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Healing with Mindfulness Meditation

May 14, 2009

Michael J. Baime, MD

KATHLEEN KELLY:

Welcome, everybody. Thanks for coming out tonight. Our networking meeting is [called] "Healing with Mindfulness Meditation." Dr. Michael J. Baime is a clinical [associate] professor of medicine at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, and has practiced meditation since 1969. He is founder and director of the Penn Program for [Mindfulness, <http://www.pennmedicine.org/stress>], . . . which teaches individuals mindfulness meditation as a way to manage stress, enhance health and promote personal growth.

Dr. Baime directs a full-time, monthlong summer program for first-year medical students on spirituality and medicine. He was nominated to receive the University's Special Teaching award because of his work with [that] class. Dr. Baime also maintains an internal medicine practice and has been included in *Philadelphia* magazine's Top Doctors issue for seven consecutive years.

He has many other credits, but please welcome Dr. Baime. [Applause]

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

I want to talk with you, and I want you to talk back to me. I want to spend this time that we have together exploring what it is to be alive. That's my real focus tonight — how it is to have a life that has difficulty, and how to manage that.

[In] my profession . . . I teach stress-management. You can't even get out of your house without having somebody tell you about the stress they're feeling, right? . . . It must be some kind of an epidemic, [or] tornado, [or] whirlwind of stress out there. You stand in your supermarket checkout line, and six of the seven magazines [in your view] have "stress" on the cover, right? Stress in your health, stress in your diet, stress in your holidays, stress in your Christmas tree ornaments. It's really something that everybody likes to talk about.

I don't want to talk about [stress] here; although we could talk about what's difficult and use that as a way to inch toward [the subject of] stress. [Specifically, tonight.] I want you to think about what *works* for you, what actually works for you. What I see right now . . . is a lot of unfolding of moments of personal lives, of felt experience, of possibility, of openness, of maybe a little bit of uncertainty about what the next moment will bring. You never know whether the sentence is going to end with the word "albatross." What? Didn't know that, did you? You don't know what the next moment brings, and you don't have any chance to relive the moment that's over.

So what I want to talk [about] with you today is how to use this present moment — the only moment you can ever actually be alive in — as a way to help you find balance and meaning and love; connectedness; joy and pleasure in the very center of your life. And [I'd also like to talk about] how to use the same present moment as a way to help you when you're feeling buffeted, uncertain, anxious, sad, angry and unhappy.

. . . If we're actually going to be real and talk about this stuff, I have to not tell stories and I have to not give a lecture, but we actually have to talk about what really happens. That's where you come in. That's why I moved the chairs, because I need to ask you to really explore a little bit about the way your life really is. To be at least a little bit honest, at least with yourself, about what works and about what doesn't work; and to take a little bit of a chance with me to see if we can experience the present moment . . . [and] sort of let the past and the future go. [So we can] just settle in here and see what it is that we find, what it is that's actually here. And then we're going to talk about that.

So let me begin by asking you what's difficult. You can say what's stressful if you want but, you know, stress is a euphemism for difficulty, for misery, for unhappiness. Right? We just kind of have this blanket word. We say, "Oh, I'm so

stressed." And for one of you, it might mean that you're sick after chemotherapy. For another one of you, it might mean that [on that day] your kids are acting out, or your parents are acting out, or your finances aren't acting right, or your hair isn't acting right. It means so many different things.

So let's just take a look at that feeling of not-rightness, when you have a hard time. What is that? Anybody willing to say?

WOMAN:

[Off microphone] What I'm saying is half of stress would be relative to what we . . . [Inaudible] . . . discern you should be happy or —

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Sure. I guess unhappiness has to be in relation to happiness. So let's just go into the unhappiness. What's unhappiness to you?

WOMAN:

[Off microphone] Cancer.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

So cancer is unhappiness. Tell me a little bit about that. What's the unhappiness about?

WOMAN:

[Off microphone] Well, there's an uncertainty

— [Speaking simultaneously]

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Uncertainty.

WOMAN:

[Off microphone] — to "live in the moment," as you say, but the next moment . . . [Inaudible].

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

So that uncertainty casts a really long shadow.

WOMAN:

[Off microphone] It does.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Yeah. And it can last forever.



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WOMAN:

[Off microphone] And it comes back again.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Yes, and it — right, right. So that's a really hard thing to face. Can other people relate to that? We're preaching to the choir here, right? That uncertainty is like a knife in your heart sometimes, isn't it? And you look at things that you love, and the people you love, and the things that give you joy, and it's like they don't really matter so much, because you don't know what's going to happen. Boy, that's really painful.

... I'm sorry to be glum about that, but I want to talk about the truth. And, anyway, it's maybe not so glum when we really look at it.

Tell me what else is hard. I'm starting with what's hard.

WOMAN:

[Off microphone] It's what you say, uncertain, uncertainty about the future.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Okay.

WOMAN:

[Off microphone] ... What's going to happen? The stuff in the future. Am I going to be here for this? Am I going to be here to see my children get married? All these different things or life events.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Mm-hmm. Okay. That sounds similar, but you're making it a little bit more concrete. You're getting down to nuts and bolts "what about," and "what about," and "what about" that. So it gets even more painful.

WOMAN:

[Off microphone] Yes.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

What else? What's hard? Yes.

WOMAN:

[Off microphone] Constant testing.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Testing. That's hard. You've had a lot of testing. [It seems as if you are] constantly [being tested]. So that was hard. This isn't a test yet, but we might have a pop quiz at the end. So pay attention.

WOMAN:

[Off microphone] I'm four-and-a-half years out of my treatment. So initially I [thought], "Yay, I did it. Each day is a gift." Now, I'm home; I'm

working; I'm with my kids. I'm kind of just falling back to [my] old [ways] — it's all about them, and it's stressful. [I'm] kind of forgetting [the], "Yay, I made it" [side of things]. [Inaudible] ... especially [once I returned to] work and ... [taking care of the] house ...

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

So you're far enough away from your cancer that ... you're feeling are other kinds of difficulties. So pick one of those difficulties, because you gave me a whole shopping-cartful there. [Laughter] I can't deal with that. I think a lot of people in the room have the same shopping cart full of stuff, packed to the brim, and lots more have had th[ose same pressures]. So we hear how [cancer] becomes a little more distant with time and things settle.

