# *Session 7 Taking Care of Ourselves Notes*

## Dis-identification/The Observer

### Introduction

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.

### Meditation

Coming to settle now into your meditation posture…… Allow your eyes to close…... Take a little while to become aware of your breath and feel yourself settle into your body…………………………. Become aware of the sensations within your body………………….. gently guiding your breath to any areas of tension or discomfort and letting the feelings soften as you breathe out from them.

Reflect a little on how your body serves you every day…., see how it feels,…. connect with the inside and outside of your body…………………. Be in your body as much as possible as you say to yourself ‘***I* have a body, it is *my* body. *I* am *not* my body’**. Repeating this to yourself several times ‘***I* have a body, it is *my* body. *I* am *not* my body’ [2-3 breaths]**

And now letting your body leave your awareness, bring your attention to your feelings…..Just noticing them, without trying to change them, or justify them, or rationalise them……………. Simply allow them to be what they are…. You may find one feeling is dominating your attention, or several feelings may be interweaving with each other…………………... Taking this time to become fully aware of what you are feeling……………….., and repeat to yourself several times ‘***I* have feelings, they are *my* feelings. *I* am *not* my feelings.**’……………‘***I* have feelings, they are *my* feelings. *I* am *not* my feelings.**’

Moving your attention now to your mind……………, become aware of thoughts that are passing through your mind…………. Notice what they are,…………… letting them come and then go again……………….. If you find yourself judging your thoughts, be aware that the judgement is also a thought, and let it pass…………………. When you have really settled into your mind, say to yourself gently several times ‘***I* have thoughts, they are *my* thoughts. *I* am *not* my thoughts.**’…………. ***I* have thoughts, they are *my* thoughts. *I* am *not* my thoughts.**’

Allow yourself to sink more deeply into yourself, into the stillness that lies below the thoughts, the sensations and the feelings. Settle here for a little while before the sound of the bells brings your awareness back to room.

### Discussion

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’.

### Who is doing the observing?

Thoughts, feelings, sensations, judgements etc are all transient. Disidentification 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’.

**Loving Kindness**

Introduction

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.

### Meditation

Settling into your chosen meditation position………….. Allow your eyes to close………..Become aware of your breath and use it to gently soften and open to your experience as it is in this moment……………….. Become open to the inner feelings of kindness and compassion. The loving care that you may feel for someone, maybe a child or a partner. Maybe for a pet or for someone you have cared for in the past.

Hold those feelings of loving kindness while you bring the focus of your attention to yourself,… to your whole self, or perhaps to some part that needs special care, such as the site of an injury, or an emotional pain…………… Allow yourself to feel this kindness and compassion for yourself…………... If you wish, focus your feelings of loving kindness on a particular part of your experience that needs love and care in this moment.

Invite feelings of peacefulness and acceptance to be present within you…….. Saying softy and gently to yourself, ‘**May I be peaceful’**, or ‘**May I be happy’**, or ‘**May I live with ease’**. Wishing for yourself whatever you feel you need for your well-being.

Stay with this feeling of kindness and compassion towards yourself for a little while, until you hear the sound of the bells.

### Discussion

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.