

Living Beautifully Meditation Book Group Meeting 2 Homework
Saturday, October 27, 2012

1. Homework Suggestions

- a. *Get the rest you need*
- b. *Meditate for 10 minutes in the morning & evening*
 - i. *Try setting an intention & building the length of time*
- c. *Reflect on this week's reflection questions & try the exercises*
- d. *Consider journaling*
- e. *Suggested reading*
 - i. *Living Beautifully with Uncertainty & Change, Chapters 6, 7 & 8*

2. Reflection Questions & Exercises: Chapters 6, 7 & 8

- a. *Pema says the 1st Commitment (C) is all about refraining from speech & actions that are harmful to self & others. This includes the inner, mental dialog as well.*
 - i. *What have you noticed about your inner voice?*
- b. *Pema says the 1st C works with causes of suffering & brings about its cessation by allowing us to see our escape routes clearly so we can refrain from taking them.*
 - i. *In a way it's like treating the underlying symptoms of an illness or injury as opposed to merely treating symptoms with some form of medicine that may be a temporary, unsustainable treatment. Have you considered your tendency to treat symptoms rather their underlying causes?*
- c. *Pema describes the precepts (not to kill, steal, lie or engage in harmful sexuality) as being a form of outer renunciation that is important but unless we work with inner renunciation, i.e.; choosing not to escape the underlying feelings, the precepts could be just another way of propping up our fixed identity.*
- d. *Try Pema's inner renunciation practice:*
 - i. *For one day, refrain from something you habitually do to escape. Pick something concrete . . . over eating, excessive sleeping, over working, time texting, checking*

e-mails . . . Really commit to it. Do this with the intention that it will put you in touch with the underlying anxiety you've been avoiding.

- e. *P describes the Sojong practice that offers a way of reflecting on where you are in terms of refraining. We can ask ourselves:*
- i. *What have I done with my body?*
 - ii. *What have I done with my speech?*
 - iii. *What about my mind? Is it steady, present?*

We can share this with a trusted friend, a counselor, a spiritual advisor and then let it go. It's all about gaining clarity about mind, speech and actions as opposed to judging ourselves good or bad.

Consider your sources of support.

- f. *Pema suggests that before we make the 1st C we need to consider if we're ready to do something different. In order to not cause harm we first have to go through a growing up process in which we simply feel exactly what we're feeling when we feel it. A key support for this capacity is the practice of everyday mindfulness.*
- i. *P's teacher, Trungpa Rinpoche, referred to this as every day wakefulness or paying attention to all the details of your life. Can you try living an hour, a day or more with this intention? Can you use this practice as an opportunity to become aware of how you may be checking out?*
- g. *Pema says that the Buddhist teaching on the 8 Worldly Concerns describes our predicament by pointing out the ways we continually try to avoid uncertainty.*

Pleasure/Pain; Gain/Loss; Fame/Disgrace; Praise/Blame

Consider how these drives operate in your life.

h. Pema suggests that if we can stay present we might realize there's no security in winning or losing, compliments or criticism, etc. This C not to cause harm helps us build an unshakeable foundation of inner strength, which manifests as courage not to act out in the same old ways. When people make this C they begin to change.

i. Reflect on your desire to change. Are you willing to let go?

3. Other Resources

a. Pema's discourse on working with Shenpa (getting hooked):

i. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGrPz9fQWI8>

b. Tricycle Magazine interview, Death & Dying, with Rick Fields, poet, writer, and editor-in-chief of *Yoga Journal*

i. <http://www.utne.com/Mind-Body/Cancer-Death-and-Dying-Philosophy/1998-03-01/Archives.aspx?page=5>

c. Shambala Sun article, Blood, Bone, Space & Light, on the four foundations of mindfulness by Reginald Ray

i. http://www.shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2229&Itemid=0