But it's going to happen again. I don't mean that cancer is going to happen again or that catastrophe is going to happen again. But your life is going to be up and down, because that's really the way that life is. To pretend that that's not going to happen, that you're not going to have good days and bad days, is just to pretend that you don't actually have a life at all.

But I want everybody to consider [something] as you think about what's difficult in your [own life]. I want you to notice how all of these difficulties have something in common, which is that they take us away from the present moment and compel us to live either in the past, or you're thinking about that long shadow. So you're thinking about all of the treatments or the tests that you've had — you've had a million of them, right? And you're thinking about your kids growing up and [wondering if] you will be there or not. Or you're thinking about whatever it is. [As you're thinking], just notice, from a distance ... just contemplate ... how the past and the future intrude on the present.

So here we are. And it's perfectly possible to go back and tell your story about whatever. You can tell the story of your cancer, or the story of whatever other life — challenges you've had. Or you can look into the future: You can think about what a nightmare it's going to be, like how it's going to get worse and worse and worse. You can do that. And not only can you do that, but you have done that. So let's be real. Okay? You've all been there. And with not even knowing any of you except a couple, I know that that's true, because I know that you're all human beings. And this is what we do. In our worst moments, we go into the past and we

exaggerate, amplify what has been difficult. So it's not just been difficult, but it's been horrible, unbearable, unrelenting — we really intensify it.

Or we go into the future. And we begin by just imagining. We imagine whatever your story is. You imagine your kids, and you think about the saddest, most difficult thing to think about. And then, even though you're imagining a future that has not happened — and the truth is [that the future] will never happen the way you're fantasizing it. It just won't. None of your fantasies have ever been true, and they're not going to start now. But despite the fact that you know that, and that's really the truth, you still live in that future that you project. It's as if it's real, right? It's [as if] you're feeling the way that you would feel if it was just as bad as you thought it was. Oh, my gosh. No wonder it's upsetting to think about what's going to happen, because somehow we have this way of taking our worst fears, imagining that they're going to happen, creating a future, and then living in that future. Wow.

Why do we do that? Well, I guess the "why" doesn't matter so much. I can give you reasons for it. It's protective in a way. It's how we plan against bad things happening. But it doesn't serve us very well. If it's a saber-toothed tiger that jumps out at us and it's going to grab us, it's good if we really charge up and go to fight back. [In that case, it's good if we] imagine what's going to happen as a way to motivate us to fight more. But it doesn't help so much when we're just thinking about our life, and our family and the things that we love.

So, what I want to suggest to you — that's the hard part of this talk. We have to start with what's true. And we do have these difficult parts of ourselves inside that make us unhappy, that give us distress, that make us feel stressed. And I wanted to start with that, and to look at it for a minute: to understand that a lot of the ways in which we experience stress and difficulty have to do with how we leave the truth of the present moment and get captured by the past, by the difficulty we had before. Or [we] get caught in the future, and imagine a future that isn't going to happen that way. [And I want you to look at how] both of those things — [focusing on the past and on the future] — are actually not fair, and [cause] unhappiness that isn't real.

So, what about the past? The past is over. The past is gone. You can't live in it anymore. It's over. How about the future? Where is the future? It's not here. It isn't here. So what do we actually have



in this life? What we have in this life is right now. And what's happening right now? Just forget about any theory. What's happening right now? You've got a body and a heart. You're a sensitive, awake human being, with arms that can open and hold, a heart that can be touched and that wants to touch, eyes that see the beauty of the world, skin that is there to be [touched]. You have this incredible, incredible gift right now, this moment, right now. I mean this moment. You will never have this moment again. This is it — this moment.

And you know what your whole life has been? Your life has been one long present moment. That's all you've ever had. That's all you will ever have. And any thoughts that you have about what's going to happen or what did happen, those are just thoughts. The truth, the actual aliveness of your being, the truth of this mystery that we call life is found right here. This is it. This is it. We are experts at forgetting that. So what I want to suggest [is that], especially when you have cancer, or when you have any really big difficult [event] that's really scary, [those frightening events] make you think about the future with uncertainty. It's very hard to "stay here" [mentally], because [what you're experiencing here] is scary. Somehow there may be reassurance in thinking [about] the worst [possible outcomes] . . . and kind of getting it over with. [But when we do that, what] we lose [is] the part of us that is actually alive.

What I want to think about is how we can take advantage of this incredibly precious opportunity that we actually have right now. This mystery, this unfolding of this experience, this possibility of all of the incredible things that people can experience: The opportunity right now to reach out and connect with the people who you care for most, to forget about all the things that take you out of the present, that pull you in the past or into the future. To slow down enough to be here [in the present], and to actually do what matters most, right now. This is why "stress," whatever stress is, is such a bad thing, such a disease, because it robs us of the possibility of fulfillment in the actual moments of life that [possess] the only fulfillment we ever have a chance to know, to actually touch, in reality.

How we teach stress management is not by complicated psychological strategies. But what we ask people to do is to settle down . . . to take the time to slow down, to let go of the future, [and] to let go of the past by recognizing that there's no payoff there. All it does is torture us. I'm sorry for

the discomfort of looking at that. But this is what happens. These tears that we have, how many times has that really happened to you? This is what we do to ourselves day and night, over and over again. Is it possible to stop, and appreciate what we actually have right now, [and realize how] profound and important and precious [that moment is]?

You may worry that your cancer will recur, and that you can't live forever, and you can get caught into fears about that. You can spend the next 20 years not having a present moment, because you've lived in that place. Everybody, whether you've had cancer or not, can relate to that, because we all fear what will happen to us in the future. And we lose what we have — this incredible gift, incredible gift.

So — wow. Time flies. I want to practice this with you a little bit. I'm talking about it too much. So what I'd like to do with you, if it's okay, is to spend ten minutes or so just seeing if we can feel this, to actually experience this, and then we can talk about it. Okay? Is everybody comfortable spending maybe ten minutes mostly in silence and feeling and sensing and breathing?

