

## **Working with physical and emotional pain:**

Here is a brief description of a very simplistic (but effective) perspective on working with strong sensations, both physical (including pain) and emotional.

The first step is to understand, that strong sensation in the body is one thing, it can be intense and unpleasant, however 'pain' is a separate reaction in your mind. These are discrete events though we rarely allow ourselves to observe this.

Pain is not your enemy, it is your body asking for LOVE. By that I mean treat it like a three year old, tugging at your leg wanting attention. If you fob them off, resent them, try to push them mentally away or pay them any less than your total attention they start to tug and wail a little louder..... So, when there is strong sensation, resist the temptation to go into thought, 'why is this here, I hate this pain, oh no this is just going to get worse and worse'. Instead, bring a loving softness to your attention and let the sensation be in your awareness, without judgement. When we open up to the truth of how we feel right now and give it a loving attention we can see the tension we surround it with, and now the task is to release this tension, firstly releasing the tension in your mind, and then the tension in your body and this directly releases the 'I don't like it mind' and allows you to rest in open, non-judgemental awareness of the sensation. Expect to do this many times.

So, as with a child, pain needs your 100% attention.

You need to become aware of the resentment the pain creates in your mind. This can be a series of thoughts or a grim / stoical determination to ignore it. Either way until you own up to the truth of how you feel about the pain you will not see the tension in your mind.

Once you do, release away from the mental activity (thoughts, determination, fear) caused by the pain and relax the tension, both in your mind and around the area that hurts. Then you need to send your awareness there and also a sense of loving kindness. As this occurs the area will become a little softer and your mind easier. And now you need to smile. It's not possible to frown whilst you are truly smiling (lift the corners of your mouth, and eyes). See how there is a binding or holding in the rest of your body and allow this to relax.

How to generate a sense of loving kindness.

At the very least, send your smile to the place where the sensation is strongest. When directing your attention don't resist or push either mentally or physically, but soften and smile.

As a general rule have an intelligent curiosity about all experience, a 'Let's see what is going on here'. What is the 'here'? It is

Sensations in the body

Emotions in the heart

Thoughts in the mind

Observe the turbulence of the heart without getting caught up. See the interconnection between all three and how each can fire off the others and then we have the possibility to take the suffering out of pain, and the indulgence out of pleasure which also causes suffering.

So in summary:

There is a strong sensation

We notice the binding / resistance in the body and the aversion as thought and tension in the mind

We smile, releasing from the thought (simply stop thinking it, pay it no more attention)

We send a soft loving attention to the area concerned allowing the sensation of resistance to soften and ease (it may well not go away, but your relationship to it has changed)

We relax the tension in our mind and body

We smile

We return to whatever was the object of our attention before the sensation distracted us.