

## **Understanding and Engaging Unbearable Pain**

Pain is a necessary and natural part of life. It alerts us that something is out of equilibrium and needs to be tended to. However, sometimes it can be ambiguous and difficult to read. Prolonged pain accompanied by negative thoughts, fears and faulty belief-systems can turn into unbearable suffering; acted out in all forms of violence; anxiety, stress and depression.

Emotional and mental pain its especially challenging because of the illusive nature and the stigmas attached to it in our culture. Because mental/emotional pain is invisible, we can easily doubt its validity and react to it by denying it, feeling ashamed of it and judging ourselves. Internalized pain can isolate us and alienate us from ourselves and from others. It can take on a life of its own and become an identity that distorts who we really are.

Few people are able to tolerate mental and emotional pain in others or to be compassionate and accepting of it in themselves. And this is as true of those in the medical profession and our friends and family as everyone else. In our culture we are taught to "snap out it" and "get on with life." We resent it when we feel helpless and powerless and have no answer to our own pain or to the suffering of others.

In seeking relief from pain, we often want to get away from it, get rid of it or kill it, but there are times when the only possible relief can come from transforming our relationship to it - non-judgmentally opening up to its moment-by-moment-sensations and seeing it for what it is; expanding our breath and directing it to the part of the body or psyche that feels the pain; and noticing the negative stories that the mind is telling us and letting them go.

[Available CD/Audio file - Bearing Unbearable Pain](#)

Samuel has spent 20 years as a body/mind therapist and a meditation teacher, speaker and author. In the 1980s, he facilitated The New York Healing Circle, which helped thousands of people with HIV live with a sense of peace and self-acceptance. Trained in body-centered psychotherapy, and in the Zen tradition and the Vipassana style of meditation, as well as in MBSR (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction - by Jon Kabat Zinn), Samuel is in private practice in Manhattan. He has been teaching Living in the Present / Dynamic Mindfulness Meditation through individual & couple sessions, classes, workshops, organizational wellness training and retreats.