

LESSON 34 • FEBRUARY 3

“I could see peace instead of this.”

Practice instructions

Purpose: To begin to experience the peace that characterizes true vision.

Longer: Three times, morning, evening, and once in between, for five minutes.

Close your eyes and search your mind for “upsetting” *situations, personalities, and events* (a typical triad in the Workbook). Repeat the idea slowly as you dispassionately watch the stream of upsets go by. After a couple of minutes, you may run out of upsets. That is all right. Just keep repeating the idea slowly until the five minutes are up.

Response to temptation: Make a point of watching your mind today for upsets. Whenever you notice one, apply the idea to it. There are two forms of upset to watch out for, each requiring a slightly different form of practice:

1. If you are upset about a specific situation, apply the idea specifically: “*I could see peace in this situation instead of what I now see in it.*”
2. If your upset is not attached to anything in particular, but consists of a general mood of depression or worry, simply repeat the idea.

If needed, take several minutes, repeating the idea until you feel relief. It will help if you add, “*I can replace my feelings of depression, anxiety or worry [or my thoughts about this situation, personality or event] with peace.*”

Remarks: The final sentences of this lesson make a very important point, one to remember throughout the Workbook and afterwards. Repeating the idea just once may not do the trick. Your upset may go away only after you’ve spent several minutes repeating the idea. Repeating the same line again and again may sound like some kind of brainwashing, in which you just drum your mind into submission. However, I find this to be an exercise not in putting my mind to sleep, but in gradually illuminating it. If I have strong negative feelings, the first few repetitions of the idea may simply bounce off. But if I keep it up, each repetition allows the truth to enter in a little bit further, until I finally see the situation entirely differently. I urge you, therefore, to give this longer form of practice a real try today.

Commentary

The most helpful thought I ever heard in relation to this lesson was this: Notice that it says, “*I could see peace,*” and not “*I should see peace.*” It is far too easy to take this lesson as another reason for guilt. “Terrible me! I should see peace, but I am seeing this mess instead. What is wrong with me?” That is not how this lesson is meant to be applied.

The opening paragraph contains such a wonderful summation of the Course’s philosophy of peace:

Peace of mind is clearly an internal matter. It must begin with your own thoughts, and then extend outward. It is from your peace of mind that a peaceful perception of the world arises. (1:2–4)

Peace is the motivation for doing this Course (see T-24.In.1:1). Our goal is what a later part of the Workbook refers to as “a mind at peace within itself” (W-pII.8.3:4). Peace must begin with our thoughts and extend outward from our minds. The focus is on the mind.

We can replace our negative feelings and our unloving thoughts with peace. We have that power. We can choose peace if we want peace. Notice that the practice instructions for applying the lesson to “adverse emotions” (6:1) suggest that we repeat the idea “until you feel some sense of relief” (6:2). This practice is meant to have tangible effects.

At times I have found that even in an extremely upsetting situation, repeating these words, “I could see peace instead of this,” has a decidedly calming effect on my mind, *even if I cannot, in that very moment, see peace*. In a very subtle way, it helps to convince my mind that the awful things I am seeing are not rock solid, immutable reality. I am seeing something other than peace, but if I really *could* see peace instead, then what I am seeing must not be as real as I think. Even that level of relief is worth the time it takes to practice.

I used to believe that when upsetting situations occurred, I had to deal with the situation and change things around in order to be at peace. Through the practice of this lesson, I have learned that I can respond to any situation much more effectively if my mind is at peace *first*. I have discovered that I can bring my mind to peace without having first “solved” my problems. It really is possible to see peace instead of whatever seems to be upsetting me. And when I do, if response is required, I act calmly and without fear. Panic is not conducive to productive action; far better to seek peace first, then act.