

# Healing Anxiety & Depression

A 6-week course on balancing emotions  
with accredited FPMT teacher  
Miffi Maxmillion



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Langri Tangpa Centre Study Notes

## **Two Breathing Meditations**

### **Nine-round breathing meditation**

Bring your awareness inwards, by focussing your attention on the physical sensation of your breath as it enters and leaves the nostrils. Simply breath in and breath out, allowing no thoughts to distract you. Whenever you notice your attention has wandered, bring your focus back to the breath, again and again. Do this for a few minutes.

Now, imagine that you are breathing out through left nostril and in through right (no need to physically block your nostrils, this is done in imagination).

As you breathe out through left nostril, imagine you breathe out, in the form of black smoke, all your negativities, disturbing emotions, obsessive thoughts, anger, hatred, aversion, dissatisfaction, craving, stupidity, dullness, ignorance, pride, doubt, confusion. It leaves your body like pollution leaves a chimney, disappearing into space.

As you breathe in through the right nostril, imagine breathing in golden light, the manifestation of loving-kindness, patience, warmth, compassion, caring, joyousness, generosity, light, wisdom, skilfulness, clarity, energy.

Do this three times.

Then swap the nostrils over. This time imagine breathing out through right nostril and in through left, three times. Repeat the visualisation.

Finally, imagine breathing out through both nostrils and in through both nostrils, repeating the visualisation, three times.

When you complete this cycle, continue breathing in and breathing out radiant, clear light. Feel the very fine membrane between the outside and the inside, with clear radiance permeating all.

### **Breathing out the three poisons (internal pollution)**

Bring your awareness inwards, focussing your attention on your breath as it enters and leaves the nostrils. Simply breath in and breath out, allowing no thoughts to distract you. Whenever you notice your attention has wandered, bring your focus back to the breath, again and again. Do this for a few minutes.

Now imagine breathing out all your anger, hatred, urge to retaliate, vengeance and aversion in the form of thick black smoke, like pollution leaving a chimney. As you do so, feel your body gradually becoming clearer and lighter. As you breathe in, inhale loving-kindness, patience and warmth in the form of golden light.

Next, imagine breathing out all your dissatisfaction, craving, lust, greed and hunger in the form of red light. Breathe in the golden light of compassion, joy and generosity.

Finally, breathe out all your stupidity, dullness, ignorance, pride, doubt and confusion in the form of light grey smoke or clouds, and breathe in clear light- wisdom, skilfulness, clarity, and effortless ability.

Then, continue breathing in and breathing out clear light for a few minutes.

## GENEALOGY OF UNHAPPINESS

### Map of How the Afflictive States of Mind Arise

Root delusion

**Ignorance**/confusion  
(especially what we base our identity on)  
of who we are, our potential, and how reality works

Main  
Afflictive  
Emotions

out of this comes  
**Pride**, the unrealistic  
mistaken view of  
Ourselves

Deluded  
doubt  
(unexamined)

**Attachment**  
based on a misunderstanding  
of how we exist, craving for  
wholeness and satisfaction

**Mistaken  
views**

bigotry, prejudice  
consciously held mistaken  
views that bring us suffering

closed-  
mindedness,  
wilful ignorance

**Anger**  
Hatred

when our needs and  
wants are thwarted

**Jealousy**

when others  
get what  
we want

Symptoms

**Unhappiness!**

Anxiety, Stress, Depression, Fear, Paranoia, Boredom, Angst, Despair

These have multiple causes, so there is no one quick cure

Our unhappiness is a symptom of the disturbing emotions

The disturbing emotions are like a disease that can be cured

## OUR TRUE NATURE IS PURE



### The nature of our mind

In Buddhism, the mind encompasses the entire spectrum of experience of thoughts, memories, feelings, perceptions from the senses, and instincts. The nature of our mind is seen as being essentially pure, like the sky. All beings have a mind that is fundamentally clear and knowing, and they all have buddha-potential, but with this particular combination of body and mind as a human, we have the potential to become a buddha in this very lifetime. This is amazing!



