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## Accessing Your Inner Guidance in Chaotic Times

[00:00:02] Hey, this is Julie Harris of Riverbend Coaching and I'm coming to you today with some thoughts about how you might access your inner guidance during this time of chaos. We are in truly uncharted waters, and what happens to our minds in times like this is usually one of two things:

- Our minds can get really busy and be trying to think and overanalyze and access some kind of logic so that we can figure out what we need to do and make decisions for ourselves, and others, and people that we love right now
- Another thing that can happen to our minds is that we can go kind of blank and just feel like we don't really have access to our thinking at all

And so today I want to talk to you, I wanted to give you a perspective on how you can quiet your mind, come into a sense of stillness that will give you access to the guidance that you need in order to decide what kind of actions [00:01:02] and decisions that you want to take right now.

So, a lot of my thinking and experience, my *visceral experience* about this topic comes from a trip that I took to India four years ago. To the western mind, India feels very chaotic; even the most, the busiest of Western cities is nothing compared to what it's like in India. There's no time of day or night that there aren't people or animals on the streets. And particularly as we visited the temples, there's a huge contrast between the way, the atmosphere of the temples in India and the atmosphere that you might find in a church or synagogue or mosque in the West.

And so what you find when you walk into a temple is a scene of apparent chaos. It's crowded, it's noisy. There are a lot of smells. There are people worshipping [00:02:02] in a particular way. There are people having lunch with their families or sleeping. And so to the Western mind, it feels very disorganized and chaotic.

And one day we were visiting a temple called Palani, and we were waiting to be admitted to the temple because it was too crowded to let any more people in. My yoga philosophy teacher Douglas Brooks was talking to us about Shiva Naturaj, which is the dancing Shiva. It's this fellow here. So Shiva Naturaj, he is the version of Shiva as artist. He is fiercely dancing his offering, his artistic offering of himself into the world. And again from the outside. it may look



extremely chaotic. And so the question I asked Douglas that day was: “Where is the stillness in his dance? *Is there* any stillness in his [00:03:02] dance?” And Douglas thought about it for a moment, and he said: “He’s listening to the music.”

And that just really landed on me with a thud – this idea that there is a way that we can be listening to the music, that we can be working from some deeper orientation, even as we’re moving in the world in apparent chaos or furiousness. And so that’s really stuck with me, this idea of “How do you create access to stillness, to listening to your own inner guidance, that’s going to inform the unique way that you’re called to act at this time?”

So I want to take you through a practice that can help you get some access to that.

So go ahead wherever you are, and sit in a way where your spine can be relatively straight. [00:04:02] And you can either sit up and upright in a chair with your feet on the floor. You can sit in a cross-legged position, and just resting your hands on your thighs, and allowing your eyes to close.

And begin to connect with the sensation either of your feet against the floor or your seat as you’re sitting in a chair or on a cushion. Just notice which one of those places feels most alive for you right now. Where do you feel the most connection or sensation? And if you’re not sure, just pick one: it doesn’t really matter.

Begin to focus on the actual physical sensation of your body in connection with the ground. So either feeling [00:05:02] the sensation of your feet connected to the Earth or where your seat is connected to the chair. Allow yourself to focus your attention, to concentrate your consciousness at this point of interface between your body and physical reality.

Just notice what sensations are there. Maybe it feels heavy or light. Maybe it feels warm or cold. Notice exactly which parts of your feet or which parts of your pelvis are in contact with the ground.

Maybe there’s a lot of energy or movement or connection there, tingling; [00:06:03] or maybe it feels kind of quiet. There’s no right or wrong way for this connection to feel. Just put your attention toward making contact, towards noticing the contact of your body and the ground.

One of the ways that we lose access to our inner guidance is by feeling separate and like there’s no sense of ground underneath us. So connect as best you can with the physical sensation of your body to get a felt sense of ground and to know that at a minimum, at this moment, you and I are connected.

[00:07:03] So allow your body to really feel that, the connection of the ground, the connection between me and you. Allow yourself to settle into that connection, however it feels to you.

