

## Working with Sense Desires Handout

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1. Check your attitude toward desires
2. Remind yourself of the refuges: you have the support, call on the support
3. Gradual Training:
  - a. Trust
  - b. Moral Discipline (precepts: 5 or 8)
  - c. Guarding the Sense Doors (don't pick it up)
  - d. Mindfulness and Clear Knowing: Being aware of "I want"; How does it feel in the body?
    - i. RAIN practice (Recognize, Allow, Investigate, Non-identification)
  - e. Contentment: Wanting what you have, gratitude practice
4. Notice how many desires arise in a meditation
5. Attention on the ugly
6. Study the desire: is there a better way to well being?
7. List the disadvantages of pursuing the desire and/or of attaining the desire
8. Redouble your intention
9. Look for what's underlying the desire. What's the catalyst?
10. Notice when you let go of desire: the sukka (and maybe also the causes and conditions)
  - a. Feel the cling, drop the thing. Feel the release, know the peace. And when the cling returns again, don't be defeated, repeat as needed.
11. Notice positive desires
12. Remind yourself of the larger goal: freedom, inner well-being. And notice when you feel it. Study it too!

### Discussion Questions:

What is a sticky desire for you? What of these methods might you like to try this week for dealing with it?

What are some positive desires? And, positive sensual desires? What makes them positive?

When were you able to let go of a desire successfully and why do you think you were able to?

## Notes from Sense Desire talk:

### Hindrances:

**What the five are:** sense desire, ill will or aversion, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, doubt.

Week 1 we heard about the refuges, the precepts and intention and we will come back to that in relation to the hindrances

Week 2 we heard about the gradual path -- the ways the Buddha outlined to grapple with the hindrances. And we will come back to that and apply it to today's topic as well.

Hindrances get in our way. Desires can get in our way:

- hinder our ability to meditate, to have a settled mind
- hinder our ability to concentrate on and off the cushion
- impede our peace of mind, our sense of well-being on the cushion or off.
- hinder our freedom
- hinder our ability to have joy
- Occupy our mind or pre-occupy

Desire:

2 responses might be:

- get rid of, squelch, prevent.
- Or, protest and say, especially of sense desire: why not enjoy life and what it has to offer?

Ultimately our goal:

- to not be hindered by them, to be less caught up. To find a greater joy in being free of their pull. "Emancipate yourself from mental slavery!" -- chasing the desire can be consuming! And like John said -- we can get drunk with it, under the influence of.
- And we can use them as **an avenue for understanding. Study, don't try to get over quickly. Work with them. "What is in the way is the way."**

"They are not hindrances if they do not interfere with your concentration, wisdom, clarity, stability what you want to do in your life or what you're about -- they might even be supportive." Gil Fronsdal

Desire: may not be a hindrance

Buddhism is not anti-desire

## **Sense desire or Sensual desire:**

**Seeing:** Wanting better lighting in a restaurant. Me on my first meditation retreat and the woman in front who was a monolith -- I wanted to see! Wanting a view, being attracted to pornographic images.

**Hearing:** wanting quiet. Wanting to not hear the neighbors dogs barking. Needing to be plugged in to music. Good sounds versus not good sounds.

**Smell:** Smells leading to other craving: smelling popcorn leads to need/want to eat it. Or, not wanting to smell something bad)

**Taste:** Chocolate, fritos, pizza, ice cream. Even when it is simplified with limited choices, still attachments: the fruit at Goenka retreats and the elaborate fruit salads people made out of very few options.

**Related: Hunger:** Bananas at the retreat -- occupied my mind in the sit before our evening tea and fruit. And then there were no bananas! BUT, I was able to let it go pretty easily. I was equipped.

I had some resistance to John's quote last week. ... when a monk eats, he is to keep in mind that he "takes this food not for fun, intoxication, or putting on bulk, but only for the maintenance of the body to support the holy life." .

One of the joys on retreat is mindful eating. Yes, some anticipation, but joy without desire. And gratitude.

**I think that Buddhism isn't saying: unenjoy things.** Though sometimes it seems like it: "The primary antidote for overcoming arisen sensual desire is careful attention to an unattractive object."

**I think the crux is:** enjoy things our senses bring to us in the moment without the extraneous attachments, without the previewing and reviewing and the obsession and compulsion.