### Why our confusion suffering now?

At present our mind is obscured by the pollution of ignorance, like a mirror covered in slime or like pollution in the sky. This pollution does not fundamentally change the light or clarity of the sky, and it can be removed. The clear-light nature of the mind is fundamentally pure. In our daily life we don't have to identify with the clouds, we can identify with the clear sky.

When delusions are present they interrupt our peaceful state of mind and influence our actions of body and speech. They always create problems and bring bad results. But because the delusions are adventitious (not inherently part of our mind), like pollution, it means they can be overcome. If we eliminate the disturbing states of mind and develop our qualities of wisdom, compassion and ability to their ultimate extent, we will not only be happier in our daily life, but ultimately we ourselves can become free of all problems, and achieve lasting happiness, just like the buddha.

### The six afflictive emotions

The 5 afflictive emotions are: ignorance (confusion), attachment (clinging), anger (hatred), self-importance (pride), deluded doubt (unexamined beliefs) and harmful attitudes (intellectually held distorted views). These are all mistaken minds, in that they come about from a distorted relationship to ourselves and the world around us. It is precisely because they are mistakes - and not inherent to our being - that they can be completely overcome. Remember, terms such as 'delusion', 'attachment' and so on have specific meanings in Buddhism, some quite different to our western popular connotations!



### It's up to us!

Imagine if we had a job as a security guard at an airport. How will we know what the terrorists look like? We need a mug-shot so we can recognise them as they arrive. In the same way, in the vast airport of our mind, many hundreds of thoughts and emotions come and go each day. Some of them are obviously harmful, but others are well disguised. The disturbing emotions, far more dangerous

than any external terrorists, have the potential to bring great suffering not just to ourselves but to those around us as well, so we must be able to recognise and halt them before they can do any harm.



### What is ignorance?

Ignorance, or inner darkness, is the fundamental, root affliction. All the others arise from this confusion. It is a not-knowing or blindness that comes about through either closed-mindedness, or seeing incorrectly and making mistakes or assumptions.

In general, ignorance is confusion about (a) internal cause and effect, or karma, (b) what causes our suffering, taught in the Four Noble Truths, and (c) being unclear or unaware of the possibility of enlightenment and how to attain it, and how our own nature is no different from that of a buddha.

In particular, it is holding to a mistaken conception of self, (both consciously and at an innate, instinctual level). It is holding our present identity to be true and inviolable.

The view of one's body and mind as the 'real me', so when people hurt us we think "why did they do this to ME?" "You can't do that to ME". Holding the self to be permanent, and independent from the forces that shape us. Misunderstanding the nature of our identity, and then clinging to the incorrect one.



### Intellectually aquired mistaken views

These are consciously held beliefs that harm ourselves or others. A mistaken or distorted view comes from an analytic mind that has reached a wrong conclusion. This is different from mere ignorance or unconscious feelings, as our views serve to justify our prejudice, fears, and harmful behaviour. Because these views are mistaken, instead of leading to happiness they lead to further affliction and suffering. View of one's body and mind as the 'real me', so when people hurt us we think "why did they do this to ME?" "You can't do that to ME". Holding the self to be permanent, independent, solid. Misunderstanding the nature of our identity and then clinging to the incorrect one. Extreme views, like nihilism, materialism or eternalism, believing that harmful actions are beneficial or necessary, denying correct views of reality.



### Deluded Doubt

This is when we don't know but we don't question. It's when we simultaneously hold two opposing points of view. Un-investigated doubts are incredibly destructive. They undermine our faith, confidence and certainty. We cannot progress or fulfil our wishes with an indecisive mind, it is like trying to sew with a double pointed needle.

However, if we have the courage to analyse our beliefs fears and hopes, it can only strengthen us. Not all doubts are negative. Honest questioning and investigation are joyful and impel us to investigate further. "Those who doubt powerfully have the power to realise the Truth, provided they investigate their doubts." - Arya Nagarjuna.

