

Anapanasati

Feelings

Feeling is a very general term in English, but we are using it as a translation of vedana, which is much more specific: the pleasant/neutral/unpleasant feeling tone of experience: a continuum covering

- Dukkha: ranging from the most excruciating agony to the mildest discomfort
- Upekkha: the point of neutrality
- Sukha: ranging from the most subtle comfort to overwhelming ecstasy and bliss

Cyclic Conditionality

- Contact → Feeling - - - > Volition
- Contact is the coming together of sense-consciousness and sense-object in sensation
- Feelings are inseparable from sensations: they arise together. Sensations have a feeling tone: there is no gap.
- Sensations and feelings are karma-vipaka: the fruit of past karma. They are ethically neutral.
- Feelings habitually condition volitions: for example feeling hurt leading to getting angry: but they don't have to: it is not automatic: there is a gap.
- Volitions are karmically formative, either ethically skilful or unskilful
- Sensitivity to the ethically wholesome or unwholesome tone of our volitions is an aspect of mindfulness called apamada or heedfulness.
- Through bringing more awareness around feeling we become aware of volitions arising, and are able to take greater responsibility for them.

Emotions have feelings to

- Emotion is a broad term covering feelings and volitions: it has a karmically formative element
- The 6 sense faculties include mind as a faculty for sensing feelings, volitions, and thoughts
- Contact can be the mind sensing a volition, which will itself have a feeling tone
- E.g. stub toe (Contact) -> pain (Feeling: dukha-duhkha – the suffering that is suffering: 1st arrow) - - - > aversion (Volition)
- Aversion (Contact) -> painful (Feeling: anicca-dukkha – the suffering of getting what we don't want 2nd arrow) - - - > more aversion
- So the gap between feeling and volition is happening all the time: it is not something that we missed when it went passed some time ago: but in the moment the gap may be between the feeling tone of difficult emotions and the consequent reinforcement of the volition within those emotions.

Feelings give rise to emotions

- Bringing awareness to how feelings give rise to emotions, we become aware of whether we are reacting with craving/aversion or responding more positively
- Reactively:

- Pleasant feelings -> attachment / craving
- Unpleasant feelings -> rejection / aversion
- Neutral feelings -> indifference / boredom / dullness
- Creatively:
 - Pleasant feelings -> contentment / being in the moment
 - Unpleasant feelings -> compassion/ patience / forbearance / faith
 - Neutral feelings -> even mindedness / equanimity

Difficulties with Feelings

Dullness: not feeling much: difficult to say what the feeling tone is.

- In this case, attend sensitively to sensations, looking for the nuance of their quality
- Check for a resistance to experiencing what is behind the dullness. Beneath the resistance, on a deeper level, there may be a greater richness and complexity.

Overwhelmed by our feelings

- In this case we need to create spaciousness, boundary, and containment in order to hold the complexity and breadth of feeling.
- Try not to identify totally with the feelings: relate to them in terms of 'something in me feels' Rather than 'I feel ...' – like a dark cloud in an open blue sky: look for a sense of the open blue sky around the cloud.

Every feeling wants to be felt

- Staying with our feelings in the context of mindfulness, not getting carried away with reactions, leads to
 - Deepening in to them, feeling them more fully
 - When fully felt through, feelings resolve, and reveal their deeper nature
 - This leads to an experience of integration
- Painful feelings may put up a lot of resistance and carry a strong tendency to aversion/ anxiety/ depression, but even these want to be felt through and resolved
- To achieve resolution we need to be willing to stay with the process and acknowledge our own feelings
- Resolution brings us back to a raw sensitivity to feelings and a natural feelingfulness which is a quality of awareness
- This awareness itself has a positive feeling tone: a quality of contentment/ happiness in to which even painful feelings resolve in the end

Breath as anchor

- Throughout the practice, whilst investigating feelings, we keep our awareness anchored in the experience of the body breathing
- We are directing our awareness towards the feeling tone that underlies our mental activity, and towards the physical sensation associated with the feeling in order not to get caught up in reactive proliferation (prapañca)