WORKSHEET 2

OVERCOMING THE EGO ILLUSION

In Buddhism, two levels of realization are distinguished on the path to enlightenment. The first level is called liberation. Its basis is the realization that the body, thoughts and feelings are in constant change and therefore do not represent a truly permanent "I". By not following habitual notions of a fixed identity, one becomes free from disturbing feelings. A deeply relaxed state of inner peace and clarity is experienced.

The idea of an "I" exhibits no constancy: As a kindergarten child, the "I" felt different than it does now; as a person in his mid-forties, it will be different from that of an old man; and if the "I" really existed, what would happen to it after death? "I" as a mental construct is constantly present, everyone experiences the world from his or her own perspective at all times, yet it cannot be found.

Once one has experienced that the ego is an illusion, there is also no one left to suffer. One no longer sees oneself as a target and has achieved "liberation". Inner freedom means being able to decide what to cultivate in one's mind.
Regular meditation helps to be able to keep enough distance.

EXERCISES

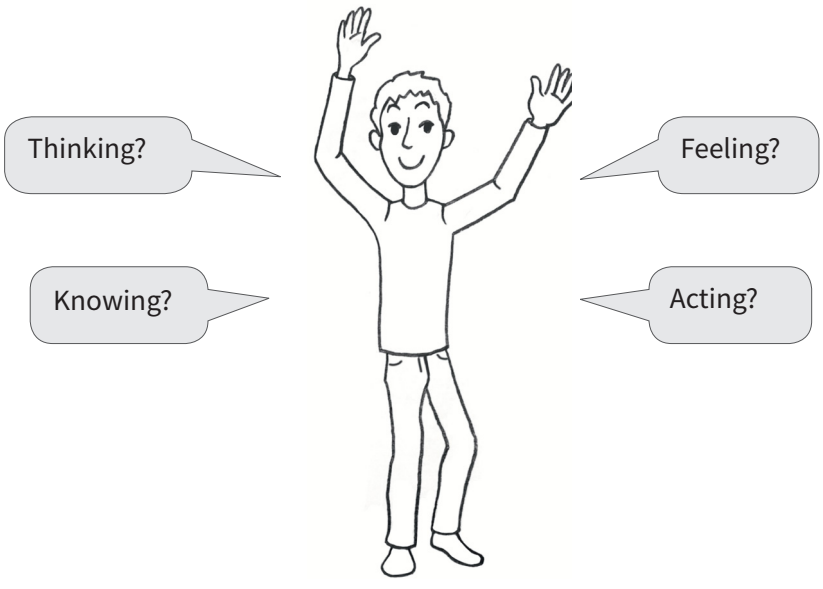
Discuss with a partner.

1. The idea of the self:

- Can you relate these Buddhist statements to your own experience?
- What does this statement mean about no longer being a target? Find examples from everyday situations.
- Make suggestions on how to act less ego-centered.

2. On dealing with feelings:

- When are feelings disruptive?
- What "disturbing feelings" can you name?
- How do "disturbing feelings" express themselves when you act them out uncontrollably?
- What is the advantage of not acting out a "disturbing feeling" but consciously letting it go?
- How can you learn not to act on "disturbing feelings" but to remain calm?



"I am not my thoughts and feelings, I have them."
"I am not my body, I have it."