

Mindfulness Worksheet - Cultivating Equanimity

Among the foundational tenets of Buddhism is this practice of cultivating equanimity. Of course, we don't have to be Buddhist to understand how maintaining a balanced state of mind can be of benefit.

When we're in a state of equanimity, our feet are firmly planted on the ground, and we are stable. No matter what happens, good or bad, we allow for it with a loving open-heartedness. We don't get thrown off balance, or swept away by strong emotions or unpleasant circumstances.

Equanimity arises when we can remain mindful in each and every moment. When we stay mindful, we can experience the full range of human emotion, both pleasure and pain, without identifying with these experiences or becoming attached. We never lose our sense of awareness. We take in everything as a witness.

By practicing equanimity, we remain in a calm, open and spacious state of mind regardless of our circumstances. We maintain connection to a deep inner happiness, and we're able to deal with whatever arises reasonably and with great care.

Learn to practice equanimity with the following brief meditation, and then answer the questions below.

Meditation on Cultivating Equanimity

- Sit comfortably in a quiet place with your spine up tall
- Close your eyes and bring attention to the breath
- Breathe quietly and patiently in and out through the nose
- Equanimity arises through continued mindfulness
- Be mindful from moment to moment as you contemplate the following pairs of words...
- Praise and blame
- How does your body respond to praise, and how does it respond to blame?
- What might it feel like to remain balanced between the two?
- Gain and loss
- What arises in body and mind when you reflect upon gain and loss?
- Do you feel pushed, or pulled in any one direction?
- Pleasure and pain
- What arises? Are you aware of an attachment to pleasure, an aversion to pain?
- Or do you avoid pleasure, and grasp to your pain?

- Fame and unpopularity
- What do these words mean to you?
- In what ways are you thrown off balance by what others think of you?
- Recall that being balanced is not the same as being unfeeling or aloof
- Notice the ways in which you are pushed and pulled towards imbalance
- Keep your feet squarely on the ground by remaining aware
- Let awareness itself become your home base
- Stable and spacious

What Did You Notice?

- Describe your experience with the meditation in general
- Did you have a particularly strong reaction to any of those pairings of words?
- In what ways do you get thrown off balance by either praise or blame?
- In what ways have you been thrown off balance by getting what you want, or losing something that you have?
- In what ways are you thrown off balance by pleasure or pain?
- In what ways have you been thrown off balance by fame or disrepute, that is, how does it affect you when people like you, or dislike you?
- In what ways do you treat some of your objects better than others?
- In what ways do you treat some people better than others?
- What might the connection be between equanimity as a state of mind, and equanimity as it relates to how you treat others?
- Which type of equanimity do you think comes first? A balanced state of mind, or treating all others equally?
- How might mindfulness help cultivate equanimity?
- If you could hold a balanced and loving state of mind all the time, what might improve in your day to day life?

Review

To understand what equanimity is, it's sometimes helpful to understand what it is not. Often, we slip into a belief that equanimity means indifference, aloofness, or not caring. In fact, it's quite the opposite. With equanimity we care deeply, but we care about all things equally.

As you become more practiced in equanimity, it's possible to remain balanced and connected to a deep sense of love even in the face of challenging hardships.

Just as a large oak tree is stable and rooted regardless of the weather, someone who is balanced and in a state of equanimity bends and sways as the world around them changes, but stays firmly planted and connected to their inner resource of infinite happiness and love.