## AFFLICTIVE EMOTIONS - PRIDE



### What is pride?

Pride is having an inflated opinion of ourselves, a puffed up feeling of superiority. It creates a distinction between self and others that leads to a lack of respect and haughtiness. It comes from mistaken view of self, where we look for external sources of validation and acceptance.

Some things we should have pride in - being a human, having the potential to become a buddha. Pride in our positive actions, in our determination to become better people, in our ability to destroy delusion.

To put our self-view into perspective, recognise that our knowledge is due to the efforts of others. Our money and status have not always been ours. We are dependent on others' goodwill. Think of our body - can we name each part, what it's made of, where it is, from top to toe? This should subdue the pride about our intelligence. Think how little control we have. We get sick, old, frail. Youth is proud of beauty and strength, but it quickly fades.

It's important we try to put the teachings into practice, and not just accumulate knowledge, getting blasé or bored, saying "I've heard it all."



### Why is pride dangerous?

If we often feel isolated or alienated, this is a sign that we cannot recognise the deep interconnectedness we have with all beings.

Pride makes us miss out - on love and help from our friends, on discovering new and wondrous things, on the respect of others, and ultimately on liberation from our problems. It imprisons us in a stagnant state.

Pride stops us taking advice, becoming a barrier to learning, and hampering any change or growth. It makes it difficult for us to develop good qualities.

Pride causes us to disrespect others. If we look down on those who lack our qualities, how can we develop kindness? There is nothing holding us back from causing harm.



### Appreciating our human qualities

Some things we *should* have pride in - we have the potential to achieve almost anything we want, including the potential to become a buddha! And we should cultivate pride in our positive actions, in our determination to become better people, in our ability to destroy delusion and disturbing emotions.

All living beings have the potential to become fully awakened - to attain enlightenment. We can base our own self confidence on this potential, rather than on comparing ourselves to others.

By remembering that all living beings have this potential, we can develop a deep-seated respect for all living beings, regardless of how they might act towards us at the present time.

## Seven types of pride

1. Superior to the inferior. Seeing those less fortunate or of lower social standing as lowly. Uplifted by feeling better than others because of our skills, wealth, gender, race, looks etc.
2. Superior to equals. Puffed up thinking we are superior to our peers. Assuming we are above average. Thinking our problems are the most important.
3. Superior to the superior. Arrogantly point out weaknesses of great people. Tall poppy syndrome.
4. Egocentricity. Pride in our identity. Thinking we inherently exist, looking in the mirror and we think "this is me". This is the worst type, and most subtle and pervasive of the prides. It's when we cannot tolerate defeat, suffer humiliation.
5. Pretentiousness. Pride of possessing qualities we don't actually have, or thinking we have special, inside knowledge or high spiritual realisations.
6. False humility. Inverted pride. Thinking we are only slightly inferior to highly realised people. Behave with humility in the presence of a lama, but think "here I am, so important, in the presence of this great person". Also, feeling we are the worst, the saddest, or couldn't possibly become liberated or enlightened.
7. Wrong Pride. Taking wrong methods to be correct, such as being proud about shoplifting, or cheating on your taxes. Also, abusing positions of trust, thinking we are above normal ethical restraint. Holding to a double standard.



### What to cultivate instead

If we want to feel good about ourselves, we must develop inner qualities and strengths to be proud of. If we only rely on others for a sense of worth, we will never feel like we measure up.

- Pride in being human, and having the skills and circumstances to change our life. This type of pride recognises our innate human intelligence, and unifies us with others.
- Pride in our potential to attain buddhahood, in our fundament purity. The nature of our mind is no different from that of the Buddha's mind.
- Pride in our positive actions, our determination to speak and act ethically. Even just refraining from harmful actions takes effort, and we should appreciate even small actions like this.
- Pride in thinking we can destroy delusion and conquer our afflictive states of mind. The confidence and determination to protect one's mind from harm.