**Touch:** soft clothing, comfortable chair -- wanting to comfortable we've experienced in meditation retreats.

**Sexual desire.** Sticky for lay people who have sexual relationships. Monks: following a path of celibacy: makes sense to not feed that desire. Make it easier. But, it can still pop up (TNH

falling in love with a nun). And for householders: we are married, we have romantic, partnered relationships or we want relationships. So... maybe it's trickier. And, maybe we can talk about that more in some future talk

**Mind:** fantasizing, learning. Needing to google something. Needing to know. Wanting to be the person who knows. Sometimes in meditation: I just sorta let myself want to think about something for a while. Reliving a pleasant experience, conversation on the cushion -- just for a bit. Learning itself seems like a good think. It may be good, but how we HOLD it might not be.

Not all of the desires are bad! Many can be good. (We will come back to that.)

Other beyond the senses, desires:

**Experiences:** Traveling in Nicaragua with the circuit and the Lonely Planet book. I'm not really doing traveling right unless I go here and see this.

**Craving craving:** creating longings because of the temporary satisfaction we get in satisfying them. Though as we know from the Robert Wright [ lectures, it's really the anticipation of the satisfying that is the boon, not even the actual satisfying them. When you are heading to get ice cream and choosing your flavor, you get a bigger boost than when you are eating it.

How can we deal with Sense Desires:

**1. Attitude:**

Like the stress resources in my EDPL class: Supportive family, supportive friends, groups we belong to (Sangha).

Inner strengths: Your confidence in your ability to handle, Your religious beliefs, your beliefs about yourself as a person (self-compassion), your views on change. Cultivating awareness and choice.

**A stress hardy person sees stress as a challenge and takes an active role in dealing.**

Attitude is all the difference: Kelly McGonigal's Ted Talk

[http://www.ted.com/talks/kelly\\_mcgonigal\\_how\\_to\\_make\\_stress\\_your\\_friend?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_mcgonigal_how_to_make_stress_your_friend?language=en)

**It's not like we want to invite Stress in; but if it comes, can we deal.** And it can be a good thing: if we have an attitude: something I can handle, something I can work with. A challenge and if we have the confidence to deal with it. And it even creates a chemical to help us deal with stress -- it self-creates an avenue out: Oxytocin (the cuddle hormone) -- seek out others

Stress is not nec a bad thing. Desire is not nec a bad thing either.

What if we had that attitude toward desires? I have the resilience to deal with it? I have the resources?

When life's temptations come at you you can be discerning. When the world comes in as it does through our senses, we can deal better. And it can't just be intention. There has to be resources to deal, which comes through practice.

2. We create some conditions that make it easier, like the stress examples. Refuges: Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. The Historical buddha or the buddha nature in us: Self-Confidence, our potential! and self-compassion, Faith in the Practice and teachings, People (and choosing the people -- friend, family, sangha, other groups)
3. The gradual path:
  - a. Trust/Faith is the first
  - b. Moral Discipline: the precepts
    - i. Abstain from killing or harming
    - ii. From taking what is not freely given
    - iii. from sexual misconduct
    - iv. from false or frivolous speech
    - v. from intoxicants which cloud the mind
    - vi. not eating after noon or outside the proper time;
    - vii. not indulging in dancing, singing, instrumental music or other forms of entertainment (these days, he would have included TV, the radio, movies, reading purely for entertainment, etc.) not wearing perfumes, cosmetics, jewelry, etc.
    - viii. not sleeping or lounging on luxurious beds.
  - c. Guarding the Sense Doors: Sense restraint. Not allowing sights, sounds, smells, thoughts to trigger craving.
    - i. On retreat or for monks: maybe easier. But, there are things we can do.
    - ii. Not to grasp at the details: Not get interested, not pick it up. A desire in meditation. People magazine at the doctor's office. Don't turn on the TV. (Hide the remote -- Shawn Achor, Harvard.)
    - iii. *Avoid advertisements that may create a craving we didn't have. Or shopping. Or having chocolate in the house. Or if we have a sticky thing. Unwise attention to certain things, it inclines our mind to want more. Lay's potato chips: you can't eat just one. Porn: mind has pictures and wants more...*

