

# Heal the Self, Free the Self

Bringing together Western psychology and Buddhism

INTRODUCTION BY JENNIFER LAUCK

I've had my share of trouble in this life—abandonment, abuse, and trauma. Just three days old, I was separated from my birth mother and placed in a home where both of my adoptive parents died—my mother of cancer and my father of a heart attack. This left me homeless by ten and kicked me into survival overdrive. The main manifestation was anxiety-driven busyness.

As I emerged from this childhood, I directed all of my energy into creating what I considered a “normal” life. I put my past in the past, as if it would stay, and tried to live like everyone else. I got an education, took up a career, married once, divorced, and then tried marriage again. Eventually I had a son and daughter.

Though the details of my experience might seem unusual, most of us have our hearts broken by the time we are in our teens or twenties, if not sooner. And many of us are convinced, at some level, that if we just keep going on with our lives, we will outdistance our conditioning. At least that's what I thought.

While I tried a bit of therapy, I was quick to dismiss it as being too slow, too tedious, and too expensive. I turned to writing instead and over ten years wrote several memoirs about my struggles. This enabled me to reach some self-understanding, yet I did my writing alone, so there was no

“other” to help me process the deepest patterns I could not see on my own.

After my second marriage ended, I discovered meditation and Buddhism. As a practitioner with a teacher who lived in Tibet, it became easy to nurture my pattern of isolation and insulation and call it spiritual practice. In fact, one might say it was even encouraged. There were so many mantras to accumulate, so many practices to study, and so much time to spend alone. The more time alone, the better the student, right? Look at the greatest masters. Didn't they spend years, even lifetimes, isolated in caves, forests, and alcoves?

Eight years of practice later, I came to realize I hadn't been practicing at all. I had been sitting, that was true, and sitting was a good start. At least I had formed a habit. But sitting in isolation wasn't what I needed.

Real practice, for me, began this year. A nearly fatal car accident forced me into several different forms of therapy: physical therapy, trauma therapy, and even energetic therapy (acupuncture). For the first time in my life, I was forced to exorcise traumas that lived in my tendons, muscles, and organs. More therapy—around loss, grief, and the nature of trauma—gave needed insight as well.

With these new experiences, my meditation practice feels as if it is growing deeper and more sustainable roots. Buddhism is no longer a way to leave the world, and therapy—in its myriad forms—is not something to discount or separate from the process of awakening. Western psychology, energy healing, and Buddhism are gears that work together in synchronistic harmony—if I just relax, pay attention, and let it happen.

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**BUDDHADHARMA:** What sort of problems do Buddhists tend to experience in their practice when they're avoiding or suppressing emotional issues?

**JOHN WELWOOD:** I'd say one of the occupational hazards of being a Buddhist is that there's a tendency to actually withdraw from the world. Long retreats, for example, and even meditation practice, as wonderful as it is, can be used as a way of withdrawing. The most basic human defense, psychologically speaking, is what is called in technical terms the schizoid defense, which is the tendency to withdraw. One's practice can sometimes reinforce that tendency. Renunciation and meditation can become a way of pulling away from the world, pulling away from your emotions, pulling away from your unresolved emotional issues.

Buddhist practice is geared toward experiencing emptiness, basically, but the relationship to emptiness can become mixed up with that schizoid tendency to pull away, deny, and not engage with relational life, feelings, or emotional vulnerability. I think that's a big problem.

**GRACE SCHIRESON:** What I see in my students when they get caught in that withdrawal is that they attend the events and do what Suzuki Roshi described as "looks like good"—they imitate the *form* of the practice. They sit perfectly straight. They chant wonderfully. They ring the bells wonderfully. Yet there's a kind of stiffness. They're trying too hard. So there's a kind of imitation of doing it right, and getting stuck there. Often those students feel they're not getting anywhere in their practice.

What I also notice is those students have difficulty working with other people. They get stuck in old patterns from earlier relationships, and I see those patterns coming out in their relationship with me and their relationship with other sangha members.

**ANDREW HOLECEK:** I notice two extremes that people get into with their practice when difficult emotions surface. One is they just abandon it. “Practice is too much trouble, it’s causing too much pain, things are getting worse.” Instead of realizing that this dirty laundry coming up is actually a good sign, they go, “Wait a second, this is the small print in the spiritual contract. I didn’t sign on for that.” And they abandon it.

