

Practice Note: Investigating Ease

Transcribed and edited from a short talk by Gil Fronsda1 on January 6, 2016

For me, the concept or experience that is the central reference point for the Dharma, for practice, for mindfulness, for finding a life that brings freedom to us all, is the idea of ease. How can you live a life of greater ease? How can you be more at ease as you go through your life or through any experience or situation?

Part of the investigation of ease is to understand how we feel uneasy. How do we lose our ease? If you have a modicum of ease – it doesn't have to be much – notice what you do to sacrifice, give up or lose that ease. Many people don't reflect on this. They wake up in the morning, and maybe they successfully get out the door without feeling too stressed, but then at some point in the day, they get caught up in some sort of unease, stress, distress, or some psychological or emotional challenge. The transition from being relaxed to not being relaxed can happen very quickly, without a clear understanding of what's going on. A function of mindfulness practice is to see what happens in the transition from having a modicum of relaxation, to being

not relaxed – to notice ease and then unease. What happens there?

What have you done? What is your role? What is your contribution to the loss of your ease? What idea have you picked up? What emotion have you stepped into or embodied, and have let carry you along? What beliefs are operating? What desires? What wishes and expectations are you carrying? What is happening in that transition? You will almost certainly have a role. What's that role? If you can see what you are contributing, then you can ask this great question:

Whatever you believe, whatever you want,
whatever you don't want, whatever you're expecting
– is it worthwhile to give up the ease you had?

If you ask yourself the question, “Is it worth giving up your ease?” and grapple and struggle with it, then the hope is that one day, you might come to the realization, which is a paraphrase of the Buddha's realization, that nothing whatsoever is worth losing your ease over.

Isn't that a remarkable thing? You can still live a responsible life and take care of yourself in the world, but maybe you don't have to lose your ease in doing so. I offer this as your theme for a whole year. The theme of looking at ease, the loss of ease, and your relationship to the loss of ease. What do you do? What goes on for you? Use the simple idea of ease as a mirror: a mirror

for you, a mirror for the Dharma and a mirror for greater peace throughout the year.