

## **The Five Hindrances – Sloth and Torpor 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 Sloth and Torpor found on the article page of IMC's website (<http://www.insightmeditationcenter.org/articles/SlothAndTorpor.html>).

### **February 27-March 6 – Energy**

*From time to time someone devoted to the higher training should give attention to three things: concentration, energetic effort, and equanimity. In giving regular attention to each of these, then one's mind will become pliant, workable, lucid, and wildy, and it will be well concentrated to overcome the taints.*

*The Buddha in Anguttara Nikaya III.42*

**Reflection:** During this week, please give attention to your energy and effort. What role does energy play in your life? Do you think of yourself more as an energetic person or a non-energetic one? Are you comfortable with being energetic? When during a day or during a week are you most energized? When least? At the end of each day reflect over the day and consider which activities gave you energy and vitality? How do you get re-energized? Is it through rest or is it through activity?

**Practice:** Spend more time than you normally would doing things which satisfyingly energize or rejuvenate you. What gives it the satisfying feeling? How does doing this affect your mood and mental state through the rest of the day?

### **March 7 – 13 - Losing Energy**

**Reflection:** Besides natural tiredness at the end of the day, what are some of the primary ways you get drained of energy and vitality? What activities do this? What kinds of thinking, beliefs, or judgments do this? How often does disappointment, frustration, or boredom drain your energy? Do you get tired or drained from being over-energized or over-busy?

**Practice:** Chronically worrying is an effective way of getting fatigued. During this week diligently notice when you start worrying. Focus on relaxing or letting go of whatever worry you can – be content if this is only small worries. Work on making this week as worry-free as you can. Notice how this affects your energy level throughout the day.

### **March 14-20 – Sleep and Fatigue**

*If a person eats until the stomach is stuffed and indulges in the pleasures of sleeping, lolling, and drowsing, then his or her mind will not incline to ardor, devotion, perseverance, and determination. This is a shackle of the heart.*

*Middle Length Discourses 16.11*

**Reflection:** Getting too little and too much sleep can have a big influence on fatigue. Please consider your beliefs, attitudes, and practices around sleep. Do you regularly sleep less than

you need? Do you often sleep more? How restful is your sleep? How frequently do you use caffeine to overcome sleepiness? What attachments do you have that interfere with getting the proper amount of sleep?

**Practices:** During this week do everything you can to get plenty of sleep. Go to bed early and get up later in the morning. In the middle of the day take a ten or fifteen minute nap. Notice how getting more sleep affects your energy, alertness, and mood. In what ways is it beneficial for you to sleep more?

If you are attached to sleep and sleep too much, use this week to reduce the amount of sleep you get. Notice what benefits this provides you.

### **March 21-27 – Purpose, Resolve and Meaning**

*A certain monk approached his preceptor and said: “Venerable sir, now my body is out of control, the directions are not clearly visible to me. The Teaching does not occur to me. My mind is overcome by sloth and torpor. I lead the holy life discontented and I have doubts about the Teaching.”*

*(Anguttara Nikaya 5.6.6)*

**Reflection:** Lack of meaning, purpose, and hope can lead to indifference, discouragement, and lethargy, which in turn can be a cause for sloth and torpor. Please consider how having or not having meaning and purpose affects you and your motivation to apply effort in meditation practice. What are some helpful purposes you can have that can energize your practice? What reflections could help you overcome laziness or boredom?

**Practices:** Spend ten minutes each day reflecting on what is your deepest intention or aspiration. Include in this reflection a consideration of how motivated you are to act on this intention. How effective do you believe you can be in following through on this intention. How is meditation practice supportive to your deepest intention? If you do this reflection before meditating, how is your meditation affected?

### **March 28-April 3 – Arousing Effort**

*Not arousing oneself from discontent and laziness is the proximate cause for sloth and torpor.*

*Commentary to the Middle Length Discourses*

**Reflection:** Are there ways that you are lazy? If so, what are some of the conditions that support your laziness? What are some of the healthy alternatives to being lazy? How can you arouse effort to overcome laziness?

**Practice:** During this week, experiment with applying more effort in meditation. This can be done physically by sitting up straighter or by doing brisk walking meditation before sitting. It can be done mentally by putting more effort into being alert and mindful of what is happening during the meditation. If applying more effort agitates you, try to match the increased effort with increased calm or inner stillness.