Knowing A Mind Affected By Delusion

Andrea Fella · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Andrea Fella · 1:06:51

The possibility of our practice here is freedom. The Buddha used the term Nibbana, which literally, I understand, means cooling. He used this image of cooling a fire and talked about the patterns of greed, aversion, and delusion being like a fire burning in our hearts and minds. This image of cooling the fires of greed, aversion, and delusion is one of the simplest and, for me, one of the more inspiring definitions of freedom in the suttas: the extinguishing of greed, aversion, and delusion. That's the letting go of something. The Buddha also said that the experience in this very life of that extinguishing was a state of peace, free from mental pain and grief.

Now, that doesn't mean that the heart is not open and connecting. This is an important recognition and understanding—that the dropping away of greed, aversion, and delusion doesn't leave us as indifferent beings. In fact, it leaves room for a different kind of connection: the connection of a heart that is not contracted, that feels more deeply, that resonates in this world with compassion when there is suffering, that empathizes and experiences a resonant joy when there is joy, and that has this deep sense of connection.

We may not quite understand this freeing from greed, aversion, and delusion at first. Yet over time we may get little tastes of what this means and begin to trust that this direction is the direction of freedom.

Our work here, as we've been describing, is to get to know our minds, to get to know the entirety of our human experience. It's the getting to know part that creates the conditions for wisdom and understanding to transform greed, aversion, and delusion, to release them. From time to time, we may find ourselves in this space of non-constriction. Yet the way to that is by getting to know the constriction really well.

The Buddha called greed, aversion, and delusion the three root poisons of the mind—the three root fires, we could call them with our analogy this evening. Greed and aversion we have some experience with and have some degree of ability to recognize them, in their many different flavors. Yet delusion, by its very nature, is much harder to see. It is much harder to get to know delusion because it obscures itself.

Greed and aversion are more in the business of co-opting our minds to go along with them. With greed, there's this notion that getting what I want is going to make me happy—getting what I want, getting rid of what I don't want. Those energies are more clear to our minds because they're essentially trying to make us see things or do things or behave in certain ways. Yet the nature of delusion is to obscure, and so it is much harder to see.

In the Third Foundation of Mindfulness, which Jill read the other day, it points to simple instructions. I

really love the simplicity of the Third Foundation. The first half of it basically asks us to look at or recognize a mind affected by greed, understanding that a mind affected by greed is a mind affected by greed, and a mind unaffected by greed is a mind unaffected by greed. A mind affected by aversion is a mind affected by aversion. It's really just pointing to recognizing the experience of greed, the experience of aversion as an arising, as a phenomenon happening in the moment. And the absence—a mind unaffected by aversion is a mind unaffected by aversion. So we notice the presence and absence.

Likewise, one understands a mind affected by delusion as a mind affected by delusion. Right there it points to the possibility of recognizing delusion, of seeing it at work in our minds. And then recognizing a mind unaffected by delusion as a mind unaffected by delusion.

Delusion is the most fundamental of these three fires because it basically underlies greed and aversion. Greed and aversion don't exist without delusion. Yet it is possible to be deluded without greed and aversion being present. Greed and aversion can also create delusion. One form of delusion is seeing things through a particular perspective—not that we're not aware, but that we are aware with a particular perspective and are unaware that the mind is holding that perspective. We might be in a state of aversion and...

our mind becomes affected by aversion and then we see things through that lens.

At one point, one of my teachers asked me to scan through the body and notice what was obvious. What's the most obvious thing? And then what's the next most obvious, and the next most? I just let the mind land randomly on these experiences. When my teacher asked me to describe what I'd noticed—because he'd asked me to let it be choiceless, not that I was choosing, but just noticing what's obvious, what's the first thing that's obvious—when I reported to him, I said, "Well, I wasn't choosing, but it's clear to me that this wasn't choiceless, because every single experience that the mind landed on was unpleasant."

