



Lesson 8

Climbing Back Down the Ladder of Attachment

Living in attachment levels one through three, we can always find common ground with others, and can truly enjoy each and every interaction and experience. If something does not go our way, we can move on to something else without a sense of loss. We can see other people's point of view without feeling challenged or needing to defend. We can enjoy your opponent's celebration and congratulate them with sincerity. Life is easy and free of conflict because we have no investment in the outcome.

Clearly the higher up that scale of attachment we climb, the more difficult it becomes to interact with those in our life that are not on our same page. When people have very strong attachments to opinions that differ from ours we can become locked in a constant battle. We can still struggle against the other person when they are not even around us. We can argue with them through our friends that agree with us, and they will usually validate us being right. Of course there are several in-between levels and varying degrees within each level, it is really more of a sliding scale that is ever changing.

When our self-worth is tied to a result, our attachment to the outcome is more important than the experience. Only by detaching from the outcome can we begin to work our way back down the ladder of attachment. Detachment does not mean you stop caring, but rather it allows you to enjoy the experiences of your life regardless of what happens in the end. When we are constantly striving to achieve something or attain something to make ourselves feel better, or make us more than we believe we are, we feel incomplete if we do not get it. Rather than striving for perfection, we must realize that we are already perfect, just as we are. When we recognize the truth of this we can stop chasing after something that exists only in our mind. As long as we believe that we need the objects of our attachment to complete us, we can never live our life completely free. Freedom comes from acting in a way that suits you without regard for any story or false belief of need.

When we can see that we never "need" anything, that what we have or do does not really change anything, then we can see how everything in our life is irrelevant. This is not to say that many things are not significant. Obviously, if a member of your family dies, you lose your job, your car breaks down or you win the lottery, those would be significant events in your life. However, they are still irrelevant. Winning the lottery will not make you happy if you judge yourself harshly in some other way. A job or car or any other tangible thing can be replaced somehow, and death comes to everyone at some point, even you. They may all affect you, but they are not you. You can be happy in mourning, or you can suffer for years. It will be whatever you choose it to be, or think it needs to be. If you have part of your identity, your

persona, your self-worth, tied to one of those things then that event is now very relevant. But, just because your attachment has made it so does not make it true. When we can detach, or at least lessen our level of attachment, we reduce the effect these events can have on us. When we can look at any of the things we are attached to and honestly say "It is okay if I don't have that" then we are free to live our life without regard to the outcome. When whatever "bad" thing happens in our life has no effect on us, everything becomes irrelevant to us. Nothing can hurt or threaten us, so we have no fear of loss. We can just enjoy our entire life without concern for all of the terrible things that could go wrong.

If there is a danger in total detachment, it could be the inability to function. This can be somewhat of a natural consequence of spiritual work, but if the desire to escape from the real world gets overpowering, we can forget how to function. The point should be to enjoy life, not become detached from the world. The detachment must be from the things you have come to believe you need, to have value or self-worth, not from you and your environment. Life can be fun and exciting, especially when it doesn't need to be anything. When there is nothing to prove, no quest for perfection, we can just enjoy the experiences and move on.