

Mental Noting

Transcribed and Lightly Edited from a talk by Gil Fronsdal 7/20/08
<http://www.audiodharma.org/talks-rec.html>

So the core practice that we do here at IMC is mindfulness practice and mindfulness has different functions. It helps us to be present for what's going on so we can understand what's going on better. It helps us be present so that we have access to a deeper connection to what is here, more than just understanding. Deeper connection to ourselves and some of the sublime feelings that can be operating for us and that we are often not in touch with if we go around being distracted. And mindfulness has a function to help us become free, to liberate us from the ways we get entangled in our lives, the ways we get caught up in things in mild ways and also very profound ways, a deep entanglement with self for example. And mindfulness is understood, at least in the Buddhist tradition, to be a very powerful practice. Mindfulness is practiced in different ways; there are different tools to support the mindfulness practice. Today I'd like to talk about one of the tools of mindfulness practice that is usually called "mental noting" or "labeling." It's a fascinating topic, fascinating practice. People have different points of view and opinions about this particular tool so if you can, if you have an opinion already, either pro or against/ you might bracket that, put that aside and listen to the points of view I have here today and then you can reassemble your opinions afterwards.

One of the big challenges for mindfulness practice is our thinking. For some people thinking is a very powerful force that keeps us distracted, keeps us in the future and prevents us from really being present in a quality way. And mental noting is a very simple way in which we use thinking to stay present rather than having thinking carry us away. And it's using a very primitive aspect of thinking, the very simple naming of an experience, a simple word that names an experience. It's not discursive thinking like thinking about the experience, analyzing it, and judging it, and having conversations in our minds about it with people. It's - we hear a sound, and it's just 'hearing.' We label it, it's that simple. It's not "Oh, that was someone coughing and I bet they have a cold and I bet now I'll catch it. I should go see my doctor tomorrow and I can't afford my doctor." You know, the mind runs off. And then you forget that you are here. So it's very simple.

One of the functions of mental noting is that if you don't think in meditation, if you're trying not to think, the idle mind will get in trouble. And the tendency to think is so strong, so we use a very primitive form of thinking to stay present. Stay here "hearing, hearing, seeing, tasting, touching, thinking, feeling" in order to stay here, stay present.

And so we're involved with words, and we're labeling or identifying what the experience is that we are having here and now. And that activity of labeling is controversial for good reason. So first I want to read what I think is a marvelous quote, a passage by Helen Keller when she discovered words. Helen Keller was deaf, dumb, and blind, so she had tactile contact with the world, but she couldn't see and she couldn't hear. So that's a pretty big handicap. So she had a teacher when she was a child who was trying to teach her in spite of that. She writes "Someone" (it was her teacher but she didn't know that), "Someone was drawing water" (from a faucet I guess), "and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over my hand she spelled into the other hand, the word 'water' first slowly then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motion of her fingers. Suddenly, I felt a misty consciousness as something forgotten and somehow the mystery of mine which was revealed to me. I knew then that 'w-a-t-e-r' meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope; set it free." Remarkable, huh? A little insight in someone

who doesn't have the contact with the world that many of us take for granted. And here this dawn of consciousness, this dawn of knowing, of recognition through someone writing a word on her hand, spelling out the letters. And from there she went to college, became a great writer, wrote a story of her own life, became one of the great American heroines.

So here the tremendous power of words, of language will set us free to be able to maneuver our lives, have contact with other people, have relationships. So much of what we know about human life and our relationships and our sense of self is mediated through words. And so as we cultivate a vocabulary we also cultivate a life. It is as if Helen Keller's language cultivated a soul. It's quite a powerful thing to have contact with language. Many of us are adults and we've forgotten the mystery, the marvel of it. Maybe children are too young to understand the marvel of it as they start learning the words. And there are things that exist only because we speak them. Maybe a good example is appreciation. We might appreciate someone but when we name it, we say it, then something is born. The other person hears the appreciation and their gratitude is born. Something happens in them. Certain words are very profound. For example, a promise or a commitment, a wedding commitment, wedding vows. You don't just sit there dumb, quiet, at the wedding when you say "Will you take this person..." Internally, you know you say 'Yes.' Not "I don't believe in words so I'm not going to say 'yes.'" That doesn't quite work. "Yes" says something very powerful.