It was clear to me—I knew that my body was not nothing but unpleasant experience. And yet the mind was choosing unpleasant, highlighting unpleasant. This is the way my mind works. This is the habit of mind based on years of practicing aversion. You may have your own flavor of this.

This is a kind of filter, an unseen filter that biases the mind towards seeing things in a certain way, taking in certain things and not other things. Greed and aversion in particular create this kind of filter for us. This is a form of delusion that arises out of greed and aversion.

But greed and aversion themselves are based on a more fundamental kind of delusion—basically, believing that in the case of greed, if I get this thing, I'll be happy. And happy not just for a moment, but something in our minds believes that we'll be happy for a good stretch of time. This is a fundamental perspective, a view underlying that movement towards wanting to have something, wanting to get rid of something.

This evening what I'd really like to explore is offering you some information about how you might begin

to recognize a mind affected by delusion as a mind affected by delusion, and a mind unaffected by delusion as a mind unaffected by delusion. Information to describe different ways that delusion works.

This information—it's not so much something to try to do something with. As we've been saying, sometimes just... and Sayadaw U Tejaniya really pointed to this. He said so much of what he offers is information that it's like what I'll call Dharma rain. It's just landing on the landscape of your system and filtering in to your minds, to your hearts. That itself is a condition. Hearing the information is a condition that may allow you to see something different, see something new. We may not even be conscious we're taking in this information.

At one point I was sitting a three-month retreat here and I had some insight about something—I don't even remember at this point what it was—but what I do remember is that there was this sense of, "Wow, that's really important. They should be telling us about this." I was thinking of writing notes: "Really, you need to talk about this in your talks, it's so important." I didn't write those notes, thank goodness. In the next three Dharma talks, I heard it. It was there. It had been there.

This is a form of delusion in a way. Sometimes it happens that because we have a certain perspective on experience, we take in information and don't take in information that doesn't match our views—or we don't consciously take it in. And yet my sense is that it was going in like that Dharma rain. It was going in, and that's what supported the seeing of it. It wasn't conscious that I saw it or heard it. It wasn't conscious, but... And then it was stunning to me that I hadn't heard it. I realized, "Wow, this is something they must say all the time. Three Dharma talks in a row it's been said, and I didn't hear it before."

This is part of the way our minds function. We take in information that's in line with what we already know, or in line with perspectives or views that we have. This is one way that delusion works.

I'd like to offer some information about different levels or different depths of delusion. The most obvious form—I'm going to talk about them in three different levels—the most obvious form is basically when we're not mindful. It's just being disconnected from experience. That's the most obvious kind of delusion, and we see that when we wake up from being lost in thought.

The second kind of delusion is more related to our own personal views, opinions, ideas, beliefs, agendas—the conditioning that we've had from our childhood, our family culture, our wider culture. These views come in through our conditioning and shape how we see things.

And this is the second layer of delusion—not that we have views, but that we are unaware that we have views. We take our perspective and we don't even know it's a perspective; we just take it to be reality. This is the second level of delusion. I'll talk about each of these in a little bit more depth.

The third level is different from the second, which we might call personal delusion because it's based on our own personal conditioning—our culture, the family we've been connected with, our school, our own personal experience. This third level of delusion is what I will call human delusion. It's delusion that we

all share, the most insidious deep patterns in our minds. We seem to come into the world with these perspectives, and yet they are perspectives, and we can see them as perspectives.

This first kind—not connecting—is basically being lost in thought, not aware of what's happening in the present moment, just disconnected from experience. The moment we can begin to see this, the moment when mindfulness returns, in that moment we can get a sense that mindfulness is back. Also in that moment, because our minds have been functioning, perceiving, knowing—those processes don't stop when we're not mindful, as we know—when mindfulness returns there's a way that we can have a sense, a kind of lingering smell or lingering taste of what that state was like before mindfulness came. Maybe a sense of a fog, or of being sunk underground, or just that feeling of being separated from experience.