## AFFLICTIVE EMOTIONS - DESIROUS ATTACHMENT



### What is attachment?

Attachment is clinging to or being fixated with something. It is noticing an attractive or pleasant object and then desiring it. On a conventional level, things are relatively beautiful or unattractive, pleasant or unpleasant. But the mind of attachment sees a solid, beautiful object, existing in this way from the side of the object itself. This is a mistake.

Attachment arises in two stages. First the mind of attachment superimposes qualities onto its object. Based on this it then generates clinging and grasping. Like wearing rose-coloured glasses, attachment does three things:

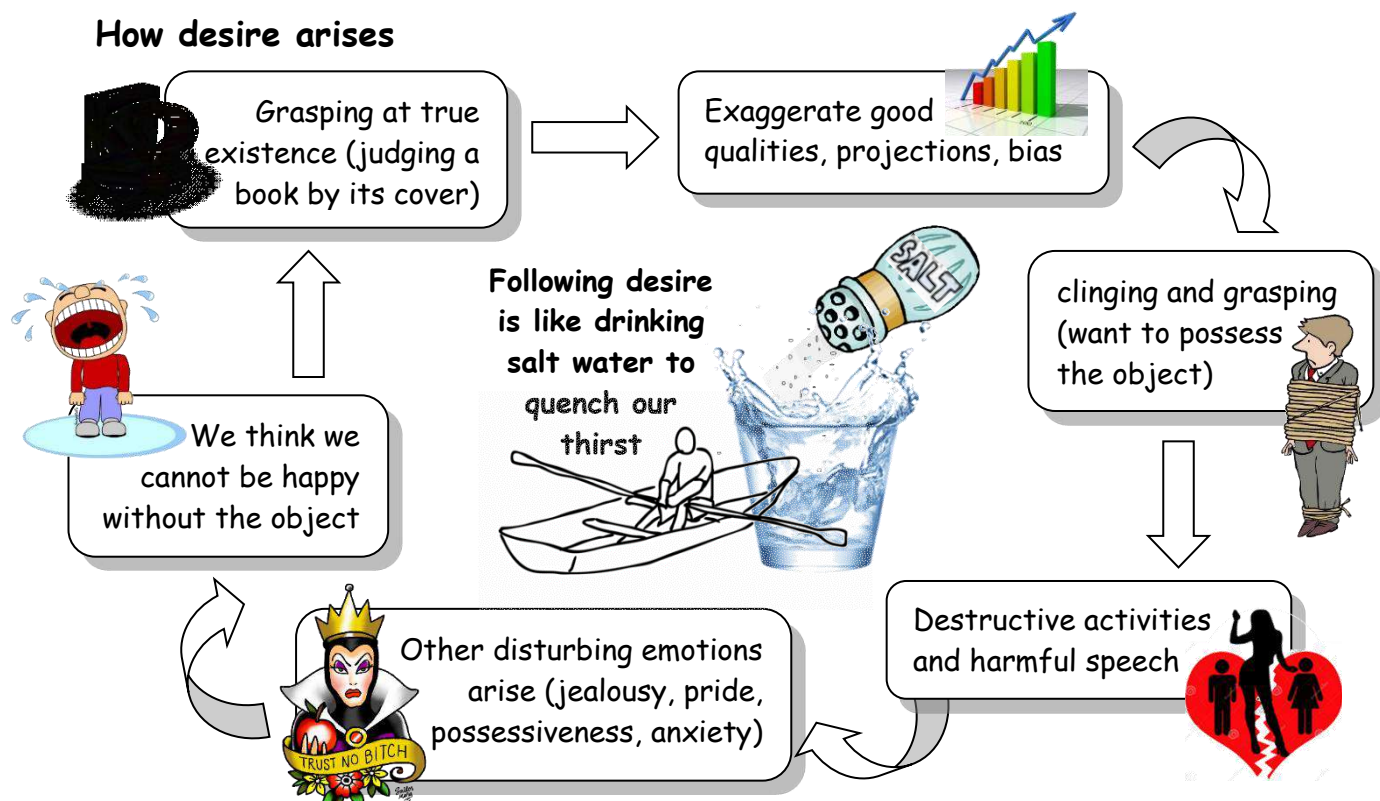
- (a) **exaggerates** the appealing characteristics
- (b) superimposes or **projects** attributes that are not there
- (c) sees only the good qualities, in a **biased** way

