

Not Overwhelmed

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It's cold and it's wet. But try not to let the cold and the wet affect your whole mind.

Ajaan Maha Boowa points out that sometimes there's just a little pain, a little something that's disagreeable, and it may be just in one spot or just one topic, but it can spread out to fill the whole mind.

It's like putting tincture in a glass of water. A little tiny drop but it spreads. All of a sudden, all the water in the glass is the color of the tincture.

You've got to make sure that the unpleasant thing stays with the unpleasant thing but it doesn't affect the whole mind. Remember that there's a lot of awareness that's aware of other things that are not unpleasant at all. You can focus your attention there.

For example, with pains in the body or disagreeable things outside: If you learn how to leave the disagreeable things right where they are and don't let them spread and branch out and infect your entire mind, there's got to be a part of the mind that's not affected by these things.

In the same way that when you have a pain in a part of the body: It's not the whole body that's pained. The pains are located here and there. But the mind has a tendency to stitch them together and create a big picture of a network of pain, nothing but pain, all gathered up and out to get you.

So you have to say, No, these are individual things. Learn to break things down into their individual components. And make sure that your awareness is larger than they are. That way the pain is just at the pain but it doesn't have to put its dye or its tincture through everything in the mind. There are parts of the awareness that are perfectly clear, perfectly fine. Hang out with those. Take your strength from those.

That's one of the ways in which you can step back from the pain and see what's actually going on. If you're totally surrounded by it, it's hard to get a good perspective. It's hard to see the machinations behind the scenes. But if your awareness is larger than that, then there is no behind-the-scenes, because your awareness spreads out in all directions. What originally was behind the scenes suddenly becomes easy to see, because you're not letting the play or the movie fill all your awareness. You've got a part that's reserved apart.

This is how we develop patience, this is how we can develop equanimity in the face of things that are unpleasant: realizing that the unpleasant things don't fill

everything. Let them have their small place, so that you can get a better perspective on how to deal with them.

At the same time, try to keep your mind as calm and as steady and as enlarged as you can. That's how these things don't overwhelm you.