So some things come alive when we give them words. And sometimes that's true for ourselves inner life as well. On the other hand we have a wonderful passage by Rachel Naomi Remen in *Kitchen Table Wisdom*. She writes: "A label is a mask life wears. We put labels on life all the time 'right, wrong, success, failure, lucky, unlucky.' These may be as limiting a way of seeing things as 'diabetic, epileptic, manic-depressive, or even invalid.' Labeling sets up an expectation of life that is often so compelling that we can no longer see things as they really are. This expectation often gives a false sense of familiarity towards something that is really new and unprecedented. We are in relationship with our expectations and not with life itself. We may need to take our labels and even our experts far more lightly. Like a diagnosis, a label is an attempt to control and manage uncertainty. It may allow us the security and comfort of mental closure and encourage us not to think about things again but life never comes through closure. Life is a process, even mystery. Life is known only by those who have found a way to be comfortable with change and the unknown. Given the nature of life there may be no security but only adventure."

So she speaks of, and many have spoken about, the way in which if we can get too caught up in labels and names that can distance us from our life; distance us from our experience; put a veil over our experience. And, through mindfulness practice, I've become very aware of how the thinking mind paints my reality and puts kind of a veil over what's actually there. And you can see it in something very simple. I'll give you an example of one of the first times I saw it. I was at the Zen Monastery at Tassajara and they had these wonderful hot baths there; hot springs. And so we would go there every day at bath time to bathe, get clean, soak in the hot tub. It was very nice. And then one day I went to the bathhouse and there was this huge frame with five or six one-gallon jars of incubating yoghurt in the hot tub. So I looked at that and I said, "Is this a bath or is this a yoghurt incubator?" "What is it?" Of course, it's both. But you know a lot of things can morph depending how we use them; how we see them. We can see things from different points of view. And so you can label things too tightly. So I saw "Oh it's my mind that creates that, in some sense. I can see it this way one way and my mind can create a perception that sees it another way."

So there is a tremendous creative potential of the mind to project onto things. We do it on people all the time. We have labels for people. “Oh that’s a bad person. That’s a dangerous person. That’s a desirable person.” And so labels can also cause problems. Still, in mindfulness practice, we use mental noting, very simple. And the idea behind mental noting is that it is not supposed to be interpretive in some abstract way. It’s not meant to be judgmental. It’s a training to name what’s happening in the most simple way of our direct experience. So we hear a car outside, “hearing.” That simple—as opposed to “Oh I wonder what year that car was made. I wonder what brand. I wonder who is driving it. I wonder why they built IMC in a place where there is traffic.” And the mind goes off thinking about as opposed to just “hearing, hearing.” Keeping it that simple.

So this very simple labeling. And it has a number of different functions. One function is that it’s meant to be a fuller acknowledgment of what is. And I hope that you’ve all had the experience of acknowledging something and in the acknowledgment something inside of you relaxes. “Oh, now I see it.” So it can be as simple as someone telling you “Oh, you seem to be having a hard day today.” “Oh yeah.” Then you relax. Someone sees you; acknowledges you. They named it, “a hard day.” But you feel seen in some way and that simple acknowledgment being seen helps something relax or open; it’s helpful in some way. That full acknowledgement can help keep us honest. I think of mindfulness as being a form of truth-telling and I see that for me when I sit down to meditate that there are times when I’m not so in touch with myself in some subtle way. But when I sit down to meditate and close my eyes it’s a chance for me to find out what is really going on with me in some deep way. And sometimes I find out that I’m uneasy about something. I didn’t realize I was uneasy until I sat down to meditate. Then I say to myself, “Oh, Gil you’re uneasy.” That’s not some great abstraction. It’s a very general experience. And then “Oh, now that I’ve recognized that, now I can explore that, I can get to know it, I can find out what’s going on in some deeper way.”

Sometimes there are things we don’t want to see about ourselves or see about different situations and it can be very powerful to name them. Family dynamics. Uncle So-and-So is an addict. No one’s supposed to say that! Then finally someone says it. Or the story of the emperor who has no clothes. Finally the little kid says “He’s naked.” Then everyone saw it. In fact, that is the way it is.

