

The Seven Factors of Awakening

Joy

Practices and Reflections

In each of the following weeks repeatedly spend time with the reflection and practices for that week. It would be helpful if you also discussed your reflections with others.

Week 1: Sources of Joy

Reflection: What helps you feel ease, contentment or joy? What are the activities that most easily bring you joy? Is it some kind of physical activity? Are you more likely to feel joy when you are with others or when you are alone? Do you experience joy that is not dependent on any particular activity? If so, what conditions bring about that joy? How easy is it for you to be in touch with the sources for your joy?

Practice: At the end of each day reflect on when you felt the greatest sense of well-being, joy or contentment. Is there a consistency to the rhythm of your sense of well-being on most days; *e.g.* do you consistently feel the most ease in the morning or evening? Or does your sense of well-being depend mostly on the activities you're doing? If possible, try meditating at different times in the day; *e.g.* early morning, lunch time, early evening or late evening. Is there a time of day when you feel more of a sense of well-being and ease in your meditation?

Week 2: The feeling of joy

Reflection: How do you know when you have a sense of well-being, contentment or joy? Is it more of a physical sensation or a mental sensation for you? How is feeling joyful different than feeling ill-at-ease or uncomfortable? What affect does joy have on you? What happens to your thinking and level of pre-occupation when you are joyful?

Practice: Spend more time than you normally would with activities that support a feeling of well-being or joy. Notice how your body feels when you feel content or satisfied. Also notice your mind state and emotional state when you have this feeling. Is the feeling of joy consistent or does it fluctuate?

Week 3: Increasing joy

Reflection: Please come up with a list of easy ways that you can increase the frequency and amount of joy during your daily life. What are some of the easy ways you can avail yourself of more delight? What

are some of the obvious occurrences in your daily life which you often overlook which would bring some degree of joy if you really noticed?

Practice: This week spend more time than you normally would doing a hobby or activity that requires you to be focused and engaged. Notice the sense of well-being you have before, during and after being absorbed or engaged in an activity. When did you feel the most ease? Notice whether you have any beliefs, judgments about or resistance to the activity and notice how that mind-set affects your feeling of contentment or well-being.

Week 4: Joy in meditation

Reflection: During meditation do you find that contentment or joy arises? How can you tell whether you are creating conditions for joyfulness or repressing joy due to an underlying belief that joy should not be experienced during spiritual practice?

Practice: Just before meditating, reflect on those things that inspire you concerning your mindfulness or Buddhist practice. In the course of your meditation, notice any feelings of joy, well-being or pleasure that occurs. Be sensitive to the physical sensations that come with the joy. Allow yourself to enjoy those feelings. Gently and patiently, let those feelings grow as you continue your meditation. If possible, have the sensations of joy be a source of biofeedback for your concentration, encouraging you to continue to concentrate. After the mediation, briefly reflect if there is a relationship between your daily behavior and the experience of joy during your meditation.

Week 5: Joy during mindfulness

Reflection: How is your sense of well-being when you are completely present in the moment?

Practice: During this week, experiment with applying more mindfulness to your life. This can be done either by increasing the time in formal meditation practice or by applying more mindfulness during particular daily life activities; *e.g.* while brushing your teeth or doing the dishes. Notice whether your sense of contentment or well-being increases or decreases when you're mindful.