

*THE FACILITATOR'S  
GUIDE TO TEACHING*

**THE KLESHAS**

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*EXPLORING THE ELUSIVENESS  
OF HAPPINESS*

by Deborah Adele

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## Overview

Understanding and applying yoga philosophy to your life changes things. You begin to see your life, your relationships, and the world differently. You begin to feel supported to live the life you came here to live. Knowledge frees.

Knowledge of the *kleshas* is knowledge of what binds us. Understanding what binds us supports us to understand the practice that frees us. This is not a simple process and studying with a group of like-minded people is beneficial.

In this book, each *klesha* has been given its own chapter in which the philosophy of the guideline is woven with practical examples and stories. At the end of the chapter, questions are provided that challenge the reader to find deeper insight. As the book progresses into the “Mind” and “Practice” sections, questions for reflection, learning tools, meditative inquiry, and quotes which follow yoga’s wisdom continue to guide us inward, to calm our minds, to find self-compassion, and to live our best lives.

This book is written to serve either as the student’s textbook for a teacher-lead, in-depth study, or for the individual on a personal journey. This book is also perfect for book clubs, yoga teachers in training, AA recovery groups, or anyone looking to live a more skillful life.

## Setting Up the Curriculum

This Facilitator's Guide is designed to be used with the book, *The Kleshas: Exploring the Elusiveness of Happiness* by Deborah Adele. The *kleshas* book can be used as part of teacher training, group study, or individual study. It lends itself to a weekly, monthly, or weekend study, or a retreat setting.

Depending on time limits, teach the points that stand out for you. Be willing to share how and why they speak to you. It is more important to focus on key points and give room for digestion than to overwhelm with information. This material is meant to be visited and revisited our whole lives.

Understanding the *kleshas* is key to understanding and giving direction to practice; consider giving this topic a priority of time or even its own separate study.

Questions for reflection/discussion are provided in the book. Whether you use all or some of these questions or create your own, do build in time for guided group discussion and/or personal journaling. Although understanding the philosophy is important, it is seeing how this philosophy plays out in our lives that is instrumental to our awakening.

## Things to Keep in Mind

It is important as a leader or student of this philosophy not to fall into the trap of feeling bad about yourself or trying to

fix or analyze yourself or others. There is power in seeing how entanglement plays out in our lives and trusting the power of that seeing. Set space and guidelines that create safety for yourself and others to “see” not “fix.”

Reflecting and discussing the role of the *kleshas* in each of our lives requires courage, vulnerability, and discipline, as well as safe space and time to digest. Remind yourself and others of this.

Each time we get heated emotionally or feel self-righteous presents an opportunity for exploration into our entrapment. Remind yourself and others of this.

As with *The Yamas & Niyamas: Exploring Yoga's Ethical Practice*, this book is a personal reflection of how the *kleshas* play out in my life and in society at large (as I see it). Your experience may be similar or quite different. Trust your own exploration and reflection.

Commentaries on the Yoga Sutra are very helpful, and there are many good commentaries available. Personally, I find Pandit Rajmani Tigunait's the most relevant to my understanding.

Although I have included both English and Sanskrit, it is more important to grasp the relevancy of these concepts than be confused by a different language. Consider if you will use English, Sanskrit, or both in your teaching, study, and group discussions and why.

## Teaching Points

### *KLESHAS: THE PROBLEM*

#### **Introduction**

\*The *kleshas* are a means to understand our experience of suffering, disappointment, loneliness, fear, anxiety, worry, loss, and confusion.

\*They are a natural progression that happen from a fundamental misunderstanding of who we are.

\*Give a brief definition of each *klesha* and describe how one *klesha* naturally leads to the next.

\*Emphasize the value of understanding the *kleshas*.

#### **Avidya ~ Ignorance**

\*Discuss the impact of being told that the way we see ourselves and the world is flawed at its core.

\*Point out that we are born into a ready-made belief system that shapes how we see the world. Split into groups and discuss some of these ready-made beliefs. (What does family/culture say about work, education, etc.)

\*We see what we already “know” to be true; we don’t see what doesn’t fit.

#### **Asmita ~ Giving Definition to Who We Think We Are**

\*Our definition of ourselves is given to us by what others say to us about ourselves and by how we see ourselves acting in the world.

\*We tell ourself about ourself more than we experience ourself.

## Raga & Dvesha ~ Seeking to Feel Good /

### Seeking to Avoid Feeling Bad

\*Point out that our likes and dislikes are a formidable pair that work as a team to keep us in a state of constant clinging and resisting.

\*Discuss how much our happiness depends on getting what we want and not getting what we don't want. Point out the emotional response that gets evoked either way.

\*Discuss how self-righteousness, pride, hatred, blame, and violence are an outcome of *raga* and *dvesha* at both the personal and group level. Note especially the tendency to find someone (something) to blame, or even hate, when we don't get what we want.

