

Review on difficult emotions: noticing that much of the time when we find we have moved away from the present moment, it is because we are avoiding painful or unpleasant feelings or thoughts, such as anxiety anger about something going on.

To boil down the teaching around difficult emotions: to come back, to turn and be present with the things we want to avoid.

Every tool in the insight tradition works on this principle: staying with, not following the energetic reactions and resistant thought patterns that want to move away from unpleasant emotions.

Looked at the three things that arise together (emotion, aversion, observer), understanding that the emotion is not all the attempts to get away from or fix it.

CONNECTING TO THE SPIRITUAL HEART

Right concentration - Thich Nat Hanh: to live deeply in the moment.

Embodying right concentration: the returning to the moment.

It's common to experience right concentration, the returning to the present moment, as an action of mental will. This tends to be a head experience, appearing to be centered in the space behind the eyes. It feels grounding to the mind, but can be somewhat abstract, disconnected, not felt in the body, sort of experiencing the body as a 'head on a stick'.

Samadhi includes another piece: connecting to the spiritual heart, which is embodied and has no sense of disconnection. The awareness of concentration needs to descend into the body, into the heart.

This emotionally felt aspect of samadhi is the such-ness or is-ness, feeling the unity of everything, the deep connection with all life.

These more sublime emotions come from the spiritual heart, which encloses the emotional heart.

We will introduce practice with this tonight.

The emotional heart feels the day to day emotions connected with duality, we are all familiar with this. A million emotions a day pass through the heart, a Grand Central Station for being alive. We feel many emotions in the heart area, and it can be busy and turbulent. The emotional heart tends to close to pain, to wall itself off from feeling fear. We all know how painful this feels when our hearts are closed.

The spiritual heart is bigger than, and encloses, the emotional heart. The spiritual heart never closes. It never closes because it is the heart of unity, of everything being one, and without separation, there is no fear.

Without fear, there is no force that would prompt it to be less than fully open, fully accepting and without any resistance of any kind.

Because of this always-open and not-separate quality, the spiritual heart is unconditional love. If we understand love as seeing another as ourself, of feeling no distance from, fully embracing and acceptance, then we see this the essential nature of love.

The spiritual heart is where we can directly experience the unity of all existence and feel deeply connected to life. While it has no boundaries, it's best connected to in the general heart and chest area of the body.

The spiritual heart is usually dormant because it is a silent presence, and we are usually totally focused on the emotional heart, which feels the day to day ups and downs of the emotions generated by the psychological self, overwhelming the subtlety of the larger container.

It's important to find the heart in right concentration, so it doesn't become disembodied and separated from joy and connection.

HOMEWORK

ON THE CUSHION: PRACTICE NOTES:

Coming down into the body is an important part of allowing yourself to awaken to the spiritual heart. It is the direct felt sense of the essential sameness, the absolute intimacy with all existence.

Start by centering in the body.

Breathe in, Expand the breath to the entire body: the movement of life energy in every cell. Feel the aliveness of the body.

Breathe out, dropping into the heart area.

For the moment, don't focus on the emotional heart. Remember that the emotional heart lies within the bigger space of the spiritual heart. Notice and allow whatever emotions might be occurring in the emotional heart and let them be just whatever they are. de-focusing on the flow of emotional energies allows you to attend to something much more subtle than the emotional heart.

And that's how we miss the perception of the spiritual heart because it starts out of something quite subtle.

So drop into the heart area, and as you do so, notice the silence of the heart, which will be subtle and 'behind' any emotional experience. Drop behind, or into a larger space than your psychological feelings.

Rest your attention into the silence in the general area of the chest. The contact point with the spiritual heart is the sense of subtle presence that is evoked whenever you rest attention on the spiritual heart. Feel this quiet presence, just allowing awareness to drop into the heart, noticing it is already and always twill and open.

The spiritual heart never open and closes. The spiritual heart is bigger than the emotional heart. It's the heart that surrounds the emotional heart. It's vast, has no borders or boundaries. It has no inside and outside. The

spiritual heart is connected with the awareness that you are. In fact, it is so connected that it is not essentially different than awakened awareness.

Out of this flows a boundless and unconditional love. Its opens up the experience of unity, of Indira's net.. And a deep emotional capacity for unconditional love.

IN LIFE: Do this anytime you remember to do it during the day and see if you can retain some sense of presence in the heart while you go about your day. Notice any effect it might have as you interact with others, or in your sense of ease about yourself. Notice how you perceive the world around you.