The other extreme is they give meditation too much weight. They think, “I need to practice more. I need to do a three-year retreat. I need to get back into practice.” The problem there is we forget that in many traditions—in Buddhism, in Ashtanga yoga—the practice of meditation is just one of many limbs. In the Buddhist thirty-seven limbs of enlightenment, meditation practice as we know it is encapsulated in only a handful of those limbs.

If we put too much weight on one limb, it’s going to bend, buckle, and eventually break. So we need to practice all eight aspects of the load, to distribute the eightfold path. We need to balance it across different spectrums of our life so our entire life becomes a practice, and not just what we do on the cushion. When that happens we have more traction. Switching analogies, instead of riding precariously on a unicycle, and spinning our solitary wheel, we now have an eight-wheel-drive vehicle. If our formal practice of sitting on a cushion isn’t

working or becomes bogged down, we realize, “Well maybe I need to distribute the weight. I can get more traction on one of these other limbs or wheels of practice.”

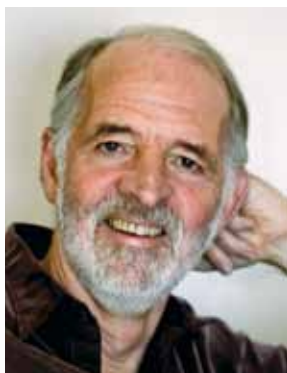
We have a lot of skillful means in the West, including the psychological one, to give us more traction and distribute this weight more evenly.

**BUDDHADHARMA:** It seems part of the challenge is actually knowing whether you have a problem. How do you know whether you’re suppressing or avoiding something, particularly if you haven’t experienced a major emotional or psychological trauma?

**ANDREW HOLECEK:** Often we don’t know, and that’s the issue. I think from a psychological and spiritual point of view, fundamentally if you’re not happy, if you’re not satisfied, then you are probably avoiding something. On a very deep level, of course, we’re avoiding our buddhanature all the time.

I have experience with people who suffer from depression, and I’ve discovered that if you look below the depression you will often find anger. If you look below the anger, you’ll often find sadness. If you look below the sadness, you’ll find fear. And if you look below the fear, you’ll discover its root in existential anxiety—the fear of emptiness. What this alludes to is the complexity and profundity of our levels of avoidance.

**GRACE SCHIRESON:** Many people are unaware of how they’re repeating patterns—patterns that began when they were about two years old to cope with their pain. One way they can become aware of these patterns is for the teacher to notice that the student is stuck in a certain way of relating.



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There are various patterns—sometimes anger in relationship, sometimes disappointment in relationship—and if we can see those patterns as a result of meditation work, then we know we’re actually integrating our practice.

Having a teacher to help with this is very important. It’s like the difference between reading a book about doing therapy or reading a book about doing yoga and actually having someone say, “Well, this is what I see you doing. Why don’t you try moving a little bit in this direction.” Which is what happens in therapy, yoga class, and meditation practice.

**JOHN WELWOOD:** Psychological patterns have been deeply etched into our psyche through repetition. We learn and repeat the same unwholesome relational patterns while growing up for fifteen to twenty years—and they become established in the neural circuitry of the brain. It’s extremely difficult to uproot and change these patterns because they largely function unconsciously. They have become part of what’s called in psychology “the shadow”—they’re not seen. The best way

to see them operating is in relationships. That is where our unconscious patterns show up most dramatically.

Meditating or working together is good but that doesn’t necessarily provide the tools for looking at our psychological and relational patterns, unpacking them, and seeing exactly how they operate. I see personal, psychological, and relational work as a somewhat different process from spiritual development. Although they can work together nicely, they seem to be different lines of development.

I saw a movie recently about a well-known Tibetan lama with many students. He came to the West and had a child with someone here, but he wasn’t able to be a father to that child. He didn’t seem to have the capacity to be a father, and often would not even respond to questions from his son. This was an example for me of how someone may have a certain level of spiritual awakening or realization but this doesn’t necessarily mean it’s going to translate into the relational area.

**GRACE SCHIRESON:** Some of the seminary trainings that we’re

There are childhood experiences that have never been addressed or fully digested and they keep arising in our lives and playing themselves out. As Buddhists we need to have some real understanding and appreciation of how that works. —John Welwood

developing now at the Shogaku Zen Institute, where we train Zen priests and other sangha leaders, is to help people who are not psychologists to first identify these hidden unconscious patterns in themselves. When they're aware of them in themselves, they're more able to see patterns and projections arising in others and they can begin to know when it's time to refer someone for counseling.

