

LESSON 5 • JANUARY 5

“I am never upset for the reason I think.”

Practice instructions

Purpose: To teach you that the cause of your upset is not the external situation, person, or event you think it is. Also, to teach you that your negative emotions are not truly different from one another.

Exercise: Three or four times, for one minute or so.

- Optional beginning: Say, “*There are no small upsets. They are all equally disturbing to my peace of mind.*” This is designed to correct your tendency to dismiss some upsets as too insignificant to bother with.
- For a minute or so, search your mind for any persons, situations, or events that are distressing you, however mildly.
- Then apply the idea indiscriminately to each one by saying, “*I am not (angry, worried, depressed, etc.) about (source of upset) for the reason I think.*”
- If you want to hang on to certain upsets because they seem justified, say, “*I cannot keep this form of upset and let the others go. For the purposes of these exercises, then, I will regard them all as the same.*”

Response to temptation: Optional.

In addition to the formal practice periods, feel free during the day to apply the idea to any upset you are experiencing, as a way of restoring your peace of mind. Say, “*I am not (angry, worried, depressed, etc.) about (source of upset) for the reason I think.*”

Commentary

This lesson is, to me, one of the most useful tools for jarring my thinking loose from a deeply worn track. “This lesson, like the preceding one, can be used with any person, situation or event you think is causing you pain” (1:1). Try to remember it today when, for whatever reason, you get upset. That slowpoke driver on the road in front of you. The person who puts you down. When the job you’ve been hoping for falls through. When someone tracks dirt on your freshly mopped floor, or breaks your favorite keepsake. “I am never upset for the reason I think.”

Notice that the lesson does not identify what it is that you really are upset about. That comes later. For now the Course is simply trying to undermine your belief that you know what is upsetting you. Notice, too, that it does not ask you not to be upset! “Fear, worry, depression, anxiety, anger, hatred, jealousy...” (1:3): The lesson does not ask you to be without these feelings, simply to recognize that they are not occurring for the reasons you think. Yes, of course, the eventual goal is to let them all go. But to do that we have to break our belief that they are different things with different causes. All of them stem, ultimately, from the same cause; all of them are meanings we project onto the world we see.

These first five lessons have been tough, if you think about them. Lesson 1 was about letting go of what I see. Lesson 2, letting go of my judgments about meaning. Lesson 3, letting go of my understanding. Lesson 4, letting go of my thoughts. And this lesson is leading me to let go of my entire thought system, the root cause behind all of my upsets.

