

Work With the Five Forces. the Five Forces Are:

- Be Intense, Be Committed.

Otherwise what happens? Nothing probably. We make little spiritual progress. This is a problem for me. I too easily hop from one practice to another without going into any of them in a deep enough way. I am trying to stay with a koan for a week at present and really try to get its teaching instead of moving to other koans. But it appears to contradict the following teaching about familiarization. Perhaps it means we BE OURSELVES INTENSELY, avoiding being drawn into too many other interesting, though fruitless, distracting side paths.

- Familiarization - Get Used to Doing and Being What You Want to do and to Be.

Seems the reverse of the previous teaching. That we just relax back into being our natural selves, what we always were. There should be no effort in being ourselves surely? Self-improvement ideas are about trying to force ourselves or reprogram ourselves into being something we are not. Being honestly and authentically ourselves is much more natural and causes us far less mental strain, no matter what it does to our self-image - or to the imaginary image of ourselves we want to project to others.

- Cultivate the White Seeds, Not the Black Ones.

It is said that we have many kinds of seeds in our storehouse consciousness - seeds of kindness and compassion as well as seeds of anger and jealousy. As Thich Nhat Hanh says, "The third aspect of diligence is to always invite good seeds to manifest. You know that you have a seed of love, a seed of joy, a seed of forgiveness, a seed of joy, a seed of peace, a seed of happiness. Learn ways to touch them and help them to manifest. If you live in a good environment, where you are supported by a loving, healthy community, you have plenty of opportunities to help these positive seeds manifest."

- Turn Totally Away From All Your ego Trips.

I think this means to turn away from self-aggrandising thoughts whenever we have done something well, or when someone praises us. Giving ourselves a hard time with criticism is equally bad. Trying to make ourselves seem important, special, or different is an ego trip which only eventually causes us separation and suffering, although it is a trap so tempting to fall into at the time. We are each given and develop a unique set of abilities, but (as the next section points out) we are only required to exercise these gifts and talents for everyone's benefit, not to feel superior to others because of them, or use them to dominate or mistreat others.

- Dedicate All the Merits of What You do for the Benefit of Others.

This is really challenging! It seems to go so much against the grain of our grasping, materialistic, self-serving society. It sounds as if I should become like Mother Theresa, and I sure have a long way to go on that one! But really, this is a way to the greatest happiness if we only see and accept the truth of it. Of course, when you see others as yourself there is no problem.