

December 10, 2011  
Retreat at the Zen Center

## **Form**

Energy follows attention. So if we are bearing down too hard with our concentration, we become miserable and uncomfortable pretty quickly. If we back off a little bit, relax the grip of the attention, then there is more stillness. This will be helpful as we move into the final hours of the day.

It does not matter if consciousness, if mental activity is like a rushing waterfall, or if it has slowed down to become a gently flowing river, or it is absolutely still and quiet like the depths of the ocean. We are training for a relaxed and stable attention while consciousness does whatever it pleases.

Alert and relaxed attention can openly know anything, any thought and any sensation. If we are bearing down too hard, becoming fixated, narrowing our focus, open up the focus so you are more comfortable.

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**Content**—greed, aversion, and delusion

Delusion—by its very nature is obscure. When we are deluded, we don't know we are deluded.

As we sit here quietly, it is frequently not very internally quiet, and our thoughts usually behave in fairly predictable ways.

Zack and Ben

The adolescent mind

All truths are a temporary understanding, let's try this one on—see if sheds light on the habitual patterns of our perception.

Thanissaro Bhikkhu "The Road to Nirvana is Paved with Skillful Intentions"

"As children we learn to be dishonest about our intentions simply as a matter of survival. "I didn't mean to do it," "I couldn't help it," "I was just swinging my arm and he got in the way." After a while, we begin to believe our own excuses and don't like to admit to ourselves when our intentions are less than noble."

Perhaps we develop habits of not knowing our intentions at a time when we are incapable of considering the consequences, and frequently denying we had a choice to begin with. This process gets internalized and calcifies into a self-image.

I am wondering if there is any useful truth here.

Can I catch that ever present spin doctor who keeps re-creating my world with all the sophistication of a pimply, self-absorbed, mostly miserable, lying or frightened, and frequently lonely adolescent?

Is this a worthwhile investigation?

Our technique for investigation is curiosity and interest and the capacity to witness whatever comes down stream....and the opportunity to catch delusion in action is a gift, an opportunity.

Which brings us to the utility and necessity of compassion, even for the voice of the internal teenager.

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Compassion

Not idiot compassion--- wanting to be helpful to ease my own distress, or to have an image of myself as a helpful person, the urge to do something.

Compassion is not an emotion.

But clarity---*the non-discursive state* that arises as great compassion, a place of *equanimity* —to help us unfold or puncture the seeming solidity of our favorite delusions.

Equanimity allows real compassion to arise, and then we can practice skillfulness, of understanding cause and effect, taking responsibility, maturing, practicing skillful, conscious intentions.

Dream image

Which brings us back to relaxed attention that can hold anything

Manifest compassion