

The Monkey Trap

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

There was once a famous teacher who took his pupils into a clearing in the forest that was known as a home for wild monkeys. There he took a hollow gourd with a small hole and inserted sweetened rice, a favorite treat of monkeys. Then he chained the gourd to a stake and waited with his class behind a large bush.

Soon a very large monkey approached. The monkey sniffed the rice, inserted his paw and screeched in frustration when he was unable to withdraw his clutched paw through the narrow opening.

The monkey's scream traveled throughout the jungle and it wasn't long before a leopard approached.

The students who were watching the whole event transpire yelled for the monkey to let go of the rice and run.

The teacher instructed them to be patient and watch and so they did.

The monkey in his hunger for the rice, refused to let go and because he refused to let go, he was eaten by the leopard.

The students watched puzzled and confused.

"What was the trap that killed the monkey?" asked the teacher.

"Rice," said one student.

"The gourd," said another.

"No," replied the wise teacher. "The trap was greed."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

OPENING CLASS

In the Yoga Sutras, Pantanjali describes five mental hindrances that distract our mind: craving, aversion, sloth, restlessness or worry, and doubt.

While these qualities of the mind are obstacles that prevent us from living in the present moment, they are also a powerful tool for self-study as each obstacle gives us an opportunity to break through the veil of illusion so that we might reconnect with our true self.

Notice how you've arrived on your mat. Maybe it's energetically heavy and there's a feeling of lethargy. Maybe your energy is really amped up and you feel restless and being in this still state causes agitation. Simply notice if any of the five hinderances are present for you...

As soon as we get entangled in thought and emotion, we're bound to find a hinderance in our mind...but if we can find our breath, we can come back to this moment... Start to deepen your breath here.

Allow the sound of your breath to overtake this space and remove a layer of doubt. Take another inhale, push out the exhale, peel back another layer of craving...See where your next inhale can lift you up...is it an arm that fans open? Is it a leg that extends? Next exhale, find a shape, release something, deepen somewhere....

CLOSING CLASS

When we let go of an enemy of the mind, when we seek its counter state, we transform the enemy into deep wisdom and profound truth.

What are you giving your power to and where can you create a shift this week?

DURING CLASS

Before Telling the Story

The enemies of our mind are easy traps to fall into. Notice what's present for you...what you're giving your power to...

After Telling the Story

The trap is what hooks you because if you have to control it, it controls you.

Most of the traps we find ourselves in are self-created. We hold on for dear life to things that don't serve us well. We hold on to past mistakes; we cling to the privilege of being right; we won't let go of anger and resentment; we become attached to material things that are of little value; and we often put our attachment to possessions ahead of our own well-being.

But if we want to be truly at peace and happy, we need to examine what we're holding.

What are you holding onto at this moment?

EXTRAS

This lesson provides a great opportunity for your students to examine where the five enemies of the mind are present in their life on and off the mat. Beyond noticing the enemies of the mind, ask them to take note of when they appear: when is craving most apparent? When are they more inclined to feel doubt? Are there any patterns that make these enemies more evident?