

Acem Meditation eNews

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Five times a year, Acem Meditation eNews gives you an update on activities, publications and developments in Acem International School of Meditation. The eNews also brings articles on meditation for Acem meditators and others with an interest in meditation.

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Wheels and corkscrews | From korfbal to Acem retreats

Wheels and corkscrews

by Halvor Eifring, PhD

Driving a foreign visitor around Oslo, he gets lost, and all of a sudden they are back where they started. "It seems we have been here before," he says, slightly embarrassed. "Well, isn't that also the way it often is in life?", his guest says with a smile. "We think we're moving forwards, but we keep discovering that we're back where we came from. The wheel of life!"

But at a recent meditation retreat at Lundsholm it dawned on him that the notion of a wheel is only one side of the story. The other side is more like a corkscrew: it goes round and round, but each rotation takes it deeper. It may feel as if we are back where we began, but in the meantime we ourselves have changed, and what initially feels like the same old place is actually a door into something new and untried.

In meditation it is the sound and the free mental attitude that play the role of the corkscrew. They penetrate into a cork which is gradually wriggled out, releasing what has been bottled up inside. Some parts of the cork are more resistant than others, as when things get congested through



too much effort and concentration. Each time the corkscrew encounters this resistance it seems that a problem we thought we had solved has resurfaced. The truth is that the problem had indeed been overcome, but only at the previous level. When we and the meditative corkscrew move deeper into the cork, we must find a new way to deal with the resistance.

Perhaps it is like this in life as well. When we feel that we are going round in circles it may be that the experience we have acquired on our journey enables us to negotiate obstacles more effectively. Meditation may transform the wheel of life into the meditative corkscrew's path towards liberation.

Déjà vu

So he is at a meditation retreat at Lundsholm. He has meditated for many hours for several days in succession, and now he is struggling with the repetition of the meditation sound. What is basically a very simple act has become complicated. In the midst of this his stream of thought wanders thirty years backwards to his first meditation guidance session. He was in his late teens, lived with his parents, and his father had tried unsuccessfully to convince him to switch to trousers without holes in them when he left home on his bicycle. His guide was a young woman, who flipped with interest through some LPs he had brought with him in a plastic bag. But she too seemed to find it difficult to grasp what he was actually doing in meditation. "You can't hear the meditation sound?" After a while she tried an educated guess: "I wonder whether perhaps you're concentrating too much?" And for some reason the question made something fall into place for the young meditator. He was the one who had got himself stuck, by putting too much energy into the repetition of the sound! He left the guidance session with a feeling of lightness: problem solved.

But thirty years later he nevertheless sits in a retreat at Lundsholm and struggles with a meditation sound that will not behave the way he wants it to. Have all these years of meditation been a waste of time? Has the wheel of life brought him full circle?

It may feel that way. But much has happened in

the meantime. Meditation has changed his life and reduced his tendency to get stuck in difficult situations with no apparent solutions. It has become easier and easier to overcome the inner compulsion that holds him in these mental knots. But nothing is solved forever. Meditation keeps bringing him into contact with new layers of consciousness, and the knots that were unravelled on one level have to be unravelled anew as he moves on.

The small difference

Sometimes, of course, his foreign guest is right: we end up on the wheel of life and go round in circles without learning from our mistakes. At other times, however, what appears to be repetition is really an important part of the corkscrew's path. The most obdurate parts of the cork can be the ones it is most vital to get through in order to make progress. And it can take a pretty long time for these hard spots in the cork to yield.

