

The Five Hindrances

Practices for the Third Month

Practicing with the hindrances is an important way to develop ones' mindfulness practice. Having understanding and freedom from the hindrances is an aspect of maturity along the Buddhist path. The following exercises are offered to help give some direction to your exploration of the hindrance of ill-will. These practices can be done both in meditation and in daily life.

December 19-26: Loving Kindness

The Buddha taught that loving-kindness was the primary antidote to ill-will. During this week, practice loving-kindness every day. Please do this during some of your daily meditation time as well as interspersed in your daily life. As you do this, notice what effect the presence and absence of kindness has on the arising of ill-will and aversion. Are you less likely to feel aversion? Is the aversion less strong or compelling? How does the presence of loving-kindness affect how you react compared to the presence of aversion?

December 27-January 2: Mindfulness of Aversion

For mindfulness practice, anything can be the focus of mindful attention. During this week, spend some time meditating on any aversions that might arise for you. These might be quite small movements of aversion or major outbursts. In situations where it is ok to do so, allow the aversion to be present without judging it, acting on it, or abandoning it. Notice carefully how aversion feels physically. Notice how it affects the quality of your mind and thinking. How does it affect your attitude? Notice the variety of ways that the aversion is unpleasant. Is aversion ever pleasant or enjoyable? How much energy do you expend in thinking when you are being aversive?

January 3-10: Your Relationship to Aversion

During this week, look for a range of situations in which you can study your relationship to aversion and ill-will. Do you have aversion to aversion? Are you strongly pulled into aversion? Is there some way in which you enjoy or value being aversive? What attracts you to aversion and ill-will? What are some of the beliefs that fuel your tendencies towards aversion? What are you trying to accomplish by being aversive? Spend sometime talking to someone about what you discover.

January 11-18: Finding the Roots of Ill-will and Aversion

Often enough the aversion is a surface manifestation of something else. So, for example, it might arise from

1. frustrated desire
2. being afraid
3. being hurt or uncomfortable
4. feeling powerless or helpless
5. conflict, inner or outer
6. learned behavior, perhaps from childhood

During this week, please study what lies behind your aversion. Are any of these roots the trigger or the fuel for your aversion? What happens to the aversion when you focus on its underlying condition?

January 19-26: Letting Go of Aversion

Look for opportunities to let go of aversions. As if letting go is a muscle, spend the week strengthening that muscle. Notice what makes letting go of aversion difficult. Do you have beliefs that make you resistant to letting go? Physically, emotionally and mentally how do you feel after you have let go. If you don't somehow feel lighter after letting go, perhaps you have not let go thoroughly enough. Explore more deeply to find the roots of the aversion and, if you identify them, let go of these.