So, what we're going to do is actually — I'm a little squeamish about saying this, but [what we're actually going to do] is meditation. But people think that meditation is something that's kind of weird, like, "Meditation. Ooh, I don't do that. I'm a normal person." You know, and that's really a shame. And meditation came to our culture in the late 18th century, along with [notions of] mysticism and the Ouija boards and magic flying carpets and crystal boards and fortune telling. And it came with theosophy, [teaching about god and the world based on mystical insight] — with all of this stuff. It sort of came as a package. [But] what meditation is, is just taking the time to settle down and feel yourself. That's all that it is. Not only is there no mysticism there, it's actually the most boring thing you can possibly do, as you're about to find out.

But in that settling down — we're not experts at settling in, and doing nothing and just feeling ourselves. But as we get more comfortable with that, and get used to it, and feel our bodies relax and our hearts open a little bit, we start to get a taste for [the goal of meditation]. We start to realize that we've been moving so fast, we kind of miss a lot of our life. It's like we're riding this supersonic jet through the landscape of our life, and it all goes by in a blur. That might be okay if you don't care about the landscape of your life.

But when I say landscape of your life, I mean your children, your loved ones, your dog, the beauty of the spring — everything that you care about. [Life] kind of rushes past us. So meditation is a way to slow down enough, [mentally, that you do a better job of paying] attention [to what's really happening]. That's really what it is.

So let's try it. Give yourself a minute to find a comfortable way to sit in this chair. Well, that may seem impossible. But just make it work — maybe sitting a little forward. Just find a way to have your back upright . . . [and] not to lean against the back of the chair. Let your feet be flat on the floor in front of you. You can have your hands just resting on your legs. Just take a minute to actually do nothing. It's such a funny feeling to do nothing. You can close your eyes if that's comfortable.

Just notice what's happening inside, probably lots of activity, lots of feelings, lots of thoughts. You can even sometimes feel them in the body: your stomach churns or your heart pounds. Just let all of that be there. Don't try to change it. You don't have to let it go away, because right now in this moment, just in this moment, actually, really there's not much happening. We can allow the pounding heart and the racing thoughts and the sensations in the body to just be as they are, in their own way, and just allow them to have a bit of time and space to settle.

Allow yourself to feel the breath at the center of your body. This is an amazing sensation. You actually feel your body expand. Feel your belly. Breathe down into the belly, and feel it expand. As you breathe out, feel the wall of the belly relax and come back. Just let go of that breath. Just let it go, and just rest there for a moment. Then breathe in again, and realize that with each breath in, you're actually feeding, nourishing, caring for the body. And release that breath and allow the body to just let go, return, relax. You can feel the cycle of breath almost as a metaphor for the ebb and flow of life, that as you breathe in, you're breathing in life — the sensation of fullness, breath — and that as you breathe out you can release and relax and let go. Just let everything be. And at the end of the out breath, just for an instant, maybe, let go completely.

I just want you to appreciate that what you are feeling, that this very simple flowing sensation of breath is the actual literal life that is yours, that is part of your being, part of this human body, part of this human heart right now. This [moment] isn't imaginary or made up. You're actually feeling the fullness, the vividness, the



awareness, of your life right now. It's right here. You don't have to make it up. You don't have to go anywhere else. It's been here all along. You're just allowing yourself, just for this brief period, to let go of the past and the future, to just for this short time allow yourself to release everything except the present moment and the flow of the breath, right here in the center of your being, right now, balanced between past and future. Breathing, filling, releasing, and letting go. Alive.

You are sure to notice how often your mind wanders off, or how quickly you begin to have thoughts and evaluations, or judgments, [such as] "I don't like this," or, "I really like this," or, "I can't do this," or just thinking about the past or the future. Those thoughts and those distractions and all of the stories and memories and plans that come through our heads are completely natural. There's no need to struggle with them. Don't let them be a problem. Don't try to suppress them or push them away. Just notice them. Relax and allow yourself to feel the breath in the center of the body again. As many times as the attention wanders away, you can come back, just for the next breath, balancing your entire awareness, all of your being, in this moment on the crest of the wave between the future and the past. As the future rushes towards you and then unfolds as the present, and then fades into the past, just allowing yourself to rest in a simple, direct way by focusing on the sensation of the breath in the body and feeling it fill and release.

If you like, you can expand the awareness from the sensation of the breath in the body. Keeping your eyes closed, if that's still comfortable, to become more aware of the space around [you]. Let's say you could focus on the sounds as they come to you, just in the present moment, not just noticing that they're there, but listening as closely as you can, focusing to hear even tiny little subtle sounds that you wouldn't normally notice.

What we're practicing here is what we call mindfulness, which is an awareness of the present moment. It is [a practice that is] accepting, non-judgmental and balanced. So whether you're noticing the breath, sensation of aliveness, or the sounds, the practice here is to cultivate the noticing. This noticing is something you can do at any time, in any place. So when you're ready, taking the same attitude that we did toward the sounds, you can open your eyes and just see if you can keep your attention present, in the visual appearance of the room and the people around you — just in the

present moment. So open your eyes and just look. Don't go back to memories. Notice the thoughts that come up, whatever [those are], the reactions [to opening your eyes], and just see if you can stay in the present moment — feeling, breathing — feeling right now what is actually awake, and alive, and real, right here.

As you get more comfortable at doing this, what this begins to feel like is a connecting with your heart, connecting with what is actually alive and sensitive and real in each moment. It could create a sense of meaning or connectedness with other people. Not a big deal, but it's just that when you look at somebody, it's like you really see, instead of just looking at that person who you've seen so many times [that] you don't even have to look at them anymore. [That really seeing creates a reaction of] . . . "Oh my goodness. There's a person." And there's a twinge sometimes, in here, in our heart, because we notice things. Or you might notice the beauty in the world. You might just notice the spring more fully.

