

Ch. 11, You're No Longer a Victim

1. Without being mindful that clinging has been abandoned, Moffit says, it won't significantly affect your life, but when you know that you have let go of clinging to something, it has a tremendous impact. Did the examples of Pacco and Joan illustrate this point for you? If so, can you give an example from your own experience? If not, why didn't they help elucidate Moffit's point.
2. In the section "How do you know that you know?" Moffit talks about confusing the suppression of a difficult desire with the abandonment of clinging. The difference between the two, he writes, is that, in the latter case, (1) "you experience a distinct felt sense of spaciousness, well-being and lightness," (2) "a felt sense that something is over and something new awaits," and (3) a recognition when you reflect back that "clinging was making a bad situation worse." Do you find these three characteristics helpful in understanding the distinction Moffitt is trying to make? Do you feel they are true to your own experience of abandoning clinging?
3. Moffitt also says that, in knowing clinging has been abandoned, "you are prepared for the challenge to be fully present in the sacred now of each moment of your life." What does this statement mean to you?
4. When you recognize that clinging to desire is suffering, Moffit states, you are able to release your attachment, but since it takes practice, you should start detaching from the less charged areas of your life, like status around work or a viewpoint that creates friction with a friend. Have you had experiences when you recognized that your clinging was creating suffering and you were able to release clinging? Experiences where you recognized the suffering that clinging was causing but couldn't release the clinging? Are you comforted by Moffitt's telling us that we can always start by letting go when we find ourselves clinging again to something we thought we had abandoned?
5. Moffit says that the more we practice letting go of clinging, the more we feel the difference between letting go for just a moment and truly abandoning clinging. Have you experienced this difference?

6. Although these moments can bring a sense of relief from suffering, Moffit says, if we find ourselves clinging again to some desire we thought we had abandoned, denial of our suffering may occur to convince us that we have abandoned the clinging. Moffit gives the example of Sheila to illustrate this point (125). Did the Sheila story work for you? Did you identify with Sheila in any way? Are there other ways to deny our suffering?

7. Moffit says that abandoning clinging opens the mind to the paradox that “the world is both manifest and an illusion, that suffering is endless and that you wish to end suffering.” How do you interpret this statement? What does it mean to you? Can you give an example from your own experience?

8. Do you agree with Moffit’s idea that a particularly insidious source of suffering is clinging to the desire that our past be other than it was? What has been your experience with clinging to this desire? How have you tried/succeeded in freeing yourself from clinging to your regrets about the past or to your desire for a better or different past?

9. What is your understanding of “the difference between having goals and being attached to goals”? How can you have goals and desires without clinging to them? Can you share any examples from your life or practice?

10. What does Moffit mean by “core values” and how does he suggest we find them? What would be an example of acting from your core values? If you recall an incident of acting from your core values, how did it make you feel?

11. In “Renunciation,” Moffit warns that the renunciation of desire is needed to break the pattern of organizing our “ego identity” around fulfilling desires and measuring success by how many desires we met. xHe suggests that we can most simply do this by keeping the Buddha’s basic precepts, as well as engaging in three “Ego-Renunciation Practices”: renouncing our attachment (1) to being right, (2) to measuring success in life by how many wants you’ve met, and (3) to giving up being “the star of your own movie.” Is there one of these three, in particular, that resonates with you or that you would work one on practicing first? Is there one or more of the precepts? Did the examples of Michael or Bonnie help you?