

Conversations with the Unseen

Episode 14 – Tea break for the mind

MX

Hello dear friends.

Laura

Hello Mexicans. Good to be with you.

MX

As always.

Laura

And so today we have Susan with us, and I'm really excited for this call, this conversation. Susan has been someone who I have known for many, many years. And I chuckle when I think about who Susan and I were when we first knew each other, as compared with who we are now. It's been such a journey and an adventure together and just been really grateful for Susan's friendship and her love and her perspective and her allowance actually, and it's so much fun for me that she is also involved in this whole conversation with you Mexicans.

MX

It seems like a perfect blend of energies.

Laura

And so I guess I would like to kick off with just asking Susan to share a little bit what she shared in a recent Power Hour about her journey and learning to connect with her inner being.

Susan

I think what I've noticed is that the busier my mind is, the more difficult it is, if not impossible, it feels to connect with the inner being. And that definitely my mindfulness meditation practice is a really big part of how I've been able to connect with the inner being. I hear people on the Power Hour, and in other conversations, talking in a way that reminds me of what that busy mind feels like. And I wonder if / how I would have connected with the inner being if I hadn't first learned to quieten my mind. And believe me, that has been a long journey. And I don't always, in ego terms 'achieve it'. But I know that I am able to quieten the mind a lot more easily than I could before. So it just seems to me that if people like me have a really busy mind, then it's quite a practical thing that we can do - the ego likes doing - so we can do something to quieten the mind. I'd be interested in the Mexicans' perspective on that, actually. But that's how I position it to people is if you practice this, it may help you to notice the ego and allow space to connect with the inner being.

Laura

And I love that, Susan, because absolutely, that's been my experience too. And in essence, what we're saying is it's really simple - connect with this aspect of yourself, the inner being. But actually, not so easy when there's a really, really busy mind. And I guess so many of us live with such busy minds all the time without even being aware that they're busy, because that's just how it is. So we just take it for granted that it actually feels like a really, really big challenge to the ego, how do I quieten the mind? And so Mexicans I would just love to hear your perspective on what we're talking about - quietening the mind.

MX

To experience a mind that is more peaceful is an energy that the ego enjoys. And yet, it would seem frequently cannot connect with for itself. It sometimes needs a little assistance because in trying harder to quieten the internal noise just creates more internal noise. It is more of an allowing energy, allowing the mind to become peaceful. And when the ego has difficulty with connecting with this quieter state, allowing peace to emerge from the internal chatter, it is useful for the ego to know there is help available - that it does not need to bring about this quieter state by itself. In fact, we would say it cannot. It requires the assistance of the inner being, the self that is beyond all of the thinking and all of the programmes where, peace exists continuously. And so, it is useful for the human mind to know that this state exists within the non-physical self. And all that is required is an allowing for that non-physical self, the inner being, to help the human mind to feel more peaceful and calm.

Susan

And that is exactly what my experience has been. It's about allowing what's already there to be experienced, it's not going looking for that sense of peace. Which, at first, the ego is not necessarily quite sure how that really works. But that's been my experience is that when we can step out of that busy 'doing' mode, everything naturally settles, it just does. It's like the snow globe, you shake up and you've got all the snow and you can't see the figures in there. But if you put it down and just let it settle, it becomes clearer. So that's definitely been my experience. It's there and it's about creating the conditions for that to happen. I guess when I started practising mindfulness and meditating, the idea of the inner being wasn't something I was aware of, but just as you described it Mexicans, I really love that - that the inner being is actually helping the ego, that's that inner partnership that you talk a lot about. So that's just given me a slightly different perspective on it. But as you describe it, that's exactly what my experience is. And it's about just enough 'doing'. That's how I describe it to people when I'm teaching mindfulness and meditation is it's just enough doing. Because it's noticing when thoughts or distractions get in the way of that settled mind and that sense of peace. So it's not entirely passive, but it's not really doing - it is somewhere just in between. And that's why it's a practice, because the ego mind will want to get into doing at any possible opportunity.

MX

We would say the doing part which, as you point out is not really doing, is more of an intention. It is the intention to achieve a more peaceful and calm state of mind. And the more doing there is, the more it takes the mind in the opposite direction. The intention can be guided towards the inner being, almost as a request to bring about this more peaceful inner state. And it is helpful for the human mind to understand and appreciate that there is nothing to do. In fact, it is the opposite.

