

The Tough Nut

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

I'm sure you know what your own 'tough nut' is. I know a little about 'tough nuts' since I took a couple of cars apart in those halcyon days when I had nothing better to do. You have to apply WD40 and sometimes a bit of welly. There's usually habit – unwholesome, of course – we retreat to when things go bad or even a bit off. It could be around eating or sex or drugs or sleep or alcohol or any number of more or less unwholesome pursuits. But we begin to realise that it doesn't deal with the original problem and it becomes an obsession and addiction and so a problem in itself. It can become an escape route so entrenched that it will probably be the last to be filled out and transformed. There are many self-help books, therapies and systems such as the Twelve Steps that are used for alcohol and drug addiction. But here I'm addressing a more 'normal' level of addiction. Even though I say normal it can be equally tenacious. Even giving up that extra piece of toast can bring tears to the eyes. As meditators we know that the key lies in *tanha*, wrong desire and craving. It's catching the moment that it arises, before it gets a head of steam in action. That is the key to overcoming it. Once we've even budged a foot towards the biscuit tin, it's difficult to pull back. 'Just one!' We're easily fooled. This is why that bright mindfulness is so necessary. It catches the arising of a desire. Right mindfulness is accompanied by calmness. So there's no rush. There's time. We can inwardly stop, watch and feel the energy rise and wait patiently till it subsides. When we know the conditions for such desires to arise; when we know when, where and/or with whom; that's when we prick the inner ears, gather the inner resolution and stand firm. It is also good to have some ploy to remove oneself from the scene of possible folly. Some wholesome distraction. Listen to music, read a book, watch good TV, call a friend. Of course, there is the danger of suppression, if we don't find time to investigate it in meditation. Perhaps the best ploy is to take the 'dog' for a walk. It gets us away from the object of desire and allows us to 'vipassana' the mental state. And should we find ourselves dashing along the addictive escape route, let's at least not be routed! What then is required? Persistence! Dogged perseverance!

Transcriptions produced locally using Swiss low-carbon electricity. Corrections and rewriting by cloud-hosted AI.