

RECOGNIZING, REFRAINING, RETURNING

Our habitual behaviors and attitudes sometimes run with abandon, unless we learn to **recognize** them as they're in transit; **refrain** from indulging them blindly; and **return** to the reality of the present moment.

- First, **recognize** - Bring to mind a pattern of yours – an attitude, self-image, behavior, conversation style, or emotional reaction - one that blocks openness and increases disconnection. Then, after recognizing that the pattern is running:

- **Refrain** - make a conscious decision to **refrain**, declining to let the pattern keep running -- either inwardly as thoughts, or outwardly as words or actions. This isn't repressing, since *recognizing* means we're conscious of the actions and reactions involved. Now, we immediately:

- **Return** – which includes three areas of present-time physical reality:

- 1st, **bodily residue**: feel any discomfort that persists in the wake of the painful pattern. If there's some unpleasant physical sensation you'd rather avoid, feel it for a few breaths, just as it is.

If nothing stands out, sense the overall body feeling;

- 2nd, **breathing**: feel the sensations of breathing, and let them provide company for other physical sensations that are present.

- 3rd, **environmental awareness**: sense the surrounding ambience, letting the sounds in all directions invite awareness to open into the spaciousness that's always right here.

Now, we **let it all be**, resting in the totality of the moment.

When intense things come up, the 2nd step above can be adapted, to include feeling the physical ache or constriction on the inhale, feeling the breathing and other sensations in the chest center.

To finish, we turn to whatever needs attending.

Elizabeth Hamilton