

On Anger, Mindfulness, and Meditation

Last night I got angry about the seeming unceasing criticism and negativity about the problems in implementing the Affordable Care Act. I was angered because I felt such criticism willfully ignored the long term benefit of this new law – that no one in America would ever again suffer or die due to the lack of health insurance because of a pre-existing condition or a chronic health problem exhausting insurance limits.

Buddhist meditation masters teach that thoughts have the quality of inherent emptiness. Thoughts come up. With mindfulness just watch them without attaching to them. Then due to their inherent emptiness they just evaporate. With thoughts that engender anger, just stay with the energy of that emotion without reacting or responding, let that angry energy soften into compassion with the mindful realization there is no true separateness between beings (no me and no others).

If I had followed that teaching last night, I would have just watched my anger at perceived speech that engenders injustice (not looking at, or willfully ignoring, the long term big picture of the impact of the ACA) without lashing out. Instead that emotion would have softened into asking that we look at the big picture and how suffering can be reduced in the world. If no more people have to die from lack of health insurance, or have to choose between medicine and food and rent, then to me we have left the world a better place than we found it. The second photo haiku touches on the same point - use mindfulness to gain equanimity and cease being jerked about by your thoughts. With inherent Buddha nature - you decide what each step forward will be, not your impulsive reactions. I will try to practice that better. dt