From this place of grounded holding, begin to notice the movement of your breath in your body. See if you can follow the actual physical movement of your breath. So as you breathe in, you feel



the air coming in down your throat or through your nose, you notice it coming into your lungs, you feel your belly rise and expand. And then as you exhale, [00:08:03] you feel the belly just soften and the breath comes up and out of the mouth or nose. Follow as best you can, for a few rounds, the movement of your breath as you inhale and as you exhale.

So our breath is dynamic. It's always moving in and out. Allow yourself just to be, simply to be, with the movement of your breath. Don't try to change it or shape it in any way. Follow as best you can its physical [00:09:03] pathway in and out of your body.

And then begin to notice the point at which your inhale ends, and your exhale begins, and the point at which your exhale ends, and your inhale begins.

Again, don't try to change anything. I just want you to observe this point where the breath changes direction. Just really focusing in on that point. I'm noticing this slight sliver, the slight moment when the breath changes direction.

[00:10:06] I'm not asking you to try to do anything here to pause. There are some yoga practices that do include pauses. I'm not asking you to do that. I'm just asking you to observe the moment at which the breath changes direction.

It may feel like a brief stillness, a nanosecond of stillness. It might feel like a slight slowing down as your breath rounds the corner between inhale and exhale, between exhale and inhale. It might feel like something else. But just see if you can observe this moment.

[00:11:14] And then allow yourself once again to follow the entire trajectory of the breath now, including this moment of turn, of possible brief stillness.

So the breath comes in, you follow the dynamic movement of the breath, and then there is this slight change in direction as you exhale and you follow the exhale as the air comes out of your body. Allowing yourself to find the stillness, to find the turn, within this dynamic action of your breath. Not trying to force it. Just being aware of how stillness and dynamism are contained in the same cycle.

[00:12:26] From this place ask yourself this question: "What do I know?"

And then allow yourself to keep following the breath and to see what arises, knowing that what arises may not be an answer in the way you're used to hearing an answer. It may not even be words. It may be a sensation in your body or feeling in your heart. Any number of things.

Just listening, just seeding that question: "What do I know?" and being wide open and spacious to listen.

You might just know that you're here in your body right [00:13:26] now, and that is enough. That your body feels calmer and more resourced, and that is enough.



You may feel that no particular knowing is coming to you and that's important, too. Being able to sit in your not-knowing is just as important as sitting in what we know. Sometimes our guidance and our wisdom comes to us as not-knowing, as just stopping, it's not time yet for us to make a decision, and trusting that.

Just sitting for a few more moments, being open to this question: “What do I know?”

[00:14:28] Sometimes when we're still, what we know comes rushing in -- what we've been knowing but haven't had space for comes rushing in, and so you may have had a moment like that too.

Taking a few more breaths here, and then when you're ready, open your eyes.

This practice of finding our ground and our stillness is so important, and I know that for me personally, it's not really what I want to do, what my personality wants to do, but the guidance that I've been getting over the past week is that it's essential.

So I want to leave you with a reading. I went looking for something on the interwebs yesterday and [00:15:28] this popped up, which was what I needed. It's from a man named William Segal from a book called *A Voice at the Borders of Silence*.

And he says: “It is my belief that every one of us is a vessel that contains a very great energy which goes unattended. Right now as we sit here, there is something in us that is waiting to be called, and if we attend to it, if we acknowledge it, we will then be in touch with a force that can illuminate. It can transform and shape each one of us and can help to change the world. When one is still and one listens, then one begins to be in touch with this mysterious element which is within each one of us.”

So none of us knows for sure where this is going, what's going to happen. But we can trust that this thing [00:16:28] that we are – that I am, that you are – has intelligence. And that when we take the time to be still and listen, even just 10 minutes a day, we can have access to the expression that's needed from us. We can be listening to our own music and offering ourselves from there and knowing also when we need to receive.

So I wish you many blessings today and every day, and hope that this has been useful to you.