So sometimes this simple labeling, naming something, can be very, very powerful – a truth-telling act. It can free something inside of us in doing that. So I see labeling as a full acknowledgment of what is here. “Oh this is what’s happening.” Another function of the labeling is: if a person practices continuity of noting – so just keep noting – not fast, but just a slow easy way, “Hearing, hearing, thinking, thinking, worried, worried, delighted, delighted, itch, itch” it can be that mundane. It doesn’t have to be sublime. That continuity keeps us in the present moment and the continuity of the noting helps us stay continuously in the present moment which is the big challenge of mindfulness practice because the mind so easily leaves the present moment. If you have the continuity of mindfulness a person is much less likely to get distracted or is much more likely to notice when they do get distracted. I’ve known people, myself as well, who thought “I’m pretty present when I meditate, thank you. Things are going well. I’m calm, I’m present.” And then I started my mental noting, just naming what is here, or back in my Zen times, I used to count my breath. And I’d take up the counting and then I’d notice, I’d get to ‘2.’ I’m supposed to get to 10. And I’d get to ‘2.’ Or I’d start doing the mental noting. “Hearing, listening, itching, aching, thinking.” Whatever, just do it like that. And then I’d notice after awhile I’d stop doing it. “Oh I better start doing it again.” Then “Oh I stopped doing it.” And I said “Oh you know I’m not as

present as I thought I was. The forces of distraction are actually quite strong here, and I was fooled into thinking that I was present because I was calm." Make sense?

So it kind of helps to know where we are at in our practice keeping the continuity going. Sometimes when we're more fully present for what's here, and there's more continuity, there is a greater chance for a deeper understanding of what is here. So it's not necessarily inherent in the labeling that there is greater understanding but many people find that in labeling something there's greater understanding. One way it works is that, say you're sitting here and you're noting the breath, "Breathing in, breathing out, breathing in, breathing out." And then "I really want ice cream." Note, "Thinking, thinking, breathing in, breathing out, hearing, hearing, I want ice cream." "Breathing in, breathing out, feeling an ache in my knee, I really want ice cream." It might encourage you after awhile that there's a pattern where your mind keeps coming back to the same theme over and over again and unless you label it you might not see how regular the pattern is. So, in other words, a person might not recognize that they're caught by some concern or some feeling or emotion unless they can track it over time and see how often it is occurring. So, for example, it might be anxiety. Maybe a person doesn't realize how anxious they are, they start noting all their experiences and they see that every third note is anxiety. "Wow, I had no idea that it was such a common theme for me." So the continuity of noting gives information that can be very helpful.

One of the ways that mental noting helps us is as I alluded to before, it is a form of very primitive thinking that is an alternative to discursive thinking. So it's a way of helping the mind to not get caught up in conversations in the mind, in discursive thinking. And it's much easier to see deeply into our experience here and now if we are not caught up in discursive thinking. So the mental noting is an alternative. If you find yourself caught up in a lot of thinking, that might be a really useful time to start using the mental noting. And I do that a lot. If I sit down to meditate and my mind is still busy with my day and it's hard for me to be present, one of the ways that I help me get settled down is to start using mental noting. And for me I often settle down pretty quickly that way.

Another function of mental noting is that it pulls us out of being entangled or caught by our experience. If you keep thinking about something over and over again, you're entangled. If you let go of the thought and you come right back, you're entangled. Or maybe you can't even let go of it, you're so concerned or wrapped up around certain feelings, certain things, you're entangled or caught by them. And one of the great potentials of mindfulness is to show us how much we're entangled. Some people don't realize how entangled they are until they start paying attention. So the mental noting is a way to help us get disentangled, to pull us out of the entanglement. And it works in different ways so if you're thinking about ice cream "I want ice cream, I want ice cream." And "I need to stop thinking about ice cream, I'm supposed to be doing my job here. So you say "Oh, wanting." Very simple label. There's wanting going on. And as you say "wanting" the mind keeps wanting to go back to thinking about ice cream flavors and to stop doing the noting. And you can feel sometimes this push and pull between maintaining the mature, stable mental noting versus keeping thinking about the theme. So then you are entangled. So you keep going back to the label until the recognition of there being wanting is stronger than being pulled into the current of wanting thoughts or wanting feelings. So, "Oh, I feel that tremendous draw towards wanting. Wanting is happening now. Yes this is wanting. Wanting, wanting." Until you feel yourself disentangled, pulled out, step out on dry ground and see the experience there, become free of it.