In our meditator's experience, it is often the free

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The following new videos are now available on YouTube:

Why meditate?

with Acem's founder Dr. Are Holen

The goal of Acem Meditation

with Dr. Are Holen

Retreats Around the World

Search for Acem Meditation at www.youtube.com

mental attitude that makes the small but crucial difference. "I wonder whether perhaps you're concentrating too much?" were the guide's timely words thirty years ago. He can ask himself the same question at the retreat at Lundsholm when he is approaching fifty, but it is not enough merely to say it: an understanding must develop from within. After several days of long meditations he begins to perceive exactly where the problem lies: he is demanding a clarity in the sound that he can only achieve by pressing a bit. As he gradually realises this, he begins to let go. The meditations become easier, and in the discussions afterwards he is able to make connections to a number of other areas in which his demand for a high degree of clarity – and the fear of what may happen if he relaxes his supervision – makes life more of an effort than it needs to be.

The meditative corkscrew is once again beginning to make inroads into resistant material. An area of life which has hitherto been bound up by effort and concentration starts to open up and become freer. This is not the first time a seeming revolution of the wheel has proved instead to be the incremental progress of the corkscrew, and it definitely won't be the last!

Acem Meditation on Wikipedia

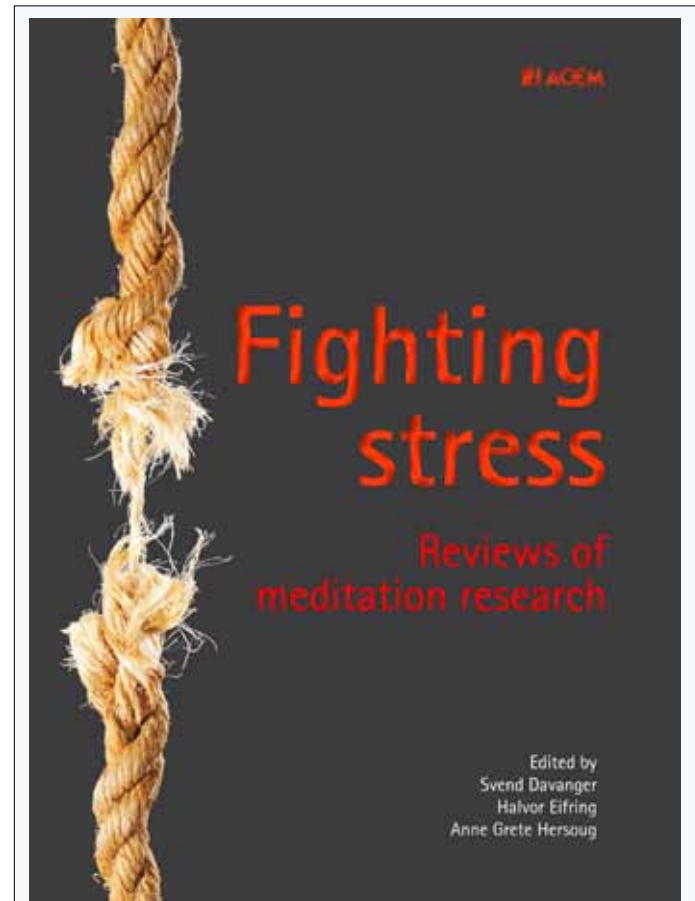


WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

Where can you direct friends who want to know more about Acem Meditation?

There is always Acem's own web site, acem.com. But now you can also refer them to the famous web-based encyclopedia Wikipedia, which features an informative article about the technique.

Search for Acem Meditation
on Wikipedia.com



Fighting Stress – Reviews of meditation research

Edited by Svend Davanger, Halvor Eifring & Anne Grete Hersoug

A must read for everyone who wants an update on what science knows about meditation today.

In modern society, meditation and yoga are among the most widely used remedies for stress. In this book, researchers and healthcare professionals with personal experience of Acem Meditation present reviews of current meditation research. Some of the articles focus explicitly on Acem Meditation, while others have a broad, general scope. The book provides accessible information on what scientific studies can tell us about the effects of meditating. 192 pages

Order from www.acem.com

From korfbal to Acem retreats



Ego functions and the prefrontal cortex

They're young, they're athletic, and they play korfbal, a Dutch game similar to basketball, now included in the World Games. They are also quite reflective, combining a love of sports with a serious interest in life, people and personal development. Four years ago, both of them started to practise Acem Meditation.

