

HEALING

Drop the attention into the belly. When the breathing has calmed down notice the totality of the body. Feel that your body is there, in this room, sitting. From the head down to your toes.

Healing, cure, surrender

I want to start the first day focusing on the aspect of ease; finding ease in your body and calm in your mind. And within the process you ask yourself what is causing ease in your life and what is causing dis-ease in your life? How would you define ease, what is the experience of ease? How do you know when you have ease in your body? How does dis-ease manifest in the body or in the mind? The mind is the intention. So I want you to check your life as it is now and ask the question ‘Am I experiencing ease in this situation, what is the cause of this dis-ease?’.

- *I felt dis-ease in the body but, when I looked for the cause I found it came from the mind, how I was reacting to the situation.*

Now you can see that the practice of healing is not something you do, outside of yourself, that is not a requirement; it is deep inside yourself and it is a process of mind, the body comes later. Transforming the mind is letting go of the unwholesome in ourself, and cultivating the wholesome. In this practice when we talk about healing it is not just taking away the pain, it is about cultivating a spark, an opening. In that sense there is a difference between being healed and being cured. It is a transformation of the mind, if something cannot be cured it can be healed. And for this to happen you need some tools, you need some help; you cannot do it just by yourself, because it is very big. Check throughout the day, when you are experiencing ease, check it. And also the opposite, when you experience something of dis-ease – what is the cause, the origin of it. And to see it in your life, your life is now, today; so you are looking at your ease and dis-ease throughout the day to help you with your life review (which we will continue later in the retreat). And don't forget to cultivate loving-kindness, to be kind to yourself. Because this is a training of the mind, I would like you to have in your mind as a *mantra*, *sabbe satta sukhita hontu* – may all beings be well and happy. It is to replace the other thoughts you have about being negative. To catch yourself when you are having thoughts that are not cultivating ease, and you replace these thoughts with the *mantra* of loving-kindness towards all beings.

What is the difference between being healed and being cured? To be cured is to go back to how it was before, removing the symptoms; healing is to be transformed. Reflect on this, ponder on it; go in and out, sometimes look at the question, sometimes leave it. Come to your own understanding of the difference between cured and healed. Many people would think, ‘Healed is a nice idea but I want to be cured, I'll think about healing later’.

Sometimes it is not the case. If you maintain an open heart, even a big suffering will not matter. Suffering, see it as a grace. If you see it as a grace, there is no more suffering – it means letting go of my life, my future, it is all illusion. Through suffering you find grace,

the open heart. You should do it now, while you are healthy, bouncy. So what is the difference between cure and healing? It is a very big difference. Healing does not just mean removing pain, discomfort; it also means introducing life, a spark. For healing you need to be in a joyful state of mind, spontaneous, it is the same for healing self and others. To see what is good in them, tap into the seed of vitality in them, and in yourself; not to focus on what is unwholesome, a problem, not curing a 'condition'. That is the ultimate healing.

It's all too easy to see yourself as a collection of symptoms rather than as a total human being, including your spirit – and thus to become your illness. Fear is powerful and contagious, and at first I allowed myself to catch it. But now I'm learning to take my healing into my own hands. Healing is not the same as curing, after all; does not mean going back to the way things were before, but rather allowing what is now to move us closer to God.

Ram Dass

(Still Here, Riverhead Books, 2000, p.5; also Fierce Grace, DVD)

I have an aunt of 85, her cancer has gone but she's still possessed by fear about it and fear of dying. So you can be cured but not healed, and healed but not cured.

So, check your level of surrender – do I really want to let go of suffering? I will tell you a story. I have a friend who is a healer, working with people who are terminally ill. She first establishes their level of surrender (she checks with dowsing) and if it is too low, or not there at all, she refuses to treat or help them, not wasting her time and their money. The healing is proportionate to how much, in the depths, they want to get better. On the surface we say 'heal me, give me skills', but in the depths we sabotage it. Remove the veils of ignorance, of delusion – illness, old age, death will come. We have to have a strong desire to get free from suffering, a gut feeling 'I don't want this any more'. Have I come to a place in life when I really want to be free from suffering? Illness is not an obstacle; practising when ill, in trauma or shock, that is the best time to practise. Weaknesses, imbalances are a wonderful opportunity to go deeper – to surrender, to let go. It may not be easy to discover your true intention; on the surface you say 'yes', but under the surface there are challenging patterns, habits, which are difficult to let go. *From personal experience of chronic illness: only when you've discovered that nothing works in more than a very limited way – no treatments or life-changes – and you've gone down and down till you've reached the pits, that's when I really surrendered – letting go of personality, of self-identity. 'Reaching the pits' is because you have to discover that none of your strategies and props has worked. All you can do is letting go of the rational calculating mind, getting out of the way so there is space for the body-mind to take over.*

Levels of illness

As you breathe in, take in the blue of the sky to the base of your skull. As you breathe out send it down to your sacrum. Repeat this until you are more clear in your body and mind. Then return to awareness in the belly.

In the teachings of Tibetan medicine, there are four levels of illness:

1. Past life-time influences – past history and present circumstances, we all carry with us a different set of seeds, which can ripen depending on circumstances; the need is for Medicine Buddha practice.
2. Demonic possessions – hidden forces that drive us, that move us in life - why this tendency, that attraction? The need is for the path of insight meditation and purification, which could be through *Vajrasattva* practice, or Medicine Buddha practice.
3. Transient – will pass, it doesn't need medicine, needing relaxation and letting go.
4. Lifestyle patterns – this requires a review of what is going on; you need to review your life, to correct your lifestyle.

Levels four and three overlap a bit, so do one and two. Levels one and two are deeper, the problem doesn't respond whatever treatment you try. Four and three can be dealt with by a whole range of treatments, therapies, remedies, life-style changes. With one and two when we have tried all those and they don't really work, it still doesn't move, then we know stronger medicine is needed. Demonic possessions are deep driving patterns needing a stronger remedy to contact. Meditation is the most active form of healing, of strength; it is a state of mind, not easily distracted, it is mind training. On a scale of the most active to the most passive level of involvement by the 'patient', meditation would come at the top, allopathic medicine and surgery at the bottom. And, in between, forms of energetic body work (including yoga, chi gong); then practices for healing the senses (such as colour and speech therapy); and lower down, more 'professional' forms of healing such as shiatsu, osteopathy, acupuncture and homoeopathy.

We start with levels 3 transient and 4 life-style, which are more on the surface and therefore the most accessible to us. These are more conscious levels, when you move upwards in the chart you come to much more unconscious. You are looking at your life and to see the patterns that disturb the flow of life in you, the movement in life. It is important to go through levels three and four first, to be able to know if the illness that you have comes from levels one or two.

