

The Five Hindrances – Aversion Practices and Reflections for the Fourth Month

It is not enough to understand what the hindrances are. One must understand how they operate and how they are overcome in one's own life. Each person will have his or her own unique expressions of the hindrances. In each of the following weeks please spend time with the reflection and practice for that week. The reflections are meant for repeated reflections over the course of the week. It would be helpful if you also discussed your reflections with someone else.

Suggested reading: "Working with Anger" found on the article page of IMC's website (<http://www.insightmeditationcenter.org/articles/anger.html>)

January 23 – 29: Anger

Reflection: Review your personal history with anger. As you were growing up what beliefs and behaviors did you learn about anger from your family, friends, and culture? What have been some of your significant experiences of being angry? of withholding anger? of receiving anger from others? What have you learned about anger over your lifetime? As you have become older have you become less or more prone to experiencing anger? What do you think are the reasons for this?

Practice: During the week look for situations in which you get angry, irritated, or annoyed. In these situations explore how the anger is affecting your breathing. Once you notice how your breathing is, spend a couple of minutes focusing on relaxing your breathing. What happens to the anger as you relax your breathing?

January 30 – February 5: Strength

Reflection: Review your personal history with your own personal sense of strength or power. When have you – in whatever degree – felt strong or powerful? When have you felt the absence of inner strength? In what ways have you felt comfortable with personal strength and power? In what ways have you been uncomfortable about these? What ways might you have to tap into some form of inner strength? How is strength helpful for meditation?

Practice: During meditation and a few other daily activities try to tap into or evoke a sense of personal, inner strength. Bring a greater sense of strength, power, resolve or confident energy to meditating and doing these daily activities. This might be done through being more grounded in your body or through bringing more of your body into the activity. Within the range of your normal postures, spend more time in postures that embody strength than ones that don't. For example, sitting up straighter in a couch may bring more strength than slouching on the couch. How are you affected by bringing a greater sense of strength to what you do? What connection might you notice between your sense of strength and anger?

February 6 – 12: Hostility and Anger

Reflection: Either while feeling angry, annoyed, or irritated or later in the day reflect on whether or not there was any hostility in these feelings. Do you sometimes experience anger without any hostility or ill-will? If so, how is anger with hostility different than anger without hostility? How does the presence or absence of hostility affect your relationship to anger you are having?

Practice: Look for an opportunity when you can meditate while angry. If you have such an opportunity, don't try to get rid of the anger. Also, don't fixate on the reason why you're angry. Rather, explore the present-moment experience of anger. How does it express itself in the body? What parts of your body are energized by the anger? What parts of your body are desensitized? What other emotions may be accompanying the anger? What is your thinking process like when you are angry? What are the motivations that come with the anger? What is unpleasant about the anger? What is pleasant? In the service of seeing more clearly, be as allowing of these sensations, feelings and thought-formations as possible.

February 13 – 19: Avoiding Ill-will and Anger

Reflection: When you are not angry or have no ill-will, what can you do to reduce the chance that these will occur to you? What conditions can you create so that you are less likely to get angry or aversive toward challenges you encounter? How can you best prepare yourself so you can avoid getting angry in situations that normally would provoke it? Ask some of your friends what healthy means they have of avoiding becoming aversive or angry

Practice: During meditation and daily life, actively cultivate calmness. Whenever you notice tension, relax as much as possible. Give yourself extra time to do things so that you are not rushed. As a way of being calmer, cultivate a greater sense of contentment with what is. Notice what influence being calm has on the emergence of ill-will and anger.

February 20 - 26: Letting Go of Aversion (repeated from last month)

Reflection: What beliefs do you have that support your aversion? What do you believe about yourself, about others, or about what you can expect or want that tends to result in aversion? How can you question the authority of these beliefs?

Practice: Look for opportunities to let go of aversion and anger. 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.