



# Dealing With Anxiety: A Buddhist Perspective [3]

Anxiety is a common struggle that many people face, and it can often feel overwhelming. In a recent discussion, Bhante provided some insightful advice on managing anxiety through Buddhist practices. This blog post will explore the key points from that discussion and offer practical steps for dealing with anxiety.

## Understanding Anxiety

According to Bhante, anxiety is a symptom of an untamed mind. It's a sign that the mind is becoming self-aware and struggling with the realization that it is not in control. This lack of control and the dissatisfaction with worldly pleasures can create a sense of anxiety. The mind, which is used to wandering freely and indulging in sensual pleasures, becomes anxious when it is restrained or when it faces the realities of sickness, aging, and death.

## The Role of Precepts and Sense Restraint

Bhante emphasizes that the only lasting way to regain control of an anxious mind is through keeping the precepts and practicing sense restraint. By adhering to these principles, the mind can calm down and anxiety will lessen. The precepts serve as guidelines for ethical conduct, and sense restraint involves controlling the mind's tendency to seek pleasure in sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches.

## Practical Steps to Manage Anxiety

1. **Keep the Precepts:** The five precepts in Buddhism are to refrain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and intoxication. By following these precepts, you create a foundation of ethical behavior that supports mental calmness.
2. **Practice Sense Restraint:** This involves being mindful of your sensory experiences and not indulging in them excessively. For example, avoid overeating, overindulging in entertainment, or seeking constant sensory stimulation.

3. **Contain the Mind:** Regularly review your behavior and intentions throughout the day. Are you acting in ways that align with the precepts? Are you allowing your mind to wander into areas that cause anxiety?
4. **Recognize the Source of Anxiety:** Understand that anxiety often arises from the mind's attachment to things that are not within your control. By recognizing this, you can begin to let go of these attachments and reduce anxiety.

## The Simile of the Monkey

Bhante uses a powerful simile to illustrate the nature of anxiety. He compares the mind to a monkey that gets caught in a trap. The more the monkey struggles to free itself, the more entangled it becomes. Similarly, when we try to escape anxiety by indulging in sensual pleasures or avoiding discomfort, we only become more entangled in it.

## Avoiding the Trap

To avoid this trap, it's essential to practice restraint and not stray into areas that are not beneficial for your mental well-being. This means avoiding actions and thoughts that lead to further anxiety and instead focusing on ethical conduct and mindfulness.

## The Importance of Training the Mind

Bhante highlights that taming the mind is not about introducing theoretical ideas but about practical application. This involves consistently practicing the precepts and sense restraint, which will gradually reduce anxiety. Over time, as the mind becomes more disciplined, the discrepancy between what you assume to be yours and what actually is will lessen, leading to a reduction in anxiety.

## Conclusion

Dealing with anxiety requires a disciplined approach to taming the mind. By keeping the precepts, practicing sense restraint, and regularly reviewing your behavior and intentions, you can gradually reduce anxiety and achieve a calmer state of mind. Remember, the key is

consistent practice and not giving in to the mind's irrational attempts to cause pain. With time and effort, you can regain control and experience a more peaceful and anxiety-free life.