Transient

Explanation

We can access this easily, it is quite conscious: transient illness comes and goes, it is something that passes quickly – a headache because of lack of food, lack of sleep and the next day you feel off colour. These illnesses need not much attention, they will pass anyway. We rest and let it pass. So at this level, there is no need to make a big deal of it: Namgyal Rinpoche said ‘if you have a headache take an aspirin’. Something that doesn’t need much, just relaxation, common sense; just see what the problem is and do something about it – take some rescue remedy! But if you keep catching a cold, or always at the same time of year – it is a tendency, so you would need to look further at your lifestyle. And with recurrent patterns like migraine; if you look deeper you see that those are ‘demonic possession’, but at first you could think it is ‘transient’ or an aspect of ‘lifestyle’.

Practices

With ‘flu or just the common cold, a tummy bug, toothache, the body can be very expressive, physical distress is at the surface. So this is a good time to practise awareness of bodily sensations without being caught up in emotional reactions; knowing the transience, that it will pass. How do I know that I have a cold, how does it feel in the body? The physical aspect of suffering – everything is an opportunity for practice! And having the symptoms of the common cold is a reason for celebration, because they are evidence that the body’s immune system is working as it should. There are teachings to support this process, which could also help make you less vulnerable to transient illnesses.

Bone breathing

In traditional Chinese medicine the bones are thought to be the source of *chi*, so this exercise is to balance energy in the body. Put a rolled towel length-ways under the top of the back – it is optional, take it away if you want. Allow the breath to settle. Then start on the left.

- Breathe in through the left foot and up to the hip, breathe out through the left leg; repeat a minimum of seven times. Then do the same with the right leg. Have awareness of which leg felt more difficult to get in touch with. Finally, with one long in-breath and a long out-breath, go up the left leg, across the hips, and down through the right leg.
- Breathe in up the left arm, from hands to shoulder, and out through the left arm; repeat a minimum of seven times. Then do the same with the right arm. Have awareness of which arm felt more difficult to get in touch with. Finally, with one long in-breath and a long out-breath, go up the left arm, across the shoulders, and down through the right arm. It is healing, feel the solidity and the warmth.
- Up the spine, from the base up to the top of the spine, to the base of the occipital; and down again through the sacrum to the tail bone.

- Then the skull, starting from the base at the back, up and over to the front, ending around the third eye; the whole skull.

If you cannot get the breath into an area, it means there will not be any *chi* in the area. Find ways to get breath into, for example, the back – visualise, ‘push’ it, like a waterfall or a stream of light.

Meditation on the body

*This body of mine is composed of atoms born in stars,
molecules, cells, tissues and organs.*

It is a union of uncountable virus, bacteria, fungi, plants and animals.

It is conditioned by families and societies, by thoughts and dreams.

It is moulded by sun and gravity and the whole of the ecosphere.

It is an inter-being of all these processes from micro to macro.

Wondrous! Transient!

May it teach me wisdom!

I will train myself to support, extend and appreciate the life of all living beings.

I will live with a sensitive and responsible awareness for the whole ecology of life.

(Precept 1, from the Five Precepts in Positive Expression, by Tarchin Hearn)

For contemplating these texts you could be sitting outside, leaning against a tree; or at night lying on your back on the ground, under moon and star-light (do wrap up well, and take protection from the damp earth).

Healing the senses

Be outside, lying down; listen to sounds, for twenty minutes. When the mind becomes calmer, you can hear very far away, faint sounds. If you catch yourself thinking, bring your mind back to the sounds. Afterwards record how many kinds of sounds you were able to hear. Were you present, really hearing them?

Instructions for guided meditation

Do this work outside for maybe half an hour, minimum twenty minutes; make yourself comfortable, be in an easeful position. Contact the sense and bathe each sense in light.

Move on when a body sensation says, or notice if it is the head pushing the body.

1. The sense of hearing: start with the right ear, bathe the inner ear, inside the ear, in light; then the left ear. Breathing into the ears feel vitality, warmth; breathing out softening, letting go. Then the radiant ear in the centre of your head; the divine ear, this is non-duality, find it intuitively. If you listen with this ear it makes total sense, you hear in a way you have not heard before.
2. Sight: the right eye, bathe and radiate light into it, then the left eye and the third eye, the divine eye – find it with your awareness; and repeat the breathing.

3. Smell: each nostril, right and left; but the nostrils are just the end points of very fine energy lines that go up into the brain at the top of the head, round the side and down the spine, gathering at the *hara* point below the navel. Centring is sometimes at the bridge of the nose, or the tip of the nose.
4. Taste: the base of the mouth, below the tongue, and lower lip then the roof of the mouth and upper lip. Centred at the tongue for divine taste, all of the tongue or just the tip. This exercise is also to do with concentration.
5. The left brain (the logical side) and right brain (the creative side), centring with awareness on the whole brain. This is contacting the thinking aspect of mind.
6. Touch: the whole right side of the body, and the left side, including right and left sides of the head; then the spine or the central channel running parallel inside the body, this is the inner spine. Or you could do the brain last.

Finally bathe all in light. At the end, come back to the rise and fall of the belly and out of the meditation on the third out-breath. Then be fifteen minutes outside walking in nature. This practice can also be done as an exercise with a partner, as giver and receiver, to heal weakness, imbalances. Guide your partner through the whole sequence twice (first right side then left), then a third time for the centre swiftly, like a waterfall.

I will train myself to use the senses to further awakening, explore Dharma, and to come to know the world more profoundly and more compassionately.
(Precept 3, from the Five Precepts in Positive Expression, by Tarchin Hearn)

The Ancient Blessing on Wayfarers

*That on your way your skin may know the touch of the thread of a thousand silk worms.
That in your nostrils there will rise the perfume of jasmine,
and in your mouth the taste of honey.
That your ears may hear the rush of the eagle's wing, and the rustling of bamboo.
That your eyes may behold the elephant walking through the rainbow.
And that in your consciousness there may rise
the bright diamond point of the Dhamma-Kaya of clear pure mind.*

Lifestyle patterns

Explanation

The level of lifestyle is again quite conscious and obvious, it is functional and easy to approach: you are looking at how you spend your everyday life, for things that happen that disturb your body, disturb your state of ease; to see the patterns that disturb the flow of life in you, the movement in life. Reviewing your lifestyle patterns gives you the information about what aspects you need to change. Until you spend time on

investigating this, you will not know if your illness is coming from a deeper source or from lifestyle.

Practices

Life Review

So I want you to look at your life, at three aspects of your life. The first one is the aspect of relationships. The second one is activity, your occupation - how you spend your time. And the third one is environment, your place in the environment - where you live, work and travel - it is where you spend your time, so if you commute to work you include travelling on the underground. When you do the life review, it is good to write something down, it helps you to be more present; but if you don't find it helpful to write things down, then don't do it.

Be somewhere conducive, and when you look at your life I would like you to make sure your back is leaning against something – to lean against for example a tree, a chair – so you need something that will make contact with your back. Otherwise you are going to go forward, to look forward. If you don't find a pattern it doesn't matter, leave it for now. If you look at it with kindness you are going to be able to go deeper. So if you are gloomy, depressed, beat yourself up with this practice – go skipping for a while. This was Rinpoche's advice to me when I was on a one-year retreat. As soon as you feel a little bit dull, depressed - skip to keep the energy positive, otherwise you cannot do the work.