### What attachment is not

It is not the object that is the problem, it is our craving for it. All we have to give up is our deluded relationship with the objects of attachment, not the things themselves. Detachment is not about giving all our possessions away or being bland, indifferent and not feeling anything. It is about really being able to enjoy things. Attachment is different from loving-kindness or sincere affection. We often have pure love and desirous attachment mixed together.



### How desire arises





## Drawbacks of desirous attachment

- Uncertain our desires will be fulfilled - after all that effort, we are often disappointed and our satisfaction quickly fades.
- The object is illusory - our craving propels us to grasp after objects that are completely illusory. They do not exist in the way that they initially appear to us.
- Even if satisfied, it doesn't last - the pleasure wears off or the object is taken from us. The object is impermanent; it changes, it doesn't last.
- Other negative minds arise - and disturb us, like anger, possessiveness, worry, insecurity. This leads to unskilful actions that can harm ourselves and others.
- Cheats us - attachment exaggerates the importance of the object, resulting in disappointment, and cheating us of temporary pleasure.
- Following craving makes us more dissatisfied - we think that happiness lies with the object out there. But following our craving makes us more dissatisfied.
- Keeps us endlessly circling - attachment keeps us bound to cyclic existence. It stops us seeking the lasting, pure happiness of liberation and enlightenment.
- Distracts us - from meaningful realisations on the path, from making our life worthwhile. "Amongst our endless activities - death arrived."

## What to do? Remedies for attachment



- Contemplate impermanence and death. Remembering that things change, grow old, or are taken from us, loosens our craving. Remembering that the time of our death is uncertain puts it into a larger perspective.

- Recognise the impurities of the body. Our body will eventually become a corpse, will swell and rot, and then become a skeleton. We are just a sack of blood and pus and other yucky stuff. Its nature is to deteriorate.



- View others as one's family. See a woman older than you as a mother; younger than you as a daughter; and the same age as you as a sister. In this way we can generate affection and respect, overcoming our obsession with our own benefit.

- Meditate on emptiness. The object does not exist in the way it appears. If happiness were actually within the object, then everyone would find it attractive, it would *always* make us happy, *the more we had* the more happy we would be, and once we got it we would *remain* happy.



- Generate conviction in reality. Wanting happiness is a legitimate wish, but can we find lasting happiness in an impermanent, fallible object? Look for a lasting happiness where it can be found! Tame the mind, strive for liberation and enlightenment. Become certain of this.

- Generate love and compassion for others. Love is wishing the other to be happy. Compassion is wishing them to be free of suffering. We often mix up loving-kindness with desirous attachment, thus getting mixed results. Instead of thinking what I want, think about what I have to offer.



## ANXIETY & DEPRESSION



### Western Problems - don't shoot the messenger!

Problems like depression, stress and anxiety are like the symptoms of our disturbing emotions. They are not the cause. Our unhappiness is the result of afflictive states of mind.

Because there are many disturbing emotions, there is no one single cure for these symptoms. One technique may work for one person but not another.

These problems can arise **organically** (changes in brain chemistry, diet, environment), in response to **events** or situations (violence, helplessness, a death in the family), they can be powered by negative **habit patterns** (how we think), and they arise as a result of **afflictive mind-states** (destructive emotions) such as attachment, pride and hatred.

Our physical state, including our neurology, can profoundly affect how we think and feel. Equally, how we think can change our brain chemistry. This is neuro-plasticity - proof that we *can* change! It is a two-way street; *chemistry is not destiny!*



### Anxiety and stress

We can make a distinction between anxiety and fear. Fear is not a disturbing emotion because it can be useful, and even necessary. Anxiety is an out-of-proportion response to a situation we perceive as negative or with no benefit. There is reasonable worry, but if we exaggerate the negative and dwell upon it, our anxiety will become stronger and be fuelled by the force of habit.