And so when mindfulness returns there's an opportunity to notice the difference between non-delusion and delusion in that simple way, in this kind of most obvious way. Every time your mind returns from wandering, that's an opportunity to notice the non-delusion of waking up into mindfulness again. That's probably not complete non-delusion in that moment, but it's in the terrain of that distinction between a mind unaffected by delusion and a mind affected by delusion.

Other forms of this kind of delusion can manifest as sleepiness, dullness, restlessness, heaviness of mind, doubt, a wavering mind. And yet we begin to see that while these states of mind are probably habitually deluded, habitually non-mindful, they're not inherently deluded, not inherently non-mindful. It is possible to be aware of sleepiness. It's possible to be aware of spacing out. You might think that spacing out is almost the definition of delusion, and yet I began to be curious about the state itself.

I noticed one day while I was having breakfast that the mind kept spacing out. While it was spaced out, I wasn't particularly mindful for most of the time, but then I'd wake up, notice that mindfulness was back. And I had an agenda at that point, because I was eating breakfast. My mind said, well, what I'm supposed to do here is pay attention to the process of eating. And so I turned my attention to noticing all the sensations of eating, and then the mind would space out again. This happened a bunch of times.

Finally, I decided to kind of just check out. This is a tool we've talked about in some of the meetings I've had with you—just widening the attention. It's like, well, what's going on here? Maybe the mindfulness can follow or know what's happening as the mind is spacing out. Instead of trying to hold on to paying attention to something in particular, I explored the possibility of allowing the mind to let go. And it kind of felt like the mind hovered up above my head and to the right a little bit, just hovering up there. And yet I discovered that it was possible to be aware of that state, that experience of the mind hovering.

In that place I recognized that the mind was resting, that it actually needed rest. This movement to come back to attending to the eating process was making the mind tired. The mind needed some rest and it was going to take its rest whether I gave it permission or not. And so I began to be curious about that and discovered that it is possible to follow the mind into that state, to allow the attention, the mindfulness to broaden and take in: oh, this is what it's like for the mind to do this. In this case what it became was not

spacing out and disconnection from experience, but resting—resting and aware.

In this exploration around things that we might think are habitually disconnected, I really want to emphasize what I'm hoping you hear. It's not that when there's a sense of disconnection from experience you should try to connect to something—oh, there's disconnection, let me pick up hearing, or let me pick up body sensation. What about exploring instead: what's this? What's this feeling of disconnection? What's this feeling of sleepiness or low energy or boredom? What's this? And in that we see that we can be connected to states that we habitually think of as non-mindful.

This is exploring that edge of being aware. In a sense, what this does is convert delusion to non-delusion.

This curiosity of "what's this?" allows us to explore that edge of awareness. In that example of spacing out, there was the recognition of a certain quality—almost like the mind looping in itself. That was the delusion. And the resting, while the mind just hung out, didn't have that same looping quality.

The second form of delusion—delusion based on views, agendas, and concepts—is a little more insidious because it can mean that we are aware. It's not that we're not aware, but that what we are unaware of is a filter or a view. We are unaware of the view that's happening.

We take in views from our family, from our experience. We can have perspectives based on our culture, based on our own personal experience, based on an agenda. Even something as simple as an agenda can create a filter where we take in information related to our agenda but do not see information unrelated to it. There are so many different ways this kind of delusion works, and I'm just going to go through a couple to give you some flavor of this.

This one about agendas is kind of fun to explore. Many of you may have heard about the study on selective attention—when you give somebody an agenda, our minds, when they have a task to do, will miss things that are pretty obvious in experience. This is the famous gorilla basketball study. People were shown a video and asked to count the number of times the basketball passed between the players in white shirts. There were people with dark shirts and light shirts, and they were asked to count only the passes between players in white. Most people could do that accurately. And then afterward they were asked, "Did you see the gorilla?" About half the people saw the gorilla or something like it, but half did not.

