



Asia Voight
Professional Animal Communicator
& Intuitive Life Guide
and Business Strategist

Meditation: Your Pathway to Connection

Guest: Julie Tallard Johnson

Asia: Welcome everyone. This is Asia Voight. We are here in our second series of Meditation: Your Pathway to Connection. We have our guest teacher tonight Julie Tallard Johnson. I am so excited to have Julie here because Julie is also my writing teacher. She has been assisting me for seven or eight years on my rocky road to becoming a writer and my huge amount of resistance and challenges. She has hung steadfast with me through the whole way. I am so thrilled that she is here.

Julie is a transpersonal counselor and an award winning author of nine books including Wheel of Initiation and Spiritual Journeying. For over 30 years she has facilitated groups and individuals in personal transformation and spiritual initiation. She offers the year-long initiation course, Spiritual Journeying, Bindu breathwork, Core Restorative Healing and consultation for writers. She began her meditation practice at the age of 16. Julie will be offering two meditations for us, Basic Mindfulness and the Hands on Heart Meditation that works on the neuro-pathways transforming negative thought and response patterns that have become hard-wired into our system. She will be talking about how these meditations can change the pathway from fight to flight or negative habitual reactions to positive responses based more in reality. This is also completely based on scientific information. I am so thrilled that she is here. So, Julie, welcome to the call.

Julie: Thank you. It's good to be here. Hello everyone.

Asia: I know that we have a lot of information to cover. That is the thing I always love about you and taking your classes, you have mountains of information that you are so generous with sharing. I know I wish we had days, that's what we need. But, I know you are going to give us as much as time allows here. I would just love to know more about the type of meditation practice that you favor, and why, and how does that differ from different meditation practices out there?

Julie: Sure. Let me give you a little history. You mentioned I started my practice at age 16. I will throw in a little confession that this does not mean I have successfully meditated every day of my life since the age of 16. My practice has been fairly consistent but I have not been the perfect practitioner. When I started at the age of 16, I was actually introduced to transcendental meditation, which uses a mantra. The reason I started meditation practice at that age was part of my search for sanity. At the time I was into marijuana and one of the side benefits of starting a meditation practice, especially transcendental, they said you have to be off it, any kind of drug, for 15 days. I gave up marijuana, never went back and don't miss it. I started my transcendental meditation practice I did for about six to ten years and then got introduced to Vipassana meditation, which is also called insight meditation or awareness meditation, which is similar to what a lot of people understand as mindfulness meditation or the meditation I practice now, which is mindfulness or calm abiding.

I've come to favor that because it is the simplest and easiest way to calm our monkey mind – we like to call it monkey mind – to calm our mind and tame our mind. So then our undisciplined mind – as the Dalai Lama calls it – a good way to discipline it is first we have to tame it. First we have to be able to tame that wild monkey so we can transform it, train it to behave. That's the basic mindfulness meditation.

Another reason the basic mindfulness meditation or calm abiding is so beneficial is that it's great to have that as your baseline meditation. It's different than visualization meditation, just resting in the breath, resting in the moment, resting in the stillness. It's a good basic meditation to base all your other meditations on or to do a visualization practice to start with five to ten minutes of a mindfulness practice. Then go into the visualization. The visualization practice will be a lot more powerful and a lot more effective.

We all want to be happy. We all want to be happy and creative. I'm sure most of the people listening to this in the class, they want to have direct spiritual experience, whether it be with truth or with spirit or their own soul and creativity. They want some kind of direct experience with divinity. It's very hard to have that if we aren't able to quiet our minds and direct our attention to something. You could say happiness, satisfaction and even having direct experience is dependent on a disciplined mind, having the ability to place our attention where we choose and remain undistracted.

