

HUMAN VALUES

Genla Venerable Thubten Tenzin

"This book covers powerful subjects and is written in an easy to understand and thoughtful way. Gen-La does have a gift for making difficult propositions seem attainable to all."

Dr. Amanda Andrews

"Gen-La's book 'Human Values' steers our thinking in the direction of happiness. It is a most useful guide full of practical suggestions and inspiring quotes. It benefits our mind-streams tremendously whilst uniting us with the breath."

Kasia Olszewski

"In 'Human Values' Venerable Thubten Tenzin compassionately explores our most painful emotions and teaches us to face them in a way that is trans-formative and healing. We begin to understand our extraordinary potential as well as the extraordinary potential of all those around us."

Venerable Tashi

Human Values is a life-changing self-help book compiled from a series of workshops given in Western NSW, and is intended to help those who are interested in the development of our shared human values, not as a guide to any particular spirituality. Gen-La Venerable Thubten Tenzin is a Buddhist Teacher and Nun in the Tibetan Tradition and Abbess of Tharpa Choeling Australia in Wellington NSW.

www.tharpachoeling.org

WARNING! FREQUENT USE OF
THE WORDS

**HAPPY
HAPPIER & HAPPINESS**

PROBABLY BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT WE ALL NEED!



Acknowledgements

Thank you to
Venerable Thubten Pema.
Human Values was edited
by Ven. Choden.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Chapter One Why Do We Need to Change?	6
Chapter Two From Anger to Love with Kindness	18
Chapter Three From Depression to Gratitude	30
Chapter Four From Anxiety to Empathy and Love	49
Chapter Five From Addiction to Honesty and Mindfulness	64
Chapter Six From Trauma to Compassion and Forgiveness	72
Chapter Seven Understanding Grief Honestly	81
Chapter Eight From Selfishness to Selflessness	86

INTRODUCTION



*"Do unto others as you
would have done unto you."
- Golden Rule of Moses*

"Trying to live according to the Golden Rule means trying to empathise with other people, including those who may be very different from us. Empathy is at the root of kindness, compassion, understanding and respect – qualities that we all appreciate being shown, whoever we are, whatever we think and wherever we come from."

Maria MacLachlan, Humanist

We have been born human. This is a natural state that affords us a unique opportunity to develop the best possible ideas and qualities which benefit ourselves, our family, friends, society and the world. We can develop wisdom to have empathy, to be kind. Knowing we are connected and with respect for others, we can speak out, being wise and courageous enough to take actions that help us connect as human beings to each other. If we are brave enough to accept opportunities that arise to be more inclusive of others, no matter their circumstances, then we can live a happy, contented, well-rounded life. This is our shared condition, we all want happiness and we are all connected.

This book was compiled from a series of workshops given in Western NSW by Genla Venerable Thubten Tenzin and is intended to help those who are interested in development of our shared human qualities and for all of us to know ultimate truth, but not as a guide to

any particular spirituality. As Buddhist practitioners, we firmly believe that to evolve the very best qualities and attributes, we begin here and now, using what we have to benefit as many beings as we can, because they are the cause and we are dependent on them for our highest happiness.

Throughout this book are helpful hints or guidelines to assist in any change we would like to embrace. They not only encourage us to be healthier and happier in ourselves, but also to be kinder and more respectful of others' needs through empathy and the understanding of our shared humanity.

"We need ways and means that apply to all human beings; we need secular ethics. And according to the longstanding Indian model, secular ethics involves having respect for all religious traditions and even for those who have no faith. Secular ethics as an approach to peace of mind, an ethical approach to inner values not dependent on this or that religious tradition, is an appropriate approach for all 7 billion human beings."
His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Buddhist Master, spoke about secular ethics in Germany, August 2014.

We are of the greatest value to sentient beings when we have a calm, peaceful mind. The way to achieve that is to not have an attached mind or thoughts of greed, nor to be angry or aggressive. People avoid angry people, therefore we cannot practice the great qualities we possess such as love, kindness and generosity. Because there is not enough care and respect, there is no humanity in aggressive behaviour. Not being honest or not making effort to know the truth of all of us and how and why we exist is not a human quality. In fact, to be born human with the intelligence to understand what is going on is our best human attribute.

Chapter One

Why Do We Need to Change? What Do We Want to Change?

*"You must be the change you want to see in the world...
As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in
being able to remake the world – that is the myth of the
atomic age – as in being able to remake ourselves."
Mahatma Gandhi, Human Rights Activist*

The best self-help we could have is learning about how we truly exist. It is not about being a one lifetime "fixer-upper" but instead being totally honest and truthful with ourself, forever.

We can affect change because we recognise something in ourselves that we want to change. Dissatisfaction may bring about the need for change. If we are really unhappy with ourselves, our relationships and our surroundings, we can adopt the wisdom of change. We can re-think our world, we can alter our view of what really makes us happy and we can find the best way to be happy. We might consider asking ourselves some tough questions:

What and where is the happiness I am really seeking and wanting?

Is it within a job or the pursuit of money and possessions? Or is happiness in the simplest of things? The simplicity poets wax lyrical about?

Can I be content with not wanting more than is necessary to live? Can I be content and live simply?

Is it the small things in life that make me happy?

Can I be happy enough to share and give happiness to others? Can I have empathy and compassion for myself and others?

Can I be more thoughtful about myself in a healthier way? Can I love and care for myself without restrictions?

When we can answer ourselves honestly by looking inward, then we effect change through a process, in our own time. We can help ourselves and give thought to others. We can begin with our family, generating ideas of connecting and assisting, not just for monetary gain, but through our shared experiences at the fundamental level of knowing we are all the same - human beings. The intention to change and the ability to affect change begins with recognising what *needs* to change and what we *can* change to become healthier and happier. We can live a life with meaning, honesty and contentment, in fact, we can get the best out of life.

