

# Investigating Identification and Nonidentification

A primary understanding this course aims to teach you is the **felt and experiential difference between identifying with a form and not identifying with a form.**

Learning the difference between these two states, and seeing what factors are at play with each, is crucial in your ability to calmly weather the ups and downs of life, and live with more love, wisdom, peace, and joy.

## Identification with Falsehoods

We identify with false thoughts when:

- We believe them to be true.
- We believe them to be more important or powerful than they are, causing us to resist, fight, or become aversive to them.

When we identify with falsehoods, they show up in the body as feelings of stress, anxiety, overwhelm, fear, anger, and other afflictive emotions which cause us to act out unskillfully. An **active falsehood** is one we identify with by either believing it or resisting it.

## Nonidentification with Falsehoods

We disidentify with false thoughts when:

- We mindfully recognize thoughts to be just thoughts: conditioned, impersonal, temporary forms that have no power over us, unless we give them our power by believing them or resisting them.
- We mindfully remember how the falsehood is unkind, untrue, or unhelpful and don't believe it.

When we disidentify with falsehoods, the falsehood may be present in the mind, but we can hold it kindly, calmly, and compassionately. We feel peaceful and at ease. Behaviorally, we respond skillfully to the present moment. An **inactive falsehood** is one that is still present in the mind, but causes

no suffering or harm, because we don't identify with it -- meaning we neither believe it nor resist it.

## Identification with Sensations

We identify with sensations (emotions or physical sensations) when:

- We believe ourselves to be the body, which is the falsehood of self-view. We are the knower, not the known. We are the formless, not the form.
- We believe the sensations to be more important or powerful than they are, causing us to relate to them with craving or aversion. They only have power over us when we identify with them.

An **active sensation** is one that we identify with by either believing ourselves to be the body, or relating to it with craving or aversion. When a sensation is active, it generally generates more falsehood thoughts in the mind, and leads us to react to it unskillfully.

## Nonidentification with Sensations

We disidentify with sensations (emotions or physical sensations) when:

- No self-view is present or active in the mind. Instead, we know ourselves to be formless awareness, the knower, spirit, soul, atman, neshamah, and similar terms. But this is not a new belief we need to adopt. Our formless nature is what we discover when the mind is free of active self-view.
- We mindfully allow sensations to be as they are. Rather than seeing sensations or the body as self, we see clearly that sensations are fleeting, conditioned, and impersonal nature unfolding according to natural laws. They are not me, nor mine. We are the formless, and these forms – no matter how unpleasant or loud -- cannot harm or affect our true selves in any way.



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An **inactive sensation** is one that we don't identify with because we know ourselves to be the formless awareness, and we allow the sensation to be. When a sensation is inactive, we respond to it skillfully.

### **Top Tips for Investigating Identification and Nonidentification**

Useful forms to investigate with this practice include: falsehoods, other thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations, cravings, and aversions. And yes, there are overlaps within these categories.

Many people typically experience moments free of self-view during the following activities:

- Deep, dreamless sleep.
- Meditation
- While exhibiting strong mindfulness as when doing the Be Here Now practice.
- While in what's known as a "flow state," caused by engaging in a challenging activity that takes all of our effort and focus. This can also arise during life-threatening situations and cause a feeling of time distortion (usually a sense of time slowing down) which aids us in acting skillfully to save our life or others.

Generally, the above activities are deeply pleasant, and it is easy to ignore that no self-view is active during them. Furthermore, we have so much conditioning that we are our bodies and all of its thoughts and emotions, that it is more challenging to be free of self-view when difficulties arise.

So be patient with this practice. It may take days, weeks, or months before you experience that magical moment when you face a difficulty with no self-view and feel how much more lighter, spacious, pleasant, and effortless it is.

All other instructions for investigations practices apply to this one as well, which we briefly summarize here:

- Do each inquiry as if for the first time.
- Answer the questions using your direct experience, not your conceptual mind.

- Be patient and persistent.
- If it seems like work, relax and use less effort.
- Start by using these questions, but feel free to modify them if different words help you better investigate your experience and see things more clearly.
- Journal any insights gained from these investigations so you can better remember them and review them later.

### **Questions that help us learn the differences between being identified with form and not being identified with form.**

Use these questions whenever one of your three falsehood alarms go off (you notice a falsehood in the mind, you feel unpleasant sensations, or have unskillful behavior impulses). Focus the inquiry on thoughts, and bodily sensations. After each question, you will find some notes on each question.

#### ***Am I identified with this form or not?***

You will know based on how unpleasant it is. Self-view tends to amplify and intensify unpleasant sensations. When self-view is not present, the exact same unpleasant sensations feel either distant, muted, or neutral.

#### ***Whether identified or nonidentified, what are the key characteristics of this state?***

Start to investigate the different key characteristics of being identified and being nonidentified. We spell them out for you here, but you need to mindfully experience the differences for yourself to transform your brain by this knowledge.

#### ***What is the feeling tone of this experience?***

The feeling tone of an object can be either: pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral (meaning neither pleasant or unpleasant).



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As stated earlier, self-view magnifies and intensifies unpleasant sensations. Noting the feeling tone will help you know what your mind believes regarding self-view in that moment. When non-identified, intensely unpleasant feelings may actually feel mildly unpleasant, neutral, or even pleasant.

***Am I mindful or unmindful of this form?***

Mindfulness is a requirement to relate to our thoughts and emotions skillfully. This question will allow you to observe that you are being mindful.

***Is there any aversion to this form?***

Even if no self-view is present, if other falsehoods are present, they will add their unpleasantness to the situation. Aversion is the typical culprit to look out for when experiencing unpleasantness.

***If so, is the aversion active or inactive?***

If aversion is present, all is not lost. If you believe or identify with the aversion it is activated. If you see how it is unhelpful, unkind, untrue, and impersonal (not me, not mine), you can deactivate it, while it is still present.

Remember, all thoughts and sensations are fleeting and temporary, and can do nothing to harm your true self as formless awareness. So even if falsehoods are present as thoughts or feelings, your mindfulness and wisdom can deactivate them so they stop causing harm.

***Is any self-view present?***

Where are you positioning yourself in all of this? Are you believing yourself to be the body, the thoughts, or the feelings? If so, self-view is present.

***If so, is the self-view active or inactive?***

Again, even if self-view is active, you can still triumph. Rather than believe the self-view thoughts, see them as a falsehood. Remember that you are the eternal and

invincible formless awareness and feel into the unmovable stability, peace, and permanence of your true self, or listen into the silence of your true self. Mindfully notice how your true nature is not harmed by whatever unpleasant falsehoods or sensations arise.

You can also use your favorite self-inquiry questions from the Disidentify Practice handout to help you overcome your belief in self-view, thus turning it from active self-view to inactive self-view.



# Intention Setting for Week 11

Continue to use the same intention setting worksheet you used for week 10 for week 11.  
Thank you.



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