



We Practice Forever, by Charlotte Beck

Charlotte Joko Beck's rules to help her students with their practice (ironically, or perhaps not, all these rules are directly applicable to life situations as well) ...

- * Don't begin a sitting period without considering why you sit. Know your intention. Know that there is "nowhere to go, nothing to achieve." Be aware of ambitious thoughts.

- * Sit every day. Try not to miss more than one day in a week. If resistance arises (it is a normal part of practice), be aware that it consists of thinking; like all thought, it need not dominate you. Just observe it. Feel it in the body. And do not bully yourself, ever.

- * Once a week, sit 10-15 minutes longer than you want to sit.

- * Don't become obsessed by sitting. In no case should one's work or family responsibilities be neglected in order to sit.

- * When upset, don't avoid sitting. Hard as it may be, it is crucial to sit when difficulties arise.

- * Know that sitting is simply maintaining awareness of body and mind. Be aware of any desire to turn sitting into an escape from life by entering peaceful, trance-like states; such states can be seductive but they are of no use.

- * Be aware that "achieving something" in sitting (such as special clarity, insight, calmness of mind) is not the point. These may occur--but the point is your awareness of whatever is happening, including confusion, discouragement, or anxiety.

- * Keep your practice to yourself. Don't attempt to teach others; do not proselytize. Leave your friends and family alone. There is an old saying, "Let them ask three times ..." What you can give others is how you live.

- * Don't spend your sitting time in planning. Nothing is wrong with planning per se, but set up another time for it.

In daily life, be acutely aware of the desire to gossip or complain, to judge others or yourself, to feel superior or inferior. All practice can be summed up as:

- (1) observation of the mental process, and
- (2) experiencing of present bodily sensations.

No more and no less. And finally, remember that real practice is not

about the techniques or koans or anything else as ends in themselves, but about the transformation of your life and mine. There are no "quick fixes." Our practice is about our life, and we practice forever. -- Charlotte Joko Beck (excerpts)

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