

Work With the Greatest Defilements First

You should work with whatever is your greatest obstacle first - whether it is aggression, passion, pride, arrogance, jealousy, or what have you. You should not just say "I will sit more first, and I will deal with that later." Working with the greatest defilements means working with the highlights of your experience or your problems. You do not just want to work with chicken shit, you want to work with the chicken itself.

From [*Training the Mind & Cultivating Loving-Kindness*](#) by [*Chogyam Trungpa*](#) ,

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The time is now, not later. This slogan is suggesting that you start where you feel most stuck.

Because the larger obstacles like rage or jealousy or terror are so dramatic, their vividness itself may be a reminder to work with the practice of [*tonglen*](#). We may so take for granted the multitude of daily irritations that we don't even think of them as something to work with. To some degree they are the hardest obstacles to work with because they don't reveal themselves. The only way you know that these are arising is that you feel righteous indignation. Let righteous indignation be your guide that someone is holding on to themselves, and that someone is probably you.

From [*Start Where You Are : A Guide to Compassionate Living*](#) by [*Pema Chodron*](#),

Purify First Whichever Action is Heaviest.

All beings within the cycle of rebirth suffer to a greater or lesser degree from emotional afflictions, but different individuals have different specific afflictions that predominate. Our main defilement may be desire, aggression, arrogance, jealousy, or ignorance. We should look within and judge which one is the most serious and then apply the necessary opponent forces to purify it first.

If attachment or desire is most intense, we should meditate specifically on impermanence and the impurity of the body. If hatred and aggression dominate, we should cultivate love. If it is ignorance or blank indifference, we must meditate on emptiness and cultivate intelligent awareness. For pride and arrogance, We meditate on impermanence, the suffering of our own life, cyclic existence, and especially the misery of the three lower unfortunate realms. If jealousy predominates, we should practice rejoicing in the virtues of others. Our afflictions are countless, and since they are active in no other place than within us, their destruction can only take place internally.

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Work on the Strongest of Your Defilements First

We should scrutinize ourselves and examine which of our defiled emotions is the most powerful. If desire is strongest, we should try to concentrate upon its antidote, which is ugliness. If anger is to the fore, we should try to generate the remedy of patience. If by nature we are inclined to ignorance and dullness, we should exert ourselves in the cultivation of wisdom. If we are jealous, we should work to develop equanimity. In this endeavor to subdue these defilements, we should concentrate all our Dharma practice. For if we are able to free ourselves of our grosser defilements, the lesser ones will also naturally subside.

From Enlightened Courage, by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.