Ultimately what we've done is an eight-week stress management class in 40 minutes. Okay — so be it. But what we begin to discover by practicing this way is that the past and the future are traps, that our hopes and our fears really do fence us in. . . . They constrict us and trap us, and make our world darker and scarier and more painful than it really is, and that as an antidote to that, when we come back into the present moment, we find possibility. It doesn't mean that all your present moments are going to be happy. But what it means is that when th[ose moments are] unhappy, when you're really paying attention, what you find is, almost always, you can handle that. You're actually strong. The thing that we can't handle is the thought that this misery, or this difficulty, or this unhappiness is going to last forever. [Thinking about misery lasting forever is] about the future. That hasn't happened yet. Just right now, you have the resources to put your feet on the ground of your own life, and stand up straight, and look right at this moment. And you always find that there's solid ground under your feet. You just have to try it to trust it, and try it.

And I don't expect any of you to become meditators because we did this for ten minutes. But what I'm hoping [is that] with [our] ten-minute [practice] . . . you will begin to respect the importance of yourself in this thing, this life that you have, and that you will begin to take care of yourself by slowing down and feeling it, and living

it as much as you can. Whatever it is that distracts you, that takes you away from that, that's okay. Welcome to the planet Earth in 2009. We're all crazy most of the time, but just give yourself moments of letting go of all of that. Maybe just sit down and feel your heart for five minutes, or breathe, or take a walk. Don't let yourself go into the past or the future. Take a walk and feel the world you're in. There's tremendous strength and renewal in doing that.

So, I've been talking a lot. Let me take a break. What are you thinking? What questions do you have? I have a microphone here. I don't know if we want to use it.

WOMAN:

Do you have a recommendation on how to balance being in the moment, living in the moment, especially emotionally, and at the same time practically planning for what needs to happen in the future? Not awful-izing about what might happen, but —

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Right, right.

WOMAN:

— you know, responsibly planning?

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

The question is: If we're going to stay in the present moment, am I saying that you're not allowed to think about the future? Boy, if you can't think about the future, you're in big trouble. You're in big trouble. But there's a difference between thinking about the future from the present moment, and getting lost in the future and allowing it to become darker and more exaggerated and worse [than it may ever become], and spinning with the anxiety of that.

So, there's one way to plan from here, where you feel and you sense — you have to be able to ask yourself, "What do I really want in the future?" But the way that you find that is by feeling now. What do you really want? You're not going to find [what you really want by imagining and exaggerating] the future. You have to feel it now. So you have to bring together the "feeling of the present moment" with the "thinking about the future." When we lose the connection with the present moment altogether, [that's] when we catastrophize. And it's not helpful. It doesn't help us to plan. It just helps us to feel worse. Does that answer [your question]? . . .



WOMAN:

Right now, one of my difficult[ies] has to do with an adult child of mine. I think [he] is on a self-destructive path. So I can live in my present moment, but in some corner of my mind, I know that he's spinning somewhere and needs help. So I'm trying to also do some planning on his behalf.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Give me an example about something that you'd plan for him.

WOMAN:

I'm planning some medical intervention for him.

[Miscellaneous conversation]

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

I can see how you could get caught up in the thoughts about this, and get quite anxious, and think about what a bleak future he has, and how this won't go well, and how that could be very painful. Has that ever happened?

WOMAN:

I could go there.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Right.

WOMAN:

But I think that I'm keeping myself from going there by having a plan —

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Okay.

WOMAN:

— a solution-oriented plan.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

So, you're planning with what you know in the present moment and how you feel, and knowing what you want, and your sense of what's right. Right?

WOMAN:

Yeah.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

So you're in the present moment doing your planning. You're not lost in the future creating anxiety and making things [seem] worse [than they really are, right now].

WOMAN:

Okay.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

So it sounds to me like you are planning for the future in —

WOMAN:

In the moment.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

— in the moment, which is the only time you can really do it effectively. So you did it.

WOMAN:

Okay.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Does that sound right? I'm seeing you doubt.

WOMAN:

My intention of my expression is not doubt. My intention is just consideration of it. It seems like a big thought for me to just say, "Yeah, you're right."

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

It is a big thought. Okay. See, this is why I wish we had eight weeks [Laughter], because then I get to say, "Okay. Go home. Check it out. Do these things, and then come back and report." But you folks come back next month, right? All right. There's your homework. See what happens. See if you can notice it as you plan, notice the things that cause you to get lost in the future, and cause more difficulty or turbulence. [Then also] notice the things where you actually are feeling [your life] from now, and making the best choice[s] based on what you know right now. Just see if there's a difference there. Good.

WOMAN:

Thanks.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Okay, somebody back there. Yeah.

WOMAN:

I meditate, and often I get bored. I get bored with it, so I end it early. I get up after 15 minutes or ten minutes.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

So, you meditate, and after 15 minutes you get bored.

WOMAN:

Right. And I started meditating — I took a course with Daniel Goleman [<http://www.danielgoleman.info>] when I was first diagnosed with breast cancer. That was a long time ago. I was religious about it for about ten years. Then I just slowly — instead of 20 minutes it got to be 15, and then it got to be ten. [Editor's Note: Walking meditation is an alternative to seated meditation, if pain or restlessness stop one from

meditating. It is done with much of the same methods and seated meditation, with the practitioner focusing on each step, and the various surroundings and sounds in the walking-space. The walking-space can be as simple as a single room, in one's home.]

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Well, tell me a little bit about this boredom, without the sort of — just tell me what it feels like when you get bored.

WOMAN:

Well, I'll sit there, and I'll breathe in, and I'll breathe out, and I'll have just random thoughts, but I'll always come back to my breath. Then in about ten minutes, I keep thinking about all the things I have to do that day. [Laughter] I think, "You know what? Time to end this."

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

So, I didn't hear anything about boredom. I heard that you're following your breath, and then you're having thoughts about what you have to do. And then you stop.

WOMAN:

Right.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Where's the boredom?

WOMAN:

I don't know. I call it boredom. I don't know. Maybe there's another word for it.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

You notice you're having a lot of thoughts.

WOMAN:

Yes.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Is there a feeling of restlessness in your body?

WOMAN:

Yes, I guess.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Can you describe that feeling?

WOMAN:

Well, if I do some exercise before I meditate, then I'm okay. But a lot of times I don't. I just get up and make coffee and then go in the room and sit down.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

The coffee? [Laughter] Sorry.