**BUDDHADHARMA:** Are we in some ways, though, asking our teachers to be our therapists?

**JOHN WELWOOD:** No, I don't think we need to do that. We need to understand that there are different lines of development and we're not necessarily going to get all the help we need in one place.

In the meditative traditions we are usually engaged in what we could call "cutting through"—cutting through these patterns to their empty essence—and that's good for liberation on the spot. We can actually let go of the pattern in the moment. But the roots of that pattern keep arising. That's where I think we can use some other method to unpack the elements of the pattern—to see what the fears are, what the imaginings are, what the stories are, what the self-images are.

I think in the future there will be spiritual teachers who can work both with the cutting through methods of meditation and the unpacking methods of what I call a more horizontal approach—the vertical approach being the cutting through, like the sword of prajna that just cuts through to the essence. Unpacking involves bringing to light unconscious patterns. Unpacking is a gradual, horizontal method that allows someone to actually digest indigestible experiences from childhood.

In childhood, our nervous system is not fully developed for fourteen years. So there are a lot of experiences in those first fourteen years that were very intense or overwhelming or confusing or conflictual, and that have never been addressed or fully digested. So these experiences keep arising in our lives and playing themselves out. I think as Buddhists we need to have some real acknowledgment and understanding and appreciation of how that works.

**BUDDHADHARMA:** When you talk about the horizontal method, are you suggesting that practitioners should be in therapy?

**JOHN WELWOOD:** I'm not saying you necessarily have to be in therapy. But psychological work happens best through a dialogical process. I'd like to see ways of doing this developed that could actually happen in dharma circles.

**GRACE SCHIRESON:** Here's how we're working with that in the Zen tradition. Darlene Cohen said there are the 300,000 times. The first 100,000 times is noticing the pattern or the arising of some discomfort: just before I felt angry or fearful, or felt like I needed to shut down, something happened; that takes 100,000 times of observing. The second 100,000 times is observing where this comes from in the body. What is it like when this feeling arises? The third 100,000 times is when one begins to have a choice. We've already watched the pattern, we've seen the consequences of it, and now we have a choice about whether we continue to repeat it. Having choices rather than being compelled by patterns is a sign of health, whether it's in therapy or in spiritual practice.

Going back to the question you raised earlier, we're not asking spiritual teachers to be therapists. On the other hand if they aren't aware of how a repetitive pattern is emerging, a student can be lost for a long time. So it's something teachers need to be able to see.

**ANDREW HOLECEK:** What this discussion is pointing to is the difference between relative and absolute truth—on one level we do have these absolute level *upayas* (skillful means), which are really the strength of Buddhism. We can cut through into the absolute, we can cultivate awareness, and that's great. If there is a fundamental cure to any psychological or spiritual pathology, it is awareness. But if your awareness isn't hot enough, then these Western relative means are of extraordinary benefit. In other words, if the fire of awareness isn't blazing enough to fully experience, incinerate, and therefore self-liberate whatever arises, we have other methods to turn to.

When we talk about patterns, it's really another way to talk about karma. What these relative *upayas* allow us to do is create a sense of perspective, a sense of healthy distance. Not dissociation but differentiation. We can step back and look at the patterns, and then we have a choice. We can either allow habitual pattern, the karmic momentum, to suck us back in



yet again or we can step back with some intelligence. This is what Buddhists talk about as the fundamental choice of what to accept and what to reject. You accept those things in your life and your practice that help self and others and you reject those things that don't.

The other important thing to keep in mind is that these patterns are lodged in our body-mind matrix. It's not just "mental." John is alluding to what cognitive scientists call neuroplasticity—how your brain is circuited, and how those circuits can be changed. The hardware/software of your brain is actually changed by these repetitive patterns. I bring this up because knowing that provides a sense of patience, and even humor. It's taken us a while to get so confused, and it's going to take us a while to rewire this. The circuitry is not only in our brains. According to the inner yogas it's in the very substrate of our bodies (we could call this nadiplasticity).

So we need to have the view of the absolute, yet honor the power of the relative. Many of these Western instantaneous-enlightenment teachers—the "just do it" variety—fail to see that. Then they wonder why no one is getting enlightened.

The gift of blending East and West is that we can bring the formidable power of the absolute to cut in the moment, on the spot, and we have the crowbars of the Western psychological traditions that can help us in addressing this freight train of karma as it is embedded in our emotional patterns and repetitive neurotic behavior. The most skillful teachers are the ones who can blend both those worlds.

