

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

HOW TO SIT

As you can probably tell by now, having a time of the day when you sit doing nothing is an integral part of becoming radically brilliant. I like to call this “sitting,” because it is a word that does not immediately evoke scary feelings of inadequacy. Pretty much anyone who can stand up can also sit. Your dog can sit. But despite the fact that “sitting” is such an innocuous and unchallenging word, people often morph it into “meditation” or “spiritual practice,” and that is where the trouble begins. Almost anytime I coach anybody and we discuss practices, I suggest they spend at least some small part of each day sitting doing nothing.

My instructions for sitting are extremely simple.

- Step One: Sit in a chair or cross-legged with your spine straight. Ish.
- Step Two: Set the timer on your phone for 20 minutes (or longer).
- Step Three: Put on a blindfold.
- Step Four:

There is no Step Four. There is also no Step Five. That’s it. It is that simple: set your timer, put on a blindfold, and the rest is not

up to you. Be curious, very curious, to see what happens next. It seems to me like no one could fail at something that simple. But a week after suggesting these simple instructions, when I ask my clients, “How did it go?” I often hear, “*Well, I’m not very good at it, it didn’t go very well,*” or, “*I don’t think I’m a very good meditator.*” These kinds of responses frequently baffle me, and leave me to the conclusion that it is worth spending some time clarifying what it means to just sit.

So imagine this. It is Sunday lunchtime. We made a nice meal, and Grandma is coming over. She has never been to this house before, not since we moved. Our driveway is a little hard to find. While preparing lunch, you ask me, “Is there anything I can do?” “Yes,” I reply, “actually there is. Could you please take this folding chair, go to the end of the driveway, then sit in the chair, wait, and watch for Grandma to arrive.” After about half an hour, she still has not yet shown up. It must be bad traffic, she slept in, or got lost. So I stride out to the end of the driveway, still wearing my very dapper-looking chef’s apron, I saunter up to the chair you are sitting in, and I ask, “How you doing?”

“Not very well,” you say.

“Why not?” I ask.

“I’m not very good at this thing,” you say.

“What do you mean?” I ask, getting curious now.

“Well, I’ve been sitting here, watching, but there is a lot of traffic. I’ve not been successful in slowing the traffic down.”

“*What?*” I ask you. “We didn’t say anything about slowing the traffic down. I just asked you to sit and keep a lookout for Grandma.”

“Well, yes, I can do that,” you say, “but I don’t think I’m really cut out for this sitting thing. I’m not really feeling blissful yet.”

“*Blissful?*” I ask you. “Who said anything about feeling blissful? You just have to sit in the chair, and keep an eye out for Grandma. There is literally *nothing* to it.”

As far as I am concerned, the instructions for sitting are just like that. Nothing more complicated is needed. Set the timer, put on the blindfold, and the rest is not up to you. Wait for Grandma.

The discerning reader amongst us might have noticed by now the subtle use of an analogy here. “So in the story about Grandma, what does Grandma represent?” asks the aspiring English-Lit major. And that is a good question. In fact, it is the very reason for using an analogy. There *is* an equivalent to Grandma arriving, when you sit, but, perhaps fortunately, it has no name and it has no form. It has no nationality. It has no voice. It cannot be described in words. But if you sit and wait, eventually Grandma comes.