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Ask the publishers to restore access to 500,000+ books. It looks like you're offline. Overview View 3 Editions Details Reviews Lists Related Books 0 ratings0% found this document useful (0 votes)3K viewsThis document discusses the importance of being fully present and mindful during all tasks, including mundane work. It references a Zen saying that before and after enlightenment, one's task...SaveSave Chop Wood Carry Water For Later0%0% found this document useful, undefined Work. What does the word mean to you? Is it something to be avoided? Is it a means to an end? Is it the only appropriate focus of your attention and energy? Is it a way to avoid the rest of your life? Is it a joy? Is it a part of your spiritual practice? There is a Zen saying, "Before Enlightenment chop wood carry water, after Enlightenment, chop wood carry water." What's the difference? The tasks are the same. The need is the same. What about the frame of mind? Who is chopping? Who is carrying water? When you labor, stay awake. Notice the frame of mind you bring to your work. Do you approach your work as if it were a nuisance? Do you remove your consciousness from work so that you are filled with resentment or worry? What would you need to do to be more fully present in your work? Practice mindfulness in work. It does little good to attain clarity of mind on your meditation cushion if you lose it as soon as you become active. Start with simple activities like brushing your teeth, ironing clothes, or washing dishes. Be fully alert as you move. Notice the position of your body in space, Notice the feelings in your body as you move. Pay attention to the thoughts that enter your mind when you do the task. See if you can let them go and just focus on the work itself. If you are cleaning a countertop, feel the sponge in your hand. Feel the wetness. Feel the texture. Observe how the sponge moves in your hand from the sink to the counter. Sense your movements as you scrub. What do your eyes see? What do you hear as you work? Clean that countertop as if it were the most important thing you could do. Move with fluid motions. Waste no energy. Allow yourself the grace of economy of motion. Be grateful for the countertop, the sponge, the water, the soap. Be grateful for the hand, the arm, the whole body that can move a sponge. Be thankful for the floor you stand on and the roof that protects you. Without letting your mind wander too far, be grateful for all the circumstances that put you where you are at that moment with that sponge and that water and that countertop. We travel to the ocean or to mountains, rivers and canyons, in part to escape the mundane world of work, but also to experience the awe that arises more spontaneously in nature's magnificence. We give ourselves an incredible gift when we can experience some of the same awe in the mundane world of our daily lives. The weed that grows in the crack of a sidewalk is a phenomenon as miraculous as the redwood tree that towers into the sky. The raindrops that streak the window are no less an occasion for awe than the spray that dampens our face at the waterfall. The fingers that tap a keyboard are as worthy of praise as the feet of a ballet dancer. When we open awareness to the tasks in our lives they become lighter. When we are able to be in the moment, we no longer feel compelled to watch the clock. Whatever your work might be, bring all of yourself to it. When you are fully present, you may find that your labor is no longer a burden. Wood is chopped. Water is carried. Life happens.