

A Mindfulness Approach to ANGER

When feeling angry and expressing it, mindfulness can help you:

- Monitor that expression and its effects moment by moment;
- Become in touch with its validity as a feeling state, with the antecedent causes that triggered it;
- Become aware of the way it is coming out in your body gestures and stances, tone of voice, choice of words and arguments;
- Notice the impression it is making on others;
- Realize that it may be producing more harmful effects than beneficial ones.

If Mindfulness is practiced purposefully it expands the context of anger right in those very moments that it is arising and peaking. Realizing there and then that there must be something larger and more fundamental that you are forgetting in the heat of the emotion, such as the values you hold most dear.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

The next time you find yourself become angry, try to bring mindfulness to the inner attitude embodying the anger. Feel the tension, the hatred, the aggression and the fear which it contains. Then in the midst of your anger, if the person you are angry at is present, try opening your hands and placing the palms together over your heart right in front of him or her. Notice what happens to the anger and hurt as you hold this position for even a few moments.

Most people find it virtually impossible to sustain their anger when they do this. It's not that the anger may not be justified. It's just that all sorts of other feelings come into play, which frame the anger energy and tame it – feelings like sympathy and compassion for the other person.

NON-ATTACHMENT ATTITUDE

When Gandhi was assassinated at pointblank range, he put his palms together toward his attacker, uttered his mantra and died. Years of mindfulness practice had brought him to the point where he was able to bring the perspective of non-attachment to everything he was engaged in, including his very life. Attachment, invariably leads to delusion. It arrests development and short-circuits the cultivation of wisdom.