

## WORKING WITH DIFFICULT THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS

Let's work with some difficult thoughts and emotions. In this exercise, remember that whatever you're feeling is impermanent and that you're the one responsible for bringing the feelings and thoughts into the present and can just as easily let them go

First, find a comfortable position to be in, even for a few minutes, where you can be undistracted and as relaxed as possible. Start by briefly attending to your breath, bringing your attention back to the breath when you become distracted. The following exercise may stir up some uncomfortable emotions; it's meant to. Just be with whatever arises, as you have learned to be with the different thoughts that arise within your mind.

After finding some stability within your mind using the breath as an anchor, think back to a time when you felt strong sadness, jealousy, or anger. Do this in a gentle manner at first, letting the feeling arise slowly. You may find that anger or sadness are the easiest emotions and feelings to invoke. If it becomes too much at any time, let it go and come back to the breath. Take some time to remember an incident or time when strong emotions were present and when you felt swept away or affected by them.

Now, as vividly as possible, open up more and let this memory flood your body and your mind. Feel the feelings; let the physiology of the moment enter you to a level that feels like you can be with it and deal with it. Feel what it felt like when you were angry, jealous, or sad. Be with the feelings. Be with the emotions. Remember, become keenly aware that all of this is happening in your mind, nowhere else. In a way, really "get into" this exercise by drawing the emotions that you felt into the present and seeing how dramatically you can affect your present state of mind and body *without getting lost in the thoughts and emotions!*

Remain with this exercise for as long as you're comfortable doing so. Return to the breath if you become distracted. Return to the remembrance of your compassionate nature if you get stuck in the emotions. Return to a realization that everything is transient, temporary, almost illusory and that anything that you may be feeling at present is without substance.

Stay with the exercise for a few minutes.

And then, just relax in the vividness of this moment, dropping all methods, allowing the thoughts to move through your mind without grasping after or following them.

As you may have witnessed in this exercise, we are all capable of experiencing a variety of mental and emotional states within a short period of time and an event that triggers wild emotions doesn't even have to be recent. I've done this exercise repeatedly and have been amazed at seeing how quickly I can enter into a state of mind that has absolutely nothing to do with the present. Isn't it amazing that when we recount our stories of having been hurt or insulted by another person to others, we can enter right into those emotions...even if it was years ago! And isn't it also amazing that in the present, there is absolutely no substance to those stories except for what we create in our minds?

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