

Anger

"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

Anger takes many forms from irritability to rage and jealousy. It is a feeling inside produced by thoughts. I remember reading somewhere that its basis is a feeling of having been hurt - the anger is often a reaction to something hurtful someone has said or done to us. Or events in life didn't go the way we wanted them to.

Since I have been thinking lately about roles, anger seems often caused by someone threatening a role we play by not reciprocating, by not playing their counter-role that complements ours, properly. Our spouses, girl/boyfriends, children, parents, bosses, don't treat us with the respect we think our role deserves.

My way of working with this is to immediately identify the sensation of anger itself, investigating the feeling in my body. Where is it? How does it feel? Is it still there? - rather than stay in my mind churning and magnifying the thoughts that in turn will strengthen the feelings. Tonglen practice also helps here. It's best to open to the feeling too, to stay with it if possible and not try to avoid or repress it. That only saves it up for a re-appearance at another time. Some teachers advise reliving angry incidents later in meditation if we haven't had time to investigate the feelings involved because of time pressure in real life.

I do find in my own life that I have developed lots more equanimity through my meditation practice, and anger does not affect me nearly as much nowadays. It can be interesting in a way to notice and investigate what triggers angry thoughts when you have the capacity not to be carried away by them..