



Six practical tools for cultivating clarity in the midst of overthinking and feelings of fear and anxiety.

Have you ever been awake in the middle of the night with thoughts racing about the past and future with tension and anxiety? Or throughout the day do you have repetitive thoughts that are consuming your attention and energy? Here are three foundations to form the basis on which to ask yourself three simple questions to free the mind of some of the clutter that obscure the potential of present awareness in which there can be space for resolution, possible solution and peace of mind.

3 Foundations

Nonresistance

When resistance is seen, acknowledged and felt, we move into true acceptance. When we are resisting something that we don't want, we are in aversion. We are avoiding it. This can create a contracted feeling of tension in the body and confusion in the mind. Our awareness and innate intelligence will tell us exactly what we are feeling. When we acknowledge emotional resistance there can be an element of illumination and relaxation because it has been exposed to the light of awareness. We start to develop a courageous mind especially when we become more honest and compassionate with ourselves.

Observation

We tend to think that our thoughts are us. It's easy to dismiss thoughts that may seem a little more neutral or don't have an impactful emotional effect. When we are faced with instability and uncertainty about the future, there is an element of fear. If you observe thoughts about the future, "negative thoughts" tend to be anxious and fearful. We can even become afraid of our thoughts and try to not think about them. When we do this, they often persist. If fearful thoughts persist, take a moment and observe them. Instead of identifying yourself with your thoughts as an extension of you, let your identity be that of the observer.

Willingness

Be willing to take action based on what you observe and understand.

Whether it is a recurring thought or a lot of thoughts in succession about the same subject, sometimes they need attention and awareness in order to resolve and alleviate suffering.

3 Questions

1. Is there an action that I need to take? You may need to take a physical action of some sort. It may be to make a phone call to handle something. It could concern your job, health, finances or any other aspect of your life that feels to be in disarray. If there are a series of actions needed, write them down so that it is no longer cluttering your mind.

2. Is there a communication that I need to make? If your thoughts are about a person(s) and situation that is troubling or unresolved, sometimes there is a communication that needs to be made. If you are experiencing anxiety, there may be other feelings involved like anger (often frustrated expectations) and sadness. With the best of your ability, consider your situation and release the negative feelings associated with the person or situation. Communication is best received by others when it is free of negative emotion. Decide what you want to communicate. Once again, you can write this down so that there is a place for it to be rather than rolling through your mind.

3. Am I just fixating? Are you obsessively investing attention and emotional feelings about someone or something? If you find that you do not have a clear point of action or communication this may be the case. This is where the willingness comes in. You simply cut your attention, which is the essence of the thinking mind, to the thought(s). One way to release the focus of attention is to take a breath and simply let your attention come to the breath. Be aware of the breath as it fills the body. You can also bring awareness and gentle breathing to your heart. You may feel residual tension from the feelings of fear and anxiety. If you let your awareness mingle with the feeling of tension there can be a movement of that “stuck” feeling of energy.

Often in times of distress, there is a complexity of emotions that can be draining and difficult to handle. Sometimes it serves us well to arm ourselves with compassionate discernment. When thought projections of past and future are observed and feelings are consciously felt they can become less overwhelming. The mind tends to reflect on the past and project to the future. Negative thoughts of the past are often associated with feelings of guilt and regret. Negative

thoughts of the future are often fearful and anxious. There can be a peaceful power in the present moment filled with potential, clarity and inspiration.

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