Remember, Shantideva says: "If you can do something about the situation, why worry? If you cannot do anything, then there is no point in worrying!"



### Misconceptions about the nature of things

1. Things, people and relationships don't change. We don't see that the object breaks, wears out, rots. We are unhappy when we notice we're aging. Every relationship we have will come to an end, this is natural, but when it does it comes as a shock.
2. Things bring us lasting happiness. No matter how much we acquire we are still dissatisfied. Novelty wears off and we get bored, get a new one, or collect more.
3. They are pure/perfect. Things and relationships are by nature unstable and fallible. Money is nice, but worry about it isn't. Nice car but hard to get parts. Nice shirt but colour runs. Nice house but we have to clean it. We try to separate the two, but can't. Do our obsessions really matter, or is our longing a desire for liberation?
4. They have a real, findable essence. That we are our body is a misconception. All our cells change every 7 years. Millions of creatures live within us, helping our body to function - it's not *ours!* We are a product of our era (politics, religion, education). What if you were the opposite gender? How would your life be different? As a person we are not the same as 10 years ago.

## Misconceptions about the cause of suffering



We often identify the wrong things as the cause of our problems, and thus we can never seem to be rid of them. Our experience of pleasure and suffering is the result of our own actions, so it is we alone who are capable of determining our own future.

1. Causeless. We think there is no cause or reason for our suffering, that it is random, we were just in the wrong place at the wrong time.
2. Wrong cause. We think our problems or suffering is created by another - another person, outer circumstances, or god.
3. One cause. That suffering comes from one cause only. But there are many conditions; we cannot blame just one thing (eg. air-traffic disasters).
4. Permanent. We think suffering will always be there, feeling there is "nothing we can do", it will never end. But suffering is impermanent, changing, and momentary.



## Depression

Depression arises when we don't get what we want. When our desires are thwarted, aversion arises. If we externalise this it becomes volatile anger and retaliation. If we internalise that anger it becomes depression.

The blame mentality deep within us, always looking for someone at fault, but blame makes depression worse, not better.

Biologically, there is no difference between a patient experiencing depression and a person enduring a depressing life problem.

It's a myth that problems are bad for us. We need problems to develop resilience. Without them we will find the inevitable (aging, sickness) extremely traumatic.

Grief makes us a better person, and is different from depression in that it focuses on the other person, rather than a neurotic focus on self.

Transform all undesirable conditions by voluntarily taking up all difficulties. Depression becomes the path to enlightenment, to compassion for others.

## How can we benefit from our depression?

- (1) Remember impermanence and death: This too will pass. Don't believe everything your feelings tell you. If we narrowly escape death - depression vanishes! Recognising our limitations means we will value what really matters to us.
- (2) Experience your depression on behalf of others: Think "I am experiencing the depression on behalf of all sentient beings. This is not MY depression". Experience your depression with compassion. Focus on the sufferings of other people who are more depressed than you, let your compassion for them grow, and try to help them.  
Give it to your ego: Rather than take upon yourself all the problems you are experiencing, give them to the ego, the self-cherishing thought. What makes us harm others and ourselves is the ego. Ego is a far more harmful than any terrorist. Let the bully of your ego have your depression, let it destroy your ego.

## AFFLICTIVE EMOTIONS - ANGER & FRUSTRATION

### What is anger?



Anger is the most destructive force in the universe. It is an agitated state of mind that intends to harm another, oneself, or an inanimate object. This hostility arises in relation to those whom we have labelled the enemy, that which we view as 'bad', or consider unpleasant. It is a mistaken mind, and coupled with indifference to the welfare of others, there is nothing to hold anger back.

