

CULTIVATING EQUANIMITY EP Practice Group – Spring 2024

Week 1

Poem

From *The First Free Women: Poems of the Early Buddhist Nuns*

Translated - Matty Weingast

Bhadra - Lucky

You always considered
yourself lucky
because things seemed
to work out
the way you wanted

Now luck has a different meaning.

Lucky to be walking a Path
that finds peace
in the arising
and passing
away
of
each
present
moment.

Regardless
of how things
work out,
or don't.

—

The home practice -

During the week please be aware of times when you feel that things have worked out or are working out in a way that is satisfactory to you.

Please be aware of the times when you feel that things have not worked out or are not working out in the ways that you had hoped or wished or desired.

In these moments of recognizing how and whether things have worked out, or not, shift to the awareness of your great fortune in having discovered this noble path.

Shift the emphasis from whether things have worked out or not to the awareness of your trust in the path, your faith in the path, your commitment and confidence in the path.

Please come to class prepared to share how you have worked with the assignment and what you have learned.

Week 2

The home practices this week are the same as for Week 1.

Week 3

Please continue with the current (Week 1) assignment.

As well, please be aware of the connection between things not working out and - and doubt. Doubts often arise when things don't work out the way we wanted, hoped for, or expected. Explore the possible connection between things not working out and doubt; doubt in yourself, the practice, or any form of doubt whatsoever. What supports you in the midst of doubts?

Week 4

Please continue with the first week's practice but instead of only focusing on outer events that either work out or don't, please include your experiences while in sitting meditation as well. In other words, observe what happens when things don't "work out" while in sitting meditation (such as the mind being scattered, pain in the body etc) and also observe when things do go the way you think they should go or want it to go (such things as the breath being smooth, the mind being concentrated etc). Please be aware of coming to conclusions as in assessing yourself as a good or bad yogi according to these experiences.

Week 5

Please continue with the Week 4 assignment.

Week 6

The home practice is to continue with the practices that you've been working with, adding this question:

- What supports you when you notice yourself drawing conclusions about the way life events are going and when you are judging how your sitting practice is going?
- What supports you when you fall into these judgements and conclusions? What is the bigger picture? What do you have confidence and trust in, what supports you

when you find yourself caught in thoughts of good and bad, of "I am a this" or "I am a that?"

Week 7

The home practice this week is to recognize moments of overwhelm as well as of apathy, passivity, indifference, or anything else that is an effort to deny the reality of what is happening right in front of you.

This requires a patient, kind and willing attentiveness to fully feel the response to what is happening. Sometimes yogis can deny themselves the delight and pleasure and joy of an experience because they are afraid if they feel it fully, they will become attached. Feel it fully, just don't try to hang on to it.

So whether it is pain and sorrow or pleasure and joy, the practice is to allow oneself to let it completely (100%) wash through and let it be felt. Allow it be fully experienced as it is, in its totality, whether these feelings arise in response to external conditions or to meditative experiences.

Learning about equanimity is learning to not be afraid of feelings. This is different from using the mind to figure something out which can be a way of averting the eyes out of fear of facing what is being felt.

The feelings that we are practicing with do not have to be big and dramatic, though they could be. If you are ruminating about something, chances are you are trying to think your way through and out of something painful. So you are being asked to first recognize what your mind is up to and then see how it is related to a feeling that is in the background of your thoughts. Bring that feeling to the foreground - notice how it registers in your body. Be aware without the thoughts and stories about it, and see what happens. This is why it is good to practice with feelings of all sorts, not just the big dramatic ones that visit over and over. This is also why the allies of stillness and silence make being in the here and now possible. We are practicing and cultivating and uncovering the transformative Brahma Vihara of *upekha*, equanimity.

A liberating understanding of equanimity asks us to fully experience both pain and pleasure, otherwise it turns into a concept that is used to avoid and separate. Please practice allowing oneself to let every experience to be fully experienced as it is.

Week 8

Please continue with the Week 7 assignment.

Week 9

The home practice this week is to recognize moments of indifference, or fear, or distancing. And then as well to practice over and over a welcoming, a welcoming of all things.

The work is to experience things fully and to lay aside conditioned habits of assessing and judging as good or bad so that space can open up. Please take note of this space and be aware that in this space there is freedom from reactivity and freedom from what we could call self-referential thinking.

Please continue with the assignment from week #7.