Laura

It's so funny listening to the Mexicans share that, because what occurs for me is when this mind is busy, then this mind also makes itself wrong for being busy. Which is just another level of busyness. Because now there's more judgement that's going on within that. And what I love is that idea of, it's something that's already there. And what we're doing is connecting with it and my goodness, have we been on a journey around intentions over the past year, and seeing the power of intentions. And just seeing that there's many, many, many times I've sat down and I think that I have to quieten the mind, rather than actually aligning with the inner being, and having that as an intention and asking it to help me calm the mind.

Susan

Yeah, that occurred to me when the Mexicans talked about intention, because that's something that again, if I'm guiding a meditation, I will always start with, what's our intention? My experience is it's a really good way to just be clear, what is it I'm doing here? I'm not sitting here going through my to do list. I'm not sitting here trying to work out a particular problem. I'm here to create some space in the mind. And I love what Mexicans said about pointing towards the inner being, or turning towards the inner being. Because very often, I found that the ego gets involved and the ego thinks, 'Here's what should be happening - this should feel really calm and blissed out'. And actually, that might not be what happens because that might not be the experience in that moment. But if the ego gets out of the way and allows the inner being or turns towards the inner being, the inner being can help us to connect with the intention, which is simply to reconnect with that inner sense of peace.

MX

And sometimes, the human mind is preoccupied with a particular situation, perhaps something that the human mind would call a problem that needs to be solved. And the way the human mind goes about that is to perhaps play out scenarios or to be circling backwards and forwards, trying to work out how to solve this apparent problem. And this can of course, interfere with achieving the peaceful state of mind that we are talking about in this conversation. And so, what to do when there is something that is preoccupying the human mind that it will not let go of? It cannot, it seems, relax in that moment because it is looking for the answer to what it believes to be a problem. And we would say there is perhaps some kind of agreement with oneself. There is an agreed pause in proceedings, almost like a tea break for the mind, where there is a period of time set aside for resting the mind. And this can be something that many times the human mind will agree to. It is not saying ignore the apparent problem. It is saying, take a break from this internal thinking wrestling match that has been taking place in the human mind. Just have a rest. And this can bring about a state of calm. And of course, what happens on many occasions is that, by the end of the tea break, when returning to the apparent problem, there is greater clarity. There is a greater sense of how to be with this situation. And this is an effective way to train the human mind when there is something that keeps coming up that there doesn't seem to be a solution to - as seen from the human perspective. It can train the human mind to use quietening the mind, as you refer to mindfulness or meditation, as a way to seek another perspective on whatever that situation is.

Susan

Yeah, absolutely Mexicans, I think many people would welcome a tea break for the mind and my experience is I don't meet many people who don't think that would be a good idea. But there's the actually doing it, the creating that time and really genuinely having that tea break, that rest from the thinking. That, for me, there's often a disconnect between the intention from the ego's perspective,

and then actually doing it. And what I often hear people saying or describing is that if they've got a problem they're trying to solve, instead of taking that tea break for the mind, they actually just distract themselves with something else. So it's like, 'I'm not going to think about the problem anymore' but actually, they're just keeping the mind busy with something else. And I wonder what you might say to people who experience that is yes, have the intention and maybe even potentially see the benefit of the tea break, but actually, they just find themselves distracting themselves even more.

MX

We would say it would depend on the energy of the distraction. If the distraction brings about a more peaceful state of mind, if there is some activity that the human self enjoys, that it can almost lose itself in, then this is a similar energetic state to a meditation or a mindfulness practice. Because it is bringing about a more peaceful inner state and this can then allow ideas, different perspectives, to emerge. That when there is a more intense doing or trying energy, this can keep out those different ideas or perspectives. And so provided that the energy of the distraction is a peaceful one, then this could be a contribution.

Susan

Yeah. Which is probably why one of the reasons why people talk about they might go and do stuff in the garden, or they might go for a run, or they might listen to music. And actually just the fact that they say that shows to me that they have an inner knowing of what it is they need in that moment. So the inner being is guiding them, even if they're not aware of it. But most people have something that they can do that helps them to connect with that more peaceful energy. So that's really helpful actually. Because sometimes people can think, 'Oh, well, I need to do some meditation, I've been told that's good'. So they try really hard to meditate. Actually, it creates, as you said right at the beginning, it creates more activity in the mind, rather than less. So that's quite helpful for people to maybe look at what they do themselves, what they naturally find themselves doing when they know they need that headspace. And that could be something they could just form the intention to be more conscious of doing, and choose it more.