"When you are happy with what you have, you are the happiest." Lailah Gifty Akita, Inspirational Writer

Disconnection and disassociation from others makes us lonely, and in the world today, because of technological advances, we can easily become isolated. As we get older, this can become more acute. Honestly, if we can find a way to benefit others who may be in this type of situation, our own life can change for the better. We certainly can feel more useful when we care enough to be engaged in life.

If we feel some sadness that our life has not been useful or meaningful, we can begin to make change and become useful. We might see that what makes us feel unhappy are actions coming from emotions such as jealousy and anger, hate and pride. These emotions make us feel separate from others, and lead to being alone. What we seek are the qualities that give us happier moments in our lives. Who would not want to have patience, love with kindness and those amazing qualities of empathy and compassion? These abilities help us to recognize that contentment and happiness are important and if we make an effort to cultivate them we affect the change we need. Our interactions with others will eventually become easier and we will be able to cope with problems or circumstances that would otherwise have made us depressed or anxious.

"Human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives."

William James, Philosopher and Psychologist

So it comes down to this: greed and selfishness can lead to a life of sadness and isolation. Sharing with others can alleviate our uneasiness, loneliness and unhappiness, and make us happier, well-rounded and contented.

Accepting the Human Condition with a Social Conscience

The ability to effect change means first accepting where we are and who we are, and then honestly deciding what we can or cannot do to change.

Sometimes when we are sick or feel hindered in our life or unable to accomplish a specific task, we berate ourselves and others for our circumstances. We may be incapacitated through being older or physically incapable of doing certain things, but this does not mean that our life cannot be a happier one. We can interpret our situation through our own thoughts, our own view of what is happening and develop a reasonable, valid acceptance of our circumstances. Acceptance may not be easy however it makes us capable of change without fearing change.

"That nothing is static or fixed, that all is fleeting and impermanent, is the first mark of existence. It is the ordinary state of affairs. Everything is in process. Everything—every tree, every blade of grass, all the animals, insects, human beings, buildings, the animate and the inanimate—is always changing, moment to moment."

Acharya Pema Chodron, Buddhist Teacher

We may notice in others an ease and pliability of their view, brought about because they see the necessity of changing to find happiness. When we find

the capacity to care for and love ourselves to be better human beings, then whatever we choose to do will be influenced by our own perspective. We can then make changes for the better, to give ourselves the very best, healthiest lifestyle possible, one that really suits us and our circumstances.

"I believe that a simple and unassuming manner of life is best for everyone, best for both the body and the mind." Albert Einstein, Physicist

From Greed to Simplicity and Contentment

One way to affect change is in the way we consume. Although we might have certain restrictions in our life, such as a lack of good friends or money or good health, it is important that we do not get carried away by others' influence and the delights of goods in advertisements and envy about others' looks, professions and possessions. It is important for us to understand why not to get carried away with jealousy or envy. Thinking we can find an answer in these negative thoughts is not the best way to use our human intelligence.

Being caught up in emotions and greed for things keeps us in a cycle of desire, always wanting more. We lack the space in our minds for happiness to arise.

When we have the idea to lessen our neediness, we begin the change in our minds ourselves. We could make a list of things we really need to live happily - what is necessary and what is unnecessary. This could help us to see how we over-spend and overindulge and simply saying "no" is a great step in our change to simplicity and contentment.

'It's not about how much you own or have, if you're not being of service to your community and the people in your life, you've missed it. You've got to be of service.'
Abe Nouk, Sudanese-Australian Refugee Poet

“Time Out”

Making space means being alone with our thoughts, with a sense of safety and time to reflect and find peace. We might notice that we are jealous, thinking that others have what we desire, making us feel resentful and upset that we are not getting *what we want*. We would be better served to be at ease and allow within ourselves that contentment and simplicity to bring happiness and a change of mind to feel better, actually healthier. We understand that there is simply less stress when we stop thinking about what we want and desire, especially those thoughts born from jealousy and envy. Focusing on the selfish needs we have makes us uneasy and gives rise to stress.

“Everybody else has this or that product, why shouldn't I?” Why do we think like this? We are fortunate when we are not giving-in to advertisements, pressure from others, television and movies showing and telling us what to have and what we need. We are our best assessor of what we need. We really do not have to be told how to spend our money and how to behave.

We could consider what we truly need, and what we do not actually need. Eating healthier is better for the body they say, but eating less could be the way to a more agile body and mind. It was once said by Prince Phillip that the Royals never eat after 4pm, and they believe this is the best way to have a slimmer, attractive, healthier body. One such instruction for monks and nuns is not to eat after 12 noon, this leaves the mind pliable for contemplation.

Making a change to a simpler lifestyle is a freedom that brings about an ease and releases us from competitiveness, envy and greed.

AFFIRMING WITH THOUGHTS OR PRAYERS

May I stop wasting my money on trivial things.

May I stop over-spending and only buy what is necessary and useful.

May I choose food that is conducive to my health.

From Agitation to Ease and Contentment

Agitation is aligned with stress. To find an ease when we are in circumstances of uneasiness or stress we can choose to think that we are okay with where we are and who we are. Recognition of what makes us discontent is a key to finding happiness. Bringing simplicity, contentment and relaxation into our own situation will allow our life to unfold. Being happy is a view, a state of mind, not something we can acquire or manipulate from outside of ourselves.

Agitation is a feeling of aggravation or restlessness, it is often a direct result of everyday stresses.

