

REST AND RELAX LIKE A BUNDLE OF STRAW  
February 7, 2013

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Here is an excerpt from a Spirit Grooves video called "Minding the View," which can be found here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y96GLkUHX70&list=UU3cL8v4fkupc9lRtugPkkWQ&index=1>

It took me many years to understand the when the meditation instructions said to let the mind rest, they meant the same kind of "rest" you and I mean when we use the term R&R, like actually rest and take it easy. In fact, the tradition has a wonderful analogy as to how you are supposed to sit and relax.

The body should rest loose like a bundle of straw, whose cord has been cut. It is a perfect analogy. If you have ever seen one of those old-style bundles of straw with a single cord at the center holding the bundle together. If you gently stick a knife blade under the cord and sever it, the straw doesn't just fly all over the place, but instead it almost imperceptible just slumps or relaxes completely. I have seen this myself, and we need to let our poor bodies just let go and relax, after making them as straight up as we can. That is the appropriate way to position the body for practicing meditation. So, sit up straight, and then relax as you can.

#### Allowing the Mind to Rest

And it is not just our bodies, but our minds that ultimately must rest. And we don't 'rest' our mind, like forcing our mind to rest willfully. It doesn't work that way. Instead, we allow our mind to rest naturally, like it does when we are not paying attention to it. We already know how to let our mind rest, but just not consciously. Consciously allowing our mind to rest naturally is something we learn to do in meditation.

In fact, beginning meditation practitioners soon learn that trying to get the mind to do anything at all usually backfires. It is like those like magnet dogs I had as a child that had opposing fields. Trying to push them together just made them fly apart.

A great analogy that the Tibetan teachers use is that of a bird in a cage. If you lock a wild bird in a cage in a room, all it thinks about is how to get out and escape. But if you take the same bird and leave the cage door open, as often as not at night it will voluntarily return to the cage, just because it is safe. The mind is like this.

You and I can't force it to do anything, no matter how willful we get, but if we relax and allow it to be itself, it will naturally just rest. Trying to force our mind to concentrate on the object of meditation just sends it in the opposite direction. However, allowing the mind to rest naturally, it will just gently rest on whatever object we wish. This is what learning meditation is all about.