



EVENT REPORT

Meditation for Busy Business People

A review of the fourth Dialogue Session for 2009 from the Business Renaissance Institute

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On Saturday, October 17, the Business Renaissance Institute organized its fourth and last dialogue session for 2009. The session was attended by a group of business executives from a wide variety of backgrounds, for-profit and non-profit; individuals who were all in agreement that regular distancing from the hectic daily pace could make an important difference in their performance and the quality of their lives. The session was facilitated by the three BRI-founders, Dr. Joan Marques, Dr. Satinder Dhiman, and Dr. Richard King. The facilitators explained that they should by no means be considered specialists on the topic of insight meditation, but that they simply wanted to share their experiences in a brief session, in order to serve as potential instigators of a more conscious way of living.

Introduction

Meditation has been around ever since human beings have. It is exercised in many different ways: with mantra's, for healing, calming, and awareness purposes, and with different focus points. Many people have meditated in some way, at least once in their life. Meditation is not a religious practice. Rather, it's a mental exercise that can be very helpful for busy people, whether they consider themselves Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Atheist, Agnostic, or anything else. In the BRI Dialogue Session reviewed here, some attention will be devoted to our breath, followed by a simple guided mediation. Participants were prepared for a 45-minute session, with the option for a 5-minute



break for those who had a hard time completing the entire session uninterrupted.

Insight Meditation

The meditation technique that was demonstrated during the fourth BRI Dialogue Session for 2009 was one that has proven particularly helpful for business people. It is a technique that was revived in the 20th century by a very successful businessman from Burma, S.N. Goenka. Goenka earned a lot of money during his career as a businessperson, but also acquired a lot of stress, like most of us. He was particularly troubled by severe headaches. He tried everything to end his physical suffering, and finally landed at a meditation teacher, who taught him Vipassana. Goenka was so pleased with the effects of Vipassana, that he made it his mission to spread this technique on a global scale. Hence, we have numerous Vipassana meditation centers in every continent of the globe today.

Millions of business people and other professionals, scholars, students, and homemakers make time today to learn about Vipassana meditation. And yet, it is an ancient technique. It was rediscovered by Siddharta Gautama, the Buddha, about 2500 years ago. Having experienced both tremendous affluence and total abstinence, Siddharta finally decided to practice this form of meditation in his search for true meaning in life. He found the answers through Vipassana, and subsequently taught this technique to many, until he died in his eighties.

Today, management scholars and business people worldwide are starting to acknowledge the value of practicing Vipassana. At the 2009 annual conference of the Academy of Management, Dr. Satinder Dhiman and Dr. Joan Marques, who both followed the 10-day Vipassana course, presented a workshop on this topic, along with another colleague, Dr. Jerry Biberman. There was



great interest in this session, and many of the attendants decided to remain in touch for updates on their progress in insight meditation. There was particularly overwhelming interest from business coaches, executives and scholars from Europe, Asia, Australia, and America.

Encouraged by this expression of interest and the obvious need from so many members of the workforce to release themselves from the increasing pressure of a continuously changing, fast-paced, money-driven environment, the Business Renaissance Institute team engaged in the service to share some basics of Vipassana meditation.

Session Details

Raisin Exercise

In order to sharpen initial concentration amongst the participants and create a receptive atmosphere, each received a raisin. The participants were asked to eat this raising, not in one bite, but in several well-considered, highly focused bites. They were also requested to chew the raisings very carefully, and consider, while eating their raisin, how many people had been involved in bringing this raisin to their hands: agrarians, harvesters, transporters, buyers, sellers, packers, producers of all materials, instruments, and machines involved, nature elements - in short, a long cycle that we usually take for granted.

This exercise is useful, as it brings into scope, the true interdependence of everything, thus the concept of "interbeing," as formulated by the Venerable Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh.

Breathing Focus



After the raisin exercise, participants were asked to ensure that they had adopted a comfortable position, and close their eyes. This is where the breathing exercise started. The facilitators requested for the participants to focus on their breathing, but avoid manipulating it. They should breath as they normally do, whether heavy or light, shallow or deep, long or short. They were then asked to try to detect which nostril was active at the moment of this exercise, again, without trying to manipulate the process of breathing. They were invited to merely observe and not get aggravated or exited in any way.

