

*QUESTION: How do I know if I'm having a moment of realization or if I'm just deluding myself (still in ego)?*

**NARAYAN LIEBENSON GRADY:** A moment of realization is a moment of realizing how things actually are. There are different levels of awakening to how things are: you might awaken to the fact that you are engaged in unskillful actions; you might become aware that you are reacting rather than responding to a particular set of conditions; you might awaken to the nature of the mind. These are all moments of realization.

The Buddhist teachings say that liberation is the absence of greed, hatred, and delusion. Only you can know whether you are experiencing such a moment. However, if you think that "you" are then you are not because realizing how things actually are is free from a sense of ownership. The Buddha said, "There is the deed but no doer; there is suffering but no sufferer; there is the path but no one to enter it; and there is liberation but no one to attain it."

Chinul, a founder of Korean Zen, taught the approach of "sudden awakening, gradual cultivation." His understanding was that although a moment (or moments) of awakening is transforming, it is not enough. He said, "Although we have awakened to original nature, beginningless habit energies are extremely difficult to remove suddenly. Hindrances are formidable and habits are deeply ingrained."

We humans—even those of us who are really honest and sincere—are capable of great self-deception. We can have powerful experiences and then identify with them, making them stand for who we are and how we are thought of by others, when what we really need to be humble and just continue on the path.

The significance of a moment of seeing into the nature of things expresses itself in the here and now. Anything else involves assessing and measuring that which is beyond assessment and is measureless. What matters is how we live. Instead of asking yourself whether you're having a moment of realization, a more useful question might be, what is the quality of my heart right now?