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WOMAN:

You think it's the coffee? Maybe.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Listen — when you do this, if you took ... 20 minutes, as I suggested you do, to settle down [and] feel yourself, [do you] know what would happen? You would immediately start noticing your to-do list. That would take about three minutes. After about seven minutes, you would notice you can't sit still. After about 12 minutes, you might be thinking that you wanted to kill me. [Laughter] And after 15 minutes, you'd be getting up-right?

So, what you are experiencing is [the] constant momentum and speed of your life. You're noticing the constant tendency to have a to-do list, and [to] check it off. Underneath that, you're noticing the feeling of restlessness and discomfort in the body that prevents us from just sitting here, and actually relaxing — even when we have nothing to do, and even when we said that we're going to do nothing for 20 minutes. We're not even capable of doing "nothing" well, because we have spent our whole life chasing our tails and running around in circles. It's crazy to think that that's going to stop just because you set 20 minutes aside to do nothing.

What you're going to feel is how you really are. And meditation is not about creating some sort of airy sort of a fantasy world, where there are rainbows and angels sing, and ... every day is your birthday. That would be bad, wouldn't it? [Laughter] "How old are you?" "Well..." [Laughter] But meditation is about allowing yourself to face the real truth of what is, and sitting with that and relaxing with it.

A metaphor that I like is [this]: It's like you've got a glass of water that you put a teaspoon full of silt in, and stirred it up. It's all muddy. And you go, "Ick. This is all muddy. I want to clean this up." So you get the spoon, and you start trying to take the silt out. Not only does it not work, but as long as you do that, it's not going to settle. So the thing that you have to do is to place that spinning, turbulent water with the silt suspended in it on a shelf somewhere, and just let it sit there. And by just letting it sit there, it's going to settle. But you're going to watch it spin around for a while first.

And so, when we first sit down, what we feel is the truth of our life, which is that we've pushed ourselves as hard as we can every waking minute for 20 or 30 or 40 or 50, however many years. And it's not comfortable. And that's why, when

we take a vacation, it actually takes a week to be ready to take a vacation. At the end of a vacation, [we think to ourselves] "Okay. I'm ready now. I can relax." [Laughter] [And then it's] back to work — right? Or when we have ten minutes with nothing to do, do you ever just sit down and say, "Thank God I have nothing to do," and just sit there and do nothing? No, we say, "Thank God, I have nothing to do," and we race to throw the laundry in, and we make phone calls, and we clean up the house — right?

Have you ever ... managed, through some miracle, to pick the slowest supermarket checkout line? [Laughter] And when you do that for the tenth time this year, do you ever say to yourself, "Thank heavens. I don't have to do anything but breathe." No. We go [growing noises]. [Laughter] Right? So we're not very good at doing nothing.

Meditation is practice [at] doing nothing. And the reason you have to practice it is because we're not all that good at it. So noticing the parts of yourself that aren't settled is how it works. So the good news is that you're doing it exactly right. And the bad news is that you're doing it exactly right. And that's how it is.

WOMAN:

Stop the coffee in the morning, then. [Laughter]

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

It's okay. But just see if it makes you more or less comfortable.

WOMAN:

I'm going to try that.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

And if it makes you uncomfortable, maybe that's even interesting to feel, like if you want to feel that racing and sit with it and see if you can relax even around that. Not even relax around it, but just let it be there and look right at it. That would be very good practice.

WOMAN:

Thank you.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Good for you. You're doing it. And what you're finding is that it's hard.

WOMAN:

As a physician, what does [meditation] do for you physically? What are the physical benefits of it, or known physical benefits from it?

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

... The reason to do this is not because there's a physical benefit, [but] because it opens your heart and gives you a chance to connect with the things that matter. But it does change lots of physical things, lots of ways in which your body is more keyed up and sort of is working at a higher pitch, faster heart rate, more shallow, more frequent respirations. Hormonal things change. Lots of things in the body change.

We have this whole system of stress reactivity that's sort of a hair-trigger system. It just takes a little thing and [snaps fingers]. And we defuse that, [and] we become progressively less and less reactive. So, no system really goes away, but the stress-activated systems are less likely to be triggered by ... small events.

WOMAN:

And [meditation is] something you recommend? What's the ideal amount of time, and how often would you do it?

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

The ideal amount of time is whatever works best for you. So this is a work-in-progress. I think that to learn to really do it, to learn to really do it well, it takes a lot of time. I recommend that people do it for 30 or 40 minutes every day for a couple of months. ...

WOMAN:

[Off microphone] I'd have to get up another hour early.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Nobody has the time. Not one of you probably has 45 minutes every day — right? Anybody have 45 minutes every day, because I'd like you to volunteer for my — [Laughter]

So the thing is that you have to make a decision, you have to make a choice that it matters enough to do it, and something that you do now [in that 45 minutes a day] is going to ... [be displaced]. But you've got to be willing to make that choice. If you're not, then it's not possible. And if you want to learn to play the piano, it's the same thing. If you want to learn to do something, you're going to have to do it. We've taught thousands, more than 5,000 people in Philadelphia to do this, and it's been over 20 years now that we've been [teaching it]. In general, there's some variation, but most people have to practice it every day for a while, to get good at it.



Like anybody — you all sort of settled for ten minutes. I didn't ask you if it was pleasant or not. Some of you would say "yes," and some of you would say "no." But we can all do that [much]. The payoff comes not because we can sit in a room with friends, and close our eyes, and listen to somebody talk gently and relax for ten minutes. Anybody can do that — right? What's going to matter is if we can do it when we're really bent out of shape and stressed. Can we do it then, when we're really upset? Can you do it then? That's what takes practice. That's where the payoff is. And that's why we have to rehearse so much.

Yes.

WOMAN:

[Off microphone] Do you think that it helps with fatigue?

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Absolutely. We know that it does. We've documented that with many, many, many people.

WOMAN:

[Off microphone] What was the question?

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

The question was: Does it help with fatigue? We give everybody who takes our program a psychological sort of survey that measures anxiety and anger and depression, and fatigue and energy in the body. The fatigue always goes down. Not for every person, but on the average it goes down quite a bit, and the energy goes up quite a bit. So that's a good thing.

