

1. Mindfulness of Feeling is supported by being in the present moment (Mindfulness of Body). This is illustrated by what one does in the Thai walking meditation when one experiences strong feeling. Rather than 'soldering on' with walking and trying to ignore the feeling, one stops. One waits, saying to oneself "Feeling... Feeling (naming whatever it is)..." In doing so one is acknowledging the feeling and giving oneself space to take it into awareness. When one feels able to do so less distractedly, one carries on walking WHILE TAKING WITH YOU AWARENESS OF THAT FEELING into ones walking. In this way one can practice living mindfully in the present moment *along with ones feelings*.

2. What we normally do is not this. Instead we go to one of two extremes:

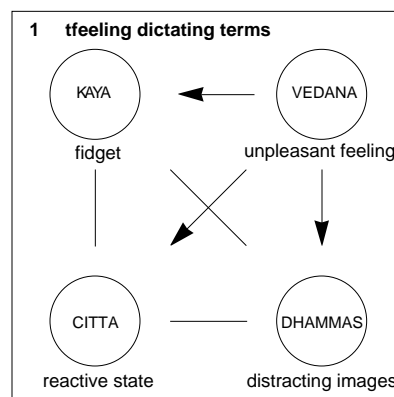
- \* We either stop everything (to be aware of our feelings) but then don't start up again where we left off once we have taken in the feeling. We try to FIX the feeling in some way, often trying to change it or get rid of it, rather than accept it.

We might change what we are paying attention to in the present moment, we change *body*. This effectively changes the *tangible* source of the feeling. If we are in sitting meditation that might be restlessly shifting position til the feeling becomes more bearable. We change what the mind is in contact with).

Another strategy is to leave the present moment, in mental fantasy. We focus on a mental object instead of the body. The fantasy gives us a more pleasant feeling which functions as a distraction from the one we were experiencing.

A third strategy is, rather than staying with the feeling, to move to a mental state. Experiencing pain we immediately become angry. We lose our mindfulness of the pain to being obsessed with what might be 'causing' the pain.

In this way (Fig.1)), we are driven by concern with feeling to select certain bodily experiences over others, certain mental states over others, and certain mental objects over others, rather than staying with what life presents us with in the moment. In short, we let FEELING (vedana) dictate what bodily experience (kaya) we have, what mental state (citta) we are in, and what mental objects (dhammas) - thoughts / views / images are in our minds.



- \* Alternatively we 'over-ride' the feeling. We carry on doing what we are doing but don't include our feelings in that. This usually requires us to keep our awareness in our head rather than in the body and in the present moment.

These strategies correspond to the extreme views of hedonism and asceticism. Mindfulness of feeling, in conjunction with mindfulness of the other satipatthanas, keeps us on a Middle Way between these extremes.

3. Feeling (pleasant, painful or neutral) comes in three 'types', depending on its source (Fig.2) -

- \* bodily source (kayika vedana - physical or concrete feeling)
  - eg. a pain in the leg

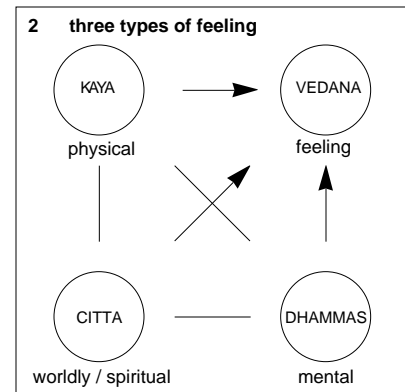
- \* the source is our state of mind (citta)

- \* raw, uncultivated states of mind like craving, ill will, envy, etc (samisam vedana - worldly feeling)
    - eg. the pain of unsatisfied greed

- \* ethically cultivated states of mind like loving kindness, generosity, awareness, good or bad conscience (niramisam vedana - spiritual feeling)
    - eg. the pain at seeing beings suffering, or at knowing one has caused harm

- \* states of mind 'higher than the ethical' - I assume those informed by insight (niramisa niramisatara vedana - 'more spiritual than spiritual' feeling)
    - eg. the pleasure of knowing one is enlightened, ones 'mind (citta) is released'

- \* the source is the contents of our mind (dhammas) - our thoughts, views, etc (cetasika vedana - mental or abstract feeling) - eg. the pain of thinking of oneself as a failure



4. There is probably a tendency to 'flee up and away' from our present experience if it is difficult:

- 1 prioritising feelings over bodily awareness - fidgetting
- 2 prioritising a reaction over awareness of feeling - flee from difficult feeling to anger
- 3 prioritising mental objects over awareness of mental states ("He did that to me")

And to 'hone down and in' if it is pleasant:

- 1 prioritising mental states over awareness of thoughts / mental objects - "don't worry let's party"
- 2 prioritising feelings over awareness of mental states - hone in on feeling, never mind consequences
- 3 prioritising bodily sensation over awareness of feeling - stay in 'bubble' of your own sensory experience but insensitive to feeling in others (spiritual feeling)

We stop these movements toward imbalance by cultivating consciousness (rather than unconsciousness) and acceptance (rather than non-acceptance) of feeling. We need to learn to take our feelings (sensitivities) with us on the spiritual path, to both ground that path in the present moment (body) but also to stay aware of our thoughts / mental objects and states of mind.

*Homework: Do the ACT exercise on judging how much struggling against your experience works. Try to manage doing it five days out of seven.*