

September 2019

Greetings!

I hope everyone had a very nice summer. The weather here in Seattle was some of the best that I can remember. One of the highlights of the summer was when some very good friends of mine were traveling through the area and we were able to get together. It was a real joy to spend time with them. I also kept very busy with the groups, which are doing quite well.

Often, at the end of my talks with various groups, I express encouragement to keep up with the meditation and training, emphasizing its ability to help in their lives. This has led to some of the trainees offering to get me pompoms. It seems that I have a reputation of being the cheerleader monk. This email will not dispel that perception.

For myself and others that I have spoken to, the training and meditation is extremely helpful in the face of adversity. Adversity can take many forms, whether it is our own illness or that of loved ones, relationship problems, financial problems, fear, grief, anger, or a general feeling of things not going well. These situations can stop us in our tracks, making wise actions difficult. Training and meditation can fall by the wayside. However, with our meditation, we can sit still, bringing our fear, grief and anger to the Eternal with its unconditional love and compassion. In this way, when we are dealing with these troubling situations, we will be able to see more clearly, and act from a more still and meditative place. Trying to be mindful when our emotions are running strong is difficult. Our training helps us to allow these emotions to come and go without holding on to them. The following two examples came up for me when I was thinking about this.

Years ago I had a very rough time right before a surgery for colon cancer. The night before, I had tremendous fear and anxiety coming up. At some point I reminded myself, "What have I been doing all these years. I have to meditate." After about an hour of meditation these emotions were still, and I experienced real peace. It wasn't easy, but it helped me immensely.

A few years ago, a resident at a live in facility (not by her choice) took me aside and told me that she was having a really difficult time and "hated it here." I told her to keep up with her practice and be extra mindful of the anger and hate, and not to hold on to it. Sometime thereafter, she had a beautiful conversion, and was accepting of her situation. When I saw her recently, she was in a very good place spiritually.

I find it very interesting that it is adversity that often helps us to take refuge in the love and compassion of the Eternal, which is always there to guide us on a deeper level. Now I'm going to grab my pompoms, and say to all that when adversity inevitably comes into

our lives, the emotions that come up may seem overwhelming. Some people can be overcome by this, while others try desperately to tamp these emotions down altogether. This is where the training really works in getting us to a still and meditative place, allowing us to deal more clearly with these situations. So keep up your mindfulness and your training during these difficult times.

With all my heart,

Rev Basil

P.S. for those who would like to start a practice, or would like a refresher, the [North Cascades Buddhist Prioory](#) website has great teaching. There you will find meditation instruction videos with an excellent commentary by Rev Master Koshin. I strongly recommend this teaching.