

The Perfect Storm

- Six factors that stimulate disturbing emotions:
 1. Society
 2. Media
 3. Seed
 4. Object
 5. Attention
 6. Habits
- Our state of mind is influenced by external factors, but lasting happiness must come from within



Society




- Our peer group
- Society or class we are born into
- The group we identify with or chose to belong to

Can we withstand influences from bad company?

- We imitate those we spend time with
- Social distraction eats away our limited time
- We take our conditions personally
- Leads to status anxiety


What to do?

- Distinguish between whom we can affect positively, and who overwhelms us
- Keep destructive friends close in your heart but physically distant
- Resist social inertia, bystander syndrome
- *Chose* good friends, then cultivate them!

A group of diverse people, including a person in a wheelchair, a woman with a red bag, a man with a child, and several older adults, standing together.



Media

- Teachings or explanations that create confusion
- **It's our own uncritical attitude that's dangerous!**
- Encourage us to commit harmful actions, stimulate desire or hatred
- The objects of knowledge are infinite, so what is their purpose?
- Social media is changing how our brain functions (outsourcing our memory, analysis, research)

A cartoon illustration of a man in a green shirt and blue pants holding a newspaper. A television set is on his head, and a speech bubble from it says "It's all in the mind". The background is a large yellow sun with a face. There are also some small figures and a speech bubble with "Hello" in the background.

What to do?

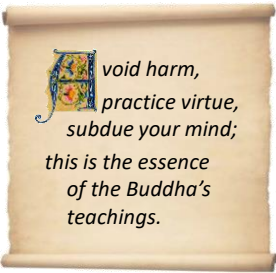
- Look for valid, authentic teachings, not just what you like or agree with
- Be aware of *why* you are immersing yourself in this information
- Bring Dharma wisdom to what you see
- Use the power of advertising to develop your virtue (empathy, compassion, tolerance, gratitude)
- Don't blame the tool, but the lack of discrimination! Be the boss of your technology, don't let it boss you!



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Becoming an Inner Being

- You don't need to become a Buddhist, but you *do* need to become an 'inner being'!
- What do we take refuge in at present?
- Develop a natural confidence based on reasoning and research (rather than blind faith, a pep-talk, or social status)



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Four Qualities of a Valid Refuge

1. They themselves are free from all fears
2. They have the means to free others from fear
3. They have great compassion for all, whether close or not
4. They aim to help all, whether Buddhist or not, good or bad, helpful or harmful



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BENEFITS of Finding a Refuge

- We stop being distracted
- Our path through life becomes clear
- We become a better human being
- We are protected from suffering



.... We know we are on the right track when we stop overly concentrating on the faults of others and start looking within!

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SUMMARY

- Six factors that cause disturbing emotions
- Society and Media and how to guard our mind
- Finding a valid refuge



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Today's Topics

- Six factors: Seed and Object
- Difference between causes and conditions
- Powerful objects and how to guard against them



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The Seed

- Potential or readiness for a delusion to arise
- We have countless seeds, some positive, some negative
- Latent, unconscious, subtle predisposition



How do we get the seeds?

- Actions controlled by afflictive mind-states
- Leave imprints on our mind (seeds of karmic instinct)
- In the right conditions they are triggered, and we experience the resultant suffering or happiness



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Causes or Conditions?



- A **substantial cause** must be of a similar type (substance), and consistently bring a similar result
- **Turns into** the result

What's the cause of Miffi's desk?



Substantial cause



Co-operative cause



Conditions

What's the cause of Eddie's annoyance?



Readiness to be cranky

Miffi turns on the TV

Noise is the trigger

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What to do?



- Difficulties trigger our latent seeds
- Difficulties are not the cause, but the mirror
- If we remove the seed, our mind will remain calm



- We have little control over people, situations, our health, or when death will come, but we *can* control our response
- Positive inner conditions help positive seeds ripen
- Adjust your attitude each morning
- Enhance positive activities



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What Happens to the Seeds?

Negative seeds

- Only wisdom understanding reality can eradicate them
- Stop them ripening using the *Four Opponents*
- Once they ripen as an experience, the seed is finished



Positive seeds

- Ripening of your own virtue
- Make sure you re-invest your virtue by planting more seeds!
- Help ripen positive seeds with spiritual practice, constructive attitudes and habits



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Related Object

- The trigger that ripens the readiness/seed...
- Delusions cannot arise without first meeting an object
- Bombarded with advertising, the seeds of dissatisfaction ripen quickly



Not random, but a *related object*

- The objects may differ, but our feelings are universal
- This means there is no ultimate good or bad



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Powerful Objects

- **Addictions:** Physical addictions (drugs, alcohol, pain killers) or behaviour (gambling, collecting, social media)
- **Place:** Sacred sites, cathedrals and temples, massacre sites, nostalgic locations
- **Kawai:** When an object carries hope, cuteness



- **Time:** anniversary of a death or abortion, traumas associated with Christmas or Easter, seasonal change, hormonal change
- **Holy objects:** Holy relics or statues, hymns and mantras. Living 'saints' like Ghandi, HH the Dalai Lama



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What to do?



