

Dancing with Life
Chapters 13 & 14, Pages 151-171

The Buddha (is saying): it is possible for you to move from the “taste” of the mind being free of clinging to the direct knowing of pure awareness to take a quantum leap in your perception of human potential (pg. 156). Total cessation entails moving beyond your ego so that you cease to be defined by it – becoming your true Buddha nature. Phew – that is a lot.

1. Moffitt suggests that through practicing the Third Noble Truth, it may be possible to realize a “wholesome, fulfilling way of relating to life that is not defined by endless stress, judgment, and wanting” (pg. 157).

- Flipping this around: In one’s life of stress, judgment, and wanting, what do you/we do to, even temporarily, in practice, to live a life that becomes wholesome and fulfilling to you?

2. I love Moffitt’s use of the term “choiceless awareness”. He describes this state of being as a “genuine, realizable stage of attainment in which one’s mind will be in a temporary state of nonclinging, and you **will know that this is so.**”

- Moffitt asks if we can imagine existing in a place where our mind does not “contract” around anything that happens to us. Even if only a foretaste (to use Moffitt’s word) of living a moment that does not contract around something, how could it be possible to practice this? How does one come to realize this is possible and practice this effort in one’s daily life?

3. On page 161, Moffitt describes cessation as, spontaneously seeing the interdependent, co-arising nature of the world and directly experiencing the empty nature of all conditioned phenomena.”

- Moffitt asks the question, “What does cessation mean to me?” What is your own interpretation of cessation, and how do you describe this experience for you? What do you do to reach this level of practice? Moffitt quotes Ajahn Sumedho’s question (that is asking the same about the same concept in a different way), “What is possible in the way of freedom for me, right now, in this very moment, just as I am?”

4. Moffitt follows this discussion on cessation by focusing on the concept of “remembering that one does not know”. This is a fascinating aspect of one’s daily practice that requires an awareness of not knowing. Suzuki is often quoted as saying, "

Practice with a beginner's mind." Moffitt says, "You must cultivate a not-knowing attitude in order to know the realization of cessation." "The Buddha taught that you are deluded when you do not realize that you do not know when you cling...and mistake your views as knowing."

- How is it possible to practice this concept in one's daily life? How does one become aware of "not knowing" and keep that concept as part of a daily practice? How do you practice that awareness?

5. In the next session, Moffitt uses the subtitle, "Dancing with Life While Cultivating Cessation". A fascinating and enticing perspective on living! Moffitt says he lives life "consciously with the question, how do I find freedom of mind right now, even in my state of ignorance? I inquire and reflect: Is this thought, word, or action suffering or not suffering?" He describes this action as "an intuitive feel for cessation."

- Ajahn Sumedho suggests that "People rarely realize cessation because it takes a special kind of willingness to ponder and investigate and get beyond the gross and obvious."
 - How have you come to practice, even momentarily, the skill of cessation?

6. The Ultimate Goal: Kundana had a "lightning bolt" moment after hearing Buddha say, "All that is arising is subject to ceasing." Moffitt suggests we apply this concept to life in general.

- What does this phrase mean to you? How do you interpret this to apply within your life practice?

7. Moffitt talks about both the "lightning bolt" moment and the gradual shift in perspective on insight of cessation.

- What has been your journey? Have you had lightning-bolt moments? Are you a person who has made a gradual shift through insight, or have you had a combination of both, or neither yet?

8. Moffitt ends Chapter 14, saying that cessation "arises of its own accord when conditions are appropriate." He says that as we move down the path, we are likely to experience many individual moments of cessation and the extinction of patterns of suffering. What we do not know is what this will feel like – prior to the feeling of cessation, what we think will happen are concepts. So, Moffitt says, just show up.

- Moffitt suggests that cessation entails movement beyond the ego. What does this mean to you? From what has been discussed in these two chapters, what part of the ego does one let go of?