So before this work I want you to establish loving-kindness in your mind; establish a calm state, a generous state, a spacious state. You can do this through body work, chanting *aham avero homi*, through the *om ah hum* - anything that will bring you to a state of ease with yourself, a happy mind. It is so important because we tend to attack ourselves too much, criticise, put down; then we don't get enough information about our pattern. If you approach it from a state of loving-kindness, of immense kindness to yourself, then we are going to see the pattern much more clearly and then we can do something about it. If you are not being kind to yourself, stop the practice and re-establish kindness to yourself, every time – through walking practice, or the *om ah hum* can be of great help here.

Begin gently, to establish deep calm, the hollow body, you need tranquility in body and mind before you can access deeper information, whatever arises, and be able to do something with it – otherwise you will cling, take it personally, and block there. The practice is to establish deep calm¹, and from there to look at your life and notice where in your body you lose the calm, it leaks away . A thought, an image loses the calm; drop the thought, the looking, and re-establish the calm. Then look again at the situation, the image, the feeling of what you are looking at. Otherwise if you don't return to it from a

¹ You could do the Deep Blue practice which is presented in the Medicine Buddha chapter.

calm state, it will over-react, go into panic reaction. If you look again from a calm state then you get information and you know – you know that you know – so you can let go. It must be done from a state of deep calm, not just when something pops up unexpectedly and hits you in the face – that is bound to produce a fear reaction. And investigate this state of body / mind so you can use it to help others, that gives more positivity to it. If you really apply mindfulness, lay it bare, look at it as it is – information will come. It depends on the texture of motivation – if the motivation is too harsh you will be losing the calm. Trust your inner wisdom.

So the instructions are, for looking at your life:

1. establish deep calm in the body
2. invite something to come up, relating to your current life-style
3. notice or ask where it is expressed in the body, where there are gaps or leaks of the calm
4. re-establish calm, then ask again
5. continue the process until it is resolved through transformation - an image, an answer, a feeling – or until you have had enough
6. make notes

Work, relationships, environment – you are looking for any disturbance of calm in each area, which blocks or arrests growth, expansion, happiness. You detect areas of imbalance and in this calm state, focus and say the word that comes up; go into it re-living, re-working it and write down what body response arises, where or when the calm has gone. How does it affect the organism? – nothing to do with opinions about it. How does it affect the body, the mind or feeling? If it is mainly a mental / emotional response, something will come up in the body too. Don't think too much when something arises as an issue, that would lead to fabricating a story. Wait and an explanation, further information, will come up later. Stay, and something else will come up – it is like diving, going deeper.

To bring in more structure to the practice, you could focus with a specific question.

When you are in a deep state of calm, look at a situation in your life, imagine yourself in that situation, then ask the question: 'Is this wholesome?' - giving me room to grow, to explore; or 'is it unwholesome?' - stopping the movement of growth. 'Is this conducive to my growing?' Establish deep calm and ask the question with no fear, no expectation. Ask the question then watch – is the calm disturbed, is the mind becoming agitated? Come from the depth, not from the discursive mind – because you can talk yourself into anything if you want to. "Your advantage becomes your disadvantage, and your disadvantage becomes your advantage."

So I would suggest you establish calm in the body first and you bring in a situation like at work, or in your relationship, and you ask the question 'Is this **conducive for my growing?**'. I find this much more wholesome than to think of right or wrong. You are calm, you ask the question to investigate and you observe – so you bypass the conceptual mind and go straight to 'how does it feel?'. It is the power of establishing the

calm first then see where it is disturbed. I would suggest you do this quite lightly and casually, not reviewing your life, not criticising yourself. The technique is to first establish deep calm, bring in the question you would like to investigate, and ask very softly ‘is this conducive to my growing?’. And you stay in contact with your body. I suggest you try this tonight before going to sleep. Try it, lying in bed, establishing blue, asking the question and letting the sleep decide for you – in the morning you will have the answer. To ask the question and get out of the way.

Do it meditatively, bring up images in your life and ask ‘is this conducive to my ease, to my growing?’. So from a calm state you ask, ‘Is this conducive...?’. Not just ‘yes, yes, yes’; look deeper, calmly. The *lapis lazuli* blue colour helps you to go into the depths, below the ripples. To look into the motivation in the mind. Until you have contacted the depth you can be swayed. When you have contacted the depth you know it is conducive to growing, to expansion. (If you know that something in your lifestyle is bad for you but cannot stop it, look at level 2 ‘demonic possession’.)

Are they really supporting your growing? Look at areas in which there is no growth in your life – where is this coming from? Don’t go into the negative. Establish deep calm then ask ‘what is good in my life, supportive to my growing?’. A life pattern can be to do with body, speech, attitude, dis-ease. Then you can see what is inhibiting growth. You need first to see it, then you can get help. We may already have a suspicion, but it has not come to the surface. First you must establish calm, in a deep state, and effortlessly, painlessly this will bring up answers, solutions. Ask what are the patterns in my life that inhibit my growing? Attitudes really come into level 2 ‘demonic possession’ but you could look here, in this exercise, at how they effect relationships, activities; get insight into them to go into the deeper levels later. You are going back to the ‘stream’, the stream of consciousness; going further, the colour *lapis lazuli* blue drops us directly into that deep stream that makes us make all the decisions that we took.

Another specific question you could ask, ‘Is this **wholesome or unwholesome?**’, giving me room to grow or holding back my growing. The unwholesome – you can feel it in the body, emotions, in the mind as contraction, there is no movement, the view is tight and narrow; a sense of blockage, arrested, paralysing fear. The wholesome is anything in your life-style, your way of being, it has expansion, promotes going further and a tendency to grow and move on.

So first establish deep calm in your body, feel it in the body, then drop the question. Get the feedback from your body. The practice is not so much in the answer but in daring to ask the question from a place of no expectation, no fear. So the question remains light, happy, and let the question go deeper. As Namgyal Rinpoche said, to ‘establish calm, then wake it up’; not with agitation but with the question. The deep calm enables the question to go deeper, looking deeply. The question may confirm that something is wholesome, so add a different dimension to the question. Or if it is unwholesome, how to

change it, to make growth. Don't go through aspects of your life and criticise yourself about it – just ask the question. The measure of your practice is 'do I feel stronger?', 'is there less mental agitation?', 'more ease in my body?', 'is my breathing more settled?'

