



the urban retreat 2013

course material for day 2: sunday

exploring further

introduction

Welcome back! As with yesterday, the material for today is quite simple. There is [a led meditation you can use](#) if you wish, and then some questions for reflection. Please do give these questions time for consideration... the more conscious and aware you are of what is going on in your meditation, the more you'll get out of the following days teaching. There is also an exercise from Subhadramati about looking to the week ahead and being prepared to make your practice as effective as possible. So we'd recommend that too.

After today, we are going to be focusing on the practice stage by stage, and there will also be short daily talks from Vessantara.

questions for reflection:

Before you consider these questions, you might like to [read](#) or [watch](#) or [listen to](#) the “introductory level” teaching material for today (you may need to log in), particularly the first five minutes that deals with the different stage of the meditation, and how the practice is structured to get us to work with different kinds of feeling. The material may give you some ideas and stimulation that will help get you going with these questions for reflection...

- 1) Are there stages, or junctures, in the practice that you find relatively easy, or it is easier to engage?
- 2) Are there stages, or junctures, in the practice where it is harder, or where you can tend to lose interest, or get distracted? If so, why do you think this is?

Here is today's "daily practice" reflection adapted from Subhadramati's 'Not About Being Good'. We've chosen to include this at this juncture of the urban retreat because it is about looking ahead and seeing what challenges might be round the corner – what might happen in the next few days that could prevent you keeping up a meditation practice, or being able to act from loving-kindness as you go about your life? We're imagining that many of you have started this urban retreat during the weekend, when your circumstances are a bit more easy and spacious, but that in the next few days your lives might be getting busier and more demanding. So this reflection is about anticipating that and being prepared, vigilant, even a bit canny about the likely trials and challenges ahead.

daily practice: looking ahead and being vigilant

Take five or ten minutes to think of the week ahead. Choose one event that you anticipate will be particularly challenging in terms of you being able to stay aware and positive enough to act from loving-kindness. It might be that you know you've got a difficult meeting coming up at work, or your partner's relative is coming to stay and you find them irritating, or some other "challenge".

Think of three things that you could put in place that would support you when this challenging event comes around. Write them down now. (It might be things like: going for a walk round the block before the meeting to "mentally prepare", putting the difficult relative in the metta bhavana practice for a few days, taking time to reflect what it is that "presses your buttons" and to think of a better verbal response,

putting a few words to remind you of your positive intention somewhere you'll see them during your day, such as on your screen-saver, or on the fridge.)

After the event has happened, make the time to reflect again. Did your efforts to be prepared make any difference? What did you learn? Write down some reflections.