

Handout #8

Transforming Negative Experiences into Positive

About this meditation

We have many habitual patterns imbedded in our thinking and in our behavior. By replaying our day's actions in our meditation session and transforming those habitual patterns from negative to positive in our imagination, we can gradually change our thinking and behavior. We can become happier individuals and bring greater happiness and well-being to others through our interactions. If we engage in this practice every time we fall into negative behavior, replaying what we have done and reliving it in the most positive way we can imagine, we will gradually dismantle our negative patterns and replace them with new positive ways of thinking and behaving.

This is a good meditation to practice in the evening, at the end of the day.



Calming the mind

Focus your attention on your breath. Use one of the various breathing meditations (counting the breaths, the nine-round breathing meditation) or mindfulness meditations to settle the mind into the moment and into a more concentrated state.

Motivation

Sit comfortably and generate the strong intention to do this meditation in order to train your mind to experience difficulties with a calm, clear, and gentle approach.

The actual meditation

Spend a few moments thinking about your day and the experiences that you have had during the day. Focus especially on difficult situations that may have arisen, situations in which you may have become impatient, lost your temper, seen others as problems or enemies, perhaps even lashed out at others verbally. Remembering that the situation is over, that you are simply experiencing memories now of something that is gone and is now in the past, bring a difficult situation to mind. Remember what happened, from beginning to end. Watch and observe your mind and your behavior as you replay the situation. Use all the techniques and abilities of mindfulness that you have learned in order to dis-identify with those feelings and actions as much as possible, to simply watch and observe dispassionately.

Now think about the disadvantages and harmful nature of the negative responses that took place during that situation. Think about how you felt while being impatient and angry. Did you feel happy? Comfortable? At peace? When that angry feeling led to angry words and actions, what effect did that have on you? On others around you? Did it make them happy?

Did it make the situation easier? Did the angry behavior help bring the situation to a positive solution? Did it help everyone, yourself and the others included, to feel good and understand each other better?

Now think about how you might have handled the situation differently, with a calm, balanced, and open attitude, without anger or impatience or resentment. Think about how your and others' experience of the situation might have been completely different. Generate a strong feeling of how extraordinary it would be to be able to manage difficult situations, just like this one, with a calm and peaceful mind, uncontrolled by anger and agitation.

Now replay the entire situation in your mind, from beginning to end, imagining it completely differently. Relive the situation and imagine yourself reacting perfectly, with warmth and openness toward the other people, with calm and balance and without any anger or agitation. Imagine how the situation might have played itself out in this totally different way. Is the outcome different? How do you feel about yourself at the end of the interchange? Pleased or disappointed? What kind of experience do others have in your replay? Positive or negative?

Make a strong determination that the next time you encounter difficulties that try your patience, you will take a breath and a step back and will try to respond with openness and patience, as you did in your meditation, keeping your mind under control and out of the control of anger. In addition, make a strong determination that each time you find yourself responding with impatience, agitation, and anger in the future, you will practice this same meditation in order to gradually overcome those negative response patterns and train the mind to respond with kindness, balance, and patience.

Dedication

Finally, dedicate your positive energy and insights to the well-being and happiness of yourself and all living beings.

Colophon:

Composed by Ven. Connie Miller based on the teachings of Lama Zopa Rinpoche.