

~ Making Friends with the Monkey Mind ~

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How to make friends with the monkey mind? Everybody has a monkey mind, right? Especially nowadays, the world is turbulent, with a lot of ups and downs, and we have a lot of anxiety, overthinking, stress, and sometimes it may create a lot of restlessness, depression, loneliness, or low self-esteem.

The monkey mind normally does the opposite. When you say yes, the monkey mind will say no. When you say no, the monkey mind says yes. For example, I always talk about how when you say “no pizza,” more pizza comes. And when you say in the nighttime, “I need to sleep, I need to sleep,” sleep disappears.

That is not just with pizza and sleep — it connects with your relationships. If you have too much expectation about a relationship, the longer your list, the shorter the relationship becomes. And that also works with your work. If you have too much expectation or craving, or if you say “this is no good, this is no good, this is no good” — everything is no good — then soon you might feel you are not getting along with your boss, or not getting along with your friends or colleagues.

And you change your job, and at first you think, “This is my dream company.” But then if you work there for three or four months, it becomes a similar circle. It becomes the same problem. Why? All of this comes from the monkey mind. The monkey mind has this kind of restless energy. And that energy needs to feed on something normally.

There is scientific research in which they invited participants into a laboratory and gave them two choices. One choice was to do nothing for 15 minutes. The other choice was to give themselves an electric shock — painfully. And what most people chose was to give themselves the electric shock. Most of them. So that means doing nothing for 15 minutes is worse than getting an electric shock. Why?

Because of the monkey mind. Because the monkey mind is restless. It is always looking for stimulation — something, something. It always needs to feed on stimulation, especially nowadays, because all the gadgets, the advertisements, the smartphones — everything is designed to create stimulation that keeps us busy and lost.

So therefore, whatever problem you have in your life, the monkey mind suddenly gets involved and makes it bigger and bigger. And in the end, we think this is the biggest problem in the world. But if you share this with a friend, and your friend says, “Your problem is not that big,” then you might think, “My friend does not understand me.”

Then half an hour later, your friend is sharing their problem. Your friend says, “I think this is the biggest problem.” But for you it is actually a very small problem! This is because the monkey mind exaggerates — it zooms in and exaggerates.

So what can we do with the monkey mind? With the overthinking, this “blah, blah, yada, yada,” the aversion, the craving, the restlessness? What can we do? Normally we do one of two things. We try to fight it. We try to stop it. We try to fix it, calm it down. It works sometimes, but sometimes it does not work — it becomes bigger. Like when you think “no pizza, no pizza,” more pizza comes.

Then some people just follow the monkey mind. If you believe and follow the monkey mind, then it becomes your boss. Then the monkey mind is a little bit crazy, and you start to look a little bit crazy too. After a certain level, there is stress, depression, sleeplessness, and you become really restless. If the mind becomes your boss, you become a slave of the monkey mind. But if you always fight it, the monkey mind becomes your enemy. A bad boss is not good, right? If monkey mind becomes your enemy, it is not good either.

So what choice do we have? Through meditation, there is a third choice. The third choice is . . . Should I tell you? This is the big secret — the big secret of our own mind. The third choice is: make friends with the monkey mind. When you make friends with the monkey mind, it is not your boss, not your enemy — it is your friend.

So the key question is: how do you make friends with the monkey mind? The technique is to find common ground, common interests, between you and the monkey mind. Normally, we become friends with somebody because we find some common ground — you both like to drink coffee, so you go drink coffee together sometime and become friends. Or you both want to watch a movie, and you become friends. Or you both want to cook, hike, or do something together, and then you become friends.

So we need to find common ground between you and the monkey mind. What do you think the common ground is? Maybe I will tell you. For you, for us, we want to be free — we like happiness and freedom, for sure. And what does the monkey mind like? A job. The monkey mind is restless. It has energy, and it needs to do something. That is the job of the monkey mind.

So now you know: What do you want? Freedom. What does the monkey mind want? A job. So what should we do? The secret is to give the monkey mind a job. If you give it a job, the monkey mind will be happy — it got the job. And now who is the boss? You are, because you gave the job to the monkey mind. You are the employer. The monkey mind is your employee.

Of course, at the beginning, do not give it a full-time, professional job. You have to give it a part-time job. So what is the job? The job is meditation. For example, if you are practicing breathing meditation, you ask the monkey mind, “Hello, monkey mind, watch the breathing.” And the monkey mind says, “Yeah, good idea. Breathing in, breathing out . . .”

Then you get lost in the future and forget about the breathing. When you remember, do not punish the monkey mind. Just say, “Okay, no problem — watch the breath again.” And the monkey mind says, “Yeah, sorry. Breathing in, breathing out, breathing in . . . Pizza! What should I do? I want to eat pizza.” And you forget the breathing again. That is totally fine.

This is what we call a part-time job. And you can give it this job again and again — repeat again and again. Do not fight it. Do not get totally

lost. Come back to the object — maybe breathing, maybe listening to sound, maybe a visual object, maybe with food, with movement, with exercise, with yoga. We can meditate anytime, anywhere, with anything, as long as your mind consciously chooses to be with it.

If you try this again and again, what happens is our mind becomes what we call “pliable” and “workable” — meaning the monkey mind develops a habit of wanting to listen to you. When you say “no pizza,” you will not think so much about the pizza. When you want sleep, you will sleep more easily.

When the mind becomes pliable and workable, you can connect with love and compassion. You can connect with wisdom to explore the nature of reality. A pliable and workable mind can help us, guide us in a meaningful direction — the direction of love and compassion, the direction of wisdom. And in your life, the overthinking and the restlessness slowly, slowly calm down automatically.

So then the monkey mind becomes your friend. And through the monkey mind, you find peace and happiness. That is the secret of our own mind. Thank you.