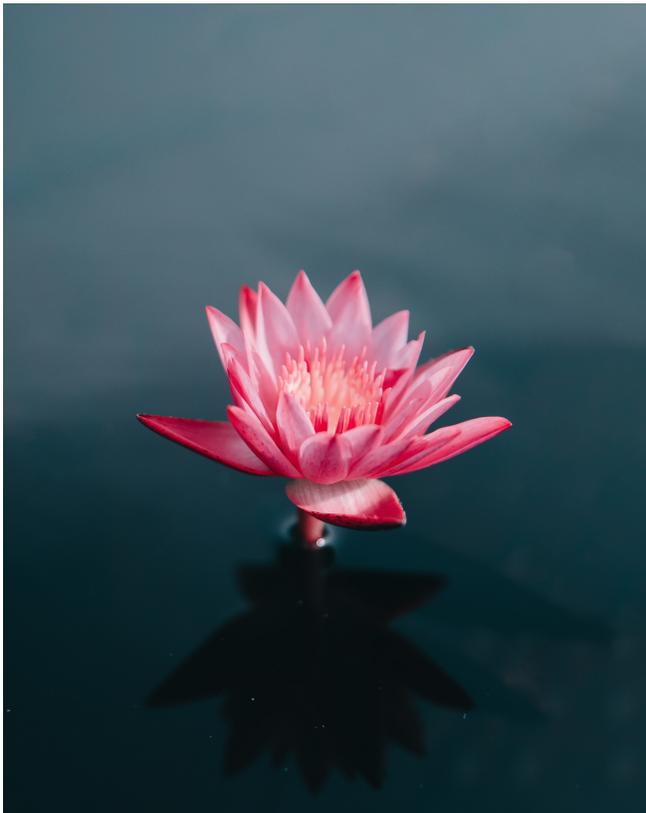


“Noticing”
(Notes on Meditation Practice)

When we sit still for any length of time, the first thing we notice is how strong the momentum of our habit energies is.

For the first few months, the job of a meditation teacher is to support the students so they can just sit in that turbulence. When we first start this practice, we often think the goal is to make the turbulence stop. But actually, the first step is to recognize that there are certain habits that we just don't have the skill to deal with yet. The humility of that realization is the beginning of our practice.



For many of us what comes in first is judgement. Some internal critic judges the fact that we can't sit still, or that our mind is wandering, or our breath is shallow. This voice can turn our thoughts into enemies.

The flip side of this is the internal voice that also tell us encouraging judgmental stories. We're doing much better than yesterday, or than the person seated next to us. The internal critic finds us acceptable that day, and we feel good for a moment.

Both approaches are traps. If we stay enthralled by this inner judgment, all we've discovered in meditation is a whole new form of suffering. Therefore, a foundational aspect of practice is to simply notice the way we're noticing, and begin to see that in each moment, we can shift our perspective.

Instead of turning each moment into something that fits our stories of ourselves, we can just observe what comes and goes. Knowing the truth means knowing what's happening now. This is more important than straining to feel good or struggling under the weight of bad feelings.

Whatever's arising in life, practice opening to it without piling habits on top. Notice and give it space; then we can start to see what's true.

from *The World Comes to You: Notes on Practice, Love, and Social Action* by Michael Stone