



My Mind on Meditation

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It was viciously suffocating: streetlights endlessly flashing; strangers' screams in hectic traffic; overwhelming amounts of homework; and pounding pressures from work. I could not experience joy or continue to do what everyone expected of me. I wanted a way out.

My father had pushed me to meditate with him in the past, but I had always been doubtful about its effectiveness. It had seemed too abstract to be applicable to my life. When he enrolled me in the iBme teen meditation retreat, I immediately wanted to cancel. But because I was in such an exceptionally fragile state, I decided I would try it.

Upon arrival at the Cloud Mountain retreat center, I felt pleasantly welcomed. The warm air kissed my cheeks, and open smiles greeted my every turn. Although frightened, I was open to change. But the first day was still a bit of a jolt. I wasn't expecting the kids on the retreat to be so friendly, the leaders to be so empathetic, or the weather to be so beautiful.

Most of all, I wasn't expecting the exercises to be so challenging. It was difficult to sit with myself and brew over lifetime repressions, to face things I've never wanted to face. The lack of cellphones, email, and social media, as well as the absence of traffic, crowds, and obligations led me to a state of puzzlement. Who was I without all these references?

Through the intensity of tai chi, a healthy diet, meditation exercises, and sharing personal stories in a supportive group setting, my eyes slowly started to open to the world. I had a moment alone in the wilderness where tears trickled down my awe-stricken face. The spider webs reflected infinite rainbows; the weeds emitted a fragrance worthy of royalty; the sun warmed my inner soul; and the breeze whispered words of love. The earth no longer seemed a bitter place I needed to escape but rather a tender setting I wanted to embrace. My body quivered at all the time I had been wasting in my dark, heartless, and blind state.

Since then, there are of course still times I feel bleak and overwhelmed with the business of life; times I feel my mind will explode from the amount of information I have to retain; and times I swear the day does not contain enough hours to complete my dulling tasks. But I remember what I have learned.

Understanding that a peaceful life is something that must be "worked" for, I joined the Seattle Teen Mindfulness Circle. The Circle's leaders offer advice when I feel I am slipping back into a life of chaos and desperation. My peers also lend support and fuel my perseverance toward a better life. The setting is soothing and calm, yet thought-provoking; it is a place to thrive. The retreat helped me in ways that I will never be able to explain, and the Circle will not let me forget.

For the first time in my life, I am able to remember to be mindful of my cluttered conscious and to see the constant beauty of the world. I continue to remember those pesky, eight-legged critters that produce masterpieces and the persistent weeds I liken to blooming roses. I also look for the sun to send rays of

light that peacefully wake me, and the chilling winds that blow tunes of harmony throughout the land.
Words cannot express my gratitude.