



Bridging Practice and Non-Practice, by Thich Nhat Hanh

We have many compartments in our lives. When we practice sitting meditation and when we do not practice sitting, these two periods of time are so different from each other. While sitting, we practice intensively and while we are not sitting, we do not practice intensively. In fact, we practice non-practice intensively. There is a wall which separates the two, practicing and non-practicing. Practicing is only for the practice period and non-practicing is only for the non-practicing period. Â How can we mix the two together? How can we bring meditation out of the meditation hall and into the kitchen, and the office? How can the sitting influence the non-sitting time? If a doctor gives you an injection, not only your arm but your whole body benefits from it. If you practice one hour of sitting a day, that hour should be all twenty-four hours, and not just for that hour. One smile, one breath should be for the benefit of the whole day, not just for that moment. Â We must practice in a way that removes the barrier between practice and non-practice.

When we walk in the meditation hall, we make careful steps, very slowly. But when we go to the airport, we are quite another person. We walk very differently, less mindfully. How can we practice at the airport and in the market? [â€] I have a friend who breathes between telephone calls and it helps her very much. Another friend does walking meditation between business appointments, walking mindfully between buildings in downtown Denver. Passersby smile at him, and his meetings, even with difficult persons, often turns out to be very pleasant, and very successful.

We should be able to bring the practice from the meditation hall into our daily lives. How can we practice to penetrate our feelings, our perceptions during our daily lives? We donâ€™t deal with our perceptions and our feelings only during sitting practice. We have to deal with them all the time. We need to discuss among ourselves how to do it. Do you practice breathing between phone calls? Do you practice smiling while cutting carrots? Do you practice relaxation after hours of hard work? These questions are very practical.

-- Thich Nhat Hanh, from "Being Peace"