## Abhinivesha ~ Fearing Death/Loss/Change

\*Point out that the continuity of clinging to our likes (including our beliefs) and pushing away our dislikes brings staleness, rigidity, and narrowness to our thinking and being, and that all of this happens in the process of seeking to be happy!

\*Discuss how understanding this process allows us to soften our clinging and resisting and live a fuller, richer life by bringing a level of humility, compassion, and the willingness to not know.

## Considerations / Conclusion

\*Discuss the way fear and doubt show up as a part of the *kleshas*.

\*Discuss ways in which the *kleshas* have or could hijack your practice.

## *MIND: THE PLATFORM*

\*Emphasize Patanjali's definition of yoga as "complete mastery over the roaming tendencies of the mind."

\*Explain the roaming tendencies and their relationship to the *kleshas*.

\*Spend some time with these concepts:

~The roaming tendencies can be painful (*klish*) or non-painful (*aklish*).

~The innate nature of the mind is peaceful and clear. Re-emphasize how the *kleshas* interfere with our natural state of mind.

~The mind has the power to observe the outer world, the inner world, and itself.

~The mind is subtle energy; therefore it moves and can change.

~All of the body is in the mind, but not all of the mind is in the body.

~We can't take a vacation from our mind; it is always with us. But we can train our mind; what kind of mind do we want?

\*Discuss the mind and its functions. Emphasize the function of *buddhi* and its importance.

\*Emphasize that we are either established in our essential nature or we are established in the mind's roaming tendencies.

## *PRACTICE & NONATTACHMENT: THE POWER*

### **Introduction**

\*Emphasize that the only thing powerful enough to free us from our entanglement in the *kleshas* is the dual team of practice and nonattachment. Discuss why we need both.

\*Reminder that the path of the *kleshas* is something we do naturally. Getting out of our entanglement in the *kleshas* takes discipline and a proven plan.

### **Practice**

\*Define what practice is, according to Patanjali. Discuss how this definition is similar and/or novel to the usual understanding of practice.

### **Emphasize**

~Practice is stabilizing the mind.

~Practice is coming into right relationship with the senses.

~Practice is replacing “lower” thoughts with counteracting thoughts.

\*Point out Patanjali’s 3 guidelines for how to practice and discuss what this means for one’s practice.

\*Discuss each limb of the 8-fold path, specifically in terms of stabilizing the mind, coming into right relationship with the senses, and counteracting negative thoughts.

### **Nonattachment**

\*Define nonattachment and its value in stabilizing the mind.

Emphasize that what we fight, fix, deny or suppress only gets stronger.



## **Between Stimulus & Response**

\*Emphasize that between something occurring and our response to that occurrence is the gap where we can exercise choice.

-We can act habitually or, by observing ourselves, we can make a conscious choice.

-Physically, the nerves can travel their well-worn pathways, or we can choose to make a new pathway that creates a different response.

## **Obstacles**

\*Discuss the importance of dealing with what is interfering with our practice as an important part of our practice.

## **Daily Life**

\*The process of disentanglement is a slow, steady process but even a little effort never goes to waste. Discuss the importance of “little efforts.”

## **Questioning the Narrative**

\*Emphasize the opportunity that is presented when our narrative is in conflict with our experience.

\*Discuss the importance of having a value or ethical system (such as first do no harm) for discerning how to know what to believe when there is a conflict between our belief and our experience.

## *FINDING FREEDOM: THE PEACE*

\*Share Patanjali's definition of freedom and discuss how life would be different if we were free from needing people or things to fulfill us.

\*Discuss the role of practice and grace in our lives and our movement toward freedom.

\*Discuss in what ways studying the *kleshas* has provided a different understanding of what bondage, freedom, and happiness are.

## *IDEAS FOR CLOSURE*

\*For your final meeting, you may consider adding a more formal closure that is somewhat like a graduation from the class. Perhaps you will devise a small ceremony such as having each participant light a candle and share what they will carry forward with them from the study. You might offer a diploma or a final poem / quote for reflection. If you are a certified YACEP (Yoga Alliance Continuing Education Provider), your students can count the hours of this in-depth *Klesha* study toward the Yoga Alliance Education Standards.

*As you reflect on the kleshas,  
may seeing your entanglement begin to unbind you;*

*As you grasp the potential of your mind,  
may you be inspired to train and care for it;*

*As you explore the power of practice and nonattachment,  
may you find equanimity;*

*As you contemplate freedom,  
may you find it within.*

*- Deborah Adele*

## **Connect with Deborah**

Individuals, teachers and studios interested in continuing their studies with Deborah through lectures, workshops, or teacher training, or for information on her other products and events, please visit her website: [www.DeborahAdele.com](http://www.DeborahAdele.com)

## **Quoting Deborah**

If you would like to quote *The Kleshas: Exploring the Elusiveness of Happiness* in your work, you can download a quote permission form from the publisher's website:

[www.onwordboundbooks.com](http://www.onwordboundbooks.com).

Thank you for your recognition of our beloved author.

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