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A message from Rodney:

As Buddhism integrates into western cultures, it is important that we do not compromise the depth and direction of the teaching. The West is built upon individuality and self-initiative, but the central teachings of the Buddha are selflessness and interdependent existence. These two competing imperatives begin to conflict when we sincerely long for the resolution of our dissatisfaction and suffering. We realize that since our suffering is self-inflicted, we cannot carry the very cause of that suffering, the “sense of self,” into the practices that intend to resolve it, or we will be reinforcing our belief in separation and move in the opposite direction of the freedom of the Buddha. The spiritual journey is often depicted as a long and laborious path containing endless lifetimes and holding a complexity that bewilders our intentions, but the journey simplifies when we are willing to pare the intricacies of practices back to the Buddha’s core teaching on selflessness. Spiritual practice is simply stepping out of self-deception, and all authentic methods and techniques have only this intended purpose.

I wrote this book because as a dharma teacher I have seen many well-intended practitioners go astray in the way they practice the dharma. We may practice for a number of years in a style suggested by our teachers within our lineage, yet feel frustrated by our lack of spiritual growth. Although we may experience character modifications, we find ourselves pretty much the same person we were before we started. Through all our techniques and procedures, the sense of ourselves remains the cornerstone of our existence and guides our practice. When we look at our experience we appear to be the center of the universe. All experiences seem to confirm our central place in life, and every input is interpreted through the lens of self. We hear about the corrupted power of the ego, but seem unable to shake off this ever-present “sense of me.” Its authority seems absolute and most of us eventually acquiesce to its rule, and we engage our dharma practice carrying the sense of me along within our spiritual development.

[*Stepping Out of Self-Deception: the Buddha's Liberating Teaching of No-Self*](#) looks deeply into the strategies of our practice and asks whether the attitude and view that drive these techniques are actually in the service of the very ego we are attempting to understand. The sense of self is extremely subtle and slippery. We cannot heartlessly approach the subject like we would many worldly tasks, because the way we investigate and the methodology we use has its own effect upon what we seek. The task is first and foremost a mission of discovery, and discovery requires sensitivity, awareness, and discernment. If the freedom of the Buddha is the intention of our spiritual practice, that freedom is dependent upon whether we are in alignment with the truth of our selflessness in body, speech, and mind at every step along the way.