

# *ALBA White Board*

Day Retreat - 13 May 2023

*'Freedom from Greed, Hatred and Delusion'*

Led by Nick Carroll

## *Reflections*

*Thank you friends for joining the retreat.*

*Please use the space below to share your reflections. The board will be cleared a week after the retreat. You may wish to put your name or leave it anonymously:*

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### **CORRECTION**

When speaking about suffering yesterday, I mentioned that I had read that a quarter of the UK's population suffer from depression. I should have said chronic pain.

NC

Reference: as reported in the news last week:

'A quarter (26%) of UK adults report living with chronic pain

- Ipsos research commissioned by BBC News surveyed over 4,000 UK adults 16-75.'

14/05/23

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Dear Nick and everyone who helps out with these days of practice,  
Thank you all so much for creating such a wonderful space in which the Dhamma can be shared. I joined online yesterday and found it deeply inspiring, awakening renewed energy and clarity of practice. Sharing time with Kalyanamitta is truly such a blessing. With many thanks and all best wishes,  
Emma

Dear Nick  
Thank you for leading us so beautifully in our day of practice today. I find how you speak so sincerely from the heart moving and inspirational. In particular your assertion that 'committing ourselves to the enquiry of the Buddhist path is the most meaningful thing we can do in our lives' resonated very deeply with me.  
With thanks and blessings,  
Madeline

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Thank you Nick for an amazing, insightful day. I find your wisdom so inspiring.

I would like to ask something that I already mentioned in our small group discussion. I am often troubled by the fact that I work so very little (as a self-employed acupuncturist); depending largely on disability and carer benefits as my son and I are both diagnosed autistic. When I was younger (in my 20's and 30's) I was a workaholic, working long hours as a research scientist. Due to my

personal circumstances (single mum, carer etc) and feeling more and more overwhelmed with life in general (experiencing intense anxiety/overstimulation despite my practice/ physical exhaustion) and less able to organise myself and remember things as I get older, I have cut my hours of work down to a bare minimum, just to keep my hand in. As an autistic person, I find I need a lot of down-time on my own. In fact, I am a much nicer person to be around (and a “better” mum) when I allow myself that time. Nevertheless, there are always nagging doubts that I “should” be pulling my weight in society and actively going out and making more of a contribution to the world. Despite my struggles, I was only diagnosed as autistic when I was 47, so I believe I still experience a lot of what is called “internalised ableism”. Consequently, I have a very strong inner critic..... “you can’t even manage to earn a living”..... “Maybe you don’t deserve disability allowance”... etc, etc....I am always trying to justify myself when I try to explain my situation. How can I find peace with the way things are, or understanding on whether I am doing the right thing to work so little? How do I discern what’s truly ethical in my heart, as opposed to what I have been conditioned to believe is ethical? Sometimes I try to justify my lifestyle by thinking of myself as a kind of state benefit-funded monastic, but I’m not sure that is an ethical way to consider it. I know you can’t necessarily answer these questions for me, but I hope you are able to point me in the right direction. My intention is to do the right thing, but I can’t always decipher what my heart is telling me... too much background noise!

I hope that all makes sense. Thank you so much Nick for taking the time to read this.

With metta,  
Sharon Darby

REPLY

Dear Sharon,

Thank you for your question about how to deal with an inner critic.

A few thoughts....

We all need an inner critic to assess and comment on what we are doing/experiencing. The critic plays an important role in assessing what is good for us. But it can become a 'problem' when it gets so extreme that instead of supporting us it undermines our ability to accept ourselves and to function fully.

Seems to me you need to have a sincere and direct chat with your inner critic! Something on the lines of:

“Oh, dear. Inner critic; there you go again. Thank you for telling me what you think. I hear what you have been saying for many years and continue to tell me. There may be some truth in what you say, but it does **not** address **all** the facts of my life. There is more to me. In fact, being so relentlessly critical does not help at all; quite the opposite, it makes me feel far worse. Cut me some slack please and allow me to live my life informed by those parts that know the full picture better, the parts that are guided by my ‘True Self’ of Wisdom and Compassion.”

Out of habit, the inner critic will almost certainly continue to find fault, so at some point, you will need to become firmer and say something on the lines of

“Thank you, inner critic. I know you well and I hear what you are saying; I am happy to hear constructive comments but I do not wish to hear your negative criticism. You are not helping. Leave me alone

please so that I can get on with my life doing what I know I need to do.”

You will most probably have to repeat that to the inner critic from time to time. Do not get involved in a discussion with it. Simply acknowledge it and say you are not interested in a conversation with it as you have heard all you need to hear from it. Eventually the voice will become less insistent, especially when you demonstrate that you do not need the critic’s extreme judgements and get on with your life.

I hope that helps.

Nick

14/05/23

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Thank you Nick. That is a very kind and helpful answer. I will try to put it into practice.

In gratitude,  
Sharon