

## **The Five Hindrances – Uncertainty or Doubt 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: “Doubt” on the article page of IMC’s website:  
<http://insightmeditationcenter.org/articles/DoubtingDoubt.html>

*Uncertainty (vicikicchā) is characterized by doubt (saṅsaya). Its function is to waver. It is manifested as lack of motivation and ambiguity. Unwise attention is its proximate cause. It should be seen as a hindrance to practice.*

*Path of Purification XIV,177*

### **May 1-7: Facing One’s Doubts**

*I know of no other single thing that has the power to bring on doubt and to cause doubt to increase than unwise attention.*

*The Buddha*

**Reflection:** Consider carefully what doubts you have in relation to meditation practice and/or Buddhist practice. Are you skeptical or uncertain about any of the teachings? Do you doubt your own ability to practice? Are you ambivalent about some of the goals or results of practice? Does this uncertainty affect how you practice? In what ways might doubt interfere with your practice?

**Practice:** Write up a list of ten questions you have about Buddhism or about meditation practice. Try to come up with questions which have a direct bearing on how and what you practice. Of these ten questions, write down the one that is most significant for you personally and bring it to our final hindrance class on June.

### **May 8-14: Confidence**

**Reflection:** How would you rate the strength of your confidence in meditation teachings and in yourself as a meditation practitioner? Over the time you have meditated, in what ways has your confidence fluctuated? What are some of the reasons for this fluctuation? With your involvement with meditation, what are the primary ways that you feel confidence?

**Practice:** Before each session of meditation, remind yourself of those things that give you confidence in the practice. Let that confidence support you during meditation. How does this affect your meditation practice?

**May 15-21: Conditions for Doubt**

**Reflections:** What are the situations, conditions and beliefs which are most likely to trigger doubt? What effect do frustrations and difficulties in meditation have on the arising of doubt? What are some of the conditions you can put into place which might support your confidence and resolve in practice?

**Practice:** Each time that doubt, uncertainty, hesitation, or indecisiveness occur in meditation, use a mental note, “doubt” to label it. Note it several times and see if you can free yourself from believing the doubt. Doubt involves belief. Can you note the belief to free yourself from it? At the end of meditation, reflect how often you noted “doubt.”

**May 22-28: Conflict**

**Reflections:** Do you have any fear or hesitation about what might happen to you when you practice meditation? Are you frightened or resistant to possible meditation experiences? Do you feel any conflict with doing meditation because other activities seem more important? Are you worried that meditation practice will change you in ways that make you uncomfortable? Is any part of your life challenged by your meditation practice? Please discuss these fears and concerns with someone.

**Practices:** If you are aware of any sense of fear or conflict as you meditate, bring your mindfulness directly to the felt experience of the fear or conflict. Use your attention to become more familiar to how it is experienced as opposed to what you believe about it. Try using mental noting to see if you can free yourself from being entangled with the sense of conflict. Simply know that it is there and notice what happens to it as you stay present.

**May 29- June 5: Commitment**

**Reflections:** What is your relationship to commitments? Do you hesitate to commit to things? Do you follow through on commitments? Do you commit to things easily? How would you describe your commitment to meditation and/or Buddhist practice? Compared to other things you are committed to, how strong is your commitment to practice?

**Practice:** For this week, make a firm commitment to practice meditation. Choose a commitment that is reasonable to fulfill. If you don't meditate every day, commit to a daily practice. If you already practice each day, perhaps lengthen your meditation time. Follow through on the commitment and notice what various ways the commitment is helpful.

*If there is a pot of water which is turbid, stirred up and muddy, and this pot is put into a dark place, then a person with normal eyesight would not recognize and see his or her own image reflected in the water. In the same way, when one's mind is possessed by doubt, overpowered by doubt, then one cannot properly see the escape from doubt which has arisen; then one does not properly understand one's own welfare, nor that of another, nor that of both.*

*Samyutta Nikaya 46:55*