

## MIND THE GAP

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I have been thinking about mindfulness and how grateful I am that it exists. As I wrote here in a poem yesterday, mindfulness is how I become aware that I am not aware or have not been aware lately. Mindfulness is how I somehow manage to wake up from whatever distraction I have recently been lost in.

The miracle is that I somehow catch myself and wake up at all and don't just zone out forever. Is that what I mostly have done up to now, zone-out?

Lucky for me, when I space out in a daydream or another meaningless distraction I eventually wake up and become aware that I am day-dreaming again or have managed once again to get off the track of whatever I had set out to do.

How it happens that I ever wake up at all is something of a mystery. Some little something jars my attention and breaks my train of thought and I am back again in the present. How fortunate that is!

The Tibetan mind training texts state over and over again that any kind of gap, break, or interval in our daily routines is to be treasured as an opportunity to realize the actual nature of our own mind and to be present again. For me it can be as simple as a loud noise like a car backfiring or the whack of something falling to the ground, the snap of the fingers, or the telephone ringing – an interruption.

Regardless of what causes the interruption or gap, it breaks my deer-in-the headlights stare into nothing-very-real and I am once again back and fully present. I somehow remember to wake up. How incredible that there is something that breaks my trancelike distraction and returns me to active use!

The reason I study Tibetan mind training practices like sitting meditation is all about learning to mind these gaps and increasingly take advantage of them to wake up more and more of the time. This mindfulness training is an exponential curve that while tough at first gets easier and easier with practice until I am present more of the time than I am distracted, well, at least more of the time than I was.

Mindfulness practice is an ever-increasing waking up sooner rather than later until, like an brightly-burning incandescent light, it finally is easier to remain aware and awake than it is to sleep on in distraction. I am working on that.

Photo: Kalanchoe. High-res image is worth looking at large.