**BUDDHADHARMA:** Western psychology clearly has its strengths and has helped a lot of people. But this blending that you're talking about seems to suggest that Buddhism without Western psychology is deficient in some way.

**GRACE SCHIRESON:** I talk to people all the time about the difference between therapy and spiritual practice. All of the practices that we do, in each tradition, developed within a culture. When Buddhism moved from one culture to another, we're told it took 500 years for it to fully incorporate the language and be applied skillfully into that new culture. In my tradition, Indian Buddhism was transmitted to China, where it mixed with the language of Taoism and became part of the psyche and culture of the Chinese people. That is now happening in the West, where Buddhism is meeting psychology. We're making the connection between karma and neurotic patterns because we actually have language in the West that describes Buddhist technology and how it works to unpack these difficult patterns and their manifestations, and it's important for us to use that.

**ANDREW HOLECEK:** In terms of Buddhism as being somehow deficient, that's mostly the hubris of the Western world. People have been waking up quite successfully without the help of Western skillful means for thousands of years, so Buddhism doesn't need therapy—in both senses of that phrase. It is a powerful wisdom tradition, tried and tested, that has worked effectively for a very long time. So on that level it stands alone. But in this contemporary age, we have sophisticated developmental models that show us how ego comes together, and can therefore help us *safely* take it apart and transcend it. With the exception of things like the five skandhas, Buddhism doesn't really have a developmental psychology. This is one of the great contributions of the West. We have structuralism. We have Piaget. We have Kohlberg, Erickson, Kegan, and a host of other developmentalists. We have all kinds of maps of the relative mind in the West that can augment our ability to work with the relative expressions of the mind. So it's not that Buddhism is deficient, it's a matter of richness and augmentation. One doesn't necessarily have to supplant the other; both can be reciprocating. You can use the skillful means of the Buddhist tradition on its own terms, yet you can support it with the extraordinary contributions coming from the West.

**BUDDHADHARMA:** John, what do you think about psychology and Buddhism working in tandem?

**JOHN WELWOOD:** That would be great. I don't see Buddhism as deficient at all—it does what it does beautifully, but it's not designed to work with the personal wounding and personal problems people in the West have today. Traditionally in Asia you grew up in an extended family where you were part of a culture, part of the family, part of everything. Buddhism was an integral part of that. In the West we have this extreme fragmentation and people feel isolated. So just as Buddhism was practiced differently in India than in China and Japan, here it needs to work with the great alienation that people feel in this culture—alienation from one another, from the natural world, from their bodies, from their families, from their culture, from their elders. Also, on the positive side, we value the development of the individual person, which is not so much an Asian ideal.

**GRACE SCHIRESON:** In the Zen tradition, the teachers who came to the West brought over the monastic practice they had experienced. They could not bring over the congregation, the teaching from their grandmothers who took them to ceremonies, the experiences they had in their family, so they brought over the container for the practice. I believe it is up to us as natives of this culture to see what else we can use to make

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that awareness flow and integrate into all areas of our lives.

Also I think this idea that there are things that are outside of Buddhism creates a false duality. Buddhism is about the development of awareness that permeates the body-mind and then offers itself to whatever it meets. Once we understand that what we're working with is this universal awareness, we see that psychological exploration is not outside of Buddhism.

**JOHN WELWOOD:** His Holiness the Seventeenth Karmapa says some things that I think are quite relevant here. In his book *Walking in Step with the Dharma*, he says, "Even if one is trained as a teacher of buddhadharma, one should still keep in mind the all-important point that one must use all of the means at one's disposal—be they Buddhist or non-Buddhist—to bring benefit to the people one is teaching..."

"Whatever major or minor methods for accomplishing happiness there are in this world, we must have respect for all of them. Not only must we respect them, we must learn and engage in those methods when appropriate. We should be ready to engage in whatever methods can help us in leading others to genuine, ultimate happiness..."

"If we know how to use a given method skillfully, we can transform any method into a support for accomplishing genuine happiness. So whether they are from the dharma or from the mundane world, we must pay attention to and study all skillful methods available. We might think that some methods, since they do not fit snugly with Buddhist philosophies, are useless and to be abandoned. However, if we abandon them, we will only be doing so because those methods do not seem suitable for us, not because of our concern for others. This is unacceptable."

