

## **Ten Ways of Practicing with Reactivity (Donald Rothberg, September 2022)**

1. *Cultivate wisdom: Understand the nature of reactivity.* Study and remember the teachings of the Two Arrows and Dependent Origination. Apply them in the moment (for example: Something difficult has happened—look out for one’s shooting of the Second Arrow).
2. *Assess the level of reactivity and whether one is balanced enough for mindfulness or other practices.* If one is too much out of balance, have ways to come back to balance.
3. *Be mindful of reactivity.* Set one’s intention to track reactivity and study what it’s like. Clarify one’s top five forms of reactivity. Notice how it is in the body, emotions, and story line. Such sustained mindfulness helps one notice reactivity more quickly.
4. *Be mindful of the pleasant and unpleasant.* Hang out with the pleasant and unpleasant when it is workable to stay with them, and when they are at a moderate or greater level. Explore the tendencies to reactivity.
5. *Cultivate the heart practices, such as metta, compassion, joy, equanimity, gratitude, and forgiveness.* These practice help with general balance when going into difficult experience, can function at times as an antidote, and give an increasing taste of non-reactivity and awakening.
6. *In reactivity, we “shoot the Second Arrow”; we learn not to shoot the Second Arrow.* We learn alternatives. We sometimes say, “I won’t go there.”
7. *In reactivity, we are not in our hearts; we learn to come back to our hearts.* We can deliberately go to empathy, or metta, or compassion, or another heart practice.
8. *In reactivity, we are on automatic, and are typically compulsively driven. We cultivate a clear intention—to be mindful (for example, of reactivity), to be wise, to act in certain ways.*
9. *Reactivity is ultimately driven by ignorance; we keep inquiring more deeply into the often hidden or unconscious roots of reactivity, such as when we explore the dynamics of reactivity, or the reactivity driven by “limiting beliefs” that come often from childhood or difficult experiences. Limiting beliefs may involve personal beliefs, such as those related to perfectionism or a sense of “I’m not okay,” or “This is wrong with me” or “My needs will not be met.” We learn how to transform these roots.*
10. *We develop ways of non-reactive speech and action, integrated with the above forms of inner practice exploring and transforming reactivity.* We can be based especially in wise speech and empathy; in skillful guidelines in relationships, groups, and organizations; and in nonviolent action (following Gandhi and King).