

Questions for Reflection
Talk 4 Seriesm12

Here are four ideas for your reflection during the week:

1) First: Since it is our afflictive emotions and behaviors that cause all our suffering, for starters we need to know our own version of them. It might be useful to separate emotions from behaviors, so the questions to think about are "What are my predominant afflictive emotions and what are say two examples of behaviors that stem from each emotion named?" For example, if your afflictive emotion is pride, you would describe two situations in your life where your pride played a predominant role.

2) Second: Having identified your personal afflictive emotions and behaviors, could you make some plan slowly to work on them? For example, you might take one emotion to focus on and really think about this week and one habitual behavior associated with it that you will try to change for the better. Since real change happens gradually, you have to guage for yourself how soon to take on the next emotion and behavior. But try to make a plan or way to check back with yourself so the whole thing doesn't get lost.

3) Third: The consciousness that conceives of our intrinsic individual existence is what is known in Buddhism as "ignorance." This consciousness is considered the root cause of the afflictive emotions and behaviors that are troublesome. Please stop and take a moment to examine your own mind with regards to this "ignorance." We all have it but we wear it with different degrees of tightness. How tight or loose is your wearing of it? First get in touch with that consciousness, see how it manifests in you, and then guage for yourself how you wear it. (This is just about raising consciousness.)

4) Fourth: This exercise has two parts: a) Please take some moments throughout the week to look for your "I." It's important that you test this basic Buddhist tenet out and see for yourself if you can find it or not. Try a lot, not just a little. b) Please test out the Buddhist tenet that every effect has a cause. So any time, any where, take any thing, and see it as an effect. Then ask yourself what is the cause for that thing? Make it a habit. The more you understand the fundamental Buddhist tenet of cause and effect, the more forgiving you will be both of yourself and others.