

# Restraining the Mind

..... source unknown (adapted and written by Amy Fox)

One day, one of Buddhas top disciples was on his alms rounds, collecting money for the poor when a group of Hindu priests saw him in the distance. They balked at how honorable, noble and patient this disciple was. They were jealous and enraged that he was so highly regarded by the Buddha.

One of the priests said he wanted to test the disciple's patience and so he slowly went behind the disciple and he struck him harshly on his back.

The disciple continued on his alms rounds, never once turning around to see who stuck him.

*Unbelievable*, thought the priest. And so he snuck behind him and struck him again. But the disciple simply continued on his alms rounds.

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The priest was stunned. And then he became stricken with guilt. He had just stuck this honorable disciple not once, but twice! He felt so guilty that he rushed up to the disciple and apologized.

"Why are you apologizing to me?" said the disciple.

"Because it was I who hit you," said the priest.

The disciple looked at the priest, smiled at him and said, "I forgive you."

The priest felt even more guilty and said, "Please, if you really forgive me, come to my house and I will prepare a meal for you there."

And the disciple agreed.

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The disciple went to the priest's house and had dinner and gave a dharma talk.

Meanwhile the news that the priest had struck the honorable disciple spread through the town like wildfire. Villagers near and far came to the priest's house with torches and clubs ready to attack the priest.

As he finished his talk, the disciple noticed the armed villagers outside the priest house and he and the priest went outside.

The villagers clamored for the disciple to move aside.

"But why?" asked the disciple.

"We wish to beat the priest for striking you not once, but twice!" they yelled.

"I see," said the disciple, "but there is no use for you here. I have forgiven him. You have not been attacked. So you should all go home."

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The villagers stood there unsure of what to do. They wanted to right the wrong of the disciple, but here was this honorable disciple telling them to all go home.

Seeing the confusion in the crowd, the disciple said, "Shame on the man who hits another and greater shame on the one who sets his anger loose. Restraining our the mind is the most important of all because whenever one turns away from the intent to harm, suffering is avoided for all."

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

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### OPENING CLASS

In our practice of yoga or on our journey of life, things won't always be smooth sailing.

There's moments our quiet solitude of class is interrupted by someone coming in late. There's days we wake up with destructive thoughts about our body. There's times when we'll find ourselves in our feelings over a person or situation and allow resentment to run the show.

Notice how you've arrived in your physical body. What areas feel tense or tight? Notice your mental body. Where is your mind preoccupied in this moment?

Start to deepen your breath. Breathe to create space around your sticky and tight places. Breathe to create space between the thoughts. Breathe to open the places that feel closed and to energize the places that feel stuck.

### DURING CLASS

The Buddha taught that there are 5 Hinderances, or negative mental states, that will interfere with, obstruct or impede our progress on the path.

One of the 5 Hinderances of yoga is ill will. Ill will is when we have angry, unkind or destructive thoughts towards someone, a situation or our self.

When ill will is present, it's like an all-consuming fire. We can't concentrate on anything else but the anger, jealousy, resentment or pride that burns within us.

Notice yourself in this shape. What's coming up for you? Are you resisting where you are, or are you accepting of how it feels? Are you putting up walls or are you breathing to break down barriers?

### CLOSING CLASS

Ill will is a dangerous hindrance and it's the product of seperatedness. We see ourselves separate from our life. We see others as different than ourselves. When we lose sight of the connectedness of things – all living things – we can easily fall into this trap.

See where you can pull yourself back into your heart. Notice where you can expand the container of your heart space.

The remedy – the antidote – to ill will is compassion because everything that love touches, it transforms.

This week, where is your love needed?

### EXTRAS

*"If you want to be happy, practice compassion."*

– The Dalai Lama