

Detachment

In this teaching I wish to share examples of clinging to; desires, emotions, expectations and the rewards of our actions. These are all ways in which attachment can cause needless dis-ease, pain and suffering. And in this teaching I hope to communicate ways to begin your journey of freeing yourself from this clinging and attachment.

Attachment causes suffering. In my earlier days. Making sure I had enough cigarettes rolled for the event or the day, having my coffee fix in the morning, then making sure I had access to alcohol in the afternoon and evenings. Not to mention attachment to the drama of life that comes with partying and hanging out with others with highly addictive natures, catching rides here and there. And trying to keep a marriage intact with all this. Life was a total stress ball. The first thing I gave up was cigarettes. It was tough at first but then I remember the wonderful **freedom** of not having to do the whole buy and roll my own cigarette thing. Oh and not having to worry about getting a break from work or a social engagement so that I could go outside and puff away. I was becoming freer.

Addiction is attachment, addiction in suffering. Ram Dass, a well known spiritual preceptor, tells a famous anecdote about the way you catch a monkey in India. You drop a handful of nuts into a jar with a small opening, he explained. The monkey puts his hand into the jar, grabs the nuts, and then finds that he can't get his fist out through the opening. If the monkey would just let go of the nuts, he could escape and be free. But he won't. Attachment leads to suffering, Ram Dass concluded. It's as simple as that: Detachment leads to freedom. Addiction is the nuts in the jar. We know what we need to do but we just can't let go. And the more we try and fail, the more we become attached to whatever we are grasping.

Attachment is a mental state. It is not the objects themselves that are the problem or the karma. The nuts are not the problem for the monkey. It is the mind and attachment to the thoughts that monkey needs the nuts that is the problem. Having coffee in the morning and a glass of wine in the evening is not the problem, it is the mind's attachment to the coffee and wine that is the cause of suffering.

Clinging to thoughts about the way things were or ways thing ought to be is attachment. I was on vacation on the North Shore with some people years ago. We checked out of our cabin and headed to Betty's Pies like we did every year. Breakfast at Betty's, what a perfect way to end the vacation before we parted. When we got there somewhat after 11 am, breakfast was no longer being served and the lunch menu was being handed out. One person of our group started arguing with the waitress that "we come here every year and always have breakfast, this can't be." The waitress said that the kitchen had already switched over. But that wasn't enough, this person actually suggested we go somewhere else because they would not serve us breakfast. The rest of us were like "we are hungry, we are staying. Betty's Pie is our place." This person clung to their story the entire meal and for years later. That is suffering. That is really needless suffering.

We cling and attach to emotions. Emotions arise in the mind and instead of processing the emotion and maybe going a bit deeper to see the origin of the emotion, we cling to them, we name them, we bring up in the mind the old stories that are attached to this emotion. We feed the emotion. The stories go around and around in our mind over and over producing more emotion and producing more karma. It can become an endless cycle. How do we end this needless suffering and endless mind-loop of old stories? Mindfulness. Mantra: Om Shanti, shanti, shanti. Sit quietly, turn off the TV, turn off the mind, reflect and process. Become Self Aware: Notice what thoughts you cling to.

Another type of attachment is expectations for ourselves. As a wood-fired potter, the process of clay to finished pot is a very long process. When I first starting potting and firing, I had all these expectations of what the pot would look like coming out of the firing. Around the first few firings, when I opened the kiln, my pots did not look exactly how I wanted them to and I got so down and was ready to quit pottery! I hated the pots. I set them aside on some back shelves and thought that the whole firing and all my effort was a failure. Then after a few weeks, I walking by the pots and started to look a bit closer at the pottery ware and little by little, week by week, I thought, "well, these aren't so bad." Once I let go of the expectation of how I thought they should look, I found the beauty in the pottery ware. And I eventually found the beauty in wood firing where pottery pieces come out looking unique every time. At this point I chose not to be attached to outcome but instead let each piece be a

surprise. It was so fun and somewhat like Christmas and opening gifts where you have no idea what is under the wrapping paper! Detachment through pottery was a huge and surprising element in my spiritual growth. Who knew that we live our lives so dang attached to the end product.

Attachment to how we think others should respond to us or our actions or even attachment to how we think others should live, causes needless suffering. How often do we do for another or gift someone and they are not as excited by the gift as you are? You feel so disappointed that they did not absolutely LOVE what you gave them or did for them. You spent a lot of time on getting them the perfect gift! This is another form of attachment to how you think people should feel and act. People will be people and do not necessarily respond or behave in the ways we like them to. But **if you are truly sincere about your deed or gift as unconditional friendship or love, the receiver of the gift can feel that and that is better than the gift or deed in itself.** And if that is not the case than sometimes we just have to detach from the person themselves. And that does not mean ignore them or not be friends with them, it means let them live their life. Om Shanti, shanti, shanti. Let them work out their own karma when the time is right. And you can just be present with them in your own love for all life and kindness for all life. This leads to Spiritual Detachment.

Spiritual Detachment is not clinging to the rewards of the action. This is a pretty big stuff. I just saw a post on FB about a person who spent like 500 hours on a quilt to give to their best friends son. The best friend returned the quilt saying that this was not at all in the sons idea of cool and would not use it. Well, what do you think? The article said responses were split in half about the best friend giving the quilt back.

Spiritual detachment would mean that if the person who made the quilt was sincere in wanting to please the son by gifting the quilt then it is done. Whether the son liked the quilt or not, the person making the quilt remains detached from the outcome. Karma would say if your intention was loving, its done. UNLESS of course you get upset because the quilt was returned. But that is not spiritual detachment. Spiritual detachment would say “oh do you know someone else who would enjoy that quilt, please pass it on. And then detach from what happens to the quilt. Spiritual detachment lets go of the rewards of the action.

Spiritual detachment is giving \$5000 to the Girl Scouts, not to get your name in the paper, but because you truly want to give to the Girl Scouts. When you begin to mature spiritually you begin to do things for the sake of doing rather than for the rewards.

How can we begin to find freedom in detachment? Kriya practices and meditation lay the ground work in our everyday lives to promote detachment. They promote self-awareness which allows us to begin to see our attachments to outcomes, things and emotions. Once we see how our attachments cause suffering rather than freedom, we can begin the process of healing. Our ‘Full Presence Self-Awareness’ practice lets us sit with emotions and let them dissolve so we can see what needs to be done. So a daily practice of just sitting with ourselves in quiet, non judgmental self-awareness is the beginning of detachment of our emotional mind.

Other practices that move us slowly but surely into detachment are:

- Do a kind deed for a stranger or for someone you would not ordinarily reach out to, without telling anyone.
- Practice surrendering to the process of doing something and letting the end result be a surprise. Love the journey. Try a new recipe or art project and let the finished project be completely new to you and a surprise.
- Give to the food shelf cash in an unsigned envelope, telling no one.
- Notice when you are clinging to an emotion and stop to sit with that emotion until it dissolves. Universal and unconditional love and compassion are not emotions. They are feeling states. Know the difference between emotions and feeling states. I always remember that emotions are feeling states hijacked by judgment.
- Whistle while you clean the kitty liter. Find joy in all you do (*yetna*). Detachment from the rewards, the minds desires and the emotionality. There is truly much to be happy for.

Aham Brahmasmi!!

Om shanti, shanti, shantih!!