

The Perfections – Energy Reflections and Practices

These reflections and practices can be enriched by discussing them with friends, fellow practitioners, strangers, and if you have chosen to have one, with your Dharma Practice Day buddy.

A useful way of engaging with the reflections is to spend a few days with each one, perhaps rereading it to see what new perspectives repeated readings provide. It can be nice to devote some quiet time to focus on each.

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 my article on the *Five Faculties* 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? Is meditation 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 consciously do several generous and compassionate activities, and notice your energy level before, during, and after doing these things. What affects the amount of energy you have for these activities? How can you appropriately apply more energy in these activities?
2. Choose some ordinary household chores you commonly do. Give your full attention to doing these wholeheartedly. Engage in these activities with your whole body. 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. How does working in this way affect your energy level?

3. Spend a week experimenting with applying more effort in meditation. This can be done physically by sitting up straighter or by doing brisk walking meditation before sitting. It can be done mentally by putting more effort into being alert and mindful of what is happening during the meditation. If applying more effort agitates you, try to match the increased effort with increased calm or inner stillness.

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 unwholesome-unskillful thought arise which has not yet arisen

- Abandoning:

Not to let an unwholesome-unskillful thought continue which has already arisen.

- Developing:

To make a wholesome-skillful thought arise which has not yet arise.

- Sustaining:

To make a wholesome-skillful thought continue which has already arisen.

The body is a bodhi tree,
The mind a mirror bright,
Carefully we polish them hour by hour
And let no dust alight.

There is no bodhi tree,
Nor is there a mirror bright,
Fundamentally there is not a single thing –
Where can dust alight.

Handouts, email list for parami course, and info about interviews are found at
www.insightmeditationcenter.org/books-articles/articles/theparamis/