

Meditation 21

Alternating Exploring the Nature of Emotions with Rest

Identify the emotion uppermost in your mind without getting lost in the story in which it appears. Ask yourself questions such as, “What’s the emotion? Is it real? Is it a thing I can find somewhere?”

If you can’t find it, let go of the effort, and rest the mind. The intellectual effort to find becomes an experience of not finding, and, in that not finding, something begins to clarify: ultimately, there’s nothing there, despite the vividness and intensity with which it appears.

Your mind may then become stirred up. “Am ‘I’ in the not finding? Am I finding something—a vibration, energy, or color—and is that the emotion? Is it inside the mind or outside?”

In this process, examine and analyze the emotion. Use effort to see if it has a color, a shape, or a size—because we’re habituated to things having features. After spending some time trying to find it, let go of the effort, and let it sink in that you can’t find this thing that’s causing such pain and disturbance in your mind, your life, and, on a larger scale, all the disharmony in the world.

Each time you search for the emotion and don’t find it, your heart can open a little more to an experience of more space, more compassion. Rest in that openness—love, compassion, the genuine wish for the welfare of others. Let that sink in without effort or thought, and rest in that awareness. When the mind starts churning again, think of everyone else struggling with similar emotions who don’t know what to do with them. Again, rest the mind, and then use effort to change the emotion. Keep going back and forth between effort and rest for the duration of the meditation session.