It's not that it creates more energy. [The energy goes up] . . . because we live a lot of our [lives] as if we had our parking brake on [while] driving [the] car. We're so tense all the time, it's like [banging, scratching sound]. . . . We waste a lot of energy. It doesn't feel good. So, [when we] undo that, it's not like we're creating this fountain of limitless energy — we just [feel] less worn-out at the end of the day.

You had a question before.

WOMAN:

I actually have two questions. One is: How is mindfulness meditation different from any other meditation? And the other question is: During the meditation, can you do things? Such as when I do my yoga thing, you do some relaxation in yoga. I imagine maybe a sunbeam, maybe a part of God coming into my heart or [into] where the cancer was — healing it, doing healing, mindfulness healing.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

That's fine to do that. That's something different than what we're practicing, but that's totally fine. It's completely up to you. In fact, it sounds good. I would say that's more like prayer in a way. But why give it a label? What mindfulness gives you, I hope, is the freedom to really make the choices that are right for you. [It gives you the freedom to] not listen to anybody else's "should," but to really take care of yourself in the best way possible.

WOMAN:

So how is mindfulness meditation different from other meditations?

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Well, every meditation, all meditation is, in effect, training your attention. [Every] meditation technique [asks you to] focus your attention on something. So if you learned meditation 3,000 years ago in India, they would have you repeat a syllable over and over. And it would have been in Sanskrit, probably, and they would call that syllable a mantra. And you would have been practicing Hinduism. If you go to Boston and study at the Mind/Body [Medical] Institute at Harvard [Science, <http://www.harvardscience.harvard.edu/directory/programs/mindbody-medical-institute>] they'll give you a syllable to repeat over and over again, silently to yourself. But it will be a different syllable, and they'll call it the "relaxation response," and they'll charge you a lot more money for it. [Laughter] Otherwise it's the same.

What we did in here was we focused the attention on different things, on the sensation of breath in the body, on the body as a whole, and on the sounds. But every meditation technique takes that part of your mind that notices, that feels, that is awake, and focuses it on something. In that way, they're all the same. What's different is just what you're [directed to] pay attention to.

WOMAN:

Thank you.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Kathleen, what's my time boundary here? [Inaudible] . . . Twenty minutes, okay, because I want to sit with you for a little bit before we finish.

WOMAN:

Hi. I'm here because I really did want to learn about meditation, and the young lady down there kind of hit on the physical [side of meditation].

What are the physical — mind and body are together, but the physical benefits of meditation, and letting things be, and knowing what they are, listening to those things. I know that lowering your stress, if you can, certainly is [correlated] with blood pressure. And [I know that] being able to lower your blood pressure just by meditating and being mindful of stressful things, and [really] lowering it [is a positive thing]. So I'm asking you — I'm here because I want to be better, and I think that being in touch with meditation is a positive step in that direction. So I'm asking you: What are the physical benefits of meditation?

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

I don't know. I mean, I give an hour —

WOMAN:

Why?

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

— talk on this and I can't sort of summarize it simply. I don't know that it's going to help cancer.

WOMAN:

Understood. But why should we practice meditation if there aren't other physical benefits with it?

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

I don't think you should practice it for physical benefits.

WOMAN:

Let's say that — I don't think that we can separate our mindfulness from our physicalness. I think that they're [connected]. So there has to be a benefit in our mind that will just flow. Yes? No?

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

I don't know.

WOMAN:

Okay.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

I mean, I can tell you that hormones change. I can give you the answer that I give: cardiovascular reactivity changes, muscular tension changes, adrenaline and cortisol change. All sorts of inflammatory mediators change.

WOMAN:

[Off microphone] That's where I was going.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

But do you care about that? Like, does anybody meditate to make interleukin-6 less [laughter], or high-sensitivity C-reactive protein? I think that that's — I do believe that there are



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health benefits, but we don't have the research to prove really significant disease endpoints. So I don't suggest that [the medical benefits are] a justification to do it.

WOMAN:

Then perhaps, maybe in a nutshell, it makes us a better person?

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

You already are a better person than you realize. [Laughter]

WOMAN:

I can't find the right words.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Well, you want to do this because you'll get something or you'll feel better or you'll be better?

WOMAN:

Yeah.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

The thing that it would do that would make the biggest difference is that it would open your heart more. However open your heart is, you would feel more life inside.

WOMAN:

Okay.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

You would love more. You would care more for yourself. You would feel more sympathy towards yourself. You'd be more comfortable with and accepting of all of the difficulties that happen. And as you go through each day, you would have a feeling of balance that would just be its own reward. That's really why people do it. That's why I do it. It may or may not be making me healthier. . . . I believe that in my heart. But if I had to sit down with the data and prove it to you, it would be hard.

I can prove to you that people who do this feel less anxiety, less depression, less stress, more happiness. They say their relationships are better. They enjoy the life that they have more. Those things I know happen. And that's why people continue to do it. If it were for blood pressure, people don't actually continue it for that reason.

WOMAN:

I probably — I misworded, because you do — when you just read things, they just say, "Well, you know, as the person was meditating, we noticed that their blood pressure came down," and those types of things. So I'm not saying that I'm here just because — I mean, we're all going to grow old and

[be] dead one day. So that is an inevitable thing. So I'm here because I want to enrich my whole being.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Well, that's the reason to do it. The thing that I do research on is — one of the things is cognitive neuroscience and the functional brain changes and the things that happen when you do this. But again, nobody's going to do this because it increases the function of their right frontal cortex.

WOMAN:

Right.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

. . . So those things are all after the fact. People have done this for thousands of years, before we knew what the brain was doing in there at all; because it changes something about how we live, [and when that happens it] feels really important. I think that is what you're talking about.

WOMAN:

I tried.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Yeah. I think you said it.

We'll take two or three more questions, and then we'll sit together for a little bit more.

WOMAN:

I have a two-parter, and I'll try to make it quick. One of them is you mentioned [meditating for] 30 to 40 minutes. Would it be better to break it up, [meditating] twice a day? . . . The second question is: How do you keep from falling asleep [Laughter], because you absolutely — your voice was so — I mean, I'm surprised I didn't wind up on the floor. [Laughter] . . .

