

Awareness “in the Middle of It”

Applying Monotropic Presence Within an Unaccommodating World

Most neurodivergent people—especially those with a monotropic nervous system—would agree that life outside our interest current often feels like being placed “in the middle of it.”

In the middle of what?

Chaos. Instability. Impinging expectations. Constant demands.

For many monotropic neurodivergent individuals, simply separating from our point of interest can be extremely difficult. When you layer social and cultural expectations on top of that, the experience can become debilitating. And yet, for those of us with families, homes, school responsibilities, and real-world obligations, we don’t always have the option to shut down or retreat when responsibility calls.

This is where we gather our neurodivergent toolbox and begin to choose awareness practices that help soften the strain of daily life—life that often feels unnecessarily hard to move through.

The Practice of Two Movements

In my own life, I start most days with awareness practices rooted in body awareness. One of the primary tools I reach for is what I call the practice of the two movements:

- the movement of mind (thought)
- the movement of body (sensory awareness)

The practice is simple:

When I notice that I’m thinking—caught in thought or mental engagement—I gently return awareness to the body. This might be awareness of the breath, the sensation of walking, the feeling of the ground beneath my feet, or any tactile sensation available in the moment.

This shift helps interrupt the ruminative cycles of thinking that so deeply affect many neurodivergent people, especially when we are out in the world.

When Practice Meets the Road

A typical day might begin with waking in the morning and allowing time to acclimate through a formal sitting practice. This strengthens the tools in our toolbox.

Then life begins. Kids need to be dropped off at school. Responsibilities take over. This is where practice truly meets the road.

At this point, I have a choice:

- I can mentally ruminate on the many things that are rubbing me the wrong way (and as a sensitive person, that list can be long), or
- I can shift into awareness of the body.

When we frame experience as either movement of mind or movement of body, we are immediately placed in the present moment. We are no longer wallowing in thought or replaying the perceived failures, pressures, or chaos of the outside world.

By focusing monotropic attention on the body—particularly through the breath—we cut off the momentum of conceptual proliferation. This creates space. Ease. A small sanctuary of presence within an unaccommodating world.

Thought as the Root of Suffering

In my monotropic neurodivergent life, thinking itself is the greatest source of hardship.

Recognizing this is key to understanding why being outside our interest channel is so difficult. Thoughts move quickly—often relentlessly—especially for neurodivergent minds. At least in my experience, the root of suffering is not the world itself, but the unchecked momentum of thought.

The moment I notice this, I can shift into body awareness and soften the ruminative mind—even in the middle of an unaccommodating environment.

A Sanctuary on Our Terms

Knowing how to enter thought-free states of being is a vital skill for neurodivergent individuals.

I treat this meditative practice as one of my monotropic interests. And most of us would agree: compared to toxic mental rumination, freedom from conceptual proliferation is well worth

cultivating. For neurodivergent people, this opens a sanctuary—a place of rest that exists on our terms.

Simple, But Not Easy

This work is simple, but it is not easy.

For those of us who struggle to engage with the world, the effort is still worth it. We become more self-reliant. We gain the capacity to enter situations that might otherwise feel impossible or overwhelming.

With this growing freedom comes confidence—the ability to live life in ways that honor who we are, without sacrificing essential responsibilities. Over time, awareness practice gives us something invaluable: our lives back, guided by lived wisdom rather than constant internal friction.

With Gratitude,

Corey