I know probably everybody listening also has heard about the law of attraction. I'm much more an advocate of the law of attention. Because whatever we give our attention to is what manifests or what we experience in our life. Our ability to direct our attention and not be distracted, the more we can do that, the more we can create, the more we can experience happiness, the more we can experience satisfaction. That baseline practice of mindfulness goes a long way. Because whatever we are giving our attention to determines our experience. I would say most of my happiness I relate back to my basic mindfulness practice, my ability to put my attention where I want it. I'm not saying I do that 100 percent and that I don't have very challenging moments. But I know what tool to use to bring me back and that is cultivating attention. That's another term for mindfulness. There are a lot of words we throw out but I like those terms cultivating attention. The more we can cultivate our attention, the more we will experience well-being, happiness.

Asia: As you are speaking, I'm getting an image of you at a temple. I feel like that's just outside of Madison, Wisconsin here. That image keeps getting more vivid in my mind as you are speaking. What is that? What does that place mean to you when I say that? What is your relation to that image I'm getting?

Julie: You are such a psychic sweetheart. I love you. It's probably Deer Park which is a Buddhist temple in Oregon, Wisconsin. It is a Tibetan Buddhist temple. They have archives of sacred texts, art, classes and meditation practices and teachings from Tibetan lamas from around the world. Some of them live there and some of them come as visiting teachers. That's one of my places where I go to get my lessons, instructions. They also do empowerments and transmissions. But, it is definitely a Buddhist practice. My particular spiritual practice is within Tibetan Buddhism, which is the Mahayana practice, which is path of the Bodhisattva with the intention of doing your best to live well with the mindset of doing so to benefit others. There are some remarkable teachers available to us here.

Asia: You have spent a lot of time in meditation there. Is it usually quiet? Is it chanting?

Julie: It's like going to Tibet if you want to get a sense of pure Tibetan Buddhism. They will translate in English but a lot of times they will be teaching in Tibetan or Sanskrit because that is their language. Most of the teachers have a translator there. The abbot there, Geshe Sopa, used to be a professor at the university as well, the University at Madison. He speaks English but sometimes he will have a translator because he goes in and out of Tibetan. A lot of chanting goes on, a lot of ritual and then teachings. Teaching is a fundamental piece of Tibetan Buddhism, receiving teachings and transmissions from a master. The meditation piece is a very small part of that actually. They assume you are doing a good job meditating at home.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who of course is Tibetan, gets up at three in the morning. He meditates for eight hours a day. And that's not enough. He wishes he could do more. But he has lots of responsibilities, lots of things that call to him. But, he is very much a proponent of meditation and I am too. If you have to give up everything else, practice wise, spiritual practice wise, make sure you keep a meditation practice. The two forms of meditation practice that Tibetan Buddhism, the Mahayana practice, recommends are Mindfulness, which they often call Calm Abiding, and Inquiry meditation. Inquiry meditation, and we are not going to do that tonight, but Inquiry meditation is taking a spiritual principle you have been taught or something you have read in one of your books and doing inquiry work around that. There is a certain way to do that so you can gain insight into the teaching. The teachers out at the Deer Park know how to teach us Inquiry meditation.

Asia: So, it also makes me think of how I was raised. I think many of the students here on the call were raised in Christian parochial school. Kindergarten through high school and then also went to church every Sunday. They would teach you stories but it's not like they want you to know. They keep you in the dark, just follow us and we don't want you getting any ideas of your own.

Julie: Right, because then you wouldn't need the church.

Asia: Right. It sounds like what you are talking about. They want you to become mindful. They want you to be independent but join in this practice with them.

Julie: They have no attachment whatsoever whether you participate in their kind of spiritual practice. In fact when you go on Sunday, they always give a little introduction to the new people who are there that is basically, we are not asking you to follow us or believe this. Take what you want but don't give up your own spiritual beliefs or practice for this. They are very opposed to conversion of any kind, or recruiting, which I'm happy about. That is how it is, not just at Deer Park you will find that in most Buddhist settings you are on your own in that regard. The teacher does not find the students. The

student chooses the teacher. Even in Tibetan Buddhism, even if the student says are you my teacher, the teacher can't say yes I am. You choose the teacher and the teacher will teach you but you have to continually choose the teacher. That's very different too in Christianity. The responsibility goes on the student.