If we can accept a life of contentment, perhaps even simplicity, no longer being agitated by feeling needy or desirous, we can then transform into a happier, healthier, certainly less stressed, person. We share our planet with others and we can be such a positive influence on many others, as others may have been for us. We can be mindful and give attention to everything we do, say and think. Usually we do tasks by rote or with lack lustre attention but when we have the idea to concentrate on the task at hand, we can remain in the moment, we can develop a contentment of mind. By making the effort to apply mindful introspection we can transform our mind from over-thinking about mundane things to positive and contented states of mind.

We might have noticed that sometimes our state of mind is pliable and changeable. If we have the ability to change our mind from negative to positive, we should embrace it. For example, if we recognise that we have jealousy or are thinking with envy, we can say to ourselves, "What does this do to me?" With honesty we can see it actually makes us uneasy, agitated and sad. These thoughts make us unwell, even sick. They are unhealthy states of mind.

We can change and find our own answer to the question of how to find happiness within ourselves. We

can find the antidote to all of our problems, we have that ability. We might begin by recognising our own qualities, or perhaps we enjoy being present in the moment, or maybe noticing a feeling of contentment that arises. This is all developmental and takes an effort, especially that of clearing out unhealthy thoughts. When we are not wanting something, not lusting after others, our thoughts and our mind become peaceful and free from agitation. We can manage our own serenity and be happy and content in just one or two moments of fully experiencing our natural breath, breathing with the gentle flow of air in and out of our body. When we concentrate on the breath, we can certainly stop the chatter and over-thinking we tend to do.

Contentment is a mental state of satisfaction drawn from being at ease in one's body and mind. Accepting one's situation is a form of happiness.

If we practise the peacefulness of contentment, it does give rise to a state of goodness, a state of well-being. Others see this and consider this to be worthwhile - a peaceful person is someone nice to be with. If we are no longer agitated by envy, jealousy and desire, our behaviour in the world has a virtuous quality that is noticeable. This is the kind of happiness we seek, and the contentment we need.

However when we are misled by others who believe it is normal to follow desire and agitation - emotions that are unpleasant - we might well be shunned. If we adopt the practice of virtuous moral and ethical behaviour it is in fact a kindness to ourselves, and we can achieve an ease in our lives and in any situation. This shows in our relationships and in our demeanour. Our interactions with others are healthier and we realize this change in ourselves is both an inward and outward virtuous quality.

*"Success is not defined by wealth but contentment."
Anonymous*

We can also be peaceful in not aggressively seeking attention for our ego, seeking neither praise nor gratification. We can seek inner peace instead for the purpose of being selfless and being confident in our own natural goodness, having the strength of our own inner development and the firmness of a serene mind. The qualities of love and care for others will always be an attribute and contribute to our own happiness.

"Riches are not from abundance of worldly goods, but from a contented mind." Buddhist Quote

Inner Peace leads to World Peace

Through the cultivation of a peaceful state of mind, we can effect a change in our environment, and we can positively visualize peace in our world. We will begin to think more "outside the box", thinking of the whole world. We can think more about a world of seven billion people who would like peace and happiness. In order to contribute towards world peace, we cultivate peaceful thoughts, not involving our minds with violence, not involving ourselves in ideas of retaliation or revenge. These ideas are against humanity and do not contribute to happiness within or without. They are detrimental to ourselves.

*"Without inner peace, it is impossible to have world peace."
His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Buddhist Master*

Only patience for ourselves and others gives us real peace of mind because it is also the cultivation of tolerance. We can find much peace by letting go, not over-thinking and definitely not getting angry. When we are positive we generate a change from harm towards ourselves and others to peace and serenity for all. Others may see this and ask, "What are you doing with yourself? You seem more peaceful." Therefore our

outward demeanour has become more serene and we can have peace and happiness, living in harmony with others now and in the future.

*"When you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart."
St Francis of Assisi, Catholic Saint*

AFFIRMATIONS or PRAYERS

Today I will begin to be more thoughtful, with less agitation, less speech, becoming more introspective, more meditative, concentrating on inner contentment and peace.

Today may I have thoughts of harmony when I am involved with others.

May I talk and act with kindness. May I give the gift of harmonious interplay with others.

*"You get world peace through inner peace.
If you've got a world full of people who have inner peace, you have a peaceful world."
Wayne Dyer, Self-Help Author*

Generosity

Changing from selfishness and greediness into being kind with generosity can be a gradual process. We begin with the idea to give of our own time patiently, and to give gifts without recompense. We can give the gift of love with kindness in thoughts, speech and actions to whomever we can and whenever we can. In the past we have been kind and given gifts and we can recall these actions with joy and happiness, remembering that this was a positive course of action. In this present moment we can make the affirmation to think of others and "practise random acts of kindness" whenever appropriate. Our happiness depends upon helping others freely and openly without the thought of self and the selfishness of what 'I' want.

*"Generosity is a practical expression of love."
Gary Inrig, Author*

We are changing and developing the action of selflessness when we can give presents out of thoughtfulness, when we can give without the attachment of wanting something in return, when we can give without wanting praise, when we can give without the thought that the object was especially beautiful or attractive so we should be 'well thought of'.

We can change our view when we think that the person we are giving to is someone who has been kind to us and we want to repay their kindness. We give to someone just because we love them or because we see a need or something they require. Whatever we give, by the act of giving we are the real receiver of benefit, a caring, loving and thoughtful being, free from grasping, we do not want to be miserly. The person who receives the gift may not always want it. This may hurt our feelings but it can help us to remember that this is just how things are and then we will be able to give freely with the best of motivations.

