

Not Yet

I was at a weekend a conference about Mindfulness in London a while ago and on the Sunday a lady was giving one of the final presentations. She seemed very calm and relaxed in front of the packed and auspicious audience from all round the world.

She started by telling us that on the Friday when she arrived she was very nervous indeed. Over tea she said she talked to a man she had not met before and she confided in him how nervous she was about giving her presentation. He listened patiently with a kind smile. She told him that she had been worrying about the presentation for some time and had been going over and over it in her mind and had even been losing sleep about it. As she told him, she said she felt herself getting more and more wound up about it. Then when she finally paused for breath he gave her a broad smile and said, "Well you're not giving the presentation yet, are you?" Then he chuckled and smiled again and slowly walked away.

She said to us, "This had a profound effect on me and after that, every time I felt myself getting anxious and upset about the presentation, I just said to myself, 'Not Yet!'. "And do you know what?" She added with a big smile, "I'm still saying 'Not Yet!' to myself now!!"

She got through her presentation brilliantly, and I think her 'Not Yet' story had a profound effect on me and just about everyone else in the room too. Our fears and anxieties are brought into the present way before they are needed and when we practice "Not Yet", they hardly need to be there at all.

And who was the man? Well it turned out that he was the Abbot of a Buddhist monastery not far away. He was an impressive man who had a quiet and attentive way of just going straight to the heart of things - and he seemed to laugh a lot too!