One of the great stories in the Buddhist tradition of this is after the Buddha was enlightened and Mara came to see Buddha. Mara is seen as the personification of these forces of temptation, difficult emotional states that might arise for a person. It's interesting that after the Buddha was enlightened, Mara still comes to visit the Buddha. You'd think the Buddha was free of those things. What's interesting is how the Buddha responds to the presence of Mara, to temptation. All he does is he says "Mara, I see you." It's kind of like labeling. "Mara, there you are." Very simple. It is not for Mara, not against Mara, doesn't attach Mara, doesn't run away, doesn't invite Mara for tea, just says, "I see you." And then in the stories, every time the Buddha does that, Mara runs away. There's something very powerful about being able to see very clearly and call something what it is. "Desire, I see you." "Hate, I see you." If you see it clearly enough you're probably not going to be in the hate. You step out of it. Or you might see "I really want to be in the hate. I prefer to be there." "Hate, hate, there's hating here." You feel it pull then you can decide where you really want to be. We say in our tradition that mental noting is to help us identify what's going on without identifying with something. You don't want to identify with it, so one of the very powerful places for this is with pain. To label pain, to note pain. If you call it "my pain" there can be a qualitative difference in the mind with that versus saying "pain." Adding the idea of "my pain" on top of the pain creates more entanglement with the experience. If it's just pain, there's a little bit more distance from it, freedom from it. So one of the functions of mental noting is to help us disentangle from our experience, to become free of it.

So I wanted to read a psychological article so you don't have to take a Buddhist teacher's word for all this. The article is entitled, *Grief and the Mindfulness Approach: Death, dying and bereavement counseling*. So this is a clinical article.

"In one case a divorced woman would have bouts of depression and anxiety when she remembered her ex-husband's bizarre sexual demands. She was trained to label her thoughts as 'remembering, remembering,' and within a few days she could see the causal relationship between the thoughts and the anxiety and depression." Pretty good. The causal connection between thoughts. Thought arises, emotion follows, feelings follow. If you see that connection, then it's possible to sometimes stop the chain before it spirals out.

"Another woman, who was hospitalized for manic-depression and schizophrenia was instructed to watch the second hand of a clock and when her mind went off the clock, to name the distraction. Soon she realized that most of her distractions were related to the past." So here's an example of if you label regularly you start seeing the themes that keep reappearing, the patterns. "She was then instructed to label them as 'remembering, remembering.' With this technique, she learned to identify herself with the objective watcher of her disturbing thoughts instead of the depressed thinker." Okay? So she pulled herself away to identify but not identify with. "Soon she began to gain insight into the nature of her illness and was released from hospital."

"Another woman, who was hospitalized for anxiety, depression, and inability to function adequately rebelled against any suggestion of introspection. As she was a Mormon, the word 'Buddhist' or 'meditation' was not mentioned. As the therapist interacted with her, it became evident that much of her day was spent fantasizing an imagining to avoid the anxiety of her life. The habit of fantasizing was discussed with her and then she was asked to undertake a psychological procedure. To her surprise she was asked to bake a cake. However she had to do it extremely mindfully with minute attention to detail. When the persistent fantasies would arise, she was instructed to just observe them. After a while she found that she could intentionally return to the present moment and so function more adequately. She also began to gain insight

into the nature of her anxiety and depression.” So the last person was not asked to name it, but still to identify the fantasies and to disentangle herself from those fantasies. And then that brought her a lot of benefit.

Another benefit of labeling is that as we practice continuity of noting, as we get disentangled from the experience, we may find it interesting to notice the tone of the inner voice that does the noting. Sometimes the tone is harsh, sometimes it is complacent or bored. There can be an attitude that comes along with the noting. Perhaps it’s not a neutral matter-of-fact noting. So if we have pain, and we’re noting the pain, it might be “Ahhh that pain, pain!” We’re entangled, we’re involved. Or if there’s some real pleasure in meditation going on, and the person labels it as “Pllllleeeaaassssuuurrrre,” that’s also being involved. And if we pay attention to the attitude, the tone of the labeling, we can sometimes notice the way we are caught in it. And the idea is to be very simple and matter-of-fact. Just “hearing, pain, pleasure.” Just simple.