Our joy in the moment of giving is something that can really make us very happy and we can see that whatever we give is not even about the gift or ourselves as the giver, or even the receiver of the gift, but about the thoughts of being kind and generous, of love, friendship and genuine care. Giving with love, giving with kindness, patience and respect is a quality we can cultivate and is a change that it is completely natural and noble as an evolving human being. We can brighten up the lives of others with gifts of time, thoughtfulness and love, patiently given.

*"We make a living by what we get.
But we make a life by what we give."
Winston Churchill, Former British Prime Minister*

AFFIRMING WITH THOUGHTS OR PRAYERS

Today I have a unique opportunity to give benefit to even just one being.

Everybody's life is of benefit. My life is of benefit and has meaning.

I will undertake every opportunity with kindness, to make others comfortable and happy.

I am content with my situation and give to those who are not as fortunate.

"Nothing endures but personal qualities."

Walt Whitman, Poet

Reflecting on Questions, Getting to Know Ourselves

To know ourselves, we can question ourselves and give time to reflect with honest evaluation. Do you agree, disagree or find empathy with these questions which were asked amongst a diverse group of people:

Am I happy?

What am I actually feeling and experiencing?

Why do I or did I have certain health problems?

Why did people tell me that I caused my cancer?

Do I have an explanation for the cycle of life?

Is everything random? Is there a cause?

Why do good things happen to bad people and why do bad things happen to good people?

Why are people unkind to each other?

Is there some form of order in the universe?

Why can't I get out of this place or this relationship?

Why does everyday life seem so meaningless?

Do I have control over my life?

Why was I born in this country?

What happens when I die?

Why do I keep doing the same old thing?

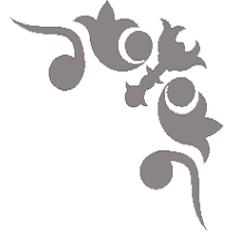
Where do I find answers?

Do I find answers by becoming introspective?

Please agree or disagree, ask yourself a question and be prepared to answer with honesty.



CHANGE



HOW?

Checking and being aware of our thoughts

WHAT?

Changing negative thoughts
into positive thoughts

WHEN?

Now, in the present moment,
nothing like the present!

WHERE?

Anywhere we are – on a plane, in a train,
in our home or on the toilet!

WHY?

Always for the better!



In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.
The important thing is not to stop questioning..

Albert Einstein, Physicist



Chapter Two

From Anger to Love with Kindness

Scientific Perspectives on Anger

There are many physical effects of anger which have been proven in scientific studies.

The long-term physical effects of uncontrolled anger include increased anxiety, high blood pressure and headache.
Betterhealth.vic.gov.au

"In the two hours after an angry outburst, the chance of having a heart attack doubles," Chris Aiken, M.D.

Harvard University scientists found that in healthy people, simply recalling an angry experience from their past caused a six-hour dip in levels of the antibody immunoglobulin A, the cells' first line of defense against infection.

"Stress is very tightly linked to general health. If you're stressed and angry, you'll shorten your lifespan,"
Mary Fristad Ph.D.

Everydayhealth.com:
"7 Ways Anger is Ruining Your Health"

From Anger to Patience and Love

Change means taking action. We undertake change to feel better. We should all want to feel wholesome and no longer caught up in bitterness and anger. Anger is very damaging for ourselves and everyone to whom we may be connected. This also means anybody who is close to us can suffer mental and physical pain because of our anger.

Anger is only ever an ego derivative. It justifies opinions and selfish outlooks and endeavours. If we really love someone we should want them to be happy. If we are angry with speech and physical actions, how are they ever going to be happy or love us back?

Physical results of anger include illnesses of the liver, bile and gall bladder, and with other factors such as not caring, the potential of a heart attack. Mental illnesses also arise because we continue to think we *have the right* to be angry. Anger only produces more anger. Continually we create more negative behaviour, for example, using harsh words, swearing and physical violence.

*"We cannot overcome anger and hatred simply by expressing them. We need to actively cultivate the antidotes: patience and tolerance."
His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Buddhist Master*

Anger arises in the form of tension, testiness, impatience, and frustration, maybe arising from the pit of our stomach and then manifesting. We may be passive-aggressive, with low-lying anger that will explode and destroy our composure. We can and should eradicate this inner arrogance, that seethes beneath the surface, for our own sake and for the happiness of others. For our own well-being, we need to stop it, and we can stop it because it is impermanent, temporary, it is not always there. We are not always an angry person.

We may think we're justified to be angry and we may think that others are making us angry, but the truth is that anger always comes from within from our own mind. There is no reason for us to get angry, we cannot justify it. If we want to stop, we find the methods to make this important change for ourselves! We might notice that anger is becoming a habit and it can be accentuated by drugs and alcohol, and still we can overcome it!

Anger leads to hatred and that in reality is so harmful and detrimental to our health. So we begin with

looking at the following steps:

The first step is that we can avoid all situations, circumstances and people who may trigger our anger, angst and frustration.

Secondly, we need to be honest with ourselves, recognizing that our anger comes from ourselves, so that we are able to apply the antidotes of patience and loving kindness.

Thirdly, with our wisdom, we can look at why we get angry in particular situations. We might see that we have expectations of ourselves and others and frustration that things do not function or go the way we want. Too bad! That is cause and effect.

Lastly, we make a conscious effort to notice and stop anger immediately as it arises and apply the brakes. This requires us to be mindful and aware of our thoughts and emotions, just allowing space enables the thoughts of anger to subside.

All afflictive emotions are pain.

This is the second seal that the Awakened One taught. Anger, confusion, attachment, jealousy and arrogance cause us suffering in the moment and in the future as these emotions compound and expand.

They fill our bodies with chemicals that make us sick, and distort our motivations so that we cause harm to others. In the future, we experience the results of the actions done under the influence of these emotions as painful situations coming back to us.

