

## **Meditative Story Transcript — Rohan Gunatillake (Mental Health Awareness Month)**

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**ROHAN GUNATILLAKE:** The position of mental health and mental illness in our cultures has changed so much, but there still remains issues such as stigma, access to care and finding the right kind of support at the right time. But as someone who works for a public health system, I'm so grateful for all the organizations and individuals who continue to move the needle, working tirelessly to improve the mental health of others, often motivated by their own personal experience.

This year, we're again marking Mental Health Awareness Month. The theme of this year's campaign is Look around, look within. Just four words, it's a concise yet rich invitation to explore and understand our environment and how it affects how we are and how we're doing. The practical tools that come with the campaign are all about ways to adapt our surroundings as well as suggestions for ways to cope when change seems out of reach.

So for this special episode, let's do a meditation together jumping off from this theme, this theme of Look Around, Look Within.

And we'll start eyes open if that feels okay.

With our eyes open but relaxed, let's receive what is here to be seen, not going out to look at things, but instead receiving things in the visual field, if that makes sense.

Noticing what is here in our environment through the visual sense.

Now switching senses to hearing.

Aware of the sonic nature of our environment, any background noise, any foreground noises. Sounds that come and go, sounds that stick around for a bit.

And now the felt sense of our environment.

How the temperature feels on our skin, any movements in the air.

And now aware of these three channels all at once, the channels of sight, hearing and touch, the channels by which we know our environment, know the space we are in.

Aware of these three channels all together if that feels possible.

So we've looked around, now let's look within.

And with eyes closed this time if that feels okay.

What is happening on the inside?

Using that question as a tool to point to direct experience. Not commentary about what is happening, but knowing what is happening while it is happening. The definition of mindfulness.

Being interested in and open to whatever is happening within us.

For me, there's a bit of a fluttery sensation in the chest.

There's some calm.

Now I'm not so sure, so I guess some confusion, some not-sure-ness.

What is it for you?

Okay, now let's unite our inner and outer environments.

With eyes open and mind open.

What insights are here to be gleaned of how our outside affects our inside?

Me, I can see Dave, my engineer here in the studio through the little window of the booth. Thumbs up from Dave there and seeing that lifts the corners of my mouth and brightens my energy a little bit.

The booth here is of course really soundproofed which deadens any noise so there is a calm here, a cocoon-like quality.

But I also know that when I'm at home and it's a mess maybe from my kids' latest adventures with cardboard boxes, it has me a bit on edge and I feel it in the body.

How is your outside space affecting your inside space?

And where is the boundary between the two? Is there one?

I want to close with some of the super helpful pointers that Mental Health America are sharing this month. There are four areas that they invite us to reflect on:

The first is our overall housing situation. For some of us this is fairly comfortable but for many people, housing can be challenging due to all sorts of reasons. So if there are other spaces such as a community center or a friend's home where you can get the security you are missing at home, then take advantage of those spaces.

Then there is our home itself. Keeping it tidy, conducive to rest and sleep can make all the difference and that can be helped further by having objects around you that make you feel calm and happy.

Another aspect of the environment is the people around us, our neighborhood and our community. Getting to know the people around you can have so many benefits.

Finally there's nature. Even if you can't go for a hike, just keeping the shades open to let in natural light can be enough sometimes. House plants can also work wonders for our mood.

And if you're still struggling, then do reach out. There are some links in our show notes to resources and screening programs that can help.

And just as importantly, check in on the people in your life, those you know well and those you don't. Because sometimes hearing a kind word from a stranger can be all it takes to lift someone up. And we can be that stranger.

So with that, see if you can keep these themes in mind for the month ahead. And how about we check in later this month to see how we're doing?

We'd especially love to hear your tips on what you do to help your outer environment improve your inner one. Do please email us at [hello@meditativestory.com](mailto:hello@meditativestory.com) and with your permission, we'll share them with the rest of our community.

Thank you. And go well.