### Buddhist definition of anger

**"A deluded mental factor [mistaken, agitated, disturbed] that observes a contaminated object [fallible, imperfect, within cyclic existence] exaggerates its bad qualities [projection and exaggeration] considers it to be undesirable [emotional reaction, sees no benefit] and then wishes to harm it [retaliation and ill-will]."**

### Anger comes from an unhappy mind



Anger and aversion arise when attachment does not get what it wants. Dissatisfaction, annoyance, irritation and frustration are all one step away from full-blown anger. When we notice these emotions arising - look out! Having our desires thwarted, feeling under attack, dwelling on the faults of others, setting ourselves apart, taking things personally, and assuming others are in control, are all conditions that contribute to anger arising.

### What to do? A comprehensive strategy for overcoming anger



Prevention. Once erupted, anger is very difficult to control, so it is best to practice prevention. Head the warning signs of an unhappy mind! Focus, not on *their* faults, but on the *faults of anger!* Recognise anger for the poison it is, by contemplating the many drawbacks and negative results. Meditate at home on various scenarios and practice applying the appropriate antidotes.

- Run away. When we feel anger arising, refrain from acting until it subsides. If you can't - remove yourself before you retaliate. Retreat and think of a more constructive way to deal with the situation.



Remedy of patience. When anger is stopped by patience, there is only one result - happiness. Patience is a feeling of ease, without confusion, accompanied by compassion. It is tolerant, open-minded, affectionate, and if needed, it can even be forceful.

- The opposite of anger is loving-kindness. Focus on their good qualities. Recall how you love and care for them, so why would you want to hurt them? Resist the urge to blame them for your own discomfort, and look at your own faults instead, your part of the equation.



## Drawbacks of anger

- We look ugly. We spend much time trying to look attractive, yet anger makes us sweat, turn red, spit. People look away, are repulsed and fearful of us.
- It is us who suffers, not them. It destroys our peace of mind. The more we think about their faults the worse we feel. Prevents us from enjoying the things we normally do, like good food, comfy bed, the movies etc. We destroy our own bodies through destructive behaviour like smoking, drinking alcohol, and suicide.
- We lose the benefits from making mistakes. We lose the benefit of constructive criticism. We lose our natural ability to discriminate right from wrong; we make bad judgements, lose our morals, and act irrationally.
- We destroy or lose our property. We may destroy our precious things and be reckless. We may be legally liable, have to go to court or pay heavy fines.
- We fall into disrepute. If we have no self-control or respect, people do not like us, they fear and distrust us. Even if we do good deeds, they go unrecognised.
- We lose our friends. We destroy friendships, our family. Just one angry word can wipe out years of caring from memory. Even though our friends love us, they cannot bare being with us. Anger draws other angry people and situations.
- Destroys our virtue. The worst effect of anger is not immediately obvious. It destroys our accumulated virtue, preventing our chance for future happiness.
- Anger burns up its own support. Anger will definitely harm us, but there is no guarantee our anger will harm them - it may even gratify them!

## Practice the 3 types of patience



1. Patience of compassion - remaining calm, feeling at ease toward someone harmful. They have no freedom - they are acting under control of delusion and karma. Think of them as temporarily insane. If I didn't have the seeds in my own continuum I would not suffer, so there is no reason to retaliate. Both of us have faults, both are looking for happiness. The more I set myself apart, the more I deny their humanity. There can be a benefit for me in going through this; we need adversity to develop and grow strong.
2. Patience of voluntarily accepting suffering. In a situation we can do nothing about, learn to bare it and keep your mind happy. To prevent anger we must develop our endurance. Pushing against it makes it worse, and doesn't help the situation.



3. Patience developing certainty in the dharma. Training our mind is the only reliable way of protecting ourselves. Only the wisdom of emptiness can cut anger at the root, the self-cherishing ignorance that defends a self that does not exist. Things change, their irate words are impermanent. Saying I have a blue nose does not make it so! To be insulted is like being fooled by an echo!
- Distracts us - from meaningful realisations on the path, from making our life worthwhile. "Amongst our endless activities - death arrived."

