

Creating Space (3)

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

After a disturbing event or encounter, wait for the reaction to subside. When we sit in vipassana, we are instructed to watch, feel and experience anything that draws our attention. We're meant to be both focused and yet loose, not attached or caught up in any particular object. So if we are experiencing pleasant states and pain in the knees starts, it is simply something else to turn our attention to. If our calm concentration is such that we are locked onto the breath and someone sneezes, we're not supposed to desire the annihilation of that person's nose, but to observe, 'hearing, hearing' and also to note any reaction that might come up'. Why can't we be like this all the time - and at work? We happen to be 'getting on with job', feel a bit pressured even, and someone comes. They may come calmly and excuse themselves, but often they come loudly, or in a rush or in some sort of irritated state. What is our reaction? Are we irritated? Do we feel panicked? Do we despair! Why not bring the lesson of vipassana directly into our lives. Even when we are working under considerable pressure, or working with enthusiasm and don't want to be disturbed, we can still be relaxed. All we have to do is remind ourselves that someone may come and ask for our attention. When that someone comes, we only need say, 'Just one moment' and acknowledge where we are, most important acknowledge what mood the person is. It may demand patience! And turn our attention entirely to the person. No fuss. No wasted energy. This turning our attention towards someone is to be completely open to what they are offering. Should it be anger, anxiety or some other unpleasant state, we need to feel it and listen to what they are saying. Their emotional state can resonate strongly within us and we need to hold steady instead of reacting with equal impatience or anxiety. I have found it most helpful to listen to what they are saying more than attend to what they are feeling. That way I find it easier to remain equanimous. And then to genuinely answer their concern. If, of course, they have come quietly and calmly, then it's good to note how that brings the best out in us. So that if we should find ourselves irritated and rushing, we can remind ourselves, that if we want to get the best out of someone, this is not the way to approach them. So we need to attend to our own state and wait till it calms down. Should we fail to behave skilfully or if we lose it somewhere in the middle, then whatever mental state has arisen from an incident or encounter, we need to give it time to subside. If not the emotional state tends to escalate through constantly revisiting the event in thought and imagination. And if it starts to do that, to keep stopping, contacting the emotional feeling and a give it time to burn out even if only a little. This way of bringing the practice into our daily life increases our sense of calm and equanimity.

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