



## Beyond Content Of Thought, by Ram Dass

Instead of trying so hard to get out of the shadow, the dark, which I think actually reinforces the shadow and its reality, just do your practices. See, if somebody says, "I'm having these terrible thoughts, and I don't know why, will you help me understand why?"

I'd tell them that I'd rather sit with them and help them to follow their breath. The breath has no content to it at all. It's just breath. It's better to strengthen their centering, the quieting, the presence, than to keep strengthening the problem, which keeps being reinforced when you work on it directly. It's a very delicate situation. I don't want to undercut times when it's really appropriate to work on thoughts as content, but for the most part, the focusing on the content of thoughts is, to me, a last strategy.

It is a much better strategy to focus on the mechanics of thought, rather than the content of thought. Do you hear that distinction?

Now I can go to a therapist, and they can say "Let's talk about your childhood and where did it all come from!" That's dealing with the content of the thoughts. Or, instead, I could choose to just see them as thoughts, not focusing on the content so much, looking for answers. They're just thoughts! Put them in the category of thoughts, not what they're about, they're just thoughts, and it's my major game in meditation to extricate awareness from identification with thought or with clinging to it. In order to do that you go into your meditation practice, which in some cases might be taking one thought, like following the breath.

What will then come up is, "But what am I gonna do about this relationship?" Thought appears, and I hear the teacher say, "Return to your breath." Go back to breathing in, breathing out, then another one comes and says, "God my life is a mess!" Now at that point, you can leave, call a therapist, and say, "Let's deal with why my life is a mess," or you say, "Ok, go back to the breath. Sure your life is a mess. Go back to the breath."

It's just rising-falling, rising-falling, and now, in other words, you can use the meditative practice to extricate yourself from identification with thoughts, whatever they are, shadowy or not. There are some thoughts that you won't get rid of that way, because they're sort of in a nest or web of stuff. Then, you'll approach them in terms of content, but my strategy is to go for the mechanics first, and then go to the content later on, when it's really ripe

for the picking.

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