Laura

It's almost like the activity, whatever the thing is that people love, is a doorway into different energy. And there's something that's really kind and loving about not making ourselves do something that's not working. We've had that, working for ourselves in business, you're trying to do something that's not working and the ego's like, 'must try harder', when actually wisdom is step away and go do something else and come back to it.

MX

And the harder the mind tries to be quiet, the more mental activity there is. And then there is another layer, which is the judgement of not being able to try harder to achieve a peaceful state of mind. And so, the more trying there is, the further away from a peaceful inner state one is. And so, we would say, small steps. If there is somebody listening to this conversation, who likes the idea and perhaps also has a thought or a story that it would not be possible to sit quietly, we would say start really small. Whatever would seem possible, even for one minute. Would it be possible to just sit for one minute and not even try to quieten in the mind? Just to sit, close one's eyes, sit and be with oneself for a short period and to not judge what happens. Just to sit and be for one minute. And then perhaps the next time they do it, could they do two minutes? Not to try and quieten in the mind,

just to sit and be for two minutes. And so, in taking these really small, simple steps, there is a practice developing. And as the practice of sitting and being is established, then there can be the invitation to the inner being to introduce that more peaceful inner state. It can seem to some like an impossibility, because it seems so far from where they are. If they have many different thoughts and they would say pressures, stresses going on in their world, the idea of sitting peacefully with a quiet mind seems impossible from where they are. But could they just sit for one minute and just experience what is going on the inside? Not to try and change it. Just to be with it, to notice it, to witness it. This would be a good place to start, we would say.

Susan

Yeah, I think that's really helpful. And what I would imagine happens for many people, because I've experienced it myself, is that you can do that one day and have one experience and the next day it can feel really different. And that in itself is useful to see. And even a different minute in the same day. And I wonder whether that's a byproduct of doing that. So it's not necessarily trying to, as you said you're not trying to even quiet the mind. But just noticing how the mind is different at different times. And perhaps if we do it more than a handful of times, we notice that there are times when the mind actually is naturally quite quiet, without us having to do anything. And that feels for me like that can be quite a powerful experience for people to then feel that they would like to sit for a bit longer and like to maybe get to know the mind better, or more. Because that, for me seems to be one of the biggest barriers is the time, creating the time to do it. And then the motivation to get beyond the discomfort that people might experience from it. So small steps, I think is a great piece of advice.

Laura

And you know, as I've been listening, what's been really occurring to me is, how often do we hear it said, it's really hard to quieten in the mind? And so, there's so much stuff been written on quietening the mind. And certainly for me, it's almost like the idea that the quiet mind is the abnormal thing. As opposed to actually, that being our natural state. And I don't know if it's true for you, Susan, but when I sit down to do anything, and I'm thinking it's hard, a) I don't want to do it, and b) there's a story right there. So that's the experience I'm going to create, which again means that I'm less likely to want to do it.

Susan

And also there's maybe another experience some people might have, which is if they're quite achievement oriented and perfectionist, then you want to get it right - says the recovering perfectionist. But that was definitely my experience. It's like, how do I do this? And how do I do it right? And if I don't feel I'm doing it right, then I just give myself a hard time for it. And that doesn't help. So I think just being that thing of remembering and seeing that it's something that is natural to us, more natural than not. But it has to be something we experience. It can't be something somebody else tells you. It's got to be something that we experience for ourselves.

MX

If anyone listening has ever thought, 'I would like to be able to quieten the mind, I would like to be able to meditate, but I've tried it and I can't do it', we would say that is a thought you are believing and therefore becomes your truth. Are you open to the possibility that you just haven't experienced it yet? But that it would be possible. And perhaps, that the part of the mind that is saying, and believing, 'I can't do it, I don't know how to do it', perhaps that is not the part that will be doing it. There is another part, which we refer to as the inner being, that if you can connect with the energy

of the inner being, that is where that peaceful state of mind exists. And so we would say, to know that that thought, that belief, that story that you cannot do it, you have tried, you cannot do it, is just what you are believing. And it is possible to believe a different thought. Perhaps just very slightly different. You just haven't found a way yet to experience it. But there is a way.

