

Juniper

The Strength Within

The opening paragraph of Juniper's *Awakening the Mind* introduces the idea that one of the goals of Buddhist training is to unlock our potential. This is important because behind it is the notion that our capacity for well-being lies within us rather than outside of us. Inner well-being, serenity, insight, and other positive attributes we might seek are really a matter of unlocking something on the inside.

This idea is pivotal in Buddhist training, especially at the outset, when the focus is on pacifying the negative patterns and habits that can have a strong grip on our day-to-day experience. If anger, jealousy, impatience, greed, lust, fear, and the like have too strong a hold on our inner life, it can be exceedingly difficult to realize our potential for more positive inner states and qualities. When we decrease these negative inner states, a more serene, positive inner state is often the natural outcome. We just have to remove the impediments that stand in the way.

This does not mean we have to eradicate every tendency toward inner stress and agitation in order to experience any benefits. We can make important changes in the quality of our experience by shifting the balance. If we are less angry, less jealous, less impatient, and so on, we are likely to find ourselves more peaceful, more joyful, and more content. The more we tip the balance, the better.

“Unlocking our potential” means that the capacity to make these changes is within us. Teachers, texts, and even Web sites may be important catalysts; their function is to bring out the very best in us. Ultimately, however, the strength itself lies within.

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