Asia: Yes. When I'm hearing this in my mind of the old patterns, I'm closing my eyes and feeling those brain waves of what was always conversion, always you must change. You are not good enough the way you are. You must come over here. We have to hold onto you. My brain feels constricted. So, it's flipping around. That part meant so much for me when you said, no, you don't have to go there. Just keep exactly what you want if it works for you and try this on. You can stay. You can go. It's like, really? Wow. That has not settled in on me in a cellular level. I love hearing this part.

Julie: Another thing you did ask me – it's switching a little bit – it's in the handout that everybody got – some fundamental pieces of what should be in any meditation practice that are necessary to end up generating attention and help transform the mind.

Asia: Okay, this is page three.

Julie: Starting on page three, yes. This is all borrowed material. A lot of it is borrowed from material from the Dalai Lama and other teachers. But, also from my own 30 years of meditating and having negative and positive experiences. So the first thing is you want to practice and actively cultivate attention through the practice, whether that's reciting a mantra or sitting and returning again and again to the physical sensation of breath, which is the one we will do tonight. It's not visualization, that's different. Even when you are reciting a mantra or looking at a mandala, it's the whole idea that you are letting go of everything else and you are resting the mind in one object, therefore cultivating attention. So one of the core things it will have is some way of actively cultivating attention. Again, that wonderful word attention.

Secondly, the sitting includes a practice –when I say sitting, it is a sitting practice. The practice of meditation includes some kind of process of letting go instead of holding on or instead of grasping. In this case, in the mindfulness practice, it is an observation of the breath, letting go of the breath each time we breathe in and then we breathe out, we let go of the breath. It's getting the sense of impermanence that everything is constantly changing. Everything is transforming moment to moment and being tuned into that. A sitting practice will have something to do with an observation of impermanence.

The third one is that a lot of stuff comes up. What I have discovered in my own personal practice and then working with others is that everything you are dealing with in your life, whether it is trying to create something, whether it is health issues, whether it is emotions, will come up on the meditation cushion. This is what I love about the practice because you can do it on the cushion instead of having to wrestle with it outside in your day to day life. You get to work through some of it on the cushion. You sit through the rising and falling of different emotional states, different psychological states, and continually returning your attention back to the object of meditation which in most cases is the breath. And this allows you to live more calm, more peaceful, more serene without being bounced all over the place by other people's emotions, other people's opinions, other people's experience, or your experience even. The third one is that ability to be able to sit in whatever arises, wonderful experience.

Then the fourth one, and I write a lot about it in the handout and I'll just talk briefly about it. It's such a valuable one for us Americans, us westerners. It is learning about no preferences or attachments. In other meditation practices you might be going for a bliss state or you might be going to connect with the soul. That's good. That's a different type of meditation. But, it's good to have this basic meditation where you are practicing no preferences. So even when you are in a state of bliss you try not to sit there and go, oh god, this is great. I want more of this. The minute you start doing this, that can bring up more suffering because you know it's not going to last forever. But, it is going to change. It might get better. So, practicing the ability of not preferring. A good mindfulness practice will have some instruction or some awareness of teaching non attachment.

The fifth one is the sitting meditation practice is understood as a means to tame the mind, to still the mind. That is preparing it for transformation, preparing it for a direct experience with spirit. So, the whole intention of sitting practice, the mindfulness practice, is to cultivate that attention so we are taming the mind, and a willingness to do that.

As a writer, we have all these wonderful ideas and I want to write like crazy. I used to be afraid, oh my god, my meditation practice is going to prevent me from writing. Well, it is the opposite. It has become a muse. In my ability to let go of everything on the cushion, then when I sit down and write, it all just comes out. It all comes out on the page.

You understand that all your issues are going to rise up when you are on the cushion and that you practice holding your seat, particularly with emotional states that tend to distract us and get us off center. So this is the ability and understanding to sit, again, let whatever is arising.

Finally, it's important that your meditation practice be followed by some kind of chosen spiritual discipline. Again, it doesn't have to be Buddhism. It can be whatever it is that works for you but that there is something that helps you integrate the practice in your day to day life.

Those are the seven key things that should be part of your mindfulness practice. They are all written down.