Joep Bruin (28) is training to become a teacher after years of work in sales and recruitment, and when he is not with his girlfriend, he spends his free time coaching young korfbal players. Jon-Tjitte te Biesebeek (31) is a physics and chemistry teacher at a high school for deaf children.

Long before they learnt to meditate, the two men got to know each other well through years of hard training in the same korfbal team in Groningen, a university city in the northern Netherlands. Then Jon-Tjitte got a meditation course as a birthday present, and Joep decided to join him.

Coping with emotions

One of the first things they discovered was how meditation helped their sports achievements:

"Every Monday we would have a group meditation and then go to korfbal training right afterwards," says Jon-Tjitte. "It felt as if the ball would just fly into the korf (basket), as if I was aiming every ball almost perfectly, without even having to concentrate. To shoot well, you need to be relaxed and at the same time sharp, and meditation helps me with both."

Joep agrees: "It's also about emotions. If the pressure to win is too strong, your capacity for clear thinking in complex situations is reduced. Meditation gives me a better overview of the situation, and it increases my precision as well as my stamina."

"For me, the first meditation was a very special experience," Joep recalls. "I needed relaxation, and after my first meditation I immediately felt more relaxed." Jon-Tjitte also wanted to relax. He had just started

working with deaf children, but he was not trained as a teacher and could hardly use the sign language he needed in order to communicate with the kids. "It was difficult and stressful, and I was quite tense. Meditation helped me calm down and regain focus."

Both have had ups and downs in their motivation for meditation, but they have always come back to it. "One winter I got tired of the whole thing," Jon-Tjitte recounts. "I felt blank and wondered if the method helped me at all. But then I went to my first weekend retreat, and the long meditations there gave me a boost. Both during and after the retreat, it was as if my mind brightened up and became much clearer. Or was it just that winter turned into spring? Anyway, I have been meditating regularly ever since. I always meditate when I come home from work, because I know it will give me energy and help me to rest properly, and I usually meditate in the morning as well."

Changing your personality

Over the years their meditative interests have gradually expanded. They still meditate for daily relaxation, but increasingly their focus is on the way meditation helps them relate to their own personal issues. "I wanted to get as much as I could from the technique," Joep explains. "Immediately after the beginner's course I enrolled in the Second Level course (also known as M1) and later the Third Level (M2). Then I started to go to retreats. This broadened my perspective on life and was fascinating." Both of them have been to a number of summer retreats in Scandinavia. "I'm a shy person, but at the first retreat I learnt to talk about myself in a group," says Jon-Tjitte. "At the second retreat I became more emotional, and though I got tired, it helped me work through issues that have disturbed me. As a result, this year I have more energy to listen to lectures, ask questions and relate to others."

Both enjoy listening to other people sharing their stories and issues. Joep says: "Meditation makes

people more sensitive and helps to create strong emotional bonds between people. In the guidance group you develop a lot of sympathy for your fellow participants, because you recognise that we are all quite vulnerable beneath the surface. We are on the same footing, even if we come from different cultures."

It was korfbal that brought Joep and Jon-Tjitte together, but meditation has deepened their friendship and is gradually becoming a central part of their lives. In a couple of years Jon-Tjitte plans to stop his career as an active korfbal player. Acem Meditation, however, has come to stay, both in his life and in Joep's.

Read the Dyade blog in English



Acem's cultural magazine Dyade (in Norwegian) runs a daily blog with an automated translation service into English. The results may not always be perfect but will still give you an impression of some of the hot topics discussed: reviews of films, books and exhibitions, Barack Obama, China, India and the U.S., meditation, the climate, vegetarian food, science & technology, sex and humour!

See blog.dyade.no

Retreats for Acem meditators

See www.acem.com for upcoming retreats