

TRUE LOVE

there. Mindfulness is always mindfulness of something. When you are angry and you know that you are angry, mindfulness is there. Anger is one energy, mindfulness is another, and this second kind of energy arises in order to care for the first like a mother caring for her baby.

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SO EVERY TIME YOU HAVE AN ENERGY that needs to be transformed, like jealousy or fear, do something to care for this energy, for this negative energy, if you do not want this energy to destroy you. Touch the seed of mindfulness, and then all of its energy will be able to establish itself in your "living

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room," like a mother tenderly embracing your pain. With that energy of mindfulness, you are doing the true practice of meditation with regard to your pain, your emotions. If you are able to maintain mindfulness for five or ten minutes, you will experience some relief right away.

When the mother hears her baby crying, she puts down whatever she has in her hands, she goes into its room, and takes the baby in her arms. The moment the baby is lifted into the mother's arms, the energy of wisdom already begins to penetrate into the baby's body. The mother does not know yet what is the matter with the baby, but the fact that she has it in her arms already gives her child some relief. The baby stops crying. Then the mother continues to hold the baby in her arms, she continues to offer it the energy of tenderness, and

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during this time the mother practices deep looking. A mother is a very talented person. She only needs two or three minutes to figure out what is the matter with her baby. Maybe its diapers are a little bit too tight; maybe the baby has a touch of fever; maybe it needs a bottle? Then when the understanding comes, the mother can transform the situation immediately.

It is the same thing with meditation. When you have pain within you, the first thing to do is to bring the energy of mindfulness to embrace the pain. "I know that you are there, little anger, my old friend. Breathe—I am taking care of you now."

You can practice this in a sitting position; you can also practice it doing walking meditation or else lying down, but it is necessary for mindfulness to be there to play the role of mother, of big sister. If you are

able to keep this up, the result could be there, maybe, in three or four minutes. The next time you are angry, practice doing walking meditation in a natural setting, for example. You breathe and you concentrate solely on breathing: "Breathing in—I know that I am breathing in; breathing out—I know that I am breathing out." After a minute or two, you practice this way: "Breathing in—I know that I am angry; breathing out—I know that the anger is still in me." Ten minutes later, you will feel better. It is a sure thing, on condition that the energy of mindfulness is really there; and if you keep it up, concentration—and not only concentration but also deep looking—will also be there. You will be able to look deeply at the true nature of your anger. This discovery, this understanding, this wisdom, will liberate you from your pain.

Buddhist monks and nuns are in the habit of practicing this, not only in connection with anger but also with despair, with fear. Regarding fear, during mindfulness meditation, we can meditate like this: "Breathing in—I know that it is my nature to grow old; breathing out—I know that no one can escape from old age." We are afraid of old age, and we are also afraid of death. "It is my nature to die; I know that no one can escape death."

Buddha taught us this, knowing that we carry all the seeds of fear buried deep within us. But we do not want this fear to manifest, because it hurts, and so we repress it. We try to repress our suffering and we invite other energies into our "living room" to fill it up so that the negative energies will not be able to make their appearance there.

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A lot of the time we turn on the television, we read novels, we make phone calls—just to keep pain from making its appearance in our “living room.” We practice the politics of subversion, we carry out a kind of boycott toward the negative seeds within us, and after a certain amount of time of doing this we create a situation of bad circulation. You know that when the blood is not circulating well in our body, we experience pains—headaches, for example. So then we try getting massages or taking medicines, because good circulation is essential for our health. The same thing is true with regard to our consciousness. If we practice the politics of repression and suppression, then we create a situation of bad circulation for our mental formations, such as fear, anger, despair, suffering. And because things are not circu-

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lating properly in our conscious mind, then the symptoms of mental illness appear: depression and stress.

We should not adopt this boycott policy. On the contrary we should open our door so that our suffering can come out. We are afraid of doing that, but Buddhism teaches us that we should not be afraid, because we have available to us an energy that should help us to care for our pain—the energy of mindfulness.

If we practice cultivating this energy of mindfulness every day, we will have enough of it to take care of our pains. Every time pain manifests, we will welcome it. We will really be there to take care of it, and the energy needed to take care of it is without a doubt the energy of mindfulness: “I am here for you, dear one, I am here for you.” That is one of the four

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mantras we learned. This means that the mother is there for the baby, the energy of mindfulness is there to embrace the energy of pain.

So we have to train every day in cultivating this energy of mindfulness. But we need friends, brothers and sisters in the Dharma, to be able to do this easily. That is why in Buddhism we talk about the practice of taking refuge in the sangha: "I take refuge in the sangha." The sangha is a practice community in which brothers and sisters in the Dharma practice the cultivation of mindfulness daily: when they eat, when they drink, when they wash the dishes, when they work in the garden, when they drive a car—and not just during times of sitting meditation. So it is necessary to have a bit of training and a sangha, that is, a community of practice.

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In the tradition it is said that a practitioner who leaves the sangha is like a tiger who has left the mountains and gone down to the plains. If the animal does that, he will be killed by humans; and if the practitioner of meditation does not take refuge in a community, in a sangha, he will abandon his practice after a few months. Thus a sangha is absolutely necessary for continuing one's practice.