Now, that itself is not inherently delusion—that's a natural functioning of our mind. It narrows attention to take in something we're oriented towards. We had a task, and we focused on it. And yet some number of people, even when told afterward what had happened, said, "Well, I would have seen that gorilla had it been in the video." Now *that* is delusion. That belief that what we are taking in is an accurate representation of reality. It is not an accurate representation of reality. It is a representation of our views, opinions, agendas, and what's important to us in this moment.

There's a lot of information our minds don't take in, and this is not inherently a bad thing or a problem because essentially there is so much information coming in that it would overwhelm us if our minds

didn't filter certain things. And yet what is an issue is our belief that our eyes function like cameras, accurately taking in everything that's happening.

Views are a huge source of this kind of delusion—a huge source of these filters that operate in our experience and have us taking in some information but not other information. We have views about ourselves, views about other people. Essentially these views can box us in. And we notice when somebody else is doing this to us. "Oh, you're always like that." "No, no, I'm not always like that. I know I'm not like that." But it's harder for us to see when we do it to other people or when we do it to ourselves.

I started reading *Remembrance of Things Past* a few years ago. I didn't finish it, but the first 150 pages had some amazing observations of humanity and the way the mind works. Proust says: "Our social personality is a creation of the mind of others. Even the simple act of what we call seeing a person we know is in part an intellectual one. We fill the physical appearance of the individual we see with all the notions we have about them, and of the total picture about others that we form for ourselves. Those notions certainly occupy the greater part."

This is more true than we know—that when we see somebody, mostly what we are seeing are our views, our opinions, our ideas about them. We have concepts, ideas, views, and opinions about our friends, about our family members. About somebody we do not know, we have views and opinions. You've seen this—views and opinions about how somebody's reaching for a spoon, or the way they put food on their plate. All kinds of things we have views and opinions about. It's rampant.

We form these views and opinions, and we may not even see that we have them. Then we start looking for things that confirm those views and opinions. This is called confirmation bias in modern psychology—we tend to look for information that confirms what we already believe, and we don't recognize, or we actively ignore or discount, information that does not confirm what we believe.

Another one from Proust: "Facts do not find their way into the world in which our beliefs reside. Facts did not produce our beliefs. They do not destroy them. They may inflict on them the most constant refutations without weakening them." We're seeing that these days.

And so we can begin to see how this form of belief, this form of delusion, is not neutral. It creates so much suffering—the way we hold to our views, the way we believe our views to be true. Our views about ourselves, our views about other people, our views about the world, our views about political systems.

It gets more complex in some ways, or layers get added on, because it's not just views about individuals. We also have views about groups of people. When we're relating to people who are similar to us in various ways, we tend to see them through our views of them as individuals, and so there's still those views operating. But when we see people who are a little different from us—perhaps a different race or gender or sexual orientation or different ability—we don't tend to see them just as an individual. We tend to see them with a whole bunch of baggage about what we see as a category or a group they belong to.

So this is where racism, ageism, sexism, homophobia—all of these are in this terrain of carrying baggage about people with respect to group identities or group connections. This causes so much suffering in our world. Not seeing this baggage. Not knowing that we are carrying along views and seeing, relating to the world through views.

Again, we're probably not going to get rid of views entirely. But what we can begin to do is recognize that views are operating. Views are operating all the time. And this is something we can remind ourselves of.

I was just talking to a dharma friend the other day, and that friend said, "I knew there was a gorilla in the room, but I didn't know what the gorilla was." There was some kind of state of recognizing that something was confusing, but they couldn't quite identify it—"Oh, it's the gorilla in the room." But that person could recognize, they could say, "Yep, there's delusion here. I don't know what it is, I can't name how the delusion is working, but I know there is delusion happening." Knowing there's some kind of view going on that's creating some kind of relationship to experience, but not quite even able to see what that belief or view is. But knowing that it's there. This is a beginning of a way of recognizing delusion is affecting the mind.

