Conquering. The person who just rock climbed El Capitan, the sheer rock wall in Yosemite National Park without ropes or assistance said: it’s not about “conquering” nature, but a dance, a merge.

This struck me as the same way we will treat our thoughts in meditation (thoughts, fears, anxiety) here they are, we don’t need to “conquer” them but exist next to them. Merge with the reality of them and still experience peace. Like he merged with the fact that El Capitan is almost impossible to climb without assistance.

Almost.

He merged with that truth and still experienced what he wanted, which was the climb.

We can merge with the truth that we still have thoughts, fears, anxieties, but we can still experience peace.

You’ll never have a meditation that you regret and more than likely you will feel a whole lot better.

The word “awareness” is important as you decide to practice meditation. I become aware of my many thoughts, arising internal mind states or emotions during meditation. I am aware thoughts and things have arisen.

I am also aware that I am intending to meditate and so practice letting go of those thought forms and internal dialogues and keep re-noticing my breath. Pretty soon, I am aware of my breath and not just my thoughts.

Awareness is what we are cultivating. Not perfection or technique but awareness of what is really going on in our meditation time and how we can practice cultivating letting go.

This requires a vast sea of patience.

Some people are dismayed by that, they expected some sort of mind shut off or goal reaching in their meditation. When they found out that as they practice sitting meditation, their mind creates a lot of thoughts they get frustrated, think they can’t meditate.

This is part of meditation, becoming aware of their thoughts and frustrations, then intending to stay and come back to noticing the breath. That IS meditation. And it does get more spacious and grounded and settled.

I recently read about a respected author who went from meditation teacher to meditation teacher for 10 years always feeling disappointed because she wasn’t getting liberated or soaring like an eagle or whatever the rhetoric was. Then she realized it was “her” pattern of needing to be something better outside herself that was creating this. As soon as she began to cultivate just sitting with what is…a busy mind, in acceptance of that, she could begin to also reap the fruits of meditation.

So we sit with ourselves, which requires a LOT of patience and cultivation. We’re so used to checking out either into anxiety or some distraction.

No wonder when we sit to meditate we feel restless and impatient!

I heard a great analogy about the mind in meditation: it’s like a shaken-up snow globe, but the more you practice, the more you can get a sense of that settled snow globe, maybe a glimpse, and know this feeling, awareness of your settled, grounded experience. And that is to be cultivated by practicing.

We chronically don’t experience enough quiet in our lives and meditation is the art of providing quiet for ourselves and yet we sit and the mind is anything but quiet! This is way for us to become aware of our internal noise or dialogue, not to judge it, but to become aware and say, “ah, there is my mind going again,” and learning to put less emphasis on the thoughts during meditation, again and again, so that that we can gain awareness of our ability for inner stillness or peace. It is in there, despite the mind blaring like a radio station turned up too loud.

Meditation is: an effort to bring you to the here and now present moment where there is liberation from past rumination or future planning or projections, just this breath, here and now.

We practice knowing that there is a gradual understanding and opening in meditation and try to treat ourselves and our experience with patience and compassion for seeking quiet and refuge in a loud world as a practice. We don’t practice to make perfect, we practice to experience more and more letting go, over time.