

# How Does It Feel When Aversion Subsides?

Mindfulness Meditation Group – Handout 01-25-26 Steve Lovinger  
(Follow-up to Equanimity)

## Looking Back: Equanimity Revisited

Last week we explored equanimity as a *living quality of balance*, not indifference or withdrawal. Drawing on the Buddha’s teachings, equanimity was described as the capacity to **see clearly without being caught** (*upekkha*) and to **remain centered in the midst of changing conditions** (*tatramajjhata*). We looked at how equanimity protects us from the eight worldly winds—praise and blame, success and failure, pleasure and pain, fame and disrepute—and how it is supported by integrity, confidence, a developed mind, well-being, wisdom, insight, and growing freedom from reactivity .

This week we move from understanding equanimity conceptually to exploring it *phenomenologically*—by noticing what actually changes in experience when aversion loosens or drops away.

## Aversion as Lived Experience

Aversion is not only a thought like “I don’t want this.” It is often a **felt resistance**—a tightening, bracing, or contracting in the body and mind. Much of the time it operates quietly and automatically, beneath the level of conscious choice.

Rather than trying to eliminate aversion, mindfulness allows us to notice it as it arises and—just as importantly—to notice **what it’s like when it is no longer present**, even briefly. These moments are often subtle, ordinary, and easy to miss, yet they reveal something essential about equanimity.

A helpful way to understand this shift is through a simple image: *if you see the river, you are not in the river*. In the same way, when aversion is clearly seen—noticed as tightening, resistance, or pushing away—we are no longer completely inside it. The act of recognizing aversion already introduces a degree of distance and balance. Awareness does not eliminate aversion, but it changes our relationship to it, often softening its grip.

## When Aversion Subsides

When aversion eases, experience does not necessarily become dramatic or blissful. More often, people report:

- A softening or release of physical tension
- A sense of space or ease around sensations
- Less mental commentary or argument with what is happening
- A quiet neutrality that feels *okay*—or gently pleasant
- A sense that experience is workable, even if it isn’t preferred

Importantly, the mind may quickly move to *evaluate* the change, *name it*, or *want it to last*. Seeing this movement is part of the learning.

## Equanimity in Daily Life

Equanimity is not the absence of preference. We can still want things to change, take action, or set boundaries. The difference lies in whether preference hardens into **demand**, and whether discomfort triggers resistance or can be met without hostility.

Noticing how it feels when aversion subsides helps clarify this distinction. It shows that freedom is not found by controlling experience, but by **changing our relationship to it**.

## Reflection Questions

### Noticing Aversion

1. How do you usually recognize that aversion is present—in the body, the mind, or both?
2. Are there particular sensations or emotional tones that reliably signal resistance for you?

### When Aversion Eases

3. Recall a recent moment—formal practice or daily life—when aversion softened or dropped away. What was the first thing that changed?
4. Did the absence of aversion feel pleasant, neutral, quieter, or simply less effortful?
5. Was there a bodily sense of release, space, or settling?

### The Mind's Response

6. What happened next? Did the mind try to name, evaluate, or hold onto the experience?
7. Did any new wanting arise—such as wanting the ease to continue?

### Everyday Application

8. What would it mean to allow preferences without turning them into demands?

### When Craving Subsides

Aversion is one way we resist experience; craving is the other. While aversion pushes away what we don't want, craving leans toward what we think will complete or improve the moment. Like aversion, craving is often felt more as a **bodily orientation** than as a thought—an urge, a leaning forward, a subtle restlessness, or a sense that something is missing. When craving subsides, even briefly, experience often feels **sufficient as it is**, without needing to add, acquire, or resolve anything.

The absence of craving is usually quiet and unremarkable. There may be a sense of settling, contentment, or simply not needing the moment to be different. Nothing special has happened, yet nothing feels lacking. Seeing this helps clarify that freedom in practice does not depend on getting what we want, but on noticing when the compulsion to want relaxes. When neither pushing away nor pulling toward dominates experience, what remains is an ease that is available right here, independent of conditions.