

## ~ *Awakening* ~

# Three Practices for Navigating Life's Challenges

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In our meditation tradition, we practice what we sometimes call “the Mahamudra style.” Mahamudra, meaning the “great seal,” refers to how the essence of yourself, others, and all phenomena is pure. This is what we sometimes call “pure perception.” My nature is basic innate goodness, and you have this basic innate goodness. And everybody has this wonderful nature.

But at the same time, there is “obscuration,” meaning we have not discovered these qualities within ourselves. Then we are lost with ignorance, aversion, and craving, and then there are a lot of mistakes. We are not denying that — they are all there, but they are temporary. They are like clouds in the sky. The basic innate goodness, our true nature, is the sky itself. And these clouds and pollution never change the sky. So although we have this obscuration, our true nature is always pure.

Based on this view, we have developed and have this lineage of practice for how to work with our own kleshas and suffering. Kleshas refer to ignorance, doubt, confusion, and all this (number one). Aversion, anger, and hatred are number two. Number three is craving, fixation, grasping, attachment. Number four is pride. Number five is jealousy. All together, there are five kleshas. And based on those five kleshas, then we have suffering.

For example, when I was young, I had this ignorance of perceiving my panic attacks as permanent, meaning they would never go away. I thought, “My life is doomed from today on, and I will never come out of this.” That is the notion of permanence. Then we think we are panic attacks, as if panic attacks are part of us. We think we are together with panic, and that is what we call “singularity.” Then we believe that

panic has a self-entity and is so solid. When we perceive these together, that is ignorance.

Then we do not like panic. I had “panic of the panic,” aversion, fear of panic. That is (klesha) number two. Craving some special state of mind makes panic become worse also.

Then sometimes we have high self-esteem and/or low self-esteem. Then sometimes we are jealous. We look around and think, “Everybody looks very happy. Only I have this panic.” And then we do not like that. We want everybody to suffer sometimes.

When these are together, then suffering comes. Panic becomes stronger. Then maybe there is depression, stress, low self-esteem, loneliness, disconnection . . . so many. A long list, right?

Now, how to work with these things? In our tradition, there are three techniques. First is what we call the “removing style,” second is the “transforming style,” and third, the “transcending style.” We need these three.

What is the meaning of “removing style”? The removing style works with your behavioral level, the environment, and the time. For example, if you are too attached to your smartphone and you cannot get to sleep early, then do not bring your smartphone into your bedroom. Remove it from your bedroom. Something like that.

If we feel ignorant, we develop wisdom. If we have aversion, anger, or hatred, we practice loving-kindness and compassion. If we have attachment/craving, then we practice with impermanence. If we experience pride, then we contemplate suffering. And if we have jealousy, then we practice rejoicing and appreciation for the happiness of others, yourself, and everybody. So it is the opposite — you remove the problem and replace it with something. That is the first strategy, and we need that, of course.

If you are in an environment or situation that is too toxic and you can change your time, environment, or situation and get out of there, good! Wonderful, right? For example, if you are really addicted to drinking too much alcohol or smoking, then you should go to an

environment like a rehab place where you cannot find alcohol or smokes for thirty days, right? You are removing yourself from the situation. Otherwise, you cannot really change your habit. These things are the removing style. We need this from time to time.

The second style is what we call the “transforming style.” Poison becomes medicine, obstacles become opportunity, and problems become solutions. This is what we sometimes call a “self-antidote.” Then slowly, slowly, for me, for example, my panic attacks become support for my meditation, support for awareness, support for mindfulness. And then slowly through panic, I connected with the loving-kindness and compassion. In the end, panic turned out to be something infused by love and compassion. And the panic becomes wisdom if you know how to transform it.

This is like what we call “alchemy.” In ancient times, there was a kind of magic liquid, and whatever metals that liquid touched all became pure gold. So it is like alchemy, transforming.

Then we have a lot of practices for all these three, and ways to transform all these things.

Then we have number three, which is transcending. Transcending is when you really see the true nature and go beyond. For example, all these kleshas and sufferings are what we call the “waves of the ocean.” Our true nature, the fundamental nature of all these emotions, has awareness without object, love and compassion without reason, and wisdom without concept. So these three things are actually the nature of panic attacks, the nature of hatred, the nature of depression, the nature of stress — you name it. When you look at the deeper level, then you go beyond! So we have the ocean and waves. The waves are like these kleshas and suffering. But what is the essence of the waves? It is water, right? You cannot have waves without water. Another example is that when we see the clouds in the sky, what is inside the clouds? It is sky, space. Without the sky, without space, there are no clouds and no pollution. So knowing the nature as it is, you go beyond — you transcend. This way, in the end, poison becomes medicine, and obstacles become opportunities. This is what we sometimes call “self-liberation.”

We need to have these three techniques. Sometimes transforming is good, sometimes removing is good, and sometimes just leaving things as they are and recognizing their true nature — transcending — is good. So we need a variety of practices.

Then, at a certain level, everything is transformed or transcended. It will take some time to practice. It is like learning new skills, so we need to practice step by step. I hope you will learn these things slowly, slowly in the future.