

Mindfulness & Meditation



LESSON 5: GROUNDLESSNESS

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Homework



- **Consciously create a better world through your awareness of interbeing**
 - resolve to soothe negativity you receive rather than passing it on to others
 - develop gratitude for your “dependent origination” that leads to altruism
 - build something beautiful in the world that begins with a simple smile or a compliment
- **And most importantly...**
 - have fun, explore, be playful with your practice!

Groundlessness



- Humans have an inherent desire to experience predictability and stability in order to feel safe
 - We like to stand on solid ground by “knowing” things
 - ✦ “President Trump is _____.”
- Unfortunately, this creates struggle because the universe is dynamic
 - Everything is constantly changing
 - There is no solid ground to stand upon
- Thus, to reduce suffering, we may benefit from embracing groundlessness
 - Ease our grasp on “knowing” or even cultivate “not knowing”

What We Need to “Know”



- Some examples of things we find comfort in “knowing”
 - Stereotypes about others
 - What our children/grandchildren should do with their lives
 - “My spouse is _____”
 - “I am _____”
 - Political/religious/philosophical ideas
 - Etc., etc., etc.
- When our ideas of what we “know” are challenged, we suffer
 - “I am smart...so why don’t I understand _____?!”
- Everything is always changing, thus these challenges are inevitable
 - This means our suffering is inevitable

How Do We Get Out of This Trap?



1. Observe our attachment to anything we hope is static

- Notice judgments arise (I like ____; I don't like ____)
- Feel the pull toward or repulsion away from things – that is attachment, or “knowing”

2. Observe the habit that arises to meet the challenge of the attachment

- Seeking reassurance
- Trying to fulfill the desire or escape the tension
 - ✦ Distracting self with tv, facebook, food, sex, music, alcohol, shopping, work, etc.

How Do We Get Out of This Trap?



3. Recognizing these habits arising to meet the challenge affords you the valuable opportunity to make a conscious choice

- **Do I react with my normal habit, or do something different?**

Example: Mountaineering



- I was invited to go “hiking” in Ecuador:



The Face of Suffering



Example: Mountaineering



1. Observe attachment:

- I “know” I should be comfortable, warm, able to breathe, etc.

2. Observe the habitual response:

- “I quit! Where is the hotel? I’m taking a hot shower and watching tv the rest of the night!”
- I could continue to wish conditions would get easier and my suffering will increase as the hardship persists

3. Make a conscious decision of how to respond

- I can continue being miserable (choose the usual habit)
- Or, I can use “not knowing” to open up to the experience
 - ✦ I wonder...what is it like to climb a 19,000ft mountain?

Example: Mountaineering



- Now that I am open and nonattached (i.e., “not knowing” or “groundless”), the situation reveals more of its beauty
 - Beautiful scenery, an appreciation of physical health and time with friends, etc.
- **IMPORTANT:** The situation and the environment has not changed *at all*, but the suffering and overall experience has changed *drastically*
 - By noticing attachment and opening up to life *as it is* in this way, we change our relationship to the situation

Groundlessness



- In an effort to create “knowing” and its accompanying sense of security:
 - The brain will even create negative stories (“I’m worthless”) to make suffering seem more predictable and reasonable
 - ✦ We attach to these negative stories as well and become just as distressed when they are threatened
- What if, instead of “knowing why” suffering is happening, we could cultivate comfort with “not knowing,” or accepting that it is part of being human
 - In this way, can suffering truly become okay?
 - *If it truly becomes okay, is it still suffering?*

Homework



- Identify ways you have tried to protect yourself from the unsettling experience of being uncertain by creating “knowing”
 - explore how this sets the foundation for future suffering when your ideas are eventually threatened by an ever changing world
 - consider how any word or idea used to describe yourself makes you smaller than you actually are
 - encounter the fear of “not knowing” by sitting with it curiously and practice opening up to groundlessness
- And most importantly...
 - have fun, explore, be playful with your practice!



Thank you!

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