

Excitement, Boredom, Contentment

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

It is when we confuse excitement with happiness that the trouble starts. You can get excited about anything – trainspotting, juggling, tiddly-winks. It does not matter what it is, so long as it excites us. We can absorb quickly into that mental state and for that time it is, well, heaven. There are those who absorb into beautiful states through their meditation and may even mistake them for Nibbana. So long as we can be lifted into that state, all is well. But when we don't get the same gratification, then disappointment sets in. After a joyous meal or party with old friends or family, there is a call for 'let's do it again!' The second time just does not live up to it. How disappointing! Suggestions for another meeting are met with rictus smiles and forced nods. Come the time, excuses abound. But what if you have to do the same thing again and again. Like work that once was so interesting. Or the breath in sitting that once was a haven. That is when the aversion sets in. A type of restless aversion that moves towards listlessness and a feeling of meaninglessness. Then a deeper boredom sets in. A sense of wasted time. Then the driving search for something - anything else. The fidgety swipes through websites. The restless flicking through channels. Scrolling through the social media. The pursuit of biscuits. The mind in meditation starts to live in its virtual reality. And we find it! Now there is joy. And off we go again, indulging in a new passion. This time it is foraging for mushrooms, playing THE Great Big War Game, scanning up and down the body in sitting. And the whole cycle starts off again. How I save the world from ecological disaster. Consumerism depends on this sort of intoxication. And it is a religion that is onto a real winner, because once it has hooked you, it knows you are always after the NEW. New means good, means excitement. That is greed, of course. But how quickly we are bored. And at the first tweak of boredom, we are off 'seeking pleasures here and there'. Boredom is the underlying engine consumerism depends on. However great the excitement, boredom comes in equal measure. And the more excitement we indulge, the more we raise the bar, the greater the excitement has to be. Greed in all its forms is voracious. More, once an adjective, becomes a noun. We simply want More. Should there come a time when excitements lose their gloss and boredom, feelings of wasted time, of a vacuous lifestyle set in, then there arises the loss of hope of ever enjoying life again – and that beds into despair. That is endgame of course. But for most of us, we can take boredom as a warning. And the cure? Repetition with good intention. Re-establish why you are doing your job. And do it for that reason. Raise a sense of care to be excellent. Interest reappears. Acknowledging that a lot of what we do is useless entertainment and determine to spend the time more usefully. The joy of living returns. Practising renunciation. Let go of all that planning. What are we going to do this evening, this weekend, next month. Do something simple instead. Over a series of weekends, the same walk, the same simple meal. Draw the attention into the present doing, and develop contentment. This is the way it is and it is ok. Contentment is poison to boredom.

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