

Training at the Tip – Meetings with the Teacher

Ki Breathing/Ki Meditation Class

Friday, Jan. 8, 2010

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Good evening. This is the first Ki Breathing/Ki Meditation class of 2010, so I thought I might offer a few words of encouragement for our training this year.

Any time we begin something new, like a new year, we often have a sense of expansion, an out-pouring, like the spring time. Our energy is expanding. There is a new “lease on life.” This always happens at the beginning of the new year.

Whether we look at animals, fish, plants, or even weather patterns, everything in nature is growing, growing, growing all the time. Anything that isn’t growing is decaying. There is no standing still in nature. There’s no treading water, you know? When an animal goes into hibernation, and even many plants during the winter go into a kind of hibernation, they all need that spring. Because the winter is a state of diminishment, where they use up all of their reserves, and then they have to get back up again and feed. Plants have to put out new growth for this purpose.

And we are very much like those plants. I happen to really like plants, so for more than half of my life I have been noticing how they grow. And, of course, since I am engaged in something like Aikido, then I really notice the similarity between plants and humans. For instance, sometimes in a plant’s life, it suffers some kind of trauma. And when it does, it pulls its energy back, taking its attention away from its growing tips. It pulls its energy in from its root tips, and just sort of hangs out in its main body, which is the main root structure, the trunk and branches, and even the older leaves where not much photosynthesis is taking place. It’s not that there is no action there, but the important point here is that it pulls itself away from its points of nourishment, the growing tips. A plant feeds itself from the growing tip of the root, the new little white root hairs, and the brand new tips of the leaves. This is where all the action is. Likewise this is where the flowering takes place, and fruiting. Everything happens right out on the edge, right on the tip of growth. If that is not happening, the plant is not growing. It’s declining, and eventually it will die. Sometimes it takes years, from the point of trauma, if it’s a big tree, for instance. If it’s quite a small plant, then it might be only days, or hours. But it pulls itself in to its own history, you know?

So, why does it pull itself in? Well, it pulls itself in because those growing tips are very fragile and moist and juicy and vulnerable and open. They can easily be damaged. The same with the root tips, the tiny root hairs that go out into the soil. They are very easily attacked by creatures. So if it is suffering any kind of stress, it just stops all of that growth. And then it begins to eat itself. It eats its own protein

and carbohydrate until it kills itself. It literally eats itself to death because it's not taking in anything new.

So for us too, most noticeably for any human beings that are engaged in this kind of spiritual practice, there is no standing still. Often, in our practice, we go through periods that feel stale, or flat, stuck. Nothing seems to be happening, not moving forward, don't know why, but nothing seems to be going on. Because we are experiencing this, we feel depressed, and might even shit-can the training, try something else. There must be something wrong with something. We don't know what it is, so we just change, make a change of venue.

When we are practicing anything like this, we want to be practicing right out there on the growing tip, just like the plant. Because that's the only place growth takes place. That's the only place you can receive the nourishment of the sunlight and the food and the water that you need for growth to happen within you. It's here, it's available. In a dojo it comes through the teacher and the teaching, also through your colleagues, other students who you sit with, or train with.

But that edge out here, this growing tip is extremely vulnerable. And the reason it works so well is because of how sensitive it is. That's where all the action takes place in our lives. And of course, it's always here, right here, and always now. But don't you notice that sometimes you are slightly reserved, or slightly away from this present moment, looking at it intelligently, or maybe questioningly, or maybe even with resistance? And often you have a sense of separation, a sense of distance. When you feel that, that means you are in your main body. That means you are living in your trunk, and in your branches and in your old stale leaves. You are living in the known. You are in your comfort zone. You are living in what is already known to you. To come out here on the edge, means to live in an area that is completely unknown to you. This can be very threatening. In order to be here you have to be in a very vulnerable, sensitive, and risky condition, completely open.

And yet, if we don't do that, there is no growth. The teachings can go on forever, and they may sound nice to you, but they'll have no effect on your heart. You won't feel it.

During the early part of the year at this time, we have private meetings with the teacher. And let's face it folks, everyone is, to some degree or other, living in their own history, living in the comfort area, living in their own body of knowledge, in the land of the known. Right? So it can be very difficult to find our way out of that. What do I mean? "Live on the edge. Live at this growing tip." What does that mean? How do you do that? Well, for some, you come to an understanding of that. But for others, maybe you don't. And for everybody there is always a deeper experience of that. So when you are having any kind of difficulty with that, that's when you need some extra help.

That's why we do this, have these private meetings with the teacher, at the beginning of the year. It's time. Everything in your whole organic being is crying

out for you to open up with the buds of spring. To come forward and to begin anew, reach a new level of experiential understanding, of direct knowing. To move into the unknown and go exploring in ways that you maybe haven't in the past.

So in this short half hour that we spend together in the teacher's office, we explore how your practice is in relation to your own growing points. When we began tonight some had signed up, but all of you haven't yet, so be sure you do it tonight. Of course, it's mandatory for dans. That just means that you are wearing a black belt, so you can't say you are not practicing. If you are not wearing a black belt, I would guess that you also cannot say that. So that's why you are welcome as well. Please also sign up for your meetings tonight.

Thank you.