- Keep a respectful distance from dangerous objects
- Abide in mental solitude
- Free yourself from the attention economy

- The real holiday is a mind free from delusion!
- Spend time with people that bring out the best in you
- Acknowledge milestones



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SUMMARY


- How **Seed** and **Object** work together
- How we confuse causes and conditions
- Recognising the powerful objects in our own life



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Today’s Topics

- Inappropriate attention
- How distorted attention creates disappointment and suffering
- Equanimity, cultivating a mind at ease



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Inappropriate Attention



Seed + Object + Attention = Delusion

Three distortions:

- 1. **Exaggerate** (overestimate qualities)
- 2. **Project** (aspects that are not there)
- 3. **Biased** (one-sided, partiality)


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Tyranny of the Reifying View

- We think the *object out there* (rather than our own capacity for pleasure) is the cause of our pleasure
- **Commodity fetishism** (Marx). Impute characteristics not there in the object
- **How it appears is not how it exists**



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 Mind of **Attachment**

Exaggerate


- Family life will bring complete fulfilment
- My child’s qualities are better than others

Projection


- She’s pretty therefore she’s also kind
- He’s charismatic so will look after me well
- A relationship/house/job will bring security

Biased

- See the qualities, ignore the faults
- Forgivable in my friend, but not your friend
- Enjoy now, ignore consequences



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 Mind of **Hatred**

Exaggerate


- “I bet they yell all the time...”
- “Yelling is utterly *totally* unacceptable”

Projection

- Take it personally, they targeted *me*
- Expect they should ‘know better’
- Assume they are aggressive all the time

Biased

- Cannot see the hurt behind the anger
- Forget that they don’t yell all the time
- Forget that we yell sometimes too



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Misconceptions About the Nature of Things



- **Things, people and relationships don't change.** The object breaks, wears out. Every relationship will end.
- **Things bring us lasting happiness.** No matter how much we acquire we are still dissatisfied. We get bored, try to get a new one, collect more.
- **Things are pure/perfect.** Relationships are by nature unstable. Objects are fallible, they have inherent complications.
- **Things have a real, findable essence.** We are a collection of reaction to circumstance, a product of our era, education, gender, politics, religion.

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What to do?



- Notice when you are **ruminating**, and change your activities
- **Reframe** the situation
- Recognise the four **misconceptions** arising in daily life
- **Separate** pleasant from needing to possess, aversion from wanting to retaliate
- Practice **mindfulness** of emotional sensations before reacting
- **Relax!** There is nothing to chase or defend
- **Expect change**, disintegration and breakage
- **Journal** your assumptions and expectations
- **Build** character and you will naturally become a good and happy person
- Use the **happiness as fuel** for inner work and a meaningful life

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SUMMARY



- It's only with inappropriate attention that a delusion can arise
- We are mistaken (4 misconceptions), not broken!
- True happiness comes from your *capacity* to experience joy, not the object out there



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Today's Topics

- The **Three Higher Trainings**
- How they make life better now
- How they can overcome all six factors
- How they can completely overcome problems and end our suffering forever!



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Three Higher **TRAININGS**

1. How cultivating **ethics** creates happiness
2. Overcoming distraction with **concentration**
3. Destroy negative seeds with **wisdom**

- **Higher** because they aim higher than just having a good life
- Goal of personal liberation and enlightenment
- With all three cut the root of suffering forever




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Higher Training in **Wisdom**

- **We are at the centre of all our troubles. It is therefore best to work at understanding our true nature first.** (HH the Dalai Lama)
- All phenomena arise by the collection of many conditions together. Because of the collection of many conditions, there is no inference
- We confuse the dual nature of reality, relative and ultimate. This is the root of all our suffering.
- Things (problems) do not exist in the way they first appear






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Cognitive Fusion

- Fusing the behaviour with the person**
 - Person acting badly = a bad person
 - A bad child? Or a suffering child?
- Cognitive deficit:** In a difficult situation we cannot see any benefits, so cannot change
 - The dentist will bring pain (not health)
- Cognitive hyperactivity:** In a pleasant situation, we overvalue enjoyable qualities
 - A drink will bring satisfaction (not headache)