Here's a question we can ask ourselves at times. Anytime there is suffering—anytime there's an experience of something feeling just not quite right—there is some kind of delusion at work. There's some kind of view or belief at work. And so it can be useful to just ask yourself that question sometimes: What's being believed?

It won't always pull that delusion or pull that view, pull that belief out of the subconscious mind and reveal it to us. But it can give ourselves the chance to recognize, "Okay, there is some kind of belief happening here," and even that is powerful.

Views about ourselves, views about... At one point I encouraged somebody to notice a very particular strong belief they had about themselves, a strong, conditioned belief. And the person recognized it was strongly believed. In exploring this, noticing it as belief, this person said, "But I can't stop believing it."

So that's another way of noticing how strong delusion can be sometimes—that we can see that there's a belief and that we still believe it. And yet it's helpful in that kind of situation not to try to convince yourself to stop believing it, especially when it's strong in that way. What's useful there is to recognize, "Wow, yeah, there's that belief, and boy, strong believing is happening. That's what's happening right now."

Even that basically opens the mind, because when a belief like that, a strong belief, is operating below the level of our conscious awareness... For myself, I had a strong belief in my unworthiness. Self-hatred was kind of the emotional tone there, a strong belief in my unworthiness. And recognizing it as a belief—sometimes I could recognize it: "Oh, that's that belief." And there are gradations of how much belief there is. We can kind of recognize, "Oh, this is strongly believed," or "not so strongly believed."

We can recognize how strong the belief is around some view that we're holding. And if it's very strong, it's

useful just to even recognize, "Okay, strong belief is happening." You don't have to convince yourself to not believe it, but recognize that it is a belief, because that begins to crack. Just recognizing that it's a belief begins to crack the mind's taking it to be truth. It's at least recognizing that it's belief, and that's what's going on in that moment. In that moment, you are aligning yourself with what's actually happening: strong belief, that's what's happening right now. And potentially recognizing, "This is the mind affected by delusion, affected by this belief. This is the mind affected by belief."

The third kind, the most insidious kind of delusion, is what I call human delusion—delusions that we tend to share as human beings. These are basically forms of views, but they're such deeply held views that you could go to any culture in the world and these views are operating. They're kind of independent of culture. They seem to come into being with our birth as human beings, these views—basic distortions of how we meet experience.

These will be familiar to you as I name them, because what we tend to do as human beings is we tend to take what is impermanent to be permanent. We tend to take what is unreliable to produce a lasting kind of happiness to be reliable, to produce that lasting happiness. And we tend to take what is not self to be self.

These three root misperceptions are also an understanding of what is seen through when the mind becomes free. Essentially, this is the deepest delusion in our minds: that we tend to take what's impermanent to be permanent, what's unreliable to be reliable, what's not self to be self.

In this kind of situation, again, it may not be that we're not aware, but we are seeing experience through this very deeply conditioned perspective. Sayadaw U Tejaniya said delusion—this kind of delusion—doesn't mask the object. It masks the nature, the true nature of the object.

And so we see our friends and we see ourselves, and we, in some interesting way that I spoke of this morning, tend to take ourselves to be immortal. We may know that we're going to die, but not today. Or we may understand at some level that we're going to die, but we don't wake up in the morning and recognize, "This day—this day may be my last day on the planet."

In terms of exploring these three areas, there's a lot that can be said. I recently gave a series of, I think, eight dharma talks on delusion, so this is just the top layer. But I want to offer a few reflections on how we can begin to see this.

The Buddha encouraged us in this terrain to cultivate the perception of impermanence, to cultivate the perception of unreliability, and to cultivate the perception of not-self. In my understanding, this means to look at, recognize, and orient towards noticing that things are impermanent, that there is unreliability, that things are often uncontrollable—not me or mine or I to control.