Asia: It's interesting how, what a reaction I felt when you were saying be willing to let go of a preferred state. And be with whatever else is arising in the moment. I'm like, no, no, I do have a preferred state of being. I'm laughing at myself. Okay, like being in breathing. That's where you have to just guess. If you are going to let go of a preferred state of breathing, you have to be willing to just be with your breath. Stay, breath.

Julie: Yes, exactly. I think you picked on the key piece of how this works. What is so beautiful about it is we suffer so much by wanting something so badly and hold onto it and experience it. Plus our ability to be able to be in all different kinds of states and have all different kinds of experiences, positive and negative and just be with them instead of putting our spin on it or putting this heavy attachment on it that it's supposed to be different or this is great and that wasn't great over there. It's kind of releasing the spin doctors. Letting go of the spin doctors and just having the experience. This kind of practice allows us to experience more.

Asia: Beautiful. It allows us to experience more. Precisely. Do you have maybe something else you would like to share with us for a few more minutes? Then I see we have some questions from our computer listeners.

Julie: The one thing I would suggest is when you are setting up your mindfulness practice, my recommendation is have it be the first thing you do in the morning, even if it is just five minutes. Have your basic mindfulness practice be the first thing you do. You can still make your cup of coffee and take it to your cushion or your chair but to have that be your first practice. Then all the other practices you do, or all the other study you do, have it follow that.

My morning practice includes, first stating my Bodhisattva vow, reciting my spiritual intentions out loud. Then the mindfulness practice and reading and studying some teachings, doing guru meditation - that is a visual meditation – and then doing inquiry meditation, sometimes, not all the time, as taught by his holiness the Dalai Lama. He has books out on inquiry meditation. And my session goes from anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour and a half. Then I do some spiritual journaling and if all is going well I get up and work on my book. It's nice for each person in their own way to design their own meditation practice from these classes you are offering. There are different practices that are being offered and they can take from this and create their own morning practice. Again, my suggestion is that the first piece of it be, at least five to ten minutes of mindfulness practice and then it can be whatever else they want.

Asia: Thank you. We never hear that enough. Just make that the first thing in the morning. Beautiful. We have a question coming in. It says, how does a meditation practice differ from a spiritual practice and do you have an example? The other part of the question is how would the spiritual discipline help you integrate the meditation?

Julie: Yes, that's very good. I would say briefly that my meditation practice is included within my spiritual practice. As I shared earlier, the mindfulness part of my meditation practice allows me to tame my mind and prepares me for all other aspects of my spiritual practice. Because my spiritual practice is Lojong, which translated as mind training. I can't train a wild mind. It's easier to train a quiet mind, a disciplined mind. So my key practice within my spiritual practice of Lojong, which is within the Mahayana tradition, is meditation. You could say meditation is the root practice. In the Wheel of Initiation, even though everyone has their own spiritual traditions and spiritual disciplines within that, everybody is encouraged to have a meditation practice, a mindfulness meditation practice. That will strengthen everything else. So, you could be Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and we are all practicing our spiritual discipline, our spiritual principles, but what is making that fruitful and also easier frankly, is having a basic meditation practice. That's why I say if you have to throw out stuff in your practice, you don't have time for this, you don't have time for that, don't throw out meditation. Keep that.

Asia: Now, do you have the Wheel of Initiation class starting?

Julie: I have the next initiation course starting in April. That is in Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin. I do also have some people that are taking it through the book and have created this on line group of people. I have a Facebook page too that is the Wheel of Initiation. We are going to start communicating with each other somehow too.

Asia: You can find out more information on Julie's website www.julietallardjohnson.com. So let's see, does anybody have any other questions or comments? I think everybody is just listening and ready to go on to the next part with our actual meditation you are going to be leading us into.

Julie: The first one is actually the basic. I'm suggesting that you have this basic mindfulness practice. Then from there you can add or take but when I say add I don't mean add while, I still want you to have five to ten minutes of just this mindfulness practice.