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

It would have been so interesting. [Laughter]

WOMAN:

No, I'm serious. If you do it in the morning before you go to work, do you set an alarm so that you're not late, [Laughter] or does your mind eventually take over and you [begin to] know when [the meditation time is up]?

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Have you done this before? Have you done this practice before?

WOMAN:

No.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Okay. You just sound like somebody who's done it. [Laughter]

WOMAN:

Oh, really? Oh.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

So, I'll give you comments, and I hope that these answers won't sound silly. How to break up the time, or how to [meditate so you won't be late for work] is completely up to you, because everybody's different. How to not fall asleep is to stay awake. [Laughter] How you're going to do that is really — it's up to you. What happens — you can't fall asleep if you're not tired. What's going to happen if you actually come into your present moment of experience, and feel your body, and notice what's happening in here, and feel the tiredness. . . . Your body [is] really smart. You're going to fall asleep [if you're tired]. And that actually means, to me, that you're doing it right.

WOMAN:

[Off microphone] But my boss isn't going to think I'm doing it right [Laughter] if I'm late every day.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Yeah.

WOMAN:

That's why I'm saying, in the evening may be even better, because then you can rest as long as you want, and wake up [when you're ready], and then be peaceful and go to sleep [for the night].

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

Yeah. And when I said the way not to fall asleep is to stay "awake," it's not really just a joke. As you practice this, you start to find out how to let go [into a relaxed state of heightened awareness] without dropping into a deep sleep. We usually run at this really high pitch, like we're vibrating, practically. Then, at the end of the day, we go [crashing sound]. And it's like you don't even know what happened [during the day].

When you begin to relax, what happens is you begin to descend from that level of — what's really not just arousal, but agitation. It's very easy to get down close to the level where sleep is beginning to happen, and then to go a little bit too far. We're just not used to that. We don't know how to relax part-way. So there's just learning there. And the way to do it is to just keep doing it. [As you practice meditation] you [begin to] find the way to stay relaxed, and sort of more spacious, but not to be sleepy — to actually not have so much tension that you get tired.



So, falling asleep, people who teach meditation say, “Oh, no, don’t fall asleep. Do whatever. Stand up. Open your eyes.” And I think it’s fine [to fall asleep during meditation]. It means that you needed the sleep, and it meant that you did it right. Ultimately you’re going to have to stay awake if you’re going to learn about it. But that will happen if you keep doing it. Just set the alarm clock so you’re not late for work. [Laughter]

WOMAN:

My question was actually kind of related to that. But one of the things that I learned when I was doing this is that if I would lie down, it was guaranteed I would fall asleep, or if I let myself sink into a chair. If I keep my body in an alert position, I was much more likely to try to stay with it.

But I had the same question about whether three 15-minute sessions might give you the same benefits of one 45-minute. And I guess it’s just what works for you.

My other questions was: I tend to get a little bit confused between the mindfulness and just relaxation, because I think of what we did before as a relaxation session, stilling my mind, just quieting my mind and letting that — just a feeling of peace come over me. And I think of mindfulness as being aware of where my car keys are after I come in the house, after I’ve gotten out of the car, and realizing what I am doing instead of doing it mindlessly. [When I do things mindlessly, I] later [have] the stress of saying, “What did I do with it, because I can’t remember. I was trying to do four things at one time.” Am I wrong that that’s a form of — that’s being mindful?

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

So there’s more — we use that one word, mindfulness, to mean lots of things. So for one thing it means a kind of meditation practice that we did, where you let go of the past and the future, you bring all of your attention into the present. And you might be noticing anything in the present. You could just bring your attention, wherever it has wandered, bring it back [into] right now. We could practice mindfulness. So being in the moment that’s actually happening is mindfulness. We do it as a meditation practice, because it teaches us how to notice what it feels like to be in the present and how to notice when we wander.

So the formal practice of mindfulness meditation teaches us to be present. Then we use

that capacity in all of the other moments of our life. So when you’re talking to somebody, you just really notice [what they are saying, without your mind wandering]. And when you walk outside, you notice the sky more. When you look at yourself in the mirror, when you brush your teeth, just all of the moments of your life become more felt, more deeply known, more vivid and alive. That’s sort of the informal practice of mindfulness. We practice meditation to be able to do that better, to be able to live more fully. The noticing your keys thing is an example of noticing, in this informal kind of a way, just what’s happening in our present moment.

WOMAN:

... I hate to drive. And one of the things I noticed is [this]: I would get in the car, and I didn’t remember much after I got into the car until I got to where I was going. My mind was so engaged on what I was going to do in the future, all the things that I should have done and haven’t got — I was in the past and in the future, and I’m driving.

When I started ... practicing mindfulness, that’s when I noticed more things. But then I would notice the guy who’s cutting me off on the left, the things about the traffic that are stressful to me. I was focusing on the present moment, but I was getting myself kind of anxious. ... Not a good idea to try to practice mindfulness while you’re ...

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

You better pay attention when you’re driving [Laughter], or let me know your license plate, and I’ll keep an eye out for you.

So, there are some other steps in there. Paying attention alone isn’t enough. But you have to use that attention to help you find the part of yourself that is still, and balanced, and steady. And if you notice the event, and then leave that part of yourself and start spinning with it, and that reactivity gets activated, it’s not going to be helpful. You have to come back here.

I don’t know how to — this is a more complicated discussion, but there is something else to learn. So it sounds like you’ve done a lot of work — keep going. But when you notice a reaction like that happening, [don’t react] ... but sort of notice it with that same kind of mindfulness. You’re noticing the reaction, as well as the guy who cut you off. It’s the difference between being really [stressed from your emotional reaction to the situation, and being objectively aware of the situation]. ...

There’s a part of you that’s in there, that is sort of going, “Whoa. [Laughter] You are really bent out of shape, aren’t you? Whoa.” And [that inner voice, trained in mindfulness is] not critical or, “You idiot. Don’t have that reaction.” It’s like, “Wow. Look at that. What a display.” [The inner voice that’s trained in mindfulness] has a little bit of humor, it’s accepting, it’s gentle. It’s like you know when you’re about to have a tantrum, and there’s a little voice in your head that [says], “Don’t do that.” But it’s so hard to listen to. Well, that’s the voice of mindfulness — right?

