

Kindhearted Awareness: Cultivating an Attitude of Yes

By Rebecca Bradshaw

Kindhearted awareness is what makes it possible for us to relax. Many of us come to practice, however, with a tendency to want to fix ourselves, or to “fix” experience, rather than with a sense of kindness toward ourselves.

If we have this covert agenda of aggressiveness towards ourselves, towards our experience of life, this will color our ability to trust silence, stillness, and presence. The world will look hostile to us, not inviting. As we cultivate an ability to infuse awareness with kindheartedness, or we could say, to bring the natural kindhearted quality of awareness to the forefront, we find that this world looks friendlier, more inviting, and a safer place to be. We strengthen a foundation of acceptance which gives the heart and mind a greater capacity to relax and meet all of life, as it is.

With kindhearted awareness, we cultivate an attitude of “Yes, you too.” For example, when fear arises, when we can meet it with kindness, it softens the edges of aversion towards the experience of fear itself, and allows us to relax into fear and see it clearly. When physical pain arises and we can approach it with kindness, we can connect more fully with life in this moment. When craving arises, rather than seeing it as bad, we can turn towards it with care, lessening its power to overwhelm us.

The relaxation encouraged by kindhearted awareness opens us to the deeper truths of existence. Expectation, agendas, and striving necessarily of themselves distort our perception of reality. These manifestations of grasping cloud the mind and unconsciously cause us to see life through distorted filters and unseen assumptions. The relaxation engendered by kindheartedness means fewer, or clearer, filters and a clearer connection with reality. This results in a greater capacity to meet experience as it is: impermanent, not able to provide lasting fulfillment and not-self. In this way, kindhearted awareness deepens our connection with life as it is, dissolving confusion and leading to freedom of heart and mind.

from Fall 2013 Mid America Dharma News