

just noticing . . .

awareness journaling
for contemplative practice



with
Paul Ilecki, Ed. D.



A meditation journaling retreat workshop for contemplatives.

Friday eve, January 21 to Monday am January 24, 2011

St. Benedict's Monastery Retreat House

Snowmass, Colorado

\$295.00 (dbl room & board)

\$175.00 (limited commuter places available)

Most journaling techniques rely on reflection and insight, a gathering of memories and understandings that may prove helpful but ultimately remove the journaler from the immediate experience of awareness. *Just noticing* is a set of awareness tools that can lead the journaler back into the flow and energy of life as it is being lived, with sufficient attention to the forms of experience (events) to address their energies and force. We then move silently toward states of awareness that may bring deep peace and calming mindfulness. An outcome of *just noticing* practice is a life lived with attentiveness, expanded awareness and graceful acceptance.

The retreat will include meditation practice, instruction, small group discussion and a silent environment. All hermitage rooms are double occupancy and vegetarian meals will be prepared by the acclaimed Snowmass retreat staff.

For more information about the retreat and *just noticing*,

contact Dr. Ilecki at 719.395.9172 or ilecki@amigo.net

To **register** for the retreat contact Carol DiMarcello,

Contemplative Outreach of Colorado at 970.927.9376 or coc@sopris.net

What is awareness journaling?

Awareness journaling is a set of mindfulness and writing exercises to help the contemplative practitioner break the habits of insight and understanding and develop habits of attentiveness and receptivity. While most meditation practices develop these qualities, the act of writing awarenesses brings awareness to consciousness without attachment, analysis, diagnosis, storied insight or understanding. Awareness journaling relies on short written observations that are simply put aside in the act of turning to the next awareness that arises. In this sense, awareness journaling is a form of un-journaling, a habit of just noticing subtle awareness in a developing practice of expanding consciousness.

Most journaling techniques encourage reflection, insight and understanding in the belief that growth and health occur when one reflects reasonably on life events, and then makes behavioral choices based on those understandings and insights. This process generally strengthens the ego (the sense of “I”) and restores a feeling of self-control. While this is a reasonable approach, it may have effects on only a portion of one’s life experiences. Most often, **reflective journaling** relies on attachment to a focused sense of self. **Awareness journaling** relies on non-attachment to self and ego by opening to an enlarged field of awareness, oneness, non-separation and the wisdom inherent in all beings.

Meditators and contemplatives know that detaching from the story telling of one’s life and dropping into an awareness of life as it is being lived opens up a large array of experiences and options for living not normally available to the cognitive process. In contemplative practices, the meditator comes to trust that life has an innate wisdom that, when tended to, can lift one out of the traps of insight addiction and programs of control. Awareness journaling is simply a way of holding life’s experiences and awareness in consciousness (and in writing) only long enough to give those events and awarenesses sufficient attention before letting them flow by, onto the next awareness or experience. The cumulative effect of this journaling documentation is the development of subtle habits that become patterns of awareness that are prolonged without attachment to ego, emotions, addictions or destructive behavior. The **just noticing** that begins to develop contributes to a life that flows with itself rather than one that is pushed forward by dissatisfaction, destructive habits or external pressures or held back by fear, worry and anxiety. The bottom line: a life lived in contemplative awareness of what is rather than an egoic control of what one wants one’s life to be. Awareness journaling makes this life process tangible, held in consciousness ever so briefly, until the next awareness arises.

Who should attend?

Attendees should have a meditation or contemplative practice of prayer or awareness and a desire to make aspects of that practice tangible. The retreat will include times of silent meditation practice, so it would be most beneficial for an attendee to have an established daily meditation practice of at least 6 months. Attendees should also have a sense that making their growing contemplative practice tangible through

journaling would be helpful to their spiritual and psychological growth. Awareness journaling focuses on writing short entries, so do not expect to do a lot of diary writing in the traditional sense.

A guideline for awareness journaling is that our focus is not on what you write but on what you notice. In this sense, people who do a lot of journal writing may have a more difficult time at this workshop than those new to journaling given that many people write for insight rather than raw awareness. During the retreat attendees will regularly be advised to notice the difference between reflective journaling and awareness journaling and discretely choose the type of journaling that best suits their needs and goals in the present moment.

What will I get from this retreat?

After attending the **just noticing** retreat workshop you will have a set of awareness writing practices that you can use to (1) return your attention to your life and its energy events and (2) gather in writing short records of those events that can help make concrete the process of deepening awareness and mindfulness. While avoiding attachment to notions of progress or spiritual attainment, awareness journaling can give you a sense that subtle awarenesses are powerful and real, that they can be trusted, and that your inner horizons can expand. As an inner sense of “no boundaries” becomes more real and reliable, you can live a life that is more peaceful, less driven and more receptive. Awareness journaling techniques learned at the **just noticing** retreat workshop can then be incorporated into more traditional reflective journaling practices.

What should I bring to the retreat?

You should bring (1) your meditation and contemplative practices, (2) an open mind to experiencing subtle energies and recording them, (3) a willingness to let go of previously appreciated reflection journaling practices, and (4) a sense of humor. I recommend that you not bring your favorite journaling tools or workbooks. In keeping with one of the tenets of awareness journaling: - nothing is special; everything is significant.

Who is Paul Ilecki?

Paul Ilecki, a former priest and monk at St. Benedict’s Monastery, holds a doctorate in adult learning and development. He was assistant dean of the Graduate School at UNC-Chapel Hill. He currently serves on staff of Intensive Centering Prayer retreats for Contemplative Outreach of Colorado, conducts his own meditation retreats and workshops, and teaches reflective journaling using the Intensive Journal® developed by Dr. Ira Progoff for Dialogue House, NYC. He is developing **just noticing** in response to a felt need for a journaling process that more directly complements contemplative practices. He is a musician, weaver and cook. He lives in Buena Vista, Colorado.

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