

November 25th 2014 - Summary of the Practice Period
Jean LaValley

8 PM

**Our (any) practice period is an opportunity to deepen our practice, both individually and as a community, as a sangha. To practice intentionally both on the cushion *and* off the cushion. All of the talks we've given and all of the small group discussions we've had come back to these themes.

Ultimately, everything we do and everything we think IS practice. We're always practicing something. Concentration practice cultivates steadiness of the mind. Chronic complaining cultivates anger and ill-will. Constant daydreaming we are practicing distraction. Practicing unconditional friendliness leads to happiness and calm. MN19: whatever one frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of the mind

- Gladdening the Heart: Freeing the Mind from the Hindrances -
We hope that this has been a focus on topic as well as attitude

**Why did we decide to study the hindrances, the mental states of sense desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse and doubt.

Because

---these mind states are common visitors. They are frequent and often habitual. These visitors cloud our mind. Visitors cause suffering. Engaging with these visitors and working with our attitude towards these visitors is a major part of anyone's practice, both on and off the cushion.

----these mind states are hindrances because they take us out of the present moment. The stories we generate as a reaction to the hindrance leads to pre-occupation - our mind is "occupied", not with the present, but with our story around this the ill will or restlessness. Or we may be occupied with our planning about what to DO about this.

----the hindrances color our perceptions, our view of a situation, our analysis of a situation. AND then our perceptions affect our actions. So if we feel irritated or resentful, we are more likely to act in a way congruent with irritation and resentment, which will often lead to actions we regret and/or actions that were not really warranted.

**We've talked frequently about the importance of intention, of being aware of what you want, what you want to focus on, what you might want to practice or cultivate. And the importance of identifying *how* we want to cultivate whatever it is. And the importance of committing, to putting energy towards our intention.

Right intentions, at their core, are the intentions to practice generosity, renunciation, non-

ill-will, unconditional friendliness, clear seeing, and compassion

Here's a bit of dialogue about intention & what happens when there isn't clear intention:

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where--" said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

"--so long as I get SOMEWHERE," Alice added as an explanation.

"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough."

Lewis Carroll in Thru the Looking Glass

So...the reasons to pay attention to the hindrances, attitude & intention

John and Mary gave us an overview of the Gradual Training: the gradual training is a description of the practices that lead to insight and awakening. The GT makes clear that it is much easier to abandon the hindrances when one guards the sense doors, is mindful - that is to say know *what* you are doing/thinking and *why* you are doing it, practice & cultivate contentment. John and Mary gave us a most helpful table, which will be? available on our website. And Steve will discuss this in more detail.

Overall, "what is the work that needs to be done? Answer: "It is the re-shaping of the habits of our mind."

Steve - does slide show review

Questions to discuss in small groups

1. which of the hindrances is the most challenging for you? Please discuss/give examples
2. Consider setting an intention to work with one hindrance for a while (a month, 3 months?) Choose 1 of the tools that we have been discussing as your primary way of working. Talk about that in your group.

8:45 Iris & Geneva lead us in taking the refuges, first in English, then in Pali.