Why are we angry?

We might find that grief, loss, angst, or attempting to control ourselves and others is making us angry. We may be angry with situations in the world because we are trying to find a physical solution to a problem. We care about environmental destruction, war and social injustice, but we allow that to turn into angst and anger instead of compassion. When it becomes anger we

blame, we fill with hatred, we use harsh words, we become part of the problem. In reality, we may not be able to physically control a situation but that does not mean we are helpless. When our care becomes compassion we use our minds and hearts to pray, to help locally, to be peaceful and become part of the solution. For example, having a violent reaction to war only perpetuates our own suffering and adds to the pain in the world. If we are vengeful or rejoice in violent retribution this will return to us as painful mental and physical results in the future. We create trauma in our own minds by wishing harm on others. Instead, if we change our way of reacting into words, thoughts and deeds that are positive, kind and conducive to wellbeing we will definitely feel better mentally and physically.

If we feel angry particularly because of social injustice then we can find a way to help with peaceful action, rather than just expressing verbal and physical reactions. Our angst, getting upset and adding more frustration to the overall perspective of combined frustrations and angst links us to others in a negative way. We can change our view and think correctly because anger cannot bring peace nor harmony, but only more anger.

Why do bad things happen to good people and why do good things happen to bad people?

There can only be three possibilities:

1. Creator God, 2. Karma or 3. Random.

To believe in karma is intelligent. To disbelieve karma (cause and effect) is to discount the truth.

Why don't we want to give up anger?

Thinking we have the right to be angry and bolstering our egocentric view is totally selfish. Nobody wants to be around an angry person. Can we imagine what it is like to have no anger, or at least less anger? The absence of anger feels like overall freedom and peace, liberated from pain. Is it better than feeling

angry? Of course, because it is cutting through what is unhelpful and not useful, and simultaneously we gain greater skill in overcoming difficulties and our ability to help others is increased. Not having anger in the body and mind is contentment and bliss in this one lifetime.

We can use mindfulness and thoughtfulness to remember and apply patience as an antidote. We can be attentive and bring extra space into the mind, allowing us to respond rather than react, and we can put in an extra effort to being mindful. Then we will be able to avoid the onset of anger by noting the initial physical response such as discomfort in the pit of the stomach. These forms of attentiveness all contribute to the cultivation of more and more patience. The absence of anger certainly makes for a happier person and a more peaceful environment.

*"As anger increases, loving-kindness decreases.
As loving-kindness increases, anger decreases."
His Holiness the Dalai Lama*

In the past we may have allowed anger to arise and to pour forth especially towards those we care about. We have had thoughts of ill-will and we have spoken harshly and divisively to our loved ones. Because we tend to think more of ourselves and not the impact and harm of our anger, we can be so uncaring about our truly unkind behaviour. We may think, "It is my right!" And we firmly believe we should react with anger because it is a habit, it is our usual behaviour, but patient loving-kindness is the change we can make ourselves, just by noticing anger and allowing it to subside.

The flow-on effect is that other people, especially our family and pets receive care, love and patience from us, and this continues onto our work colleagues, and our community. We can look for the pivotal moment in a difficult situation and transform our mind into patience and happiness. We can think: "In this moment, in my spacious mind, I have the opportunity to change and to stop anger, I have remembered to apply the antidotes of love and patience."

P *assive Perseverance, Prayer*

A *ble to Apply*

T *olerance*

I *nspirational, injuring none*

E *ncouraging to all, enduring*

N *ot anger nor irritability*

C *alm constant composure*

E *quanimity, evenness,*

Moments of anger will pass. The thoughts of hatred that arise from anger can be wisely eradicated with patience. This patience with love is true kindness and thoughtful carefulness.

"Have patience with all things but first of all with yourself." St Francis de Sales, Catholic Saint

AFFIRMATIONS or PRAYERS

Today instead of reacting, may I allow moments of space, so anger and moments of frustration subside.

Today may I practise patience, especially with my closest friends / partner / family.

Today may I recall how much I care for someone and actually send thoughts of love to them and may I freely give time in a way that is supportive.

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama offers wisdom about anger:

1. Anger is the real destroyer of our good human qualities; an enemy with a weapon cannot destroy these qualities, but anger can. Anger is our real enemy.

2. If we live our lives continually motivated by anger and hatred, even our physical health deteriorates.

3. Anger and hatred are like a fisherman's hooks. It is very important for us to ensure that we are not caught by them.

4. We have a saying in Tibet: "If you lose your temper and get angry, bite your knuckles." This means that if you lose your temper, do not show it to others. Rather, say to yourself, "Leave it."

5. According to Buddhist psychology, most of our troubles are due to our passionate desire for and attachment to things that we misapprehend as enduring entities. The pursuit of the objects of our desire and attachment involves the use of aggression and competitiveness. These mental processes easily translate into actions, breeding belligerence.

Such processes have been going on in the human mind since time immemorial, but their execution has become more effective under modern conditions. What

can we do to control and regulate these “poisons”—delusion, greed and aggression? For it is these poisons that are behind almost every trouble in the world.

6. Hatred can be the greatest stumbling block to the development of compassion and happiness. If you learn to develop patience and tolerance towards your enemies, then everything becomes much easier—your compassion towards all others begins to flow naturally.

7. Happiness cannot come from hatred or anger. Nobody can say, “Today I am happy because this morning I was angry.” On the contrary, people feel uneasy and sad and say, “Today I am not very happy, because I lost my temper this morning.”

* Through kindness, whether at our own level or at the national and international level, through mutual understanding and through mutual respect, we will get peace, we will get happiness, and we will get genuine satisfaction.

