

The Perfections - Energy Reflections and Practices

It can be useful to spend several days with each reflection, reading the questions multiple times. They can be considered quietly when alone and in discussion with others.

Suggested readings: Bhikkhu Bodhi's article on Right Effort at the Access to Insight website:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/waytoend.html#ch5>

Also of interest may be the *Five Faculties* essay on the Articles page of IMC's website.

Reflections:

1. How do you experience physical vitality? How do you feel mental vitality? What makes you feel more energetic? What drains your energy? Does spending time with other people bring you energy or drain you of energy? Is spending time alone energizing or not? What activities bring you a balanced sense of vitality?
2. What is the relationship between your interest and your level of energy? What motivations tend to energize you? What emotions tend to increase or decrease your vitality? How strong a role do desire, fear or aversion play in how energized you are? What role does compassion have?
3. How do you decide what to apply effort to? Of the many things a person could do, what criteria do you use to choose where you apply your energy?

Practices:

1. Over a few days intentionally do several generous and compassionate activities, and notice your energy level before, during, and after doing these things. What effect does generosity and compassion have on your energy and application of effort.
2. Choose some ordinary household chores you commonly do. Give your full attention to doing these wholeheartedly. Turn off the radio, TV and phone. In the same way you might let go of distracting thoughts to return to the breath in meditation, let go of distracting thoughts that take you away from being present for your chores. When done, reflect on how doing the work this way affected you, including your sense of vitality?
3. Spend a week experimenting with applying more effort in meditation. Physically sit up straighter. Motivationally meditate with greater wholeheartedness and calm determination. Focus more on being alert and mindful than on distracting thoughts. Monitor whether your effort can be supported by relaxing or by sharpening your focus of your mindfulness, or both. Perhaps choose to meditate at a time of day when you have the best energy for meditation.

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Dharma Practice Days

4. Over 4 days, spend a few hours each day focused on one of the 4 right efforts, doing a different one each day. Write yourself a note and keep it with you to remind you, as you work with each one of these.

- Guarding: Not to let an unskillful thoughts and actions arise which has not yet arisen
- Abandoning: Let go of unskillful thoughts and actions that have arisen.
- Developing: Focus in introducing having skillful thoughts and actions.
- Sustaining: Maintain skillful thoughts and actions that are present.