**ANDREW HOLECEK:** That's beautiful.

**BUDDHADHARMA:** Still, many Buddhists aren't looking for therapy, even if they might need it. They set out on the Buddhist path because they were drawn to the path of liberation, the path to end all suffering. They believed this path would be enough.

**JOHN WELWOOD:** Buddhism is the path to liberation. But in terms of actually embodying that liberation and integrating it fully into all the aspects of your life, Buddhism doesn't necessarily have a skillful means of doing that in the modern Western world, which is a completely different world than the one where Buddhism originated.

The good news is that when you start to unpack these patterns and really look at them and take them apart, ultimately

you find at the root of them some basic intelligence operating. Even with the worst kind of emotional patterns or defenses, there's always some basic intelligence there.

I recently had an interesting experience with a client who suffers from depression. Underneath the client's depression was this deep sorrow, and when we started to work with this and unpack the sorrow, he saw that the sorrow was actually a defense or a relief from experiencing a deeper feeling, which was an utter disconnection from his family—a feeling of aloneness, of not being understood, seen, heard. So for him it was actually preferable to feel the sorrow than it was to feel complete and utter dissociation. This person came to realize that he had chosen sorrow as a way of connecting with his heart. When he felt sorrow, he felt connected to his heart. This is an example of how you discover great intelligence underneath when you begin to unpack psychological patterns.

**ANDREW HOLECEK:** When we set out on the path, we're naively setting out for heaven. We want up and out. Otherwise why would we engage in the spiritual path? I mean if you're going to enter a path of guaranteed hardship, what's the point? People want to relieve their suffering, and because they associate suffering with earthly manifestations they are unwittingly setting out for some kind of paradise. The path becomes an escape.

Eventually, though, we come to the harsh realization that there is no way out. The magic is to discover there actually is a way "in"—that's the path. So you pull this wicked U-turn where you end up returning to the wisdom of the body, returning to the wisdom of the earth, returning to the wisdom of your emotional upheavals and actually discovering liberation there. I think this is where a lot of people get tripped up. They realize at a certain point they're heading in the wrong direction. It's not up and out, it's down and in. It's really a process of "waking down" not "waking up." Waking up denotes the escapist propensity we all have for getting away from our problems. Waking down is returning to the wisdom that's already here and finding the magic there.

**BUDDHADHARMA:** Apart from it being painful to see our emotional stuff, are there other reasons why practitioners in particular are reluctant to explore their emotional wounds?

**GRACE SCHIRESON:** Within my Zen community I see that what Suzuki Roshi described as "looking like good" means there is a kind of culture where emotions are not really allowed, particularly anger. When one enters one of these communities



and takes on the external forms of the practice, there's often a desire to conform to what they think a good monk looks like, and this can be reinforced by a community. So then a person becomes adjusted to the forms of the community rather than adjusted to their own development and to whatever is arising in the moment. There's a kind of culture or cultish effect that has practitioners trying to imitate or belong or look good within a community.

**JOHN WELWOOD:** That's connected to the superego issue, which I call in this case the spiritual superego—the superego that can take on a spiritual tone and content. From the spiritual superego's point of view, you can never practice well enough—you

can never be devoted enough or compassionate enough, and so on. And one starts to try to live up to the dharma as though it were a set of prescriptions, and I have to say, that's often how it's taught. I've attended many teachings where truths are presented not as something to be explored, but rather as “here's how you should be.” This feeds that superego and as a result people feel they're bad if they don't obey the doctrines of Buddhism and “do it right.”

**ANDREW HOLECEK:** The fundamental problem is inappropriate relationship. There's nothing problematic whatsoever with anything that arises in mind. This view is critically important and endemic in Buddhism. The foundational teachings



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of buddhanature, or basic goodness, all proclaim the perfect purity of whatever arises. It's so important to hold this view because it gives us a sacred parachute when we're landing in reality. When we relax in meditation and these repressed and unwanted elements arise, if we know that what we're going to fall into below these relative expressions is this matrix of love and goodness and perfect purity and compassion, that will give us more courage to let go.

My experience with people I consider awake is that they live with a fearless emotional gusto, a sense of passion and even anger that I have never seen in a nonawakened being. We shouldn't fear our emotions. They are sacred. They're actually the buddhas. If we *relate* to our emotions properly, each emotion is recognized as a deity. What we really fear, to come back to your question, is the energy, the power of who we actually are.

