

Care Group Talk and Guided Meditation 1:

Working with Anxiety and Fear and being your own therapist.

Begin by knowing what anxiety feels like. The fear, the trepidation, the unknown. This knowing is best when it is balanced. We need the intellectual inputs from our thinking brain and the emotional responses from our heart. Both conditions are movements in our consciousness. We identify it intellectually and emotionally,

The more we can objectify the anxiety, that is, to make it an object of the anxiety, it follows that we begin to make more space, more emptiness or we can say the more stillness around the anxiety. This comes about when we can start to notice still consciousness surrounding the condition of fear or anxiety. We notice it in space, so it is an object. We are not lost inside it.

The Buddha spoke of Five Khanda's (aggregations, build ups or structured processes) that make up this physical world that we live in. I am referring here to his list of Five Khanda's or five aggregates. Four of them (80%) are mental conditioning while the other one (20%) is physical. He starts first with the physical world and our physical being. Our bodies and indeed the entire world have been fused into place by our habitual mental nature. He points to this mental nature as the second to fifth Khanda's which are all mental formations. They are best understood and seen in the mind as nested phase transitions that have the potential to unify or subsume one inside the other as we let go and relax into the present moment. The fifth Khanda or still consciousness is what builds it all. The mental aggregations go from feelings to perceptions then back further to the fourth Khanda which is movement of mind. These three mental aggregations are what we are practicing to balance because they account for the head and the heart. The way we know we are in balance is when the fifth Khanda, pure consciousness becomes present in our awareness.

We practice noticing how our thoughts and feelings begin and end in this still consciousness. Still consciousness, the fifth aggregate, starts to stand out in the present moment. We can see it as space or emptiness or indeed stillness. As we develop, we can cultivate it and practice to amplify and have it with us all the time. As Ajahn Chah has said, this stillness is the transcendent. We can know it along with what is apparent in our day to day lives, seemingly at the same time. When we know stillness, we can know we are present and heading towards the reality and sanity of enlightenment.

Our meditation practice is working well and becoming alive for us when we can surround the conditioned mind states with stillness, in this case anxiety and fear. Anxiety and Fear becomes the object and we can notice that it will finish in the stillness. The stillness penetrates and relaxes it until we can finally let it go. It is so for all conditioning. Letting go of conditions into stillness becomes an obvious pathway to illustrate the Third Noble Truth.

We can also notice that this same stillness is responsible for the creation or beginnings of conditions, as set out in the Second Noble truth of the path. The Dukka (First noble Truth) inherent in all conditions arises in the stillness of mind and then will eventually finish in the stillness of mind. We can see a breath begin and end, a day, a week, a year, even a life. Compounded conditions have different scales but we see that the principle is the same. A still unconscious moment is very fast, arising and finishing countless times in the wink of an eye according to the Buddha. At the other end of the scale a Universe begins and ends in deep time and space, and the beginning and ending of our life can be just as mysterious but it can be all seen

and intuited as we realise and become aware of the stillness that is in fact the matrix of our mind.
Everything begins and ends in our mind.