So you are looking here at patterns that disturb your growth, your wholesome state. Wholesome is to invite you to move; to be free to grow, expand; to express yourself; to move in life. Unwholesome is something that stops this movement. We need to move away from positive / negative, it is wholesome / unwholesome. The wholesome promotes movement in life for you, the unwholesome stops it. You need to check how you spend your time in life and look at patterns that are stuck, repetitive, patterns that don't go anywhere. Patterns that stop you from moving into life, expanding. The wholesome is freedom to move, good room, good space in which you feel you can grow, explore, take risks, be creative. If we cultivate the wholesome – friends, activities – we are going to really grow. Are these relationships, activities, food, climate supportive to my growing? It is not about 'do I like it?' or success. The unwholesome is about what stops the growing – you feel stuck, there is no movement. The unwholesome is the *bonsai*, wanting to grow but being clipped down, trimmed back; no room to grow, to expand: this leads to distortion. Distortion in the body comes as a dis-ease, un-ease. When you bring up an aspect, a situation– notice where do you feel constrained in the body, where do you feel you cannot move? I want you to approach this with extreme friendliness to yourself; not to destroy yourself, criticize yourself. You want some information – but without the drama. How does it feel in the body? Come from a place of calm, from the depth – not with an agenda already worked out, not from a place of fear, of contraction. Scan your lifestyle, see where there is some agitation, disturbance in the body, and look further: where is it coming from? Listening, receive it at the body level. Something comes up, you keep looking (the path of insight) not thinking, scanning your life from a distance, peeling the layers and you find the core pattern. If you find that you are no longer the victim of it, you are the master of it.

Finally, to look at life's turning points, where choices that you made reflect a deep aspiration. When a determined being wanted more than the options she saw around, and went for something else. This should cultivate loving kindness towards yourself, and admiration for those old beings who stayed with an aspiration. What was moving you then? What was in the stream? – contact the deeper stream of consciousness, *bavangha*. Either start from far back or from now working backwards. And what are the anchors? – for me it is the Zendo. Be warm, comfortable and dig deep into the stream of consciousness. Doing this with past turning points can help with current choices and options. You are looking for, touching on, 'right view'; it may not be words, or it can come as texts. Do this work in a real spirit of openness and willingness, not just because the teacher says so (and part of you holds back). It will make the work much more easeful and much quicker. Not just being seen to practice, going through the motions.

Question and answer

- *A pattern of working too many hours could also come from a different level?*
Exactly, so it is important to name it and then move on to another level.
- *What if you know that a job is harmful for your health but because of a mortgage, and other commitments, you can't change it?* You have to manage it, to work with it. It is not easy of course, not easy. The practice of loving-kindness is important for this, you can pacify your fear and have a different focus for the situation. It is an invitation to practise; when we see something as a problem we want to get rid of it, we want to push it away.
- *To share from when I was in a difficult situation at work. I learned that if I take the difficulties in, then I can see I have the tendency to create something on top of what is outside – then some of the difficulties melt away and it is more clear and I can see which part I need to look deeper at.*
- *To a student with a bad back who works long hours. Is there a deeper level?*

It is important to know this, so if we go for a massage it is not going to help it. So we need to look deeper, to be more alert. You know the term 'demonic possession'? Do you know yours? It is something that is possessing you, something that is so part of you that you don't know it, you don't recognise it. It influences everything that you do, hidden forces, you don't see it. This is where we need the path of insight; it means looking deeply, you can see all your little tendencies. If you have tried everything and nothing has an impact, then your illness comes from the second level or the first level.

- *Are the tendencies from this lifetime?* They are from this lifetime but some of them come from further back, but it is very difficult to access that. This is why we need the practice of the Medicine Buddha and purification, that includes *Vajrasattva*.

You can see it as it is, not to push it away or fabricate, just see it as it is. And the first level is the most difficult to reach, passed down from previous lifetimes. A way to understand it is when we come into the world we have different seeds, potentialities, tendencies; and depending on what happens in this life some of them will open up and grow, or not – the wholesome and the unwholesome. We have genetic information coming from the parents; sometimes it manifests, depending on the circumstances, or not.

- *What about environmental factors, mass epidemics?* That doesn't explain why some people get sick and some do not, or others get sick and then recover, they do not die.

The point I am making is we need to practise meditation, insight, to protect ourselves from tendencies; because no matter what we are going to die. So illness is not a mistake, it is part of our life and we have to learn to manage it skilfully, lovingly. For illnesses that come from this life, you need medicine; for illnesses that come from the womb, you need the practice of *Vajrasattva*, purification; any illness from a previous life goes more deeply, so you need the Medicine Buddha practice². This life is transient.

² *Vajrasattva* and Medicine Buddha practices are in the Purification and Medicine Buddha booklets.

Holistic clearing

Explanation

Holistic clearing is a practice for dredging up from the depth what prevents us from making progress in life. We may have surface awareness of problems but need to listen more deeply. It is about the preciousness of life, don't take it for granted: so how can I do more to take advantage of this precious life, to fulfill my potential? When we are not fulfilling our potential there is a sense of paralysis in life, we may have the idea but not the possibility of improvement.

What are the causes of paralysis?

1. blocks, what prevents you – having fixed ideas, fixed views
2. lack, what you are lacking – when you have fixed ideas, you don't explore new things
3. your strength – if you have a really strong specialisation, you invest everything in that and other areas are neglected

Look at these in the body, body experience – unlocking, un-paralysis, un-freezing has to happen at a physiological level in the body. Where is my block in the body, how does it feel? Have mindfulness and calm to look at it as it is. We need tools to avoid too much thinking, dialogue, and too much emotion. Feel it directly, cut through thinking and emotion and 'let the sin liberate itself'. You are gardening, weeding in the body – then let it speak to you directly itself.

Bodhicitta is the drive to get better: 'I want something better, there must be another way'. *Bodhi* means enlightenment, being fully awake; *citta* means the mind. It is good if there is an underlying restlessness in life, even when things are going well; that is the drive of *bodhicitta* and energy. Get me, I, self out of the way and ride on this energy that we all have. Truly relax and let it happen as it is; no big emotion around it, no embroidery. Dig deep below our obvious strengths and find a suspicion about our blocks, our lacks. Don't focus on the negative, that has a tendency to block, contract, freeze – blocks don't move. Strength moves, by nature it is dynamic, it flows. This is why we normally focus on the negative, because it is so present. There is a deeper strength: the strength to know has a familiar code of identity, it lacks full awareness; the deeper strength is exploration. The teaching of holistic clearing comes to us from Namgyal Rinpoche, you will not find it anywhere else. He said it is a practice for modern times.

Practice

Holistic means total. You need to establish a place in yourself where you can find safety and return to balance, flexibility. The key is breathing – it gives an indication of blocks, justifications. Letting go of that requires humility, openness. So be at ease, relaxed, spacious. Notice the tightening, contraction of awareness around a thought, soften. Relax the body, soften the attention. You must start from a place of calm, not too much discursive thoughts. Then the depth speaks to you and blows away your little plans.

Meditation on strengths

During the day, identify your many strengths - twenty-one strengths, big and small ones; these can be characteristics or skills that you have acquired, make a list in advance. Then later, leave your list and prepare for the practice with body work, breathing, to do it from a place of mind-body calm. This enables you to have more distance, and to have energy to go deeper and not give up. It is very important to come to this practice from stillness, quietness; being restful, peaceful, in deep calm. To be able to look deeply without fear or expectation – if there is expectation you are going to fabricate. So the preparation is very important. The whole practice is getting away from ideas about your strengths, from discursive thought; get away from that, forget them, and focus on sensations ‘in the body’.