As we practice this continuity of noting and as we get a little bit disentangled from the experience and as we stay more equanimous or neutral about what we are labeling, we may find that we are becoming more fluid or receptive in our awareness. Or experience flows through us much more fluidly. We’re not stopping or blocking or resisting or running away from experience. We’re much more receptive and willing to be open to experience as it is. And this is a very important part of mindfulness. Mindfulness is not meant to create a distance between us and experience that is hard or separate, like “I’m keeping things at bay,” but rather it’s purpose is to be open to experiencing more fully.

So, the trick with the noting is how do we note in such a way that we stay soft and receptive? Some people note in a very hard way and they create a kind of artificial distance that is not so helpful. In this same spirit then is another function of the noting which is to train us in non-judgmental awareness. It is not an easy training but it is a training to learn how to recognize something without judging it, without being for or against it, without saying it’s good or bad. Just very simple—this is the experience. And this can be very helpful for people who judge themselves very negatively, for example, for some of their inner mental tendencies. You might have murderous rage about something and feel like you’re an awful person. And in the mental noting, you learn to recognize and name it, “rage, rage, rage, rage,” without adding on “I’m an awful person because of it.” Or, there are a whole slew of things that might come up. We might judge our experience positively, “I’m a great person. I’m the first saint at IMC.” And, no, you don’t have to go that far, you can just simply say, “Oh, a generous thought happened.” It was a generous thought or a kind thought, just that.

So we train in a non-judgmental and non-abstract kind of recognizing—just what’s there. So these are some of the functions of noting. There are some dangers with mental noting. I don’t want to champion noting without mentioning the dangers as well. Some people will use the mental noting mechanically as a way of actually creating a barrier between themselves and their experience or a way of trying to control their experience. They might use noting as a way of not experiencing what’s really here. I’ve known people who have kept a running monologue of noting, “noting, noting, noting, noting,” so they wouldn’t have to feel what’s really going on. Or to feel like they’re in control, because if they stopped the noting then their minds would be out of control. It’s a way of keeping these very powerful psychological forces at bay as opposed to discovering how to be free with them. So the mental noting can cause problems for people or be done in the wrong way. Also, sometimes if the mental noting is done too much, it’s at a coarser level of the mind and some of the more sublime, or more subtle movements in our hearts and our

minds don't have a chance to show themselves. So we might not get to know ourselves as deeply if we keep the noting going too much.

Still it can be very helpful. Some people find that noting continuously is very helpful. When I was on my long retreats, I was taught to note all the time. All my waking hours I was supposed to be involved in noting my experience, labeling what was going on, all the time. And it took me awhile to learn how to do it. It was like riding a bicycle. It was very awkward at first and I'd done a lot of meditation practice before this in which I didn't do the noting. It was like "What's this? Now I'm getting busy in my mind where I used to be really quiet in my mind. Now I'm noting all the time." But I diligently did it anyway—my teachers told me to do it. And after a while, it became second nature like riding a bike. After a while you can ride the bike without holding the handle bars if you get good enough at it. So after a while I could note without the handle bars. I could just note. It became easy and very supportive of my practice. And it became very very helpful for me. And I attribute a lot of the depth I had in my practice to the continuity of the mental noting. For me, it worked really well.

There are other people for whom mental noting does not work so well. So to be studying with a teacher who says you have to do mental noting and that's what you do, can sometimes pose a problem. They end up doing something that does not really work for their particular mind. Some people find that rather than noting continuously, it can be helpful to note at particular times, particular things. It can be helpful to note maybe at the beginning of meditation, because at the start, the mind is distracted a lot. Or it can be particularly useful to note when the mind is getting really concentrated, but when the mind has a little tendency to waver from the concentration. The very subtle noting is like a nudge, keeps us here, keeps us here. The noting is like a soft frame around the experience to keep us with the experience, keep us right there. So then it's really useful. Some people find it's helpful to note the experience of particular things, like thinking. They are very quiet in their mind generally, then every time the mind goes off into thinking, it's very helpful to note, "thinking, thinking" and that can interrupt the getting lost in the current of thinking, pulling us back and disentangling us a little bit. Some people find that's very helpful. Other people find it is very helpful to note emotions, every emotion, because emotions are where they get tangled—"oh, happy, sad, angry." Noting pulls them back into the present moment. For some people it's helpful to note the feeling tone of the experience—"pleasant, unpleasant." Some people find it helpful to use mental noting when things are out of control in their life. (And none of you, of course!) But there are times when there are very powerful forces within us, powerful forces of desire or addiction, powerful forces of hate, powerful forces of self-loathing, powerful forces on inside of us. And it's really humbling to understand how the mind can have a mind of its own. "It's not my choosing to be swept away this way." Sometimes this might be a time when the noting becomes a lifeline for certain people. And they use the noting because without the noting it is too easy to get caught up and start acting in ways that later they very much regret. It becomes a tool, it becomes a refuge, it becomes a lifeline to stay balanced, to stay protected from getting swept away. Then finally, some people only note that which takes them away from the breath. They're focusing on the breath as the primary meditation object, and whenever something takes them away from the breath, they note that and then they come back. And they're silently with the breath but they note the distractions. That can be helpful.