With respect to taking what's impermanent to be permanent, at times you might notice that something in your experience feels solid. At one point in my practice, I was just noticing where the mind was creating

solidity and got curious about that. A solid experience of a block of pain, for instance—what's that like? And then exploring it, being curious about it, I began to see that it's not solid but kind of a rapidly changing, dynamic experience. Looking at what we are taking to be solid, we can notice its changing nature.

This may happen over a longer stretch of time. For instance, one day I was a veggie chopper in the kitchen here. You walk in and there are all kinds of vegetables, often in buckets, and the cook will put a new bucket out. Well, one day, the cook—I don't know, the cook seemed like he had a kind of sense of humor—because what we had on the table was all of the chard in a huge mound. To me, it was like four feet high. It was this huge mound of chard. I felt like I couldn't see the person on the other side of the chopping table.

My mind created solidity around that mound of chard, and it said something like, "We are never going to finish that in the hour." And yet I just started working. I noticed that sense of "it's a thing."

And then I started chopping and chopping and chopping. About half an hour later, I looked up and the mound was gone. It startled me. It had simply disappeared. So that's the kind of exploration we can make—noticing that things change. We can let that be a highlight for us: notice change. And notice what we are taking to be reliable, what we are looking for to be reliable. Sometimes it's something simple or small, like getting my seat in the dining hall or having two pieces of chocolate. What is it that our mind is grasping for? What are we looking at thinking, "Oh, that's going to make me happy"?

The Buddha offered a very simple instruction around this. He said, yes, it's a form of happiness when you get what you want. Notice how long it lasts. So this teaching on unreliability is directly connected to impermanence, to the impermanent nature of experience. Our mind imputes a more lasting kind of reliability to something that is fleeting. And so the Buddha encouraged us to notice.

Okay, you have a bit of happiness from having some chocolate. How long does it last? What happens? Chocolate is actually pretty interesting. I was surprised when I investigated this. I put the chocolate in my mouth and it was pretty happy, pretty good. Lots of sense pleasure happening with the chocolate. And then the chocolate was gone. But I just kept investigating, and there was a lingering happiness. It probably lasted about a minute. That's a lot longer than I thought it would last, but it did fade. So noticing—how long does it last?

The mind sometimes, especially deeper into retreat, may find itself desperately searching for something reliable in experience. The more we see just how fleeting experience is, how rapidly things are falling apart, some part of our mind rebels. This is some of the deeper undoing, the deeper noticing of how strongly our mind rebels against this truth of impermanence, of unreliability. As we see experience arise and vanish, arise and vanish, at certain points that can be delightful, but sometimes it's like there's nowhere to land. Where do I land here? And the mind desperately starts searching for somewhere to land.

This is a manifestation of that delusion—the belief that there's got to be someplace to land for happiness. There must be. Our minds believe at some very deep level that there must be someplace to land for happiness, where I can rest. And so you might notice the mind searching, looking for something to land on. Can't I find something? That's a form of delusion at work, that belief that there would be someplace to land. And again, you don't have to stop that from happening, but recognize it. Searching. Searching for somewhere to land. This is delusion affecting the mind, believing there's someplace to find happiness.

At one point on a long retreat at the Forest Refuge, I noticed this process happen repeatedly. There would be a kind of space where the mind was searching for someplace to settle. And sometimes the mind would actually create a state of ease or peace and land there for a little while. Oh, I can rest here for a while. Then that would fall apart.

And there would be a kind of an even deeper peace that happened as the mind could be okay with even the falling apart of peace. But then the mind picked up the search again. "Oh, but there must be someplace, someplace to land." And by this time, I had watched this happen over and over again, and I just felt very tender towards this pattern. It's like, "Oh, search away. You're not going to find anything. But I'll be with you while you look. Okay."

It's like some part of our system just has to do that. We cannot tell ourselves to not be deluded. But we can begin to recognize this. "Searching, okay, searching is happening."