1. Begin to identify with the strengths by plugging into positive ‘events’ – meeting with a person, scenery, landscape, happy conversation. Begin to work it – expand it in the body, how does it feel? Feel well and good. It is easier to focus on the negative. Physiologically the positive has a tendency to expand, to go on and on. So it is easier - physiologically – to talk about the negative where there is contraction, solid, stuck. Stay with the positive association and feel it more and more.
2. Then line up more positives, at least five. As you remember these, compare and experience their different tones, not being regimented, you can go back. Move from one to the other and feel, see the differences, playing with them, shades of happiness. Narrow it to three and it becomes more serious, more real. Spend longer with each one to really feel it in the body. Explore them at random.
3. Then select one, the one with the strongest feeling of potential for growth, for change, the strength that will take you further. Really go fully into it, a ‘body in the body’ experience; your total body is that feeling, totally in it. And try to find a word that represents it and repeat it silently on the out-breath, until you find yourself silently at a deep place, where everything feels very strong. A new word may be revealed, repeat it again, refine it. Really focus on the body, you want to get to the heart essence of that feeling. It can be a feeling of ‘not knowing’, open-ended.
4. Ask the revelation question – choose the timing – ‘where is this going?’, ‘what does it reveal, where to go next?’. You could ask ‘what is my path in life?’. You are at the depth level, dredging: ‘what is my vision?’, ‘where do I want to go onto from here?’. You send the question deep into your unconscious, like fishing, listen with all your senses and watch the ripples of it. Don’t expect an answer straight away, the most important thing is to have asked the question. You might get just a sight, a flashing picture, a feeling in the body, a taste, smell. Maybe an answer later when you are more casual; stay in touch and it will lead you where you are wanting to go. It gives you confidence to do what you are doing in life, following the stream.
5. To listen to the stream you could take time out, be quiet, in nature, and see what comes up. Stay with the question – ‘where is this going?’ ‘what is my path?’ – in

non-clinging awareness. No dialogues about negatives, stay focused on the positive. Then let it settle, do a short review - you could make a drawing, go outside and pick flowers, whatever. It is important to reflect on what has happened and not just let it go.

You can return to the practice on another occasion and go quicker into the depth. With repetition you are well in touch with the depths, the stream; it is a way of certain decision making. Do it regularly, once a week is good, and allow a full hour to do the practice so you have time to reflect. This is an important practice for people involved in healing work because it focuses on strength, what is strong in you. There is a difference between being 'cured' and being healed, restored to your energetic balance.

Question and answer

- *Sudden sharp pains and twitching around the body during the meditation – what do they mean?* It could be from the posture. But more likely that it is movement of energy into areas that have been stagnant or empty.
- *What identifies the one strength after the revelation question?* Positive feelings, lightness, joy.
- *What causes negative blocking feelings, like a blank wall?* You may feel a block if your life, your options are limited at the moment, but the depth will surface again when circumstances change – like underground water seeping through, re-surfacing anywhere.

Demonic possession

Explanation

Demonic possession: it is the being that is still grasping; reaching out for an old story and feeding it. It is informing your action, your speech, way of working, informing your life-style and other people. You need to discover where is this coming from, what am I holding onto? See the text below – the key words are contraction, awareness and grasping. The contraction of awareness is not the problem, it is that we are grasping at it. If you don't recognise it as a contraction, it gives you energy to 'do something about it', which means involving others.

To observe how and when a contraction of awareness occurs around any mental impression that arises, then a "being" is born in that moment.

If the impression is a pleasing memory, with this contraction or grasping, the thought "I am happy" takes root. "A happy being is born" and as with all that is born, this "happy being" will also die.

So why do we hold on so long? - because whatever being is born is certain to pass away. Hidden dialogue in your life, that is the demonic possession – we have hidden drive,

hidden need to hold on. Like the difference between being cured and being healed, we have to address the mind. The first two categories about how you spend your time (*transient and life-style*) are easy to see. Once you have sorted out those two categories you come deeper into the mind.

Recollect an incident – did you make a story out of it, engage other people, take action to make sure it doesn't happen again? This is serious demonic possession, the process that we do. Watch the mind contracting, holding on, holding tighter: this is the cause of many diseases. At that moment when you are practising the unwholesome, you arrest the movement of change – you, not the event – you contract, you stop. Look at how this contraction arises and how you add to it. Then what do you do to it? Just meet it with choice-less awareness, then it passes away. Contraction of awareness is an experience in the body, there is a contraction in the body, something stopping – then soften it. All this doesn't matter, it is not important. Contraction is grasping, and you are doing the grasping. Holding it, and with the holding you are becoming something, it gives you a sense of existing. Whatever is arising, it is within itself that it will pass away – it doesn't need another condition for it to pass away. All you need to do is take your hands off. We have in ourselves the possible end of suffering, we are the makers of our own suffering.

In looking at your life, you are going to meet your demonic possessions anyway. There are many 'beings' in your life that you are holding onto. We all have demonic possessions, otherwise you are not human. We all have contractions, it is how you hold onto them. You are opening yourself to unwholesomeness from within and without because you are stopping the flow. In the exercise, start with calm and the blue then look at relationships, occupation, environment – not as a list, more casually, what comes up. You have to give a trigger or, if you are just in deep calm, nothing will happen. *What is demonic?* Thoughts that are very strong, they are demons, they possess us, make us who we are. They are so much part of ourselves that they are hidden – that is why we have to go deep into ourselves and look. With this category of illness, we can work simply with the practice of insight – to look at whatever is arising and let it go. This is the ultimate healing – I don't know a doctor who specialises in anger, hatred, desire, confusion.

How to recognise contraction in the mind? Contraction could be to be impatient about it, have ideas about what should happen, wanting it to be in a particular way. In every moment there is a being with ideas, for example a being that wants to do the practice. That is OK, that is wholesome, but then let go of the wanting and just get on with it, or you start having opinions about how it should be done. Not right or wrong, just be with what is happening in a particular moment. As you let it pass, you give room for something fresh to arise, fresh in the moment. We are all the time holding on. In each moment a being is born – be aware of that, soften it; and the next moment a different being is born. So we go into much deeper now, a more unconscious level. You need a deeper method to reach this level: the path of insight meditation. To help you understand this

level I want to teach you about the three characteristics: the acquisitive, the averse, the confused.

- Greed, the desire types, *lobha*: are in pursuit of delight, looking for happiness through gratification of the sense desire. The state of mind is most often associated with grasping, wanting, not having enough. In a new situation you see what is pleasing, beautiful and most attracted to; you associated with people you find interesting and pleasing.
- Hatred, the aversion types, *dosa*: define themselves by rejecting, taking an oppositional stand. The state of mind is most often associated with pushing away the world through judging, criticising, disliking, aggression. In a new situation you see what is wrong, not how you would do it, what should be changed, what displeases you.
- Delusion, the confused type, *moha*: are associated with lethargy, delusion, disconnected, not knowing what to make of things or what is going on. In a new situation you look around, you become restless, you don't know how to relate to what is going on, you ask yourself 'how do I fit? what am I supposed to do?' You withdraw.

