

Questions for DANCING WITH LIFE, chapter 12 “The Paradox of Desire”

If the paradox of desire is that it is both dangerous and necessary, then we need to find ways to avoid the danger and practice the necessary. The previous chapter focused on the distinction between desire and clinging and revealed the possibility of clinging as the dangerous side of desire. Now in the current chapter Moffitt asks us to consider ways to bring the necessary and positive role of desire into our lives.

1. He begins by describing his own clinging to goals and his eventual shift to living from his intention. Do you recognize the distinction he is making? What can be problematic about goals? How does this view fit into American values about work and achievement?
2. He suggests we can mindfully practice letting go of expectations of having our desires met--including our spiritual desires. Have you had expectations about your practice? Have you found ways to let go of the desire to have your expectations met? How has that affected your practice?
3. He advises us to live from our intentions. He describes this as freedom from attachment to outcomes so that we do what is right in the moment as an end in itself, according to our deepest values. Have you experienced this in your own life? Is it a way of life you would like to experience? Have you found ways to move toward this?
4. Moffitt has found that having fewer expectations leads to creating fewer desires. The insight he describes is that “you don’t strive to get rid of your desires; they simply become less interesting once you cease to be organized around your expectations.” Have you experienced this? Have you found ways to have fewer expectations?
5. He refers frequently to works by T.S.Eliot. Did these excerpts from his poetry add to your understanding?
6. One specific phrase Moffitt highlights from Eliot is the “still point”. How would you connect that with the Buddhist teachings we have learned about. Have you experienced something you could recognize as Eliot’s “still point”?
7. Moffitt suggests that after we become aware of our clinging we may experience discomfort as we realize the consequences that clinging has had in our lives. He says this discomfort will pass, but meanwhile “be gentle with yourself”. Does this

discomfort sound familiar? When it appears, have you found ways to be gentle with yourself?

8. If the positive aspect of desire is that it can be generated by love, how can we use this loving energy in positive directions—and without clinging?