

Before The Interview

by [Nelly Kaufer](#)

In the space of a few minutes, our mind can go in so many directions. It takes more time to read these thoughts than it did for this fictional character to think them.

Kimberly looks around the meditation room. Other students are journaling or taking a bathroom break. She wonders if she wants to talk about her meditation.

She flips quickly through a series of considerations, like shuffling a deck of cards, her thoughts and concerns moving quickly, cascading one upon the next. Sometimes she is sure she does not want to talk about her sitting. But she is also intrigued by what might happen if she dared to talk honestly about her meditation.

Kimberly is a tall, lank woman in her fifties. She is dressed plainly in baggy pants and a khaki-colored tee shirt. Her mid-length brown hair seems dulled by strands of gray. She always sits in a chair cushioned with carefully-placed pillows she brings with her to each meditation she attends. Her face seems drawn; she looks older than her years.

It seems like nothing was new or interesting in this meditation. And I can't remember much of it. I fear the teacher might grow impatient with me because my meditations seem mundane and full of repetition. Now that I think of it, this meditation veered off in some different directions. But what came up feels bad and bothersome. I don't know if I want to burden others in the group. They'd think less of me if I talked about this. When I go home after meditation sittings, I wonder what the other meditators think of me. Sometimes it seems like they are happy to see me, but sometimes it seems like they don't notice me at all. I feel obsessed when I dare to talk about my meditation, wondering what the teacher thinks of me? The last time I shared I am pretty sure people were bored. In today's meditation, I wondered, no actually worried about what Jennifer thought when she saw me rearranging my pillows. It seemed like she was irritated. Of course, she was sitting right next to me and I did bump into her when I arranged the pillow under my foot. I would never talk about this part of the meditation.

It is not that I haven't thought about my fibromyalgia often in meditation; hard to experience or think about anything else when I feel excruciating pain coursing through the upper part of my body; sometimes it feels even more intense when I meditate? Then again, sometimes I don't feel in pain when I meditate; it seems to disappear. How can that be? I thought meditation would really help me with this pain, but sometimes it gets worse. I'm not sure if this meditation helps. Probably I am doing something wrong or it wouldn't feel worse. I've read that meditation is a way to get rid of chronic pain. Sometimes it seems like my family thinks my pain is all in head. They're glad I go to meditation because they hope I can change my head. I hope so, too. Isn't that what meditation is about, looking at what we are creating in our heads? But my arms and neck hurt like hell right now and it sure feels like it is in my body. Some people say all our

diseases are created in our minds. That infuriates me. It seems they believe that even more when it comes to fibromyalgia.

Should I share today? I thought a lot about my family and how they treat me. It seems as though they don't believe me or act like I should be different, and other times they treat me with kid gloves, almost like I can't be counted on or trusted.

Most of the people in the group don't know about my fibromyalgia; I rarely talk about it. I'm not really sure about the people in this meditation group. I have seen most of them before, at a workshop, a group or a retreat, but they really don't know how much pain I'm in, that I can't even button my shirt some mornings. I'm not sure I should tell them because they may think of me differently, like a disabled person. I'm not even sure they know I can't hold down a job and that my husband has to support me. I'm afraid if they knew, they'd think less of me. I feel so alone already.

Somehow, meditation makes me feel better. I don't understand why. Sometimes I feel better after an awful-feeling meditation. Other times, I have these great meditations where I feel pain-free, not just in my body but in my mind and heart. I feel happy and bubbly and I'm sure the day is going to be great. Then later in the day, it's like the ground drops out from under me and I feel really insecure.

Maybe if I report, I could just talk about the part where I saw a babbling brook. It seemed to shimmer and then I can't remember much after that. And I was not in pain; I wasn't even sure if I felt my body at all. It felt wonderful. But this is the part I can't remember much about, not after I saw the shiny rocks in the creek bed. Aren't we supposed to be able to remember more than this? After all, Harold gave a long description of how he returns to the breath whenever his mind wanders. His mind never seems to wander and he seems to remember a lot.

But I better decide now about whether I'm going to talk about this meditation. Others are putting down their pens and settling in their seats. Really it comes down to what they will think if I tell them I have fibromyalgia. Will they believe it is for real? How will they treat me? But it's more complicated, really. Because in one part of the meditation, I imagined screaming at my husband and calling him an inconsiderate bastard. Meditators don't use curse words. I could talk about it more generally, just say I was mad at him. But it wouldn't really get at it, because I feel awful about this. I even saw myself punching him in the face. What would people think of me? After all, Sally's meditations always sound so good, she has practiced meditation for a long time and always talks about sending metta, loving kindness, to people who upset her. She seems to always smile. I know metta is not being taught this way in this group. But she seems to have more of it and I want more of it. She seems more spiritual than I am. Everyone seems to admire her, smile at her, listen to her.

When I do get up the nerve to speak up, I usually discover something new about my meditation and things don't seem to be quite what they used to be. I seem to break out of something. Really this is all very confusing. When the teacher inter~views me, I feel like she really

understands what I am going through and really cares. But no one ever tells me directly what they think about my meditation. I know they are not supposed to and I understand why. It is sensitive stuff and it is mine to bring up. Only the person who has the meditation experience can bring it up after the group. But I really feel better when my friends check in on me, making sure I'm okay. I gauge how okay I feel about talking about this hard stuff by what other people say. When the other group members don't say anything, I'm just not sure. They generally seem okay, but sometimes I hear someone sigh or see someone shuffle around in their chair. Though I trust the teacher. She validates a variety of meditative experiences, both by what she says and something more subtle, how she is with us.

Right then Harold begins to report. *Damn him, he just reported a couple of weeks ago, it isn't his turn again.*