Through mindfulness, you can transform those three states:

- the greed state into a natural and compassionate state which brings beauty and pleasure in the world
- the hate state transform into clarity, discernment, compassion and discriminating wisdom that uses clarity to help and heal
- the confused state transform into spacious equanimity.

We have all the tendency to respond in life with one of these patterns – greed, hatred and delusion. So imagine a situation in life, how do you respond in an acquisitive tendency? Wanting more and more, 'what's in it for me?' It is about what is pleasing this person, it is based on desire. In an averse tendency? Critical, quick-tempered, with anger. This type of person will see everything as wrong, nothing is good enough. And if you are the confused type, how do you come into a new situation? – with disconnectedness. So you can see as "demonic possession" something that is so deep in you that you don't know you have it, that is why it is called demonic. See which type you are, of course we all have all the three types but in times of crisis, with your back against the wall, which type are you? And how does it feel in body, speech and mind?

There is good news!

Confusion In this state are the seeds for transformation, and with more mindfulness you can transform this state into spacious equanimity. So know that in your suffering there is the seed for transformation, and this transformation can lead you to spacious equanimity. That is within the confusion, not outside it. It is not that you sort out the confusion then you get the spacious equanimity, it is already there in the confusion.

Acquisitive The good news is you can transform the wanting into compassion and generosity. You want to look after the welfare of people, not to tolerate any unhappiness.

Aversion The good news is that you develop a very sharp discriminating mind with a lot of clarity and wisdom. So your speciality is wisdom, clarity.

You see that behind this distorted view there is the seed for something very beautiful.

You don't have to fight what you are, you just need to transform it. You need the path of insight meditation or the Medicine Buddha practice to transform it. Then you will be able to transform these tendencies into liberation.

Practices

Demonic possessions are hidden. In terms of illness if you have tried everything you can – attended to your lifestyle, changed your diet, tried homoeopathy, acupuncture and nothing changes – this is a sure sign, it means you have to go deeper into the practice. And notice that the remedy is the path of insight – it means that we have to cultivate deep calm, to see through the layers. One practice to do with this is working with the face. It is going back to the original face so you do some work to dredge up your different faces, you bring them out, you expose them. You are seeing them as they are, the power of seeing, and seeing they dissolve. It is the closest you can get to going back in time. It is very powerful work. At this level it is very deep in the unconscious, we need some device to bring them out. The thinking mind cannot do that, it will fabricate. It is a big question to ask, to find out the hidden faces within us – why this tendency? For example if someone works too much and you ask them why they do it, the answers will be only part truth (needing the money, seeking status) – you have to go deeper.

Meditation on the Face

You need to have gone through the preparatory exercises, so little tensions in the face are eased out. Then when you have enough calm, you are strong enough to look at what is disturbing the being, unwholesomeness which is blocking growth. It can happen and pass quickly or the expression can be fixed, the face feel arrested. We are touching now on demonic possessions – it is very deep, can go back to birth or in the womb. You will be contacting the depth. Don't do it unless you really have established calm – either nothing will happen, or you play games with yourself, frighten yourself, fabricate. The face practice needs energy so be relaxed, not exhausted; be in a good space. Prepare with face exercises in advance:

1. scanning the face, the muscles, its expressions (and go back to this scanning after each stage). See if there is a difference between the right and left side.
2. yawning, for five minutes
3. then adopt different facial expressions, moving directly from one to the next: surprise, shock, disgust; lying, honesty; fear, panic; intimidating or to frighten someone, peacefulness; anticipation, charm; satisfied or content, anger; grief, pain. This starts more externally and becomes more inward.

Then move into the lying down posture for the meditation and bathe the eyes in blue, as if you are looking at deep night blue sky; this to settle the breathing and establish calm. Blue is a very calming colour, it has an effect physiologically on the body; to relax the body, and it is also anti-fear. Then focus only on the face, on the facial expressions and

muscles of the face. Become aware of something moving in the face, little movements or twitchings, let it happen. The face will go through different expressions naturally, through layers of expressions. Lots of expressions all the time are passing through the face. Then as you go through the depth, down the stairs, it comes to a place where it sets, it is stuck; you meet an expression that seems quite fixed, it doesn't change. At that point it is what is driving you, unconsciously but it controls your life. Something happens – an image of you aged four, or whatever. Witness, just notice it – don't even name it. Don't think or fabricate. You are dredging up, excavating. Stay with it, give it *lapis lazuli* blue, and gradually it unfolds, starts to shift, loosen up, and it is freed – it does that, not you. The sign of it being freed is that you feel more energy, creativity, you view the world differently because you get a different response from the world. Because the demons have been freed, and the energy which they were draining has been released. In your time stop, get up and walk around.

Opening the heart

When we talk about transforming the tendencies, for healing – which factor is most important? It is often a quality that is forgotten actually. I am looking for a universal quality. *Patience... (and many other suggestions) ...Is it gentleness?* Yes, it is opening the heart, gentleness, loving-kindness, spaciousness, softness. Patience comes into it, but actively opening the heart. So I am going to take you into the practice of Opening the Heart. If you don't open the heart your practice can be very hard, very busy, bullying yourself. It has to involve the heart in the transformation. *You said to imagine a cushion behind my back and that has helped me so much. It was so much effort before, trying to get it right, do too much.* You want a friend. I don't want you to beat yourself up again and again when there is no need for that. Just open your heart!

Instructions for guided meditation

1. So first we establish deep calm in the body. Imagine that you have a fine silk cloth or a soft mist of *lapis lazuli* blue touching the body, covering the body. So take some time to establish this deep calm in the body; don't try too hard at it, just gently, softly.
2. Now recall a pleasant event, a happy event in your life. Notice the sensation in your chest changing, as you recall the pleasant event place your attention also on the chest. There may be a slight sensation of lightness, of softening, of warmth. Now expand the sensation in your chest, make the sensation bigger side to side. Opening the heart, expanding the heart; the sensation as you have it now, imagine it expanding to your side. Try to maintain the awareness of the deep blue, and as you breathe in and out the sensation in your heart expands sideways. Now make the sensation expand front to back. And now up and down. So you have the sensation moving side to side, front and back, and now up and down. Now imagine rays of light shining out from your heart into the four directions (front, to the right, behind, left).
3. Now imagine your heart being held, being touched, in the front of your body, in the back of your body; gently touched, one hand in the front, one hand in the

- back. Imagine being held at your heart, very softly, no pressure, a very light touch. Stay with this image, with the sensation that comes with it. Allow yourself to be touched at the heart, to soften.
4. Now you feel supported inside and from outside, you in turn imagine holding the heart of someone in need. Imagine placing your hand in the front and back of someone in need. Your touch, your presence, is inviting them to let go of fear. It is important that your heart remains open, even in the face of the suffering of others. And as you are feeling supported, held, you in turn support someone who is in need.

