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# *Session 7 Taking Care of Ourselves*

# Thoughts are Not Me

*If we are not our thoughts and feelings, then what are we?...When I am having trouble trusting myself to the sitting, I find it helpful to ask, “Who is it that sits?”*

*Daishin Morgan*

Over-identifying with our thoughts, feelings or bodily sensations can lead to problems. We become our pain, our achievements, our anger, our happiness even. Without whatever it is we may lose the sense of who we are.

We can learn to dis-identify from our experience in mind, body and feelings. We can become an observer of ourselves. This gives us a different vantage point from which to view our experience, and gives us the ability to be fully present to our experience without becoming overwhelmed by it. Often we try to detach from or suppress an experience. Such actions aim to minimise our participation in whatever it is we are experiencing. Dis-identification gives us a way to stay with that experience.

We practice dis-identification by changing our viewpoint, we acknowledge that we *have* feelings, thoughts etc, rather than *being* that feeling etc. So ‘I have anger’ rather than ‘I am angry’.

*I have a feeling, it is my feeling. I am not my feeling.  
I have a body, it is my body. I am not my body.  
I have a thought, it is my thought. I am not my thought.*

Thoughts, feelings, sensations, judgements etc are all transient. Dis-identification enables us to recognise them as passing events and prevents us becoming too attached and identified with them. We learn that they are part of ‘my experience’ as opposed to being ‘Me’.

When we have a greater knowledge of who we really are, who is doing the sitting, as opposed to who we think we are, who we think we should be, who we wish we were, etc, we can live with greater wisdom. Knowing when to act and knowing when to let things be.

(with reference to Tomás Agosin (1985) “*Self-Knowledge through Disidentification”* and Ferucci, P (1982) “*What We May Be”*)

# Being Kind to Ourselves

Often in our practice it can be difficult to simply observe our experience without judgement or criticism. These habits of judging and criticising ourselves are often deeply ingrained. Bringing a quality of kindness and compassion to our practice can help soften these habits.

In the Loving Kindness meditation we learn to hold ourselves with a sense of love, of kindness, compassion and acceptance, in the way that a mother would hold her hurt or frightened child.

Just as when we learned to keep our attention on our breath, we may have to remind ourselves time and again of our intention to hold ourselves with this sense of kindness and compassion, whatever we find. At first, it may feel artificial to give yourself loving kindness, it may even trigger feelings of unworthiness and shame. With practice, loving kindness can help us to become our own greatest friend.

Loving kindness can also help us to soften and be more open when we are sitting with very difficult feelings, which may be too raw or intense to simply allow and let be, or to just observe. We can learn to treat ourselves, and our thoughts and feelings, with compassion rather than criticism. We can wish ourselves, peace, happiness, safety etc whatever storms we may be experiencing.

## Love after Love

The time will come  
when, with elation  
you will greet yourself arriving  
at your own door, in your own mirror  
and each will smile at the other's welcome,  
and say, sit here. Eat.

You will love again the stranger who was your self.

Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart  
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you  
all your life, whom you ignored  
for another, who knows you by heart.

Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,  
the photographs, the desperate notes,  
peel your own image from the mirror.  
Sit. Feast on your life.

*Derek Walcott*

# Home Practice

1. Alternate the loving kindness and dis-identification meditations, either on their own or as a lead in to your sitting meditation session.
2. Meditate for at least 20 minutes or 2 x 10 minutes daily if possible.
3. Think about your own future with mindfulness, responding to the questions on the sheet.

### How would you like to carry on with Mindfulness practice?

These are a few questions that may be useful in helping you to decide how you would like Mindfulness to fit into your life in the future. You may wish to change these questions or add further questions or answers.

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| What has been most effective for me so far? |
| What do I want to do more of? |
| What do I want to do less of? |
| How will I make a space in my life for practice? |
| What practice I am going to do? |
| When will I review or change what I do? |
| How can I deal with problems/crises? |