Go ahead and get in what we call meditation posture, which in my tradition we also say sitting like a mountain, or sitting like a peaceful warrior. The spine is alert but not rigid. You are not tense but you are alert. If you are sitting in a chair western style, your feet are uncrossed and they are on the floor. Otherwise you are sitting on a cushion with your legs crossed. There's no need to be uncomfortable. Your hands can be placed down on your lap on your legs. Close your eyes and take a nice deep breath. It's actually recommended to take several nice purification breaths. Those are breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth, releasing on the exhale and settling into that meditation posture.

With eyes closed, first bring your awareness to the physical sensations of just sitting, the physical sensations of this body sitting. Just sitting, just notice your physical sensation, perhaps your legs on the floor, your feet on the floor, your body on the chair. Let your head rest naturally on your shoulders and on your neck. Bring this awareness to the body sitting. Within this body sitting is a body breathing. So bring your awareness, bring your attention to the physical sensation of the breath. That could be the rising and falling of the breath in the belly or it could be the in and out of the breath through the nostrils. Just sitting, watching the breath. There is nothing else to do. There is nothing else to figure out. There is nothing to achieve. Simply rest your attention in the physical sensation of the breath and the body sitting.

There are three points of this mindfulness practice, sitting, breathing and being, practicing letting everything else go by resting your attention, resting your awareness on the breath. There is no right or wrong way to breathe, just simply breathe in and breathe out. Something you will notice is that often your awareness leaves the breath. Your attention leaves the breath and is distracted by a thought, most commonly a thought sensation. It could be an emotion. It could be a physical sensation. What you do with that is you allow your awareness, you allow your attention to light on that and then you gently and lovingly return back to the physical sensation of breath and the body sitting, just sitting, just breathing, just being, the three points of mindfulness meditation.

I'm going to teach you a quick technique as you are sitting in the place of breath, of calm abiding and thoughts arise. Let's say you are going oh my god, there is way too many thoughts. What I'd like you to do with thoughts do is what we call labeling them. When you get a thought, instead of following that story line, first you bring awareness to that. If you feel like you are caught up in a lot of thought, just label it, thinking, thinking. Then return gently and lovingly back to the breath and the body sitting, thinking, thinking. Give yourself permission to bring your awareness to that point, whatever it might be, an emotion, a thought, an idea, a physical sensation. Then return back to the breath, the physical sensation of breath and the body sitting.

What we tend to do in life is have something come up, some distraction or feeling or thought comes up. Then we will go, oh my god, I'm thinking. Then we will go, oh and we will judge that and we judge the judgment, and then we judge the judging of the judging. At some point, when you bring awareness to that, it melts through all the layers of judgment or all those layers of commentary and it gets back down to the moment and the breath. You are sitting in that place of being, just sitting, just breathing, just being.

That's the basic practice of mindfulness or calm abiding. It's good to do that for five or ten minutes to begin with and you can increase it as you go along. When you end the practice, take a nice deep breath, open your eyes. At any time you want you can check in with what is getting your attention. That is a great discipline outside of the sitting practice. What's got my attention now? What do I want to give my attention to? That's the basic mindfulness practice.

Asia: I'm so relaxed. It's wonderful.

Julie: Most of the time when I am meditating, I experience relaxation. But, we don't always. So if there is somebody out there that was feeling agitated or distracted, remember the practice is bringing yourself to whatever the experience is. Sometimes it is not pleasant. Sometimes it can be very challenging to sit when other things are calling on your attention. When I started transcendental meditation, everybody was going to it – I was a teenager, right, I mean 16. I was bouncing off the walls, you know, crazy. I would go to these people and they were all dressed in white robes and stuff. Everybody was into white robes back then for transcendental meditating. They are all walking around peace, love, tranquility and I'm going Jesus, God, I'm losing my mind. But, that's what my energy was. It's being able to even bring our attention to that and ultimately yes, we do experience a lot of relaxation.

Asia: Yes, I guess when you first started, I found myself being very agitated, like, no, I'm not sitting still. I'm not seeing it. Then it was just smiling at that thought and going back to the breath. Just sitting in a chair here. I love that. Here's your thought, no, and come back and just breathe. Beautiful.