Explore how the out-breath is in your body, how it feels in the body, it is the expression of a willingness to let go.

Meditation on the Positive

Find ten different things in your life that are positive, ten moments of positivity. Coming into the Zendo, feel it in the body; ten moments of wellness, strength, positivity, could be reading a book, stroking your cat. The ten moments each have a different quality, different texture. Catch yourself being in a moment of wellness – how does it feel in the body? Wellness, positivity – a feeling of expansion, spaciousness – ‘ah, that’s how it feels, wellness’. Negativity is a feeling of contraction. Coming into the Zendo maybe touches me in my belly, reading a book maybe touches me in my heart; in a different place. You will hear me often say to you ‘how do you know you feel...? How does it feel in your body, the texture in the body?’

The practice of holistic clearing is to really unlock your potential. A strength can sometimes become a hindrance, a block, you focus too much on it. Thinking that meditation should make me happy, that is in the head. How does it feel in the body? Not in the head, don’t trust the head; how does it feel, your gut feeling? (*to a student: It is easy to see when you are thinking, the head bows, you look to one side or the other.*) A sense of connection, acceptance, no thinking, just being, the feeling of an infant, it reminded me of how I felt as a child – as a child it was almost a permanent state and now it is just glimpses. Open, trustful, more innocence.

Instructions for guided meditation

1. First you go shopping. Select ten positives, ten moments of wellness, and do a comparison between the ten, compare one with the other, the different textures, feelings between them. From ten you want to get it down to four, you want to do four out of your ten. *Is it the best out of them all?* You choose the four that have more depth, more – the most – potential in them, the strongest potential.
2. Then you go more thoroughly into the comparison – go into the four, try to feel it in the body again. Evoke the situation, the memory, and out of the four you choose one to go deeper – or the one chooses you, the one jumps out at you. You can go one, two, three, four, back and forth, play with the different feelings. It is

the one where you sense a strong potential in that one. It is the one where you know there is something more to it. You enter into an echo of that wholesome feeling and it is like a thread, you borrow a memory from the past and live it in the present now. And with this one, you go into the total ‘in the body’ experience of it. Total – you indulge in it, you swim in it, taste it, you smell it, you go for it – feel it through all your senses.

3. And then you find a word that describes this experience to you, and you repeat this word silently with the breath – exploration of warmth, excitement, whatever word it is. So you repeat the word with the out-breath, this is to make the word even stronger in the body. As you repeat the word it may change because the sensation in the body changes so the word changes. At some point you find there is no more changes happening, you have gone through deeper layers of experience.
4. This is where you change to asking the question ‘what is this, why does this have the strongest potential?’. As you ask this question, you may jump into another feeling, another texture, so stay with that in the body. There is a moment in the practice when it will become clearer, you can also ask another question: ‘what is my vision?’, ‘where is this going next?’. Throughout the meditation it is very important that you don’t go into a story, into fantasising – we want so much the answer, we fabricate one. The answer may come through any one of the senses – a smell, a taste, not just through a word. The answer may not come straight away, so after this meditation you spend some time in nature.

But what you are going to experience is a shift, a new sense of potential, that you have gone deep enough in the depth to unlock your potential, a new sense of space. It is important that you don’t have a dialogue with your negatives. It is like being very relaxed, going deeper and deeper asking the question, don’t get involved in thinking. You will feel in the body maybe a trembling, a shaking – but something will be unlocked. You have to be like a witness, a spectator, listen to the instructions as they come and be a witness, go into it. You could do the practice last thing at night before going to sleep and you will continue the practice in your dream state. And when you wake up there will be a sense of freshness.

This is the first meditation you do when you want to do holistic clearing- start with the positive so you have more strength with the negative, more compassion, more back-up. After the practice it is important that you do a review – in nature – and maybe then you get more insight. It is a very deep practice, a subtle practice. But also easy. If you are going into memories, you can get an echo of the feeling and that takes you into the body. You borrow a memory from the past and that leads you into the present.

Meditation on the negative

*Most suffering is psychological, nourished by fear and our identification with the pain.
It is important to break down the idea that it is our suffering, our fear.
Concentrate on the feeling, the texture, not on thoughts about it.
Concentrate on the centre of the feeling. Penetrate into that space.
There is a density of energy in that centre that is clear and distinct.
This energy has great power and can transmit great clarity.*

What is disturbing your growing in your life, what is interrupting the expansion? In this meditation as soon as your mind fills with stories about yourself, stop and return to the body, to what is happening there. We are too much overtaken by our pain, suffering – it is not yours, no ownership; it is just an event, no clinging. Physical pain can be dealt with, psychological suffering is more difficult to unlock, we feel: ‘this is my pain’. The technique is to go back to the body – how do I know there is for example irritation, how does it manifest in the body? This is the heart of the practice. Bare noticing, bare attention – physical heat, where does it come from? Don’t wrap it up in opinion. Pain is sensation in the body plus opinion. If you go right to the centre of a pain, physical or psychological, and name it as you see it, not how you feel - at the centre there is a lot of energy to be freed up. Fully being present for the sensation in the body not the idea, how we feel about it. First you have to see how you are jumping into it, into the sensation. “You have not got a headache, the headache has got you”. Strength is the movement of positive expansion. The movement of the unwholesome is contraction, that is why it tends to draw you in, swallow you up. So you have to be very vigilant with yourself, how does it feel in your body? It is a beautiful moment, focusing on the body, and you have a wave of anger – just watch it, as heat, don’t lean into it; just watch and the mind will let go. Don’t enter into conversation with your thoughts. Create a new habit, to stop and come back to the body. It needs great courage, be vigilant, be right there very present. Not to start with a biggie, just a smallie. Think of it as a rehearsal, we are trying it out, you are training. When a story starts, come back to the body quickly, immediately – don’t wait to hear the end of the story, then you are lost; just drop it and return to the body. Mind is very fast, the body is very slow; the mind will play many tricks not to get back to the body. What we call ‘negative’ is not really, that is wrong; it is just a movement of energy – blocking, like a dam, being held up. You have the physical body and the psychic body, which goes beyond the physical – look at the whole body, psychic and physical. Basically first maintaining uprightiness, not leaning into your story, research gathering, it is not really you. You are trying to break what you have been doing all your life, to change the habit pattern.

To catch the monkey mind. Track the sensation, to follow – oh, it is moving to my shoulder, to my head, to my eyes – this may start from posture, then after a while it

becomes much more subtle, an impulse. The idea is, in everyday life, you have a moment of anger – catch it and walk on, all you need is bare attention and then that deals with it itself. If it is difficult to connect with the sensations, take that as the object of attention, whatever sensations come up. Name whatever is happening in the body at the moment: (*student's example*) a shield – name its shape, colour; stay with the sensation or it becomes a concept, disconnection from body sensation: 'I'm cut off now, I'm safe'. The practice is to make you go deeper into it, into the sensation. All the defences we have in life start as sensation, mind then makes a concept out of them. The defence of the shield is to stop you from feeling, for protection. There is nothing right or wrong, the shield is not wrong, every block in the body you notice it, give attention that is bare. Not judgement, just notice, not another story - 'If I breathe deeper everything will be well', 'If I did hours of meditation' etc.

