

A three-step technique for working with emotions in-the-moment

1. Mindful gap
2. Clear seeing
3. Letting go

STEP ONE

Last week listened to a recording of Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche teaching on “mindful gap.” This technique has three aspects or ways of working with the emotions.

1. Distancing: Notice/remember, feel, hold, relax
2. Cultivating patience: Investigate the emotion and get to know it; keep looking without reacting; by practicing patience we undermine this habitual pattern instead of reinforcing it
3. Transformation through right view

Tonight we begin with **right view**. Not about right vs wrong. Right as in **true**.

Right view: how we can understand our emotions in a deeper sense. See their true nature.

Label the emotion: anger, passion, etc. without fixation on the emotion as being truly existent and permanent.

“Conventionally speaking, the root of our problem with our emotions is our fixation on them as being truly existing and permanent things called “anger,” “jealousy,” or “passion. That perception is transformed by seeing their impermanent and insubstantial nature.” p. 59

The emotion is changing because that is its nature. Impermanent.

Why is this good news? Because it means we do not have to solidify the emotion.

Changing Our Outlook

See how someone who is irritating us could actually be helping us. If we focus on their negative qualities, we increase our own suffering. Instead reverse the situation. See how working with this difficulty can strengthen our mindfulness.

Lojong practice: mahayana. Working with others helps us in our practice.

Every situation is an opportunity. Counteracts our usual tendencies to blame, criticize, complain. Cultivate positive habits. (Lojong practice will be the focus of Module VI)

STEP TWO

Clear seeing: insight, vipashyana. Look at the complete picture: the emotion and the environment in which it manifests. Zoom out. See the emotion more clearly.

Identifying Our Emotions

Identify our own emotions. Know the defining qualities and characteristics of each one.

“So in order to effectively and progressively transcend or let go of our disturbing emotions, we need to know and see them clearly. We need to know exactly what they are like, how they arise, where they are in our body, where they go when we chase after them, and so on. This process of

clearly defining our emotions is an essential precursor to any ability to truly free ourselves from their painful hold on us.” p 63

Evaluating Our Emotion

How do we experience the emotion? Is it very strong or weak? Is it a course emotion or a more suppressed emotion that we experience as an undercurrent of feeling?

Recognizing the Landscape of our Emotions

Look at what triggers our emotions. What environmental factors influence or support the emotion?

“When we can predict the ways in which our emotions are likely to arise and be triggered, we will gain some power in the situation...” p. 66

“Clear seeing” allows us to zoom out and see the subject and object more clearly.

STEP THREE

Letting go: We let go of the emotion.

How to do this? Release some of the energy each time you work with the emotion. That deflates the emotion little by little.

“The part that is left behind is called a habitual tendency, or a subtle obscuration.” The trace that remains is like the scent in a perfume bottle.

Two stages:

1. Release the energy little by little. Over and over again.
2. Need to exert ourselves at a much more subtle level.

Work on the level of body and mind.

Body: relax the body, good posture, deep breathing, yoga.

Mind: awareness. Label the emotion, let go. Like working with thoughts in meditation practice. We label them as thoughts and let them go.

Relax the thought process of clinging and fixation. Let go of the story line.

Ultimately have to let go of the “let-goer” or the person who is letting go.

Mindful gap: shamatha (calm abiding meditation/mindfulness)

Clear seeing: vipashyana (insight meditation/awareness)

Letting go: vipashyana

“Freedom to choose something different.” Pema Chodron instruction.