

"train wholeheartedly" and "abandon all hope of results"

To train wholeheartedly is to really open yourself up to your experiences, to be fully 100% present with whatever is happening no matter how painful. This is not our natural reaction - it is really much more natural to churn around in our thoughts, to attempt to find something, somebody to blame for our predicament. I notice that rationalization is one of my own favourite ploys. Relationship breakup? 'It would never have worked anyway because of A, B and C, and I will soon meet someone more suited to me.' We don't want to rest on that 'icy couch.' But only by doing that can we make space for transformation. Really staying with and opening up to the bad feelings in the present moment, perhaps using Tonglen practice, not just once, but thousands of times is what weakens the sense of self and opens us to a sense of joy and empathy to others.

"One of the deepest habitual patterns that we have is to feel that now is not good enough." Pema Chodron

The danger of this and other spiritual practices is control. We too easily bring our usual egoic manipulative techniques into spiritual practice by doing them in a selfish way. I notice that the first thing anyone usually asks me about meditation practice is 'What do you get out of it?' We become greedy for results, for enlightenment experiences for instance, rather than resting in just whatever life brings us in each present moment. What develops from resting in stillness is a kind of opening and trust that will reveal a better path to tread than imposing our preconceived ideas on a situation. There was a good analogy in Tricycle magazine about a rock climber who started to panic when she saw no way up or down a vertical rockface. But when she just stayed in stillness for a moment, all of a sudden 'all kinds of new patterns and shapes begin to emerge from the rock.' Being able to rest in uncertainty seems to allow us to get out of our own way and allow a different kind of knowing to emerge.

Questions: What is the difference between abandoning all hope of results and resignation? And isn't there a danger of just being too passive? Or just wallowing in self-pity?