

Using Reflection as a Support for Daily Life Practice

As a support for practice in daily life, it can be helpful to take some time each day for reflection. In this reflection, I suggest that you reflect about your life, how the practice supports you, and ways that you struggle and suffer, which are the areas into which your practice can grow!

In reflecting on difficulty or struggle, I'd like to suggest that you consider the reflection as a way to support your practice with the difficulty. It can be a way of gathering resources with which you can meet your struggles in the future.

My colleague Annie Nugent suggests using 4R's when moving into reflection: Relax, Review, Reflect and Resolve:

Relax: Knowing that you are about to reflect on your life and your practice, approach each session of reflection with an attitude of relaxation.

Review: Think back over your day. What happened? Where did you struggle? Be mindful during the review process. How do these thoughts impact your body? Your emotions? This is a practice of exploring content mindfully! Allow some of your attention to be with the thoughts about what happened, and some of your attention to notice your response to those thoughts.

Reflect:

- In what ways did the practice and the Dharma support you?
- Were there any themes to your struggles that you are familiar with?
- Were there any new themes that came up?
- Are there any discernible patterns? e.g. tending to struggle in certain situations, with certain people, when you are in particular states of mind or body? (for example, you were sleepy, or rushing, or hungry...)
- What beliefs were operating when you were caught in difficulty?
- Are there any cues in your reflection that might help you to meet a similar difficulty with more mindfulness in the future?

Resolve: Resolve to try to meet with mindfulness and kindness any similar kinds of struggle – even just the feeling of struggle itself – in the future. Using this kind of resolve needs to have a firm yet gentle touch! It is not a whip, but a gentle and kind connection to "I'm going to try to meet this next time."

You are welcome to reflect in whatever way feels natural for you. This does not have to be a long involved process -- I think 10 minutes each day would be very helpful. I have also included a few thoughts that might support your reflection -- these came from a guided reflection I did at one of our meetings a few weeks ago. You are welcome to use these or not, as you wish.

Suggests for Reflections on practice in daily life

Take some time to settle in and connect with your present moment experience.

First ,bring to mind a time in your daily life, where you felt like your practice was right there. A situation in which you felt that the practice really supported you in terms of interacting in your environment, or with people in your life. Bring that situation to mind, allow yourself to remember what was happening , who you were with.

Reflect on how the practice supported you: What were the circumstances that allowed you to meet this experience with the support of the practice? How did it unfold for you? What mental qualities became apparent, and how was your behavior supported?

How does it make you feel now, to reflect on this?

Letting go of that reflection, take a couple of breaths, allow yourself to come back into the present moment, connect with your body, notice how you are right now.

Now I'd like you to call to mind a time in your daily life when you got caught, a time when you got stuck. Recalling the situation into your mind, notice what was happening, noticing whom you were with, what you were doing, and saying. Feel right here, right now, how it feels to recall this situation.

Allow yourself to reflect for a few moments about how and when you realized that you were caught, or had been caught. Did it come to you in the midst of the situation, or perhaps some hours or days later?

Allow yourself to recollect your relationship to the moment of noticing you had been stuck, and how that impacts you here and now.

Now, allow yourself to let go of the situation in its recollection. Just explore the question: How might I have been supported by the Dharma. Are there any conditions that would have supported a bit more mindfulness, compassion, open heartedness in the situation?

Letting go of that now, and coming back into just this moment. Letting go of reflections, and just noticing how you are right now.