

Problems on the path, The Five Hindrances:

The Centered Path, Part 6 of the Buddhist Basics (Sattipathana sutta)

Thus I have heard-

In meditation we are attempting to have an unshakable and calm mind. These five can slow our practice... Here are the five main things that can frustrate your progress and their antidotes. Reflection into the source of them is generally the antidote, and this is no small task! This may be a lasting part of your practice you chip away at over a very long time.

1. Desire or clinging to this way or that. There are beautiful objects of the senses. Recollect the six sense doors: The untrained 'monkey' mind is pure id, it wants, it must, it always... and never... To begin to tame this we can; Meditate on impure objects to release our attachment to what we think is pure. When enamored with food for example, realize what it will become through the process of digestion and elimination. Guard the sense doors, (sight, sound, smells, tastes, touches and thoughts) Seek moderation in food, drink, and conversation. Seek and keep good friends.

Look at what you desire, why are you dissatisfied? Always wanting more or new things? When you find the root of these, desire will fade. Impermanence and change are good focuses...

2. Ill Will, Aversion, anger, hatred. Giving unwise attention to ill will, we can become engulfed in them. The way to liberate ourselves from this are... Cultivate loving kindness and ill will disappears, cultivate compassion and cruelty disappears, Cultivate sympathetic joy (joy for others achievements) and listlessness will fade, Cultivate equanimity and anger will disappear. Know that you alone are the owner and heir of your actions and thoughts.

Are you jealous? Have too much pride? What is the cause and can you understand the conditions of others again (impermanence, change etc) Practice sympathetic joy!

3. Sleepiness, sloth, laziness: Mainly overeating can cause this, also boredom and disinterest. Attend your posture during meditation, Think of the perception of light, stay in an open air place, not stuffy, with good friends and maintain suitable conversation that will not bore you. Study impermanence and you can see the danger of being lazy and not let life pass you by. Acknowledge your sheer luck in being born a human in this life with enough smarts to even attempt meditation and contemplation.

What makes you disinterested? Is it boredom? Why or how have you become bored? Are you ill and need to take care of your health first? Look deeper and you can find the causes and let them go.

4. Restlessness and remorse: Again wanting what is not YET. In meditation we can become familiar with the teachings as an absorption. Also it is good to associate with those mature in age and experience and possess dignity, restraint and calm. Restlessness means the mind is not yet settled and mature and it is the proper time to cultivate tranquility, concentration, and equanimity. Be still... Think of the simili of the pot of water.

Stress, illness, lack? Loneliness? Begin with the body-scan and work on letting go of what you discover. Deeply understand concepts like change, attachment, desire and greed...

5. Doubt: This is from a lack of confidence in our practice. We may understand what we should be doing and be a little too hard on ourselves about it. Doubt, if focused on unwisely can lead you to abandon your progress. It is good to study deeper and learn to ask questions both of yourself and others.

Where else is doubt in your life? See how it affects you and holds you back. Doubt is healthy as it helps you come up with more important questions and can help you delve deeper into yourself.