



The Attention That Arises From Caring, by Andrew Cohen

Bare mindfulness, or attention from moment to moment, is a good technique as far as it goes, but I don't feel it's enough, unless you, whoever you are, care about your own effect in this world and the role that you're going to play. When we really begin to care about the impact we're having on others and the world, we're naturally going to begin to give a presence of attention to our own motives. And when all these dark and impure impulses arise (which they will), because we care, we're going to take responsibility for them and not act out of them. Now it takes a very big heart and a courageous interest in higher development to be able to bear all that without wincing, without pulling back, without being frightened by your own darkness. You begin to see that your potential to be a saint and your potential to be a sinner are absolutely equal. And you have to find a kind of equanimity as you observe everything that arises within you and get to the point where you're not just trying to become a "good person." As long as you see yourself as a good person, you're going to be afraid, for the wrong reasons, of the darker parts of yourself. I think a really heroic attitude is to embrace the darkest part of ourselves without wincing "to know that both potentials exist in all of us, but we're not striving to become saints, and we're not afraid of becoming sinners. We want to be free and because we want to be free, we no longer want to act out of unconscious, impure motives in a way that will have karmic consequences in the world. If you live knowing that the darkest potentials exist inside you without being afraid of them, you're going to catch them before you act on them. --Andrew Cohen