



A Meditator's Bag of Tricks, by Thanissaro Bhikku

Meditation is not just a question of technique. In training the mind, you have to remember there's a whole committee in there. In the past the committee has had its balance of power, its likes and dislikes, and the politics among the various voices of your mind. Each of them has different tricks for pushing its agenda on the rest. So just as these defilements have lots of tricks up their sleeves, you as a meditator need to have lots of tricks up your sleeve too.

When greed, anger and delusion come into the mind, they usually barge right in with a lot of force and expect to push you right over. So one thing you have to do is ask, "Well why?" Why should we follow that? Why should we want instant gratification? And there will be an "of-courseness" to their answer the first time around. "Of course you want it this way. Of course you want it that way." "Well why?" If you're persistent in being block-headed like this, all the defilements will start revealing themselves. [...]

It's not that you have to wait for a totally solid concentration before you can see the defilements clearly. A lot of learning about the defilements lies in learning how to struggle with them as you bring the mind to stillness. You begin to see: "Oh this is how greed works, this is how aversion works, this is how I've fallen for this stuff before in the past. Well, this time around I'm not going to fall."

Sometimes it's like a battle. Other times it's more a question of learning how to work together in a way that's for your own best interests: how to be a mediator, a negotiator, or a patient teacher. You've got to have lots of ways of relating to the different elements in your mind.

So it's an all-round training [...] learning how to relate to everything going on in the mind as well, so that skillful thoughts take over and unskillful thoughts get left behind. That's when you can say the meditation is a whole-mind process. That's when it gives results penetrating through your whole life. The committee members learn how to live together. The unskillful ones get outvoted. The ones who should be in charge, the skillful qualities, take over and run the show in such a way that nobody suffers.

--Thanissaro Bhikku