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Wisdom – Re-education




Seed

- Discrepancy between appearance and reality
- Cognitive fusion
- Work on your own mind first rather than abstract philosophy
- Wisdom of selflessness (no inherent self)

Media


- Post-truth world
- Check your sources!
- Re-train your thinking and your feeling
- Constantly use your words to reframe



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Higher Training in Concentration

- Concentration is a mental factor that is capable of abiding one-pointedly on an object of virtue without distraction.
- It results in mental and physical pliancy
- It is naturally blissful
- It engenders good qualities
- It benefits others



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Concentration – Practices




Object

- Physical solitude, free of social media, pets, lists, alcohol or drugs
- Mental solitude, free of rumination on objects of lust or hatred
- The real holiday is the mind free of delusion

Attention

- Chose an object of meditation and focus your mind on it
- Avoid laxity and excitement
- Try to achieve and maintain stability, clarity, and intensity



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Higher Training in Ethics

- Ethical conduct means restraining from harm
- Abandon harmful physical and verbal actions
- Main motivation is the determination to become completely free from cyclic existence
- Vows (marriage, scouts, citizen)
- Professional code of conduct
- Laws of the land



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Ethics – How to Act?



Society

- When in company, watch your physical actions and speech
- Friends with ethics!
- Active in civil society
- Humility, respect others

Habits

- When alone, practice good mental hygiene
- Proudly uphold your code of conduct
- Become an inner professional
- Avoid spiritual materialism
- Happiness is a habit



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SUMMARY



- Three Higher Trainings are not just for a good life, but for the complete cessation of suffering
- **Ethics** is the foundation for achieving everything we want to
- **Concentration** informed by love and interdependence
- **Wisdom** cuts the root of ignorance, the cause of all suffering



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Today’s Topics



- The habit cycle
- Instead of forcibly supressing our destructive habits, **deconstructing** them so they no longer arise!
- Cigarette case study
- “Happiness is nothing more than a few simple disciplines **practised each day**, while misery is simply a few errors of judgement and bad habits repeated daily.” --Paul McKenna



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What is a Habit?

- An acquired behaviour, done repeatedly, that becomes involuntary
- A **negative habit takes us from something beneficial**
- Bad habits are easy because of our familiarity
- A habit does not go away by itself, but grows
- The initial traumatic incident may be over, but we become unhappy out of habit
- Our habits end up defining us




What are we practicing right now?

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Happiness is Also a Habit!

- Things happiness is NOT:
 - It is not something we wait around for
 - It is not a thing we can purchase
 - It is not something we receive from another
 - It is not something that happens to us



Happiness is an activity!

- We must practice it until it comes naturally!
- Eventually it will be **easier to develop a virtuous, happy mind** than a negative one
- Baseline of natural yet realistic optimism



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What to do?

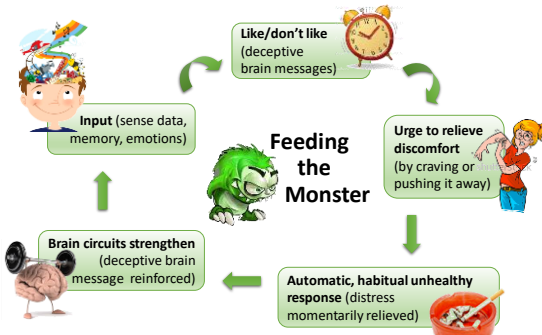


- **Gratitude** journal or jar
- **Coloured dots** prompt:
 - a time you were happy
 - someone who loves you
 - something you are looking forward to
- **Compliments** with specifics
- **Pay it forward**, make a plan and carry it out
- **Loving-kindness** meditation (may you be happy... and you..)
- **Rejoice** in other’s good fortune and happiness
- Do something **for others** and **don’t** post it on social media



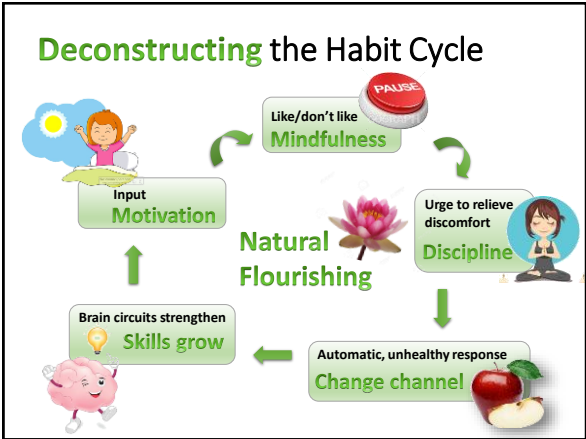
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Neurology of a Habit Cycle