Guided Meditation

With a 5-minute breathing exercise as foundation, the facilitators then started a concise insight meditation session, carefully explaining that the mind might not be silenced in a very first sitting. This is why a short break was included for those who felt that, at any time, they needed to get up. These individuals could do so, as long as they would not disturb their fellow meditators. During the 45-minute session, the participants were guided through a body scan, in which they concentrated on each aspect of their body, examining it with no emotional attachment. Participants were asked not to get upset if they found that their mind had been wandering for a while, as this was a perfectly common occurrence, especially for first-timers. The slow process of observing the body was accompanied by explanations of the purpose of this exercise:

Vipassana is a way of self-transformation through self-observation. It focuses on the deep interconnection between mind and body, which can be experienced directly by disciplined attention to the physical sensations that form the life of the body, and that continuously interconnect and condition the life of the mind. It is this observation-based, self-exploratory journey to the common root of mind and body that dis-



solves mental impurity, resulting in a balanced mind full of love and compassion (Vipassana Meditation, 2009).

After the 45-minute session, participants received a handout with additional information about insight meditation and the web address where they could read more.

Dialogue Session

Many of the participants were in agreement that they felt a higher level of internal serenity after this exercise. Even at this first time effort, they managed to last during the entire sitting and refrain from giving in to the impulse of getting up. There were mixed responses about the guidance of the session: while some people admitted that the guidance kept them going and helped them to last throughout the sitting, others felt that they were ready to engage in a quiet sitting without further assistance. This could be attributed to the different levels of readiness amongst the attendants.

Some attendants confessed that they had an extremely hard time sitting still, and could not admire nor understand the philosophy behind meditation sessions as a means toward improved performance and quality of life. They felt that they were dealing with a wide cultural gap in practices, and that they would much rather engage in other activities such as walks, tours, or other alternatives to step out of the daily hustle and bustle. This, too, was understandable, because different people appreciate different ways of performing, thinking, working, relaxing, and rejuvenating.

Overall, the participants to this meditation session agreed that more members of the workforce should be offered possibilities to release their stress, so that they can attain better results and more gratification from



their work, and enjoy higher levels of personal and professional wellbeing.

References

Vipassana Meditation (2009). Dhamma.Org. Retrieved on 21 January 2010 from <http://www.dhamma.org/en/vipassana.shtml>

Dr. Joan Marques stands for more than 20 successful years in advertising, radio- and television production, show-hosting; and dynamic entrepreneurship, executed in Suriname, South America, and Burbank, CA. She has founded and managed several businesses and a non-profit organization prior to her migration to the U.S. Dr. Marques holds a B.Sc. in Business Economics from MOC (Suriname), an MBA from Woodbury University; and a Doctorate in Organizational Leadership from Pepperdine University. She has done significant research on the topics workplace spirituality and leadership, and has authored/co-authored multiple articles and seven books, pertaining to workplace contentment and emotional intelligence. Her current research interests include workplace spirituality, enhanced consciousness at work, and awakened leadership.

Dr. Satinder Dhiman has guided business leaders for the last 25 years, and served for 10 years as a Senior Lecturer in Commerce at DAV College in North India. He has co-authored various textbooks in the area of accounting and management, and currently serves as Professor and Chair of Management, and Ass. Dean of Business in Woodbury University's Graduate Program. Dr. Dhiman won ACBSP's prestigious International Teaching Excellence Award in 2004. He holds a B. Sc. And a Masters degree in Commerce (with Gold Medal) from Panjab University, India; an MBA from West Coast University, Los Angeles; and a Doctorate in Organizational Leadership from Pepperdine University. His current research interests include transformational leadership and spirituality in the workplace.

Dr. Richard King is a recognized authority on United States - Pacific Rim business relations, and founded his company, King International Group, to carry out his personal commitment to strengthening these relations. He has held top management positions at major organizations and currently serves on the



boards of various Pacific Rim oriented organizations. He is a longtime member of the Noetic Institute and the World Business Academy. Dr. King is a frequent writer and speaker on Pacific Rim business issues, and is the initiator of the Business Renaissance consulting project, which focuses on 'adding humanity to the bottom line.' He is also Chairman of Go Green Solutions, a company dedicated to sustainable development, emphasizing LED lighting solutions and consulting. He holds a B. Sc. From Syracuse University, an M.A. from Occidental College and an Honorary Doctorate of Business Administration from Woodbury University.