Julie: So, it's Valentine's Day and I want to give the hands on heart meditation. This is a little bit different than mindfulness practice because it incorporates the physical sensation of touch. This is research based practice. In fact, some people at the University of Wisconsin helped create this meditation. It's very simple, you can do it anywhere. People won't even necessarily know you are doing it. It helps with, we are all hard wired for drama and difficulty basically. We are all hard wired in native ways. That's because of the fight and flight. That's because we are, our brains are trained and our neural pathways are trained to retrieve traumatic and negative experiences in order to help us deal with difficulty. Okay, so, it's not our fault that we are patterned to do this, to be in a constant state of preparing for the worst kind of thing.

Our neural pathways and our memory retrieve the negative memory first in order to deal with difficulty. This practice that I'm going to teach you is in the handout on the last page. It helps change your hard wiring and there is scientific research that shows it. Just recently we learned we are hardwired in the first place to negativity. Then more recently, we realized we can re-wire. So, this meditation will take just a few moments.

Go ahead and get in the meditative posture again. You can actually do this just sitting around at work. Again, this will help you access; you get beyond the fight and flight response. One thing you need for it to work is a positive memory, a memory of a time you felt completely loved. Some of us don't have that in our childhood or in our family and I was one of those. I didn't have that particular kind of memory but it can be with another person. It can be recent or in the deep past. It can be in nature. It can be with an animal. It can be with spirit, but a time where you felt in your body, in your whole system, you felt loved. It doesn't have to be a long memory. It can be a short one. Mine is fairly short and I just repeat it.

So, everybody bring to mind a time you felt loved and know you are going to use that. Take a couple deep breaths and close your eyes. Nice deep breaths. Place your right hand on your heart center, your heart chakra, right in the middle of your chest. Take a few moments to appreciate that sensation of touch, hand on heart. Then notice the breath again, the physical sensation of breath and how it rises and falls with the hand on the heart. Synchronize those two in your awareness, the hands on the heart and the breath. Just rest in the awareness of the breath and the hand on the heart for a few moments. Then bring to mind that loving memory, that favorable memory, that positive memory of a time you felt completely loved. Hang out in that memory for a few moments, breathing naturally, hand on heart, hanging out in that memory of love, of being loved.

You can repeat the memory over and over if it is a brief one. Do your best not to move away from it but just hang out in that wonderful memory, rewiring. Then now, take a couple more nice deep breaths. I always say the deeper the better and you can hear your breathing and the person next to you can hear your breathing. That's good. And then bring to mind recent and simple things you are thankful for. Recent and simple things become like a lift. Then take another nice deep breath or two and then open your eyes.

I recommend that meditation be something you do every day. Then when difficulty arises in our life, which it has a tendency to do, you will start accessing that memory. Not necessarily literally but your mind will go, okay, it's okay. I'm taken care of and loved. It's okay. I don't have to go into panic mode or anger mode.

Asia: Beautiful. Thank you. I had a memory about my grandmother just hugging me. I felt so much love from her and felt my heart opening and opening and opening. There are a lot of people on this call who desire the spiritual connections with their animals. This is the place where that ease of connection happens, that you are just open. Even then just the sensation of appreciation and how appreciating the simple things and then this energy, your vibration grows and increases.

It's easy for you to match that vibration of telepathy with your animals and your spirit guides or higher self. I was looking at the things in front of me on my desk when I was being appreciative and I have my Singer's Saving Grace herbal throat spray because I talk a lot on the phone. I'm like, I love you Singer's Saving Grace. I love you. I have my insulated tea cup holder right here and I'm like, oh my god, I have this and my cup with the big handle. You honestly become in love with everything around you. Without that attachment, it's blissful and flowing. I love this practice. You did this for us in one of the classes a year ago and it has been one of my favorites.

I'm wondering if any of the students and listeners out there have any other questions or comments? We have answered all of their questions. You've put them into a very relaxed space.

I want to remind everyone about checking Julie's website. Again that is julietallardjohnson.com. Find out about the new practices that you have and her books, nine published books. It's incredible. Do you have any last tidbits you would like to offer us that you want to share?