Psychic body? The psychic body is greater than the physical body, more subtle, more an image of yourself.

The big one? Of course your big one is ready to jump on you, because you have fed the big one for many years. For example, the idea of studying anger brings on confusion, so drop the anger and stay with the confusion, catch the sensation, catch the monkey mind. You read in the text, above – in the centre of suffering there can be '*great clarity*'. And great happiness, in the midst of great suffering there can be great happiness, they are not mutually exclusive.

Instructions for guided meditation

In advance, practise being happy, centred and grounded in the body.

1. Establish calm – do the elements chanting, body work, from a place of calm, no deep tiredness. If you are excited, agitated, fearful, anxious – it is not the time to go investigating, so you have to calm this state first before doing the practice. That goes against the 'norm', 'ordinariness' when we tend to approach a problem from the place of having a problem.
2. Check your aspiration for doing the practice, your deep wish; setting your intention, which is always something that is positive like 'may I find more information about my state for the benefit of self and others' – respectful, calm, caring. All this is preparation.
3. Select two situations from the past and two from the present that disturb your ease, bring discomfort in your being – that is more gentle and more open than 'a negative'. You can select anything, it is like picking up the thread, it will take you to the big one – if you are ready to go, you will go now. You can break it up into distinct sections – job, relationships, environment – study the texture of what it is that is disturbing ease about these sections: four situations. You begin to feel what is disturbing ease in all four, don't stay too long, just make contact at this stage.
4. Out of the four you want to select one – go deeper by allowing change in posture in the body to manifest. Name the state you find yourself in and repeat the word mentally. With the 'negative' it is more to with contraction (compared with

expansion in ‘positives’) so you go into that contraction and, if you don’t censor it, it takes over and it does you. At some point the movement begins to slow down, it goes into a frozen posture, called the full statement of your block. Stay with it, name it, find a new word for it and ask the question ‘what is it?’, ‘what is it?’ and again you go deeper. When you have reached the resolution word the body begins to uncoil, unwind; it shifts by itself, you don’t do it. The power of just naming it as it is, you can feel the body shaking out of this corner that it has been in. Use the energy in the block to move into the positive; you have positive energy to use in the world for your benefit and others’:

There is a density of energy in that centre that is clear and distinct.

This energy has great power and can transmit great clarity.

Maybe your practice doesn’t go through the resolution stage, revisiting what you already know but confirming – then when you do the practice again you can restart from there. The time after the session is very important, make sure you have a full hour to ease out, to reflect. Tonight in bed, look back at the day and just pick out a few moments, and go to sleep with those memories, that feeling. Today, tomorrow, any time you have a feeling of irritation, aloneness, tiredness – name it, feel it in the body and drop it, move on. Take the habit of referring back to the body – posture, breathing, facial expression, gesture.

Previous life-time

Explanation

Another even deeper level of illness which is difficult to access is past-life illnesses. This can include womb experiences, when you were in the belly of your mother, and genetic make-up. When you come into the world you come with tendencies, some come from parents and some from previous lifetimes. Tendencies can manifest from past history and previous pattern. Something from the past is a seed and factors from the now can make this seed open. It is not wrong, it is not a failure. If you see all this as seeds – they may ripen or not ripen, see them as potential. With this level of illness only the Medicine Buddha will help (or another Buddha figure). If you have tried all kinds of treatment and still the condition, the illness, doesn’t change – then you have to practise meditation, or have someone else do it for you (it is more powerful if you do it yourself). Don’t drop the other treatments, but add to it. Maybe in that category of illness you may not be cured, but you are using your illness to study the mind, to liberate mind. Illness is a welcome gift to you and others around you, but it takes time to feel into this as a gift and not a hindrance. Health is not happiness and illness is not a problem, it teaches you to slow down, do other things in your life, to prioritise. It helps you to change the point of view that you have about old age, pain and suffering. Illness takes away the innocence of ignorance, it takes away the arrogance. We need to be real; the innocence of ignorance does not help us at the final day. Illness teaches you to ‘wake up!’.

Don’t waste time in worldly thoughts, useless things. This level of illness is difficult to make contact with, you need to reach the level of an enlightened being to understand what

is really the deep root cause. Don't make judgements on people ('she got cancer because...'). Do the *lapis lazuli* blue practice, go deep, you may reach insights into the past of your present life. When we ask the question 'what is the root cause of my disease?' don't expect an immediate answer. And possibly there may be tiny glimpses from a past life, we can't make sense of them. So stay with the present, sit on your cushion, you may not be enlightened but you will die happy. *Lapis lazuli* will change the chemistry in your body and mind state. If you are not well it is a gift to others – to slow down, be gentle, remove the veils of ignorance. And the practice we do helps us be ready for the unplanned, you don't know when it happens - examples from Ram Dass's sudden stroke, a *dharma* friend's riding accident, of being unable to plan for imminent death. In every moment there is a becoming and a passing away and we miss the passing away; we halt it, holding on.

So don't make a big deal about past-life, *karmic*, illness. *Karma* means that past actions have conditioned the present, but also that present actions condition the future; so if you concentrate on positive *karma*, positive actions in the present ...

Karma, cause and effect

If we want to know our past, we only need to look at how we are now, we are the product of what we have practised. If we want to know our future, we only need to look at what we are practising now; all that happens has results, it matters what we do. Recognising this, may I ever be watchful how my body (actions), speech (what I say) and mind (thoughts) shape this moment and the next.³

We go back to the motivation – what is the purpose of your life? Ask yourself this question, 'what is the purpose of my life?', then you can come to terms with suffering. Through your suffering you can cultivate compassion, acceptance, this in turn will help other beings. Think also you are always in a state of teaching by your example. Each one is teaching everybody by how you are. The motivation is so important, the drive of your mind, why are you here? I would like you to write your own text of motivation, make a few sentences that express your motivation in this life. So if you come back to your motivation you will be very happy whatever happens in your life; we are asking for deeper motivation in life that carries us over to the other side. Again to hear your deeper motivation you need to be very calm, you will be surprised at the strength of your motivation. I find it important in my life to check with myself 'what is my deep motivation?', it keeps me on the right path.

³ There is more about this text, the Fourth Contemplation, in the Motivation booklet.

Main sources

Holistic Clearing, September 2008
Calm Abiding and Insight, October 2006
Guided Retreat, 2005
Holistic Clearing, May 2004
and Medicine Buddha retreats from 2011, 2009, 2007, 2006, 2004

Notes

The intention has been to present Sonia's words as she spoke, to preserve the flavour and the spirit of her teaching. Anything else is in italics: contributions from students, texts, editing links, other languages (mainly *Pali*).

Only one significant aspect of the teaching has been omitted: instructions for body work exercises / movements, which are learned from demonstration and experience.

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