

## ALEXANDER BERZIN

Overview of Exercises for Developing Balanced Sensitivity Based on Buddhist Practices Sensitivity is a function of two variables - attentiveness and responsiveness - each or both of which may be weak, out of proportion, or balanced. With attentiveness, one notes the condition of someone, the consequences of one's behavior toward him or her, or both. Attentiveness also regards one's own condition and the effect of one's behavior on oneself. Responsiveness allows a spontaneous or considered reply to what one notices. One responds with an emotion, a thought, words, actions, or some combination of the four. Certain people seem naturally more sensitive than others. Sometimes this is an admirable quality. Partners are sensitive to each other's moods and do not make demands when the other has had a difficult day. Let us call this ability "balanced sensitivity." In other cases, being sensitive is a disability. Insecure people are sensitive to the point that their feelings are hurt at the slightest remark. This syndrome is known as hypersensitivity. At the other end of the spectrum lies insensitivity. Self-centered persons are insensitive to the effect of their words on others and say whatever comes to their heads. The Buddhist teachings suggest various methods for developing or enhancing the positive variety and for reducing or eliminating the negative ones. In *Developing Balanced Sensitivity* (Snow Lion 1998, revised edition available, together with *The Sensitivity Handbook*, as e-books on [www.berzinarchives.com](http://www.berzinarchives.com)), Dr. Berzin presents a program of twenty exercises for overcoming sensitivity imbalances. Ideally practiced in group sessions, although adaptable for individual practice, each exercise contains many parts and builds upon the previous exercises. The program does not require any Buddhist background and is suitable as supplementary training for workers in social, educational, medical, and other service areas.