*“No one intentionally creates problems, but we tend to be slaves to powerful emotions like anger, hatred and attachment.”
His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Buddhist Master*

Experiencing a Different Life Physical and Mental Effects of Patience

The study of patience is still new, but there’s some emerging evidence that it might even be good for our health. In their 2007 study, Schnitker and Emmons found that patient people were less likely to report health problems like headaches, acne flair-ups, ulcers, diarrhea, and pneumonia.

*In a study of nearly 400 undergraduates, Professor Sarah A. Shnitker found that those who are more patient toward others also tend to be more hopeful and more satisfied with their lives.
GreaterGood.Berkeley.edu*

Shopping with Patience

When we are shopping, we can try to be kind and be patient especially to ourselves. Breathing with patience is the antidote to anger and frustration in all shopping circumstances. We can be considerate and allow people to go before us, if we cannot, then we can just breathe and adopt a calmness. We can be patient with the check-out person and we can practise patience if items need checking. We can breathe in slowly and exhale slowly. We can practise patience if anyone gets in our way with a trolley, etc. We can be kind because others want consideration as much as we do, and they appreciate our efforts to be careful. We can breathe in white light slowly so as to remember to be patient.

We can be patient with goods stacked in the aisles. We can check our minds - what are we there for? We can be mindful of others with empathy - they need to shop too. We can acknowledge that everyone there would probably rather be somewhere else. Expectations breed contention - we tend to have an idea that others should be there for us or are paid to help us, this is not always true and we can counteract this idea by actually developing kindness in our interactions. Our human connection and the interplay in a supermarket can be a very useful exercise and a practice for a better, happier life experience. We become the change we want to be and we are an example to others.

*"Patience is a conquering virtue."
Geoffrey Chaucer, Poet.*

Driving with Patience

When we get into our car, we can take three deep breaths, filling the lungs and exhaling slowly. This is a great first step and we can bring to mind that we are going to put an effort into driving with concentration and concern for others, those in our care and others outside. We can aspire to practice patience in all our

driving situations, especially with the idea of "Do unto others as you would have done unto you." Road rage is now commonplace. If we notice that we are impatient and annoyed, we only add to any road problems that may be occurring. On the other hand, if we want to be part of the solution to road rage, we practice patience and find a calming mechanism as a countermeasure to our anger. If we allow space and we breathe, we do not have to get carried away by the conditions of the weather and the actions of others who intend to cause harm because they cannot cope or are angry themselves. Then we are certainly part of the solution by keeping ourselves patiently in check. The careful consideration that we show, this change that we can engender, will help us and those around us so much, it is certainly a human virtue.

We can practice mindfulness and be aware of others' potential to cause harm, such as speeding or being intoxicated. We can be mindful of road signs, local government and RTA rules, keeping our car legal, road-worthy and safe.

"A moment of patience in a moment of anger saves you a hundred moments of regret." Simple Reminders

Practising Love with Kindness In Everyday Life

As we go about our mundane chores, we can learn to practise changing our thoughts, our minds, by thinking of our life as valuable, as well worth living with ease, love and kindness. Taking precious moments out of our busyness, we can think of a particular person with love and compassion using a heartfelt prayer. We can concentrate and bring to mind someone we truly love and respect and want for them to be well and happy. We understand that they may have problems of body or of mind and we can pray for them, send thoughts of love to them and we can think of ways to help them. We can give loving thoughts and gifts to them. We can make affirmations and develop ways to

always be there for them and care for them whenever and however we can.

To make the change from anger to loving-kindness we start thinking about those dearest to us, we send love to them whether they are close or far away. With heartfelt thought we wish and want the best for them, especially if we may have exchanged angry words. We can understand with empathy, respect and love those who may be experiencing their life in a similar way.

*"Always, pray to have eyes that see the best,
A heart that forgives the worst,
A mind that forgets the bad,
And never loses faith in humanity."
Anonymous*

We can extend our heart and give to our whole family, not only loving them with the idea of kindness but actually thinking of methods to protect and nurture them. We might be able to see not only their good qualities but also their negativities, and still we can accept them for who they are. We can love them unconditionally, being available, and being the best we can be for them. We can allow within ourselves the spaciousness to be brave and to be firm enough to stop them from hurting themselves. We can help them with the best love, the love with enough kindness to place them before ourselves. Or we might feel that the practice of 'tough love', of withdrawing our help, although difficult, has more benefit at this time.

Knowing that forgiving ourselves, especially when we have expressed anger that has caused harm, takes effort, we can still apply the antidotes of love and patience to ourselves and for ourselves. We can persevere and then find the peace we have been missing.

When we find ourselves getting testy with others, it is a good time to take a step back, breathe and skilfully remember loving-kindness, reducing reactions and allowing ourselves to respond with spaciousness.

We can then cultivate forgiveness, forgiving others' verbal and physical expressions of anger. Patiently, in

an ongoing manner, we understand that if we want people to forgive us, we need to practise forgiveness; if we want people to love and be kind to us, we have to practise love and kindness and if we want people to have compassion for us, we need to think compassionately. Development of these healthy virtuous qualities is crucial to our evolving from harmful patterns of thinking into the correct thinking. These practices in our everyday life are our best human virtuous qualities that are well worth the effort.

"Forgiveness is the best form of love... it takes a strong person to say sorry and an even stronger person to forgive...but we all desire peace." Anonymous

AFFIRMING WITH PRAYER

May I understand how necessary it is to forgive myself. In forgiving myself, I can and must forgive others. May I develop the practice of forgiveness, knowing it is the highest form of love. May I live everyday with thoughts of love and kindness towards all others.

