

Pause practice can transform each day of your life. It creates an open doorway to the sacredness of the place in which you find yourself. The vastness, stillness, and magic of the place will dawn upon you, if you let your mind relax and drop for just a few breaths the storyline you are working so hard to maintain. If you pause just long enough, you can reconnect with exactly where you are, with the immediacy of your experience.

When you are waking up in the morning and you aren't even out of bed yet, even if you are running late, you could just look out and drop the storyline and take three conscious breaths. Just be where you are! When you are washing up, or making your coffee or tea, or brushing your teeth, just create a gap in your discursive mind. Take three conscious breaths. Just pause. let it be a contrast to being all caught up. let it be like popping a bubble. let it be just a moment in time, and then go on.

In any moment you could just listen. In any moment, you could put your full attention on the immediacy of your experience.

When you are completely wound up about something and you pause, your natural intelligence clicks in and you have a sense of the right thing to do. This is part of the magic: our own natural intelligence is always there to inform us, as long as we allow a gap. as long as we are on automatic pilot, dictated to by our minds and our emotions, there is no intelligence. It is a rat race. Whether we are at a retreat center or on Wall street, it becomes the busiest, most entangled place in the world.

So, what is the most important thing to do with each day? With each morning, each afternoon, each evening? It is to leave a gap. It doesn't matter whether you are practicing meditation or working, there is an underlying continuity. These gaps, these punctuations, are like poking holes in the clouds, poking holes in the cocoon. and these gaps can extend so that they can permeate your entire life, so that the continuity is no longer the continuity of discursive thought but rather one continual gap.

Pema Chödrön