There is also the question of precision versus vagueness in the noting. Should I be precise? Some people will spend a lot of time thinking about what the right label should be. And that's not useful. If there's a precise label that is obvious, then precision may cut through things and

provide insight. But only if the label is obvious. Don't think about it. It's okay to have a vague label. Part of the function of the label is just to keep you present. So it can be as vague as "oh this is an experience." What does that mean? But you have an experience and you stay present for that. Or one of the great labels is "chaos." "I don't know what's going on but it's chaotic; it's chaos." At least you're labeling, you're there to that degree and then you can start getting closer based on that. It doesn't have to be very precise. So whatever is obvious and easy that helps frame the experience, keeps you present, keeps you there. Then with mindfulness, since you're practicing mindfulness over a long period of time, hopefully, if something keeps appearing over and over again, the mind, through familiarity, will be able to recognize the more precise, accurate label in its own time. You don't have to be thinking about it.

I'm almost finished; I realize I'm talking over. I hope this has not been trying for you to listen to all of this. If it has been difficult for you to listen to it because it's boring, what you do is label "boring." And then you can see—are you entangled in the boredom, can you become free of the boredom? That's what I did. I did about six or seven weeks of a retreat in Thailand and for some reason, I have no idea, my teacher took me out of retreat to see a gaudy funeral for a Thai General in Bangkok. And I couldn't understand anything; it was in Thai, and I was really bored. And after a while, I said, "Wait a minute! I've just been on retreat for six weeks." And I started labeling, "boredom, feeling present," and very quickly the boredom vanished. So in that spirit, you are responsible for how you feel here in these talks! If you start thinking, "This is going on and on; it's never going to end; now he is going on some tangent." So I apologize.

So I want to finish with this. As the mind gets stiller and stiller, more concentrated in meditation, it's important to adjust the loudness, the intensity of the labeling we do. It's almost as if there are different layers of thinking we can have; different layers of intensity. And the normal thinking mind is a certain level, but as the mind gets calmer and calmer, the labeling gets calmer and calmer, more subtle, more quiet, quieter and quieter in the mind. Just a whisper in the mind. A little whisper. And whisper is important because the primary thing we are doing in mindfulness is not the mental labeling. We say, in our tradition, 5% is the labeling, 95% is experiencing what's there. Some people turn it around and it's 95% labeling, and 5% experience. Five percent labeling is what we do. And then I found that at some times when my mindfulness got quiet enough, my mind got really still, I still found it very helpful to label. The mental noting was still useful, but it got to where I was just saying "yes" to everything. "Yes, yes." And just that "yes" was enough to keep me present, to keep me from wandering off. And at some point I got quiet enough that I just grunted at everything. My mental label was a grunt or a "hm." That helped me just stay there, stay there, stay there. So the mental note doesn't have to be so precise with a word even; it's just a kind of a way, just a verbalization, just an inner kind of way of saying, "stay here, stay here, stay here."

And at some point as you become familiar with this world of mental noting, you've been given your chance to learn it; to learn to ride the bicycle, you're fluid with it enough, then hopefully you'll also know when to stop doing it. Or maybe you'll find out you're not that kind of person; you shouldn't be doing it. But I would encourage all of you not to jump to the conclusion that you are one of those people for whom mental noting does not work. Give it a serious try. Experiment with it, explore it. What we've found is that—this is a strange statistic that should be taken very lightly—but the people who use the mental noting in their meditation tend in a greater percentage to make more progress in their practice than the people who don't. Now some people who don't note make great progress. But there's a tendency in this direction. So give it a try.