One more comment. Somebody back there had something? Or not? It’s okay.

WOMAN:

Yeah. I was just going to — this is something I’d love to try. I’m wondering if you could speak on any more active stress-management [techniques]. People run, people listen to music, people lose themselves in a book ...

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

There are lots of things that you can do. And I think that there are two main categories. There are the things that bring you into the stress reaction, like mindfulness, that help you to find balance within it; and [there are] the things that take you out of it, like getting a massage. I don’t have a prejudice one way or the other. But what I do is I teach people to experience their distress, to face it directly, and to not get reactive or to panic or to become upset by it. So that whatever it is that happens, you’re steady.

However, the most successful stress management strategy in the United States is exercise. I think exercise is really great. I exercise every day, when I can. It’s good because, first of all, it really can be like mindfulness practice. It brings you into your body. When you’re exercising, all the stuff out there — it fades away, and you come down to the very simple truth of your breath and the sensation of your body. If you think about it that way, it’s an awful lot like meditation. Plus, it has a physical benefit, so it actually gets at all that stuff that we were talking about.

The other things that you talked about are the things that don’t help you to manage your stress, maybe, but that feed your heart. Playing with your grandkids, or your kids, or your dog, being with people you care for and who care for you, experiencing beauty, listening to music — whatever gives you a connection with your own heart, which is what mindfulness is stepping towards. But then



you have to live it out some way, so however you find it in your life, to make that a priority. So that's the thing that I would say is most important, because if you — and I have a feeling that most of you are like most people, you put yourself last. You do everything else for everybody else, and run the list and check the boxes. And [there may be] ... ten minutes left for you at the end of the week. [That] just isn't a very healthy way to live. If you don't take care of yourself, do the things that nourish you, that feed you — nobody else will do it for you.

So these other things, people, places, situations, beauty, can combine with mindfulness, because what the mindfulness part of it does is it helps you to feel them more deeply. So mindfulness is just about connecting with and feeling more fully. How does that sound?

WOMAN:

[Off microphone] It sounds great.

MICHAEL J. BAIME, MD:

So maybe that's my final message to you. We live in the most incredibly crazy time. I think it's always been kind of stressful to be a human being. But the pace at which we live and the demands that we ask of ourselves, the number of balls that we have in the air at one time — I don't think it's ever been like this before. It's really easy to get lost in the middle of your life, and to just not even know why you're doing it anymore — that it becomes such a chore and an obligation, and there's no joy or pleasure in it.

So, however it is that you find a way to nourish your heart, whatever it is, it's so important that you make that a priority, to slow down enough to feel, to take the time — this is the planning thing — to take the time and think about what you really want, what matters most to you. Are you actually doing something about that? Or are you just hoping it happens later? Or are you going to take a step towards that right now, to reorient yourself to recognize that this is the moment, now, to do what matters most? Instead we do what's closest to our face, or we fix the thing that's making the loudest noise. Don't always do that. Stop, breathe and feel, and chart a course through life that's going to give you deeper satisfaction, because the best antidote to stress is not to have some magical stress-management technique or a fairy dust that makes it all go away. The best antidote to stress is actually connecting with the things that you care about most. And you have to do that actively. It's

not going to come to you. But you can do it. And it's really, really important [that you do].

This is why — since I have been working at the [Abramson] Cancer Center at Penn [<http://penncancer.org>] now this whole year — this is what I've come to realize the gift of having cancer. And I hate to say that there is a gift there, because it [is also] such a nightmare — it is a nightmare. But the gift that comes with it is that you realize this life that you have is really precious. You have this understanding that actually people don't know about, because they take it so totally for granted. Sometimes that recognition, that this really matters, gives you the chance to really pay attention: Every moment matters, because it is so precious. It gives you the chance to actually take the best advantage of it in a way that nobody else remembers anymore. It's like we all know it. People get to the end of their life and they [say], "What was I thinking? How did I not see my kids grow up? How long has it been since I've watched a sunset with nothing else to do?" And when you realize how important this thing that we call life is, you have a better chance to take advantage of [life].

And that is really the best reward for being alive that anybody can get. That's a real miracle, because every day is another miracle, and you take it less for granted when you know that it's not going to last forever. Even if you just look down that dark tunnel, it makes you appreciate the day that you have right now, the light and the beauty and the joy. You've got people who you need to tell things to. You've got things that you need to see. You've got people to hold. And you'd better do it, because one day and the next day and the next day and the next month and the next year go past and it doesn't happen. And then it's over.

So grab it right now, while you have it. Realizing that is just so important. That's the gift of being a doctor, is that I realize that everything is uncertain. And that's the gift of having cancer. You have a better chance to take advantage of this life that is right here. I don't care what you think about what's happening next. You have it. Use it. Make it yours. Make it real. Go for what matters most.

Well, I'm sorry for the soapbox. And I'm sorry to talk about the things that are hard, too. I really feel like I need to do that to honor the truth of what you have gone through. But use all of the things that have been difficult as motivation, to take the next step into the light,

to love and to feel and to appreciate what it is that you have right now.

So, I'll stick around for a little bit. I met my time-boundary. I did want to tell you that just this week, actually, we decided to do a ... full eight-week program for people with cancer at the Cancer Center at Penn. And if you have any interest in that, in sort of going through this whole eight-week exploration of how this works for real, you'd be welcome to join us. ... [Editor's Note: The Penn Program for Mindfulness now conducts an eight-week online program for people with cancer, accessible from your home, as well as workshops in Philadelphia. For more information about either program, visit <http://www.pennmedicine.org/stress>].

So, thank you for coming, for sitting in stillness with me, and especially for sharing your hearts, which is really the most satisfying for me, to see people like you who are really working with your situation, and willing to be real and to be present and to share that. You're very lucky to have this group, I think. It's really an honor to share just a little bit of it with you.

So, thank you for the invitation, and I'll stick around if you have any questions. [Applause]

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]