- d. Mindfulness and Clear Knowing. Knowing what you are doing and why. This can help us just be AWARE of our desires. And, perhaps the intensity of them. (And, can also provide some humor.)
  - i. Mindfulness of body: how does this desire feel in my body? This can be in your mind then instead of the desire (from John's talk)
  - ii. RAIN:
    1. Recognize what is happening (this may include layers, physical sensations)
    2. Allow it to be just as it is (yes, this too "let it be"). It may pass with just these
    3. Stickier, recurring need: Investigate with kindness  
Investigation means calling on your natural interest—the desire to know truth—and directing a more focused attention to your present experience. Simply pausing to ask, "What is happening inside me?" might initiate recognition, but with investigation you engage in a more active and pointed kind of inquiry. You might ask yourself: "What most wants attention?" "How am I experiencing this in my body?" or "What am I believing?" or "What does this feeling want from me?" You might contact sensations of hollowness or shakiness, and then find a sense of unworthiness and shame buried in these feelings. Unless they are brought into consciousness, these beliefs and emotions will control your experience and perpetuate your identification with a limited, deficient self.
    4. Not self: This is not me. Or Natural Awareness. The result of the first three.
    5. Source: Tara Brach  
<http://www.tarabrach.com/articles/RAIN-WorkingWithDifficulties.html>
  - e. Contentment: Living simply, moderation. "Want what you have" Gratitude practice for what you have. My mom in her struggle with recovery after her operation.
- 4. To prime yourself for noticing desires, you might Try noticing how many desires arise in a meditation.
- 5. Unattractive object. Gil Fronsdal: the unappetizing parts of the body meditation. 32 parts of the body. DISCERNMENT: Might help with lust and sexual desire that is not beneficial: an inappropriate person or time. But, not on your honeymoon.
- 6. Study the Desire. Sensual pleasure is fleeting and temporary. Perhaps there are better forms of well being and happiness. Is this really what I want?

7. Notice the downsides, disadvantages of having the desire or fulfilling your desire: if I get this job, then I won't have as much vacation. But do we want to do this? Not always! If I practice meditation then I won't have time for X.  
Disadvantages of the pursuit -- notice that. Romantic love. I had a housemate who was falling in love and said You know, falling in love basically generates the same physical feelings as being broken hearted. You have trouble sleeping, eating, obsessive thoughts and feelings. You want the other person, to be with them. In the first, you're getting your desire fulfilled in the second you're not. "Love sickness" But, would most of us turn away from falling in love if it was offered to us? How can we do it without getting too sick?
7. Intention: on the cushion or off: don't go there. Amp up the inner determination. Use your name to get you rolling. "Come on, Mare, we aren't going there now." Think of your larger motives for meditating: to gain wisdom, compassion.
8. What's underneath? What's the catalyst for the desire? Discomfort. Loneliness. To escape uncomfortable situations: escape through entertainment, with sex, drugs, alcohol. This won't help in the big pic.
9. Philip Moffit on craving and noticing when you let go. Notice the freedom you feel when you let go. Feel the cling, drop the thing. Feel the release, know the peace. And when the cling returns again, don't be defeated, repeat as needed.
10. Recognize beneficial, positive desires. Or recognize when you are enjoying something and not attached. Why? What aided you in enjoying and not being attached? I want to hear them!
11. Cultivate a stronger pleasure or sense of well-being that is not sensual. Instead of trying to repress or deny sense pleasure, you cultivate something better. You have these granola bars and yeah, it's fine. But, chocolate cake comes along. And it's easier to let go of the crackers. It's a greater pleasure. Not dependent on senses being stimulated. Arise out of concentration and stability. Mind isn't chasing, fragmented by desire. This is better. To have freedom and sense of well being regardless of what's happening with our senses and our desires. You can remind yourself in meditation: not the fantasy, but you're willing to continue with meditation. Discover a sense of inner well being. Not dependent on things being one way or another. If your happiness is dependent on something outside yourself, you will be living like a teenager (a teenager who doesn't meditate) -- big ups and downs! You can choose to not be caught. And you can choose when to pursue them when appropriate.

#### **RESOURCES:**

**Gil Fronsdal on the Hindrances:** <http://www.audiodharma.org/series/1/talk/1808/>