"I choose to respond to provocation NOT with anger, resentment or regret, but with equanimity and a focus on positive action." Jonathon Lockwood Huie, Author



Chapter Three

From Depression to Gratitude

"You largely constructed your depression. It wasn't given to you. Therefore, you can deconstruct it."
Albert Ellis, Psychologist

"Whether we are a Dharma practitioner or not, every problem in life comes from our own mind, as does every happiness. The cause of suffering is not external; the cause of happiness is not external. The cause of what we experience is within us, in our mind," Lama Zopa Rinpoche. The mind of attachment is the mind of dissatisfaction. We are dissatisfied when we do not get what we want and we are dissatisfied when we do because then we want more, different or better. We must eradicate this mind of desire and attachment. According to Lama Zopa Rinpoche, if we remove the mind of attachment we will not have constant mood swings and instability.

"Confused about the nature of reality, we see impermanent things as permanent and so we suffer. Nobody gives us trouble but ourselves. We torture ourselves by not having realized reality, by not seeing things the way they really are. We perceive them in a way that is completely contradictory to reality and grasp onto these false appearances. In this way we become the creator of our own suffering," Lama Zopa Rinpoche. We see reality through our lens of anger, jealousy and pride, so we do not see reality as it is. Possessing things is not the problem, having friends or money is not the problem, the problem is the way we perceive them.

Dissatisfaction arises from the mind of desire and attachment. Unchecked dissatisfaction leads to depression. We are overcome dwelling on the dissatisfied unhappiness we feel because our plans don't work, we can't get what we want and nothing ever turns out right. This can then become a way of degrading

ourselves. Soon we start to feel lost and alone, unworthy and discontent.

So, what are we dissatisfied with? Is it our health? Are we unhappy with our physical body or the way it performs? Are we unhappy with our lot in life? Are we short of money? Are we dissatisfied with family, friends or a partner? Are others living up to our expectations? Are we dissatisfied with society? Do others provide us with a nurturing, respectful interaction? Do we expect this? How much in our lives actually brings us happiness? How do we find some happiness? We want happiness and we need happiness and we deserve to be happy. Most assuredly, we can cultivate ideas that make us happy. We can answer all of our own questions wisely, by contemplating to find the answer that best suits us, benefits us holistically and completely.

"Never let the things you want make you forget the things you have..." Anonymous

Depression has a specific cause for each and every one of us. We have set up in our mind recurring patterns of thoughts and feelings that quickly lead to a depressed attitude. These thoughts and feelings are based on our attachment to people, things and ideas, wanting everything to be permanent and exactly how we want it to be right now, just how we desire it and how we deserve it. This can only add to more depression. Loss can also be a factor that triggers depressed thoughts. We might have lost a friend, a job, a way of life, a parent, a pet, our favourite possession... the list goes on.

"My recovery from manic depression has been an evolution, not a sudden miracle." Patty Duke, Actor

Expectations may be another factor. We might have built up expectations of how our life should be, what our parents, the media, school teachers and friends have told us life should be and what we should

expect. If we spend some time reflecting on our situation, the trigger for our depression can suddenly arise and we can then recognise the disadvantages of being depressed. We can see that the symptoms of isolation, laziness, loneliness and unhappiness are not good for us. So to motivate ourselves we begin the process of change, because the answer is not outside, but inside. Depressed thoughts are adventitious and we can remove these negative views and help ourselves to actually be our own therapist. Meditation may help, we might be able to find some quiet time to ourselves. Then we can just breathe and concentrate on our own natural breath, letting go of the pain of how everything should be, but is not.

"People who practice mindfulness show better mental health than 70% of the population on average. People with depression and anxiety have even larger gains than that." Dr Neil Bailey, Research Scientist

We could reflect on our own life in depth. We could think about how every single person has problems or is unhappy with some part of their life. We could think about how we are capable of managing our life and healing unhappy states of mind by ourselves, for ourselves. Or we could seek some help or professional guidance. We could look at our life and see that we are fortunate to have the life we have. We can truly understand what we can do to stop being depressed. All this by sitting in meditation.

Letting go of the past and plans for the future helps us find peace right now. We can find a sense of contentment and happiness in this very present moment. Just 'being present' also means we develop serenity and become gentler. This means that instead of harming, we are more likely to benefit.

*"Let go of the things you can't change.
Focus on the things you can." Anonymous*

The table below shows situations, thoughts and emotions that could lead to depression. However, not everyone who goes through these kind of experiences will become depressed. It comes down to the individual, but you may find something helpful for you in the following list.

Situation/Thoughts	How it may lead to Depression
Dissatisfaction with what we don't have could lead to taking what is not given.	It is mental discipline to refrain from certain minds of wanting and needing. To follow the wanting and needing mind could lead to depression.
Over-indulging in work to gain more money and making ourselves sick...	... could lead to stress and depression.
Trying to rid ourselves of things we have in our lives, such as people who don't conform to our expectations...	... can lead to anger, depression, fighting and at worst mental and physical harm.
Loss e.g. a person, pet, possession, friendship, etc.	If we linger and wallow in the loss we could get depressed.
Disappointment, in ourselves and in those around us.	When our plans fall apart we can feel deprived and could become depressed.
Expectations of others and trying to attain power over others are mentally debilitating actions.	The result could lead to depression.

Situation/Thoughts	How it may lead to Depression
Illness	We can become sad and depressed as we lose mobility and ability, when we are no longer able to do what we used to, or to care for ourselves.
Terminal Illness	Perhaps isolated from others, we start to wonder what our life is about and whether it has meaning. We may regret our life choices and become depressed.
Loneliness—In this tech age where people turn to their phones and social media rather than seeking the company of others, loneliness is enhanced. Or when we seek company based on drinking alcohol and gambling, enhancing addictive patterns, we can feel more lonely than ever before.	Loneliness and distracting ourselves from our loneliness can become a hindrance as we avoid looking into our own minds for the answer. This can lead to depression. His Holiness the Dalai Lama says that loneliness is a creation of our own mental attitude.

