

Practice Part 1: Looking Deeply at Volition in our Day-to-Day Lives

We begin our practice with these teachings by looking deeply at the underlying motivations and aspirations that direct the day-to-day activities in our lives. Whether conscious or unconscious, whatever we are moving toward is conditioning our mind. We ask ourselves:

- Where am I directing the energies of my mind?
- What is it that is motivating me to take the actions I take?
- What it is that I am desiring?

We all want to be happy in our lives, but if we are truly honest with ourselves we may find that the external things that we are motivated towards only provide temporary happiness, and are not capable of providing real and lasting satisfaction. Yet, we expend enormous amounts of energy pursuing them. We may also find that there are subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, motivations at play in our lives that are not aligned with our values. We ask ourselves:

- How much energy am I expending towards attaining external achievements? Money, career, relationships, education, getting my to-do list done?
- What are some of the subtle motivations behind my every day actions? Am I motivated towards looking good? Getting approval from others? Being liked? Pleasing others?
- How much of my desiring is aimed towards feeling good? Towards pleasure? Entertainment? Distraction? Avoidance?
- Are my strivings ego-based? Wanting to get my way? Be right about? Be better than? Get more than? Get even with? Get back at?
- Am I often motivated by afflictive emotions such as craving, anger, fear, jealousy, ignorance, pride?

If we look deeply, we begin to uncover the underlying volitions that operate in our lives that are moving us forward and directing our actions in ways that we may not be aware of. We begin to recognize the suffering that some of these volitions cause to ourselves and to others. As we bring our mindfulness to these habits of mind, we recognizing that we no longer need to consume and perpetuate these unwholesome energies.