

Summary - Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation
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Wellness Through Mindfulness Sangha - Sept. 5, 2017

The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still treat each guest honourably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi
born September 30, 1207 in Balkh (Afghanistan)
translation by Coleman Books

1: What is Insight meditation, vipassana (Pali), mindfulness meditation?

Mindfulness Meditation is not simply a matter of bare attention, present-moment awareness or simply being present.

“We are aspiring to “clearly know”, clearly comprehend” or be “fully aware” of what is taking place. With clear comprehension, we know the purpose and

appropriateness of what we're doing; we understand the motivations behind our actions.

When we act in full awareness, of even small things, it's possible to notice the motivation and then to consider: is this motivation, this action, skillful or not, useful or not?"

Phillip Moffitt, *Dancing with Life*, 2012, New York, Rodale Inc.

Our practice also benefits others through the transformation of how we are in the world. Are we more accepting, more peaceful, less judgmental, less selfish?

The Buddha's teachings are meant to be assessed firsthand, by direct experience, to be put into practice in one's life so that one can find out for oneself if they do, in fact, help alleviate suffering.

- experiential, not dogma to be accepted purely on faith
- it takes regular practise, perseverance, patience and systematic training
- meditation is not something we do every once in a while, but rather a way of being that we can carry with us every moment of our days.

2. We all know that life is full of suffering, unsatisfactoriness, discontent, stress.

How is suffering, unsatisfactoriness, discontent, stress created?

(a) The 3 unwholesome root causes of suffering are: greed, aversion, and delusion.

Greed - is self-centered desire: the desire for pleasure and possessions, power, status, and prestige that we believe will bring us happiness

Aversion - signifies the response of negation, expressed as rejection, irritation, condemnation, hatred, enmity, anger, and violence.

Delusion - ignorance which blocks out clear understanding.

The cause of this dissatisfaction is attachment and craving: I want, I need, I must have

If the craving becomes a strong and powerful force in the mind, it can lead us to many unskillful, harmful and unwholesome actions.

(b) Hindrances:

In meditation, the Five Hindrances can be seen as the major forces in the mind that hinder our ability to see clearly or become concentrated. They are universal, we all experience them.

The five hindrances are:

- 1) greed - self-centered desire
- 2) ill-will or aversion - all kinds of thought related to wanting to reject, feelings of hostility, resentment, hatred and bitterness.
- 3) sloth and torpor - heaviness of body and dullness of mind which drag one down into disabling inertia and thick depression.
- 4) restlessness & anxiety or worry: the inability to calm the mind
- 5) doubt: lack of conviction or trust.

(c) 8 Worldly Winds:

- praise and blame, success and failure, pleasure and pain, fame and disrepute.

Becoming attached to or excessively elated with success, praise, fame or pleasure can be a set-up for suffering when the winds of life change direction.

If we understand or feel that our sense of inner well-being is independent of the eight winds, we are more likely to remain on an even keel in their midst.

(d) Impermanence, uncertainty and unsatisfactoriness of everything that is conditioned

For example: pleasant sensations and mind states are impermanent, continually changing and disappearing. Seeking them can become an endless pursuit.

We believe our happiness lies in things we don't have and not in the things we do have.

We want things that are always changing to stay the same. Wanting something to stay the same will not stop it changing.

This suffering is caused by craving and clinging to impermanent things;

3. What can we do to be free from suffering?

How can we effectively protect ourselves from falling prey to toxic states of mind?

Mindfulness as a protector

We cultivate mindfulness both in meditation and life so that our mind is steady and awake during all your daily activities and so that we are present to make choices that do not create suffering.

“We cultivate wisdom through meditation, observation, and reflection so that you develop the discernment to know what brings happiness and what causes suffering.

Phillip Moffitt, *Dancing with Life*, 2012, New York, Rodale Inc.

So what collection of personal qualities do we want to develop, what kind of person do we aspire to be?

In our pursuit of happiness/contentment

- do we feel peaceful or not?
- are our actions ethical, virtuous, wholesome, benevolent and skilful?
- does our conduct bring harm to ourselves or others?

Hindrances:

The primary instruction in working with the Hindrances is to turn them into your meditation object.

It doesn't matter if a hindrance is present or not, but it does matter if you're not aware of it.

Any moment the hindrances are suspended, one feels happy and calm. It's important to have a friendly relationship with the hindrances, not an adversarial one.

Skillful mental formations that we can use to work with the hindrances:

happiness, joy, love, compassion, gratitude, generosity, patience, acceptance, understanding, forgiveness, peacefulness, contentment, appreciation, respect

We can practice the Brahmaviharas, divine abodes: lovingkindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity

loving kindness: this is the generosity of the heart that simply wishes all beings to be well and happy

compassion: is that feeling in the heart that wants to help others and ourselves be free of suffering

sympathetic joy: finding joy in the happiness and success of others,

equanimity: Equanimity is a wonderful quality, a spaciousness and balance of heart. We can feel this possibility of balance in our hearts in the midst of life when we recognize that life is not in our control.

We can practise wise speech which is speech that is true, beneficial, kind and timely.

We can consider the impact of our speech.

We can reflect and contemplate: why am I talking? W.A.I.T

We can practise listening; to ourselves and others

We can seek out the company of wise friends

Take the One Seat

“Just go into the room and put one chair in the centre. Take the one seat in the centre of the room, open the doors and windows, and see who comes to visit. You will witness all kinds of scenes and actors, all kinds of temptations and stories, everything imaginable. Your only job is to stay in your seat. You will see it all arise and pass, and out of this, wisdom and understanding will come.”

Ajahn Chah