## FINDING WISDOM IN DEPRESSION



- Depression arises when we don't get what we want. When our desires are thwarted, aversion arises. If we externalise this it becomes volatile anger and retaliation. If we internalise that anger it becomes depression.
- The blame mentality is deep within us, always looking for someone or something at fault. But blame makes depression worse, not better.
- Biologically, there is no difference between a patient experiencing depression and a person enduring a depressing life problem. The difference between grief and depression is that we judge depression to be useless, and grief as an appropriate sadness. Depression, like all neurotic state of mind, focuses on the self., but grief focuses on the other.

### What to do?

- How can we find the kernel of wisdom in our unhappy experience? Remember - don't shoot the messenger! Depression is your innate wisdom pushing up, demanding attention! It's evidence of your own wisdom.
- Aches and pains of the flu are evidence the body is already working to battle a virus. Depression and anxiety are evidence that your inner wisdom is already pushing through, saying pay attention here! Not pleasant, but working *for us!*
- Experience your depression for others. Enjoy your depression by voluntarily taking on the experience on behalf of others, and using it to destroy your ego. The fever of your depression can become your path to compassion and emotional health.

*Remember - you are not a "sad person".  
You are a budding buddha experiencing depression!*

### Three remedies for depression

- (1) Remember impermanence and death: This too will pass. Don't believe everything your feelings tell you. If we narrowly escape death - depression vanishes!
- (2) Experience your depression on behalf of others: Think "I am experiencing the depression on behalf of all the other people suffering in similar circumstances. This is not MY depression". Experience your depression with compassion. Focus on the people who are more depressed than you, and try to help them.
- (3) Give it to your ego: Rather than take upon yourself all the problems you are experiencing, give them to the ego, the self-cherishing thought. What makes me harm others and myself is my ego. Ego is a far more harmful than any terrorist.

## The difference between depression and sadness

Neurologically there is no difference between sadness and depression - so why do we experience these two so differently?

### Sadness or Grief

- we naturally develop empathy
- we become a better, kinder person
- we recognise our connectedness to others, feel part of our community
- more able to help others from our own experience
- our sadness is not wasted, it can be highly meaningful

### Depression

- self-focussed, as neurotic states are
- emotional stagnation
- alienates us from others, especially those who love us
- distresses those around us (and we are often oblivious to this)
- we cannot see any benefit in the experience

## Useful Strategies

- Listen to your thoughts without believing in them. What is depression saying to you? Describe your expectations underlying these thoughts and feelings. What is it that you want and are not getting? That you think 'should' happen?  
Now try to reframe the situation. The issues that your depression is focussing on may indeed be valid and serious, but depression is quite tunnel visioned. Try to take a broader perspective, and re-frame the situation by re-describing it *very carefully in new words*, rather than running on unconsciously with an inner commentary.  
For example, instead of *"the world is ruined, there is no hope and my existence in it just makes it worse"* try, *"the world has always had difficulties, and even then there are many people who are showing kindness right this minute. I am the result of the combined kindnesses of all people throughout history. Even if I feel miserable today, I can show kindness back to them"*.
- Give yourself some space by meditating. Use the feeling tone meditation or the mindfulness meditation to practice giving yourself some space. Try to sit with the space between the feeling and the reaction, and broaden that space. Get used to the discomfort of sitting with it, without doing anything about it - neither grasping or pushing away or panicking or freezing.
- Investigate who you are identifying with. You are not your depression! Remember - your mind is naturally clean and clear - thoughts are feelings are like clouds, they are not you. Your sense of self is circumstantial and can change when conditions change, and when your inner attitude changes. Impermanence can be a good thing!
- Develop the good heart. Meditate on love and kindness. This is important as with depression and anxiety we focus almost exclusively on empathy, and without the energy of love we can burn out. Feel your warmth and love towards those closest to you as gentle warm light at your heart and radiate it out to all.
- Less talking more doing! Change your physical environment to change your inner atmosphere. Go for a walk, a ferry ride, do some gardening, help others clean or cook. Make sure you do something whilst talking - don't just sit and drink coffee! Physical activity helps to elevate mood and re-wire the brain.



# Healing Anxiety and Depression

## Recommended Reading

