

The Five Hindrances – Restlessness and Worry Practices and Reflections

In each of the following weeks repeatedly spend time with the reflection and practice for that week. It would be helpful if you also discussed your reflections with others.

Suggested reading: Article on the Hindrance of Restlessness and Worry on the article page of IMC's website:

<http://www.insightmeditationcenter.org/articles/HindranceOfRestlessness.html>

Restlessness (uddhaca) is characterized by disquiet, like water whipped up by the wind. It functions as unsteadiness, like a flag whipped by the wind. It manifests as turmoil, like ashes scattered by thrown stones. Path of Purification XIV, 165

April 3 – 9: Noticing restlessness

Frequently giving unwise attention to a restless mind nourishes restlessness and remorse that is occurring and which has not yet occurred. SN 46:51

Reflection: During this week, please look for opportunities to investigate your restlessness. How often are you restless in either body or mind? What effect does restlessness have on your life? How do you tend to act when you are restless? What are some of the situations that trigger you to be restless? Spend some time reflecting what beliefs underlie whatever restlessness you have.

Practice: Give special attention to noticing how restlessness operates while you meditate. Bring lots of mindfulness to whatever degree of restlessness you can identify, no matter how subtle. Notice where and how restlessness appears in your body and your mind. How does restlessness affect your mindfulness and what happens to restlessness when you can hold it in mindful attention?

April 10-16: Noticing calm

Frequently giving wise attention to a still mind depletes restlessness and remorse that is occurring and which has not yet occurred SN 46:51

Reflection: During this week, please look for opportunities to investigate calmness. What are the times of day when you are most likely to be calm? How much value do you give to calmness? What supports you to be calm? What are the most common conditions that cause you to lose your calm?

Practice: Give special attention to being calm during meditation. Just before you meditate spend a few minutes doing some calming activity. During meditation tune into that part of your experience which is satisfyingly still or calm. Notice how calm or tranquility is experienced in your body and mind. How does calm affect your mindfulness and how does mindfulness support calm?

Worry (kukucca) is characterized by regret. It functions to grieve about what has or what has not been done. It manifests as remorse. It should be regarded as slavery. *Path of Purification XIV, 174*

April 17-23: Reviewing remorse

Reflections: Please consider some of the things you have remorse about as well as unresolved issues you have that cause you to be agitated or preoccupied. Over several days, make up a list of these. Look the list over and see if you can discern any pattern in the kind of things that are unresolved. Do they mostly concern events of the past or about events that are still current? Spend time considering how you might resolve these issues or your relationship to them so that they no longer cause you to be preoccupied with remorse or agitation.

Practice: Look over your list of things that are unresolved or that you have regrets over and find one or two that you can do something to resolve. It might be something that requires you to apologize, make amends, or have a difficult conversation with someone. Make an effort to do this.

April 24-30: Questioning Worry

Reflections: Several times over the week spend time reflecting on the beliefs that underlie your worries. Question these beliefs. Are they true or useful? How did you acquire these beliefs? Why might these beliefs have enough power to cause you to worry? How do these beliefs relate to your self-image or ideas of self? Try to have an in-depth conversation with someone about what you are thinking about as you reflect on these questions. Alternatively, write down your reflections.

Practices: During meditation this week focus on mindfulness of breathing. Focus on the calming and stilling affect of focusing on the breath. This might be done by getting enough into the rhythm of breathing in and out that you maintain a longer sustained attention on each cycle of breathing. Perhaps it can be done by breathing into or through any place of agitation or tension you have. Sometimes it can be calming to remember to let go of thoughts at the end of every exhale.

If there is water in a pot, stirred by the wind, agitated and producing waves, a person with a normal faculty of sight could not properly see the image of his or her own face. In the same way, when one's mind is possessed by restlessness and remorse, one cannot properly see the escape from restlessness and remorse; then one does not properly understand one's own welfare, nor that of another, nor that of both; and also teachings memorized a long time ago do not come into one's mind, not to speak of those not memorized. *SN 46:55*

When one does not cling, one is not agitated.

MN 140.22