Susan

And that makes me think Mexicans that often when I've asked people when they've experienced their mind being quiet, most people can come up with a time. It might have been a long time ago, or it might be as we said, referring earlier to things that people do that distract themselves from that problem solving mode, that we've probably all experienced a quiet mind at some point even fleetingly. And I find that that can be helpful if people are struggling with that belief that I can't do it. It could be that recently, I've found it really difficult to because I've got a lot of stuff going on. But maybe if we think further into the past, or maybe just at some random time where you were sitting in the garden or sitting in your car waiting to pick the kids up from school and you realised there was not much going on in the mind. I'd maybe encourage people who are listening to this, to just be open to noticing that, in the next day or so. Just those moments, those just tiny moments where, 'Oh, hang on a minute, there's nothing much going on there'. And just notice how that felt, because even as you said one minute, or even just one breath, just being really aware of one breath, and nothing much else going on in the mind, is quite a nice stepping stone perhaps for people.

Laura

And I also love the phrase quietening the mind. Because as soon as you start to say words like mindfulness and meditation, the ego starts to go, 'What is that? And am I doing it right? And how do I know when I'm actually doing it?', which is again, just a whole other bunch of thinking. So there's something that's really beautiful about the simplicity of the phrase, quietening the mind.

MX

Most people will be aware of the idea of the eye of the storm. And so, even when there is much going on around - there could be a lot of very turbulent internal weather - right in the centre of that turbulence can exist a peaceful place, which is the eye of the storm. And we would say, this is a wonderful place to be when there is seemingly much occurring in the human experience. When there is turbulent weather occurring in the mind, and perhaps a lot of emotion, we would say, there is that peaceful place right in the centre that one can connect with.

Susan

And when you say right in the centre, that makes me feel right in the centre of the body. You know, wherever people experience that. But for me that's a place that I can drop into, when I allow the mind to quieten, feels around my heart or my belly, or somewhere in the middle of my body. So yeah, just that word of the centre that you know, the eye of the storm, the centre of our body. Something you said earlier Mexicans about people feeling that things need to be okay for them to then be able to relax. And I think when we have an experience, that there can be a lot of stuff going on in the outside world, maybe even in our own minds. But there is this space that we can connect with, that's really quite empowering. So we don't have to wait for something else to happen to allow us to have this experience. It's not like I need to get through my to do list to then be able to do that, which I think is how a lot of people who have a busy mind, myself included, approach things - like I'll get to it once I've done these other things or when that's sorted and that's sorted. But actually, for me it's the flip side of that, it's the opposite, that if I could connect with this space - be in the eye of

the storm - I can then respond to the storm in a much more effective way when I need to step into that space. So the potential is huge, and it's really empowering.

MX

And the storm can pass.

Laura

And I love that it's something that we can do on our own, or it's something that we can do in community. And I know that you currently have a drop in session for people Susan. I say currently because who knows when people are listening to this at some other point in time, it may not be current any more. But I guess if people are listening to this and thinking it would be really lovely to be on the journey with some other people who are also looking at this, how can they connect with you?

Susan

Well, it's Tuesday at 7:30 UK time on Zoom. And you can connect with me by email susan@susangrandfield.com or my website, which is susangrandfield.com. And I was doing it last night, and I was really struck by the power of doing this sort of practice in community as well. There's people that come almost every week, and then each week there are new people that come. And it doesn't really matter how often or how frequently or infrequently people come. There's just this sense of - and even though we're doing it remotely as well - connection and support, without anything being said about people supporting each other, just being there together. And then from a very practical point of view, for some people just knowing that at that time on a Tuesday, if no other time in the week, that's the time that I practice quietening my mind. And I find that people then naturally go on to do it. They don't just have it that one time in the week but it's a practical, it's like really booking time in with themselves. So yeah, practising in community is really powerful. I've always found that in the years that I've been doing this, so anyone and everyone is welcome.

Laura

I love that and Susan, thank you for just coming on and playing and having the conversation with the Mexicans. And Mexicans, I'm wondering, have you got any final words for us on the topic of quietening your mind before we close?

MX

We acknowledge you both for the service you are offering to others in assisting them on their journeys. And we are honoured to be supporting with that intention.

Laura

Thank you Mexicans. It feels like such an honour to be having this conversation with you in this way and to be able to share something that hopefully may be of use to others.

Susan

Thank you, Mexicans.

MX

Until next time.