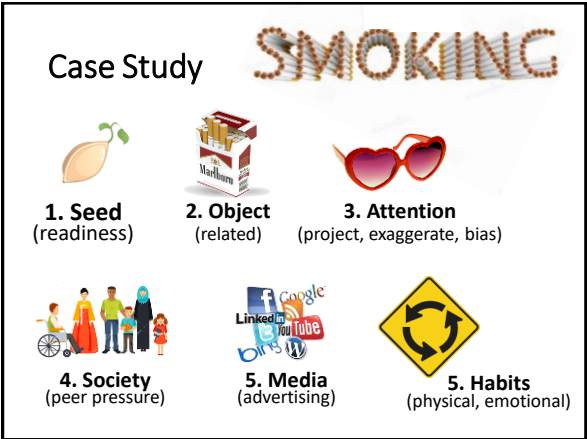


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graph TD; Input[Input sense data, memory, emotions] --> Feeding[Feeding the Monster]; Feeding --> Urge[Urge to relieve discomfort by craving or pushing it away]; Urge --> Response[Automatic, habitual unhealthy response distress momentarily relieved]; Response --> Strengthen[Brain circuits strengthen deceptive brain message reinforced]; Strengthen --> Input; Feeding --> Like[Like/don't like deceptive brain messages]; Like --> Urge
```

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What to do?

- **Mindfulness** of physical, emotional sensations (notice and name)
- 9-round **breathing** meditation
- Replace with a positive **behaviour** or ritual
- Change the **channel**, physically move
- Time with **non-smokers**
- **Visit** or help people dying of lung cancer, emphysema
- **Re-educate** yourself on advertising spin
- Focus on **deeper goals**, who and what matter to you the most

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SUMMARY

- Stop feeding the monster!
- Deconstruct negative habits step-by-step
- Happiness is nothing more than a few simple disciplines practised each day, while misery is a few errors of judgement and bad habits repeated daily

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Today's Topics


- Social media changes society and re-wires our brain
- Harnessing this power for good!
- Ease of equanimity
- A world of support

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Tyranny of the Reifying View

- If it appears, it must be true
- If it's not apparent, it does not exist
- **Selfies**: grasping at a self that does not exist
- **Fundamentalism**: my truth is right
- **Nihilism**: nothing is true
- **Confirmation bias**: believe or notice only what you like, not what is correct
- **Indifference** is ignorance operating on an unconscious level
- Indifference means nothing holds us back from harming others

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Refugee Crisis


- Lack of proximity
- Focus on difference
- Scary people? Or people undergoing scary events?
- Age of entitlement

Case Study

DANGER
Alternative Facts

Climate Change

- Time delay
- We conflate weather with climate
- Description shapes our reality
- Large scale, powerless




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The Pain System of Our Conscience

- **Shame**: avoid negative actions due to *personal* conscience
- **Embarrassment**: avoids negative actions out of concern for what *others* might think
- Both are positive mental factors that **function to restrain** negative actions of body speech and mind

- **Just because it feels bad, doesn't mean it's bad for us!**
- **Helps us be true to our innate sense of fairness**



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Case Study



1. Seed
(readiness)



2. Object
(complex technology)



3. Attention
(reifying view)




4/5. Social Media
(identity construct, no witness, global reach, instantaneous)




6. Habits
(re-wire the brain, emotional addiction. Confirmation bias)

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What to do?



- Self-respect based on **doing something worthwhile** in the day!
- **Educate and organise**: *Viva la revolution!!*
- Mindfulness, **pause** before you push send
- Is it **true, kind, necessary?**
- **Stay friends**
- Spend a day together **(de)vice free**
- **Meta analysis**. Strong education, cyber bullying workshops
- Emails at 4 pm, set bells for **time-limit** browsing
- **Read** the whole article, not just headlines
- **Contribute** to the feed, don't just consume it




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Empathy is Not Compassion!


Affective Empathy

- Feel for them




Cognitive Empathy

- Think it through



- 1. Use existing feelings
- 2. Expand them using reasoning and logic
- 3. Include everyone!

- Compassion is wishing them to be free of suffering
- **Compassion is an activity**, not just a feeling!



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Equanimity – Feeling Equal Care Towards All





Feeling affection towards friends
Expand your love to everyone



Feeling warmly towards strangers
Raise the bar



Feeling concern for enemies
Judge the behaviour, not person

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SUMMARY

- Social media genie is out of the bottle!
Harness its power for good, not evil!
- Two types of empathy to develop equanimity,
equal care for all, regardless if we like them
- Live with an open heart and without fear

