

## *Self-motivation*

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Part of right effort is generating desire, i.e. generating desire to give rise to skillful qualities and to maintain them. If any unskillful qualities have arisen you want to get rid of them, and when they haven't yet arisen you want to make sure they don't arise again. You have to desire to do this—this doesn't happen on its own—and this is the kind of desire that's a part of the path. It's a good part of the practice.

What this translates into, of course, is that you've got to learn how to motivate yourself. Sometimes it's easy: If you see this is good to do and you like doing it, it's going to be easy to do it. If it's something that you don't like doing and you see that it leads to bad results, you're *not* going to do that. The parts that are harder are the things that you like to do but are going to give rise to bad results, or the things you don't like to do that are going to give rise to good results. You have to learn how to motivate yourself to abandon the first and to develop the second.

This way, you can become a self-starter. After all, it is your suffering that you're working on here.

You want to be able to motivate yourself to think far down the line. Another sign of wisdom, of course, is that you go for long-term happiness rather than short-term, so you're willing to put up with some difficulties in the meantime. And you're willing to learn how to make yourself willing and happy to do things ordinarily you wouldn't want to do.

Sometimes you use heedfulness. In other words, you remind yourself of the bad things that come from unskillful actions and the good things that come from skillful—and that you've got the choice right here, right now. If you fritter away your time, the time just gets eaten up, eaten up, and your opportunity to do skillful things just gets reduced to less and less. So heedfulness is one way of motivating yourself.

A sense of compassion is also a good way of motivating yourself—that when you practice, you benefit, and the people around you benefit as well. If you want to dedicate the merit to somebody else, they're going to benefit too. It's not just you here practicing.

Remember that we're living here on the generosity of other people. You have to have some gratitude for them. They're generous not because they want any specific monetary return but they simply want to see that we're practicing. So we dedicate the merit of our practice to them, and they benefit.

You can also motivate yourself with a sense of pride: Here you are a human being; you've got the opportunity to do something that human beings can do. Animals don't have the choice about developing skillful qualities or abandoning unskillful ones. But it's a choice that we have, so let's make the most of it.

You can also use a sense of shame, realizing that certain unskillful things are really beneath you. You've been well-trained, you've got the Buddha as your teacher. You'd be ashamed to do things that the Buddha would criticize.

These are all useful ways of motivating yourself. Speaking in terms of having a sense of self, this is a useful sense of self to have because this is what keeps you on the path.

So when you find your practicing is flagging, do what you can to pick it back up again. What can you do to gladden the mind? What can do you to steady the mind? What can you do to keep your focus right where it belongs?

When you're a self-starter like this, then you can go anywhere and you can practice. You can rely on yourself.

At the same time, you're actually putting one of the Buddha's main teachings into practice. He says it's one of the customs of the noble ones is to delight in developing what's skillful and to delight in abandoning what's unskillful. That puts your heart in line with the noble path.