

Attached to Non-Attachment

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“Bert, you’ve been crazy about this mindfulness medication. I never asked this before but I can’t hold it any longer. What’s good about it?” Ernie had a hint of seriousness but he rarely

sounds serious. “Ernie, it’s *not* medi**ca**tion. It’s *medi***ta**tion. It’s all about non-attachment. I’m not supposed to be attached to *anything*.” Bert always looks and sounds serious and doesn’t show a hint of light-heartedness. “Oh, so you have been doing this wacko practice all these years *not* to be attached to anything? Really anything? Our house, your most favorite foods, eh, Menudo? And me?”

Bert and Ernie have been living together for many years. So, they know each other very well. However, as for mindfulness meditation, Bert keeps it to himself and practices alone in his room. They never talked about it until this morning.

“Ernie, be realistic. I’m very fond of our house, my favorite foods, and of course, you, Ernie. It’s not about liking and disliking. It’s about attachment. I’m trying hard to set myself free from *any* attachment.” Bert sounded a little irritated. “How hard are you really trying, Bert?” Ernie like to trick Bert. “Very hard. Very hard, indeed. As hard as your head.” That’s as hard as Bert was able to get. “Bert, if you are trying so hard, you want to succeed, right? Are you afraid of failure?”

Not only they live together, they are really good friends. They talk about all sorts of fun and tough things. So, Ernie didn’t think it was really rude to probe Bert. “Well, Ernie. I can’t say for sure. But I think I’m getting there. I’m no longer attached to many things. I think I’m free from the fear of little bugs. I think I sleep well because of my increasing non-attachment. I think I’m having less attachment even to my own life. At this pace, it will be all right. I don’t need to be attached to anything ... eventually.”

“OK, Bert. Can I ask you one more thing? Are you attached to non-attachment?” Bert has never thought about this idea. He had to pause and think about it. “Ernie. You are getting to my nerves. But since you’re my best friend, I will try. I will try to answer your question the best I can.”

Bert needed some more time to organize his thoughts. Ernie waited.

“OK, Ernie. I don’t think I’m attached to non-attachment. That’s because even if I fail, I will be all right. Attachment is being stuck with an idea or a thing and can’t help if I can’t get it. Ernie, I know you are attached to your ... handkerchief. You don’t wash it very often, do you? Even when you wash it, you wait in front of the washer and then in front of the dryer until done.”

Ernie flushed. He was not prepared to talk about his hanky.

“You don’t need to mention that. I’m not practicing mindfulness meditation or medication. I have no problem with attachment. Yes. I am attached to my hanky. I am also attached to this house and you, Bert. I can’t stand if you are gone.”

Bert felt bad. “OK. OK. I’m sorry to bring that up. That’s all right. And, I do like living with you, Ernie. You are my best friend after all, aren’t you? Maybe, I don’t know enough about non-attachment, yet. Maybe, the process of trying to be non-attached involves some sort of attachment. Maybe, every spiritual process involves some sort of attachment. What’s wrong with that?”

“Then, are you saying that you are giving up on non-attachment, Bert?” Of course, Bert would not accept that. “Well, Ernie. Honestly, I’m a little confused. But I don’t think I’m going to quit my practice. It is certainly helpful. I don’t get as angry as before, do I? I don’t yell at you as often as before, do I? I think it is working. I just don’t know if I should highlight the idea of ‘non-attachment’, at least for now.”

“Then, what’s the point of non-attachment? Maybe, the kind of attachment you’re trying to avoid is only bad attachment? Or, is it something you get at the end when you are not even attached to non-attachment? Is it something you get when you finally know what attachment *really* is?” Now, Ernie are getting serious.

“Ernie, thanks for trying. That’s really helpful. I will work harder on this idea. I will review the idea of ‘mindfulness’ in the context of ‘right mindfulness’ as described in the Buddhist literature. It must be a little more intricate than I first thought. I think that the key here is that right mindfulness refers to the whole working of our minds. It’s not just avoiding something or fixating on a single idea. I think I will be able to explain that better ... later.”