



## **Week Two: Reflective Guide Cultivating a Beginner's Mind**

### **A Beginner's Mind and Renewal**

Shunryu Suzuki was an influential Buddhist teacher—and largely responsible for bringing Zen to America. In 1970, he wrote *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. He penned these words:

*In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the experts there are few. Always be a beginner. Be very careful about this point.*

A beginner's mind opens us to renewal by helping us remain unencumbered with the need of being the expert. As an expert, we tend to feel the need to be right, to be unchallengable. We tend to stay locked in our own opinions, practices, and ways of being. We also tend to become annoying to those around us.

## Questions to Ponder

- What is the difference between “expertise” and being an “expert”?
- Where do you sometimes see your own ego’s need to be the expert? How does it impact you?
- What might you do to rediscover the freedom and wonder of “first inquiry” in your life?

## Practices to Cultivate a Beginner’s Mind

### Cultivate a “Don’t Know Mind”

Don’t Know Mind allows us to approach ourselves, a situation, a problem, another person with openness rather than assertions. Feel the liberating power of words like “don’t know;” “not sure.”

This approach ensures that we’re in a learning orientation rather than an expert orientation. It opens us to discovery. It can also be unsettling—especially for those of us accustomed to being the expert.

Where might you need to offer a “don’t know; not sure” in your life?

### Choose Curiosity

Don’t Know Mind opens us to discovery. Curiosity is the doorway. Curiosity creates an appetite for something not yet known. As experts, we tend to lose curiosity. We already know.

What discoveries might open to you if you were curious about...

- Yourself—the life you’re living and the life unlived within you?
- Those you love—what more there might be to them that what you’ve seen and come to expect?
- The world around you—and the mysteries that await your lingering gaze?

### *The Discipline of Noticing*

A Don’t Know Mind infused with curiosity lends itself to that “lingering gaze” that’s necessary to notice. Our brains are literally wired not to notice the things we see often. We’re great at seeing the novel. We’re likewise great at missing that which we’ve become accustomed to seeing.

What wonders might your curiosity-fueled lingering gaze reveal about yourself, those around you, those you love, and the beauty of life?

### *Make Space for Wonder*

Don’t Know can open up curiosity. Curiosity can engender an ability to notice. Noticing sparks wonder.

The world around us is filled with large and small wonders.

What wonder awaits you in this moment if you have the beginner’s mind to see it?