**GRACE SCHIRESON:** In previous languages we talked about negative emotions as demons. Now we talk about them as neurotic patterns or impulses. It's important that we allow those demons to come out and play without demonizing ourselves or someone else who has them. Those demons are very much a part of our humanness. The problem is we fear the unknown. Once we've developed all of these patterns, they become the devil we know, and it's the devil we don't know that we're afraid of. What will happen if I don't protect myself in this particular way? What will happen if I don't shut down? We really want to keep those protective patterns in place; we're afraid to try what is unknown.

**BUDDHADHARMA:** Is there also a reluctance to admit to our demons or emotional wounds because as practitioners we're aspiring to this sense of no self? It seems it would be harder to grieve your childhood when you're being told that ultimately there is no self.

**JOHN WELWOOD:** Exactly.

**ANDREW HOLECEK:** We have two fundamental fears. The first fear is the fear of the truth of our nonexistence. We're afraid of emptiness. We're afraid of egolessness, which is just another way of saying we're afraid of death. So that's the foundation, the fear that's associated with the second turning of the wheel of dharma. But we're also afraid of our shine. We're afraid

of our power. We're afraid of our radiance and our luminosity, our majesty and our competence. We're afraid of being a buddha. This is what the third turning of the dharma is about. It's about how we relate to the luminous expression of that emptiness, which is where the emotions are. The emotions are one aspect of that radiant expression.

**JOHN WELWOOD:** No one likes to relate to their own vulnerability, which is a form of one's openness and luminosity. It feels very shaky and raw and dangerous to go there. It feels especially dangerous for people to do that in a social context—to actually acknowledge their vulnerability to another person. In a way it's easier to open oneself to the universe or to reality than it is to another person.

I would love to see a Buddhist community where acknowledging psychological obstacles could be included as part of the path. We strive for these wonderful visions of dharma, like the notion of basic goodness, which is such a wonderful way of talking about our basic nature. Yet even in a community where we believe very strongly in basic goodness as the ultimate ground of everything, for many people it's not a living experience. Often there's a pervasive sense of personal deficiency, the sense that I'm not good enough. We need to honor that in some way and say, "Okay, as part of the path of discovering my basic goodness I need to fully acknowledge and investigate my sense of not being okay, of not being good enough."

**GRACE SCHIRESON:** We have to start with ourselves rather than some image of what a perfect teacher looks like. As we become more familiar with those emotions arising in ourselves, it allows us to love. Not because we're fearless, not because we won't be hurt, but because we know we have a way to work with those feelings when we are hurt, and this gives us a great confidence in relationship.

**ANDREW HOLECEK:** That's right, and working with our emotions means relating to them properly.

**GRACE SCHIRESON:** Yes, just being present with difficult emotions and patterns and allowing them to be without forcing them in one direction. There's an expression in Zen, "turning away and grasping are both wrong."

**BUDDHADHARMA:** What advice do you have for readers who want to explore their emotional issues, or perhaps even figure out whether they're repressing emotional stuff that might be affecting their Buddhist practice? Where do they begin?

**GRACE SCHIRESON:** Well, I recommend that they talk to their teacher about that, or their practice leader if a teacher isn't available. And if neither of those options are available then I recommend they find a friend who's gotten helped in this way, and if necessary go into therapy.

**JOHN WELWOOD:** One basic question practitioners could ask themselves is, "Am I using my practice to get away from something, to get away from some aspect of my experience that I'm not comfortable with?" That's a very deep question and that's probably a good place to start. If your practice isn't going



well, it means you may be using it as an avoidance, probably unconsciously. Then I would encourage them to inquire into that themselves—to really look and ask, “What am I not comfortable with in my own experience that I’m trying to cure through meditation?”

**ANDREW HOLECEK:** First I would say celebrate your courage. Be aware that emotional upheaval and so-called psychological problems can be a great blessing; they can be signs of progress and not regress. Celebrate the fact that things could be coming apart as your ego comes apart. Even though from a

conventional point of view that’s the last thing the ego wants to hear, from a spiritual point of view this is something to rejoice in. And lighten up—nurture your humor. It’s all a joke, after all. A big joke with a bad punch line.

Then really trust your basic goodness. Relax into your humanity. There’s fundamentally nothing wrong with you. The only thing that’s “wrong” is inappropriate relationship. Embrace what arises without indulging it, and accept it as part of who you are. Learn how to love your mind unconditionally. Love your mind. **BD**