And then seeing what's not-self as self. This is a big topic, and we might do a whole talk about not-self and noticing the sense of self at some point. But this is actually the key piece I just want to point to here. Along with all of these other things that we've been pointing to—whatever experience is arising, notice it.

There's a famous quote by Zen Master Dōgen. He said, "To study the way is to study the self." I would say, to study the way, to study our minds and hearts, is to study this sense of self. "To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be awakened by the ten thousand things."

And so our practice isn't somehow trying to find our way to not-self, but is to study—to get to know all the ways that we take up self. So notice: When does it feel like I'm a me? When does it feel like that? And there are some really obvious times. I wouldn't so much encourage trying to find it everywhere—the sense of self is probably operating a lot and very continuously below the level of our conscious awareness. I'm pointing more to those times when it just kind of stares us in the face. Sense of self-righteousness. "I'm right!" Oh, there's a good one. There's Andrea. Okay.

So noticing that—what does that feel like? At one point, I was noticing a sense of "I'm right, I'm smart, I know my stuff, and that person is wrong, and they shouldn't be doing that." So a lot of selfing there. And then something else happened in the situation. I was doing walking meditation and noticing very much this congealing of a sense of me—this analytical, argumentative, "I'm right" Andrea was really present.

And then a big truck drove up. And my mind just... I mean, it was amazing, this truck. And the whole

forty-year-old Andrea just vanished, and it was replaced by something that felt more like a two-year-old. "Wow, it's a truck!" Bang, crash, boom, squeal of the brakes. There was this sense of delight of a two-year-old. Immediately this shift—seeing how a sense of self turns on a dime. And what I took to be me is now gone. Something else is there.

So noticing that, noticing how these interplay, how they come into being. Studying the sense of self. And then at times you may notice a weakening of that. At times you might notice just taking in experience. Not me, not mine, not who I am.

And in terms of cultivating the perception of not-self, which the Buddha encouraged us also to do at times, I think that this is the avenue that he pointed to—using this reflection. This sense of self that's happening is a conditioned phenomenon.

It isn't me. It's not me. It's not who I am.

The Buddha used that phrase extensively. One understands one's experience: *This is not me. This is not who I am. This is not myself.* Using that as a kind of reflection, we begin to let wisdom infiltrate our habit of the sense of self.

And so delusion—seeing delusion. At times we see through something. Insight arises, and our minds open into clearly recognizing the unreliable nature of experience. At one point I was seeing everything as just an arising, and I understood: this is unreliable, this is unreliable. And the mind was so happy in knowing that. It was not experiencing suffering; it was knowing the unreliability and not picking up experience, knowing that unreliability. It was not clinging to experience.

I thought I'd figured it out.

Conditions change. The next day, what I was experiencing was picking it up. And that's what I got to be with. It's not a mistake and it's not a problem.

Sometimes we see through—it's like the veils part and we see through some delusion. *Oh, things are unreliable. There's no point in picking anything up.* And then habit of mind returns. Conditions change. The mind picks things up, holds on to them, and—oh, this hurts, it suffers.

It's not that we've somehow lost that understanding. In fact, the next day when I was picking up experience, clinging to experience, it was much clearer to me that this was the mind doing it. That this was a habit of mind. This was delusion at work—this picking up of unreliable experience and clinging to it.

Having seen it clearly not picking it up, when the pattern came back, that's a way we can now really begin to recognize: *Ah, this is the mind affected by delusion.* Before the delusion falls away—for moments, maybe for a minute or a few seconds or perhaps a few hours—a delusion might fall away. Having seen that difference, the mind unaffected by delusion, the mind affected by delusion becomes much clearer.

And so this is the opportunity—not to beat yourself up for not seeing it the way you saw it yesterday, but rather: *Oh, here's the opportunity to see how delusion works. This is delusion at work.*

And so again, the path is mindfulness of what's arising.

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