Julie: I just love what you were pointing out that you were appreciating about your surroundings. Just that word appreciation, how it is high vibration and you aligned it with being present and how true appreciation is just a state of awareness. Awareness, calm abiding, attention, is a state of pure appreciation. Even if it is something that is not what somebody might consider something we would

normally appreciate. That ability to show up in a state of appreciation for whatever is arising, so I love borrowing that from you. I loved how you brought those two together just naturally and noticing those.

I want people to know that we do have a tendency to hang out internally in the negative and to be patient with ourselves. These practices transform that but be patient. Sometimes some challenging emotions and states can come up but we can be free in them too.

Asia: Beautiful. I want to thank you again Julie for being here with us. Suddenly there's all these questions that just popped in right at the last second here.

One person wanted to know if we are struggling with emotion coming up, what do you suggest?

Julie: Again, it's not about repression. It is about allowing, bringing attention to it. You may have an emotion but you aren't adding to it. You are not adding a spin to it. You are allowing the emotion and as a matter of fact, you may be allowing it to get very big. But you are sitting there in calm abiding while it's getting big. You reach its state of expansion. It will get as big as it can and then it will dissolve. But you aren't adding to it. It is not about repressing emotions. It's allowing it. It's not strengthening it by going, yeah, I am angry about that. It's I'm angry and you just sit with the anger. I hope that is helpful. It's good to join a class, like a sitting practice with somebody or a tape. A tape can be very helpful. Lama Surya Das's tape, his tapes are good. Pema Chodron has some good meditation tapes but there are all sorts of good CDs out there than can help with that. Again, it is just returning, allowing for what is there, in this case the emotion, but returning back to the breath.

Asia: Beautiful. We have a few other comments here. Kendra is saying I'm a newby to meditation. I love Julie's basic meditation. In the past when I have meditated, I would get a headache or felt very lightheaded and that didn't happen. I felt very relaxed and content. Thank you. Yea, good job Kendra.

Evergreen is saying, my love image was when my dog was a puppy and would lay on my chest over my heart, so soft and warm, thank you for reminding me of that.

We have one more that says, it took me time to remember when I had felt loved and finally a cat that I had lost came to mind. I was able to remember then other times so thank you for that nice feeling.

Linda says, thank you for reminding me that it's okay to turn sadness into happiness.

Carol writes, what is your experience with people with ADD trying to calm that wild mind? I find myself constantly off focus, looking at the clock, being very distracted. Is it more difficult for me or am I just using this as an excuse?

Julie: It could be both. To remember that I've been practicing for over 30 years and still most of my time is returning back to the breath. Okay, so one moment of mindfulness, I'm saying to this practitioner, one moment of mindfulness has a lot more healing effect than you can realize. One moment of awareness, one moment of practicing mindfulness has very profound healing effects that can't be measured. So for her for example, when she just sits in the breath for a few moments and then she is distracted and she comes back, that coming back is just as much of a practice as having "successfully" actually rested in the breath. The coming back, the returning, that she is returning back is a wonderful practice. It is helping her immeasurably. She is not adding judgment to it. If she is coming back to the breath and she's not adding judgment like, oh I'm not doing this well, or oh, this is difficult

or whatever. She's just coming and realizing, oh I'm distracted. My awareness is there, I'm distracted a lot, she's bringing her awareness to that and then she is coming back to the breath. That is a successful practice.

Asia: Yes, Carol and everybody else, I hope you are just drinking in those words. That bringing it back is successful. That is creating it. You can do this. Right, even after 30 years, there isn't that perfection. It's a state of awareness while we are in our earth bodies, just bringing it back. Just bringing it back again and you have that success.

Cathy writes in, thank you both so much. I loved this call.

What a perfect sentence to wind up here. Julie once again, thank you, and everyone else on the call. Let's just all right now send out love and appreciation to Julie for being here and to everybody on the call, on the computer, throughout the United States and the world, being present with us. Blessings, love and support to you and continue opening your heart, expanding your awareness, finding that perfect state of connection for yourself. I honor you for being here. To everyone, have a beautiful evening and good night. Bye.

Julie: Good night.