

Six Paramitas: Patience

Patience seems to be the opposite to anger. To me it often involves time; time spent waiting for something to happen, for something to end, for something to change, for something to become stable. If we don't exercise patience we become irritable, angry or frustrated. We suffer and make others around us suffer as well. So how do we exercise patience? I find one way is to practice noticing the small potential irritations that life is sure to provide us with in good measure because we expect things to go a certain way - but they don't. I try to notice the feeling that is produced in my body rather than get tempted into being carried away by, and thus magnify, the angry thoughts.

If other people try my patience it's good to remember the empty boat story.

A man sees an empty boat coming down the river towards him. At first he thinks it is someone enjoying the river just like he is. But the boat is headed right towards him and travelling faster and faster. He gets angry at the carelessness of the occupant of the boat and starts to gesticulate and wave at it furiously, but it finally crashes into his boat. But he then realizes the boat is empty and his anger subsides.

Other people just act out of their own circumstances and delusions, so really 'the boat' is always empty.

Our daily meditation practice should help develop patience:

"If it gets to the point where I'm "dealing" with anger, it's too late. It's like the guy who's entered a golf tournament and he's practicing and the old pro comes along and says, "If you haven't got it by now, you're not going to get it before the tournament's over." It's the same with getting angry. By the time the reactive process is underway, it's too late. By practicing meditation and doing mind training, we can avoid being caught up in the reactivity of anger and can stay present."

Ken McLeod