There is no happy-ever-after because we all die, yet there is an intangible part of us that will continue on. The physical world is never going to work even though we want it to. Manipulation does not work to get the things we want because we end up spending our whole life trying to control rather than just being contented and happy. Power-tripping over situations and especially people is ridiculous—can we really make

someone else do what we want all the time? Or any of the time? We cannot change others, only ourselves. When we let go of our expectations of others and just let them be, this is a more relaxing and freeing state for us (and for them!).

Really, nothing goes the way we want until we get the mental fortitude to know the truth. Dissatisfaction can be seen as a form of ignorance as we are not accepting of what is going on, nor understanding how the laws of relative truth work (please see cause and effect in "101 Suggestions for Evolution" by the author).

We will not find peace or ease if we are always caught up in how things should be but actually aren't. Courage, firmness, affirmations, these are all so helpful in preventing and overcoming dissatisfaction or depression and in fact any mental disease. Contentment comes from within and should be cultivated as a strong mental quality or virtue.

"Just underneath the beautiful surface of affluence there is a kind of mental unrest, leading to frustration, unnecessary quarrels, reliance on drugs or alcohol, and in the worst case, suicide."

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Suicide is never an option firstly because there is a continuum that goes on (in Buddhism it is the mental continuum), secondly we will continue to face the same or similar problems over and over again until the truth dawns in our minds.

*If you or someone you care about
is in immediate need of support,
call Lifeline – 13 11 14.
Lifeline provides 24/7 crisis support
and suicide prevention services.*

When we look inside ourselves, we can understand that we are worthy, we can feel better, we can overcome all of our negative views or states of mind that we label as depression. We have the right to be happy. Feeling contented is giving up worrying about living up to other people's expectations of us—society, parents, the media. We do not have to be competitive, our sense of self-worth is inside, not outside, and although we might think we are unimportant, we are important, and our life is precious.

When we have time alone and feel comfortable being alone, we can replace our depression time with healing contemplative or meditation time. When we are with others, we can choose our company wisely, not falling into the trap of idle gossip and slander, unhealthy pursuits. Some effort is needed to change our mind from the negative to the positive, so we need to be brave and courageous enough to face our depression and admit that we may be dissatisfied. We might need courage to abandon our depression, courage to let go of the stress of complex situations, courage to live simply. We might need to apply effort, seeing that there are no quick fixes. Starting with simple meditations such as white light healing, or any meditation that emphasizes the impermanence of our thoughts, we can see how everything is spacious and in flux. If we spend some quiet time not bombarding our senses, but in finding peace, we could begin to have faith in our own clarity of mind.

*Meditation has been found to change certain brain regions that are specifically linked with depression.
Harvard Medical School www.health.harvard.edu*

Honesty about the Transitory Nature of Everything

Depression is not permanent. We are capable of easing and eventually ending our depression. We can with honesty recognise what is making us unhappy now, and we can analyse what will make us happy now. We can try to have a simple, natural life, using real

thoughtfulness to establish the best quality of life we can have without neediness. If we understand that everything ends, we can focus on what is important and what makes us happy right now in our life, since we are the one living it.

'The more simply some people live their lives, the happier they appear.' Paraphrased from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Buddhist Master

Developing Thoughts For Others

With humanity understanding our own condition, we can develop empathy for sufferers of depression. We expand our understanding to comprehend the suffering that others experience.

Developing empathy helps us to understand that we are all in this together, and that we all become dissatisfied or unhappy with certain parts of our lives, or our situations in general. Empathy and compassion will develop into the ability to transform unhappiness to happiness, this is a necessary component for all of us living through our many experiences especially in this modern age.

Equality will help us because it shows us how we are equally experiencing the pain of being depressed and it is a sincere feeling from our heart that gives rise to compassionate action for other sufferers of depression. We should source short-term and long-term solutions to our problems which do not resort to artificial means such as drugs, alcohol, or escaping into impermanent pleasure-seeking activities such as traveling and holidaying. It is more important to live now without seeking band-aid treatments which may be expensive and not useful. Blame and transference onto others are not helpful either because each of us are responsible for our own mind and our own actions.

Everyone wants comfort, all of us want pleasant thoughts and experiences. We all want pleasant sights and smells, but the lack of these should not lead to

depression. We can remember thoughts of simplicity, as well as sympathy for others in that we are connected and dependent on each other. This helps us in the development of the 'good heart', so necessary in today's world. Inspiration can come from all those people who give their time, their experience, their effort, and their money to benefit others. We ourselves may wish to help others with depression, loneliness and homelessness, to give medicine and technology that improves lives. This humanity is an inclusive and expansive perspective.

Self Compassion - Change in Behaviour Begins with a Change in the Heart

Through developing self-compassion, we are developing a healthy sense of self, free of both extremes of egoism and low self-esteem. We might recognise that there have been times in our lives when we had either low self-esteem or egotistic self-obsession. What were our thought patterns around these self-habits? When we are being egotistic we are self-righteous, prejudiced, judgemental, jealous and narcissistic, discriminating against others. When we have low self-esteem, we berate ourselves, call ourselves names and put ourselves down. In truth, these two ways of seeing ourselves are painful and extreme. If we are honest, we can see these are just thought projections and we can let them go. In this we are the same, neither better nor less than anyone else, we are connected, and our happiness depends on each other. Just to feel this human connection can help us develop a healthier attitude to life in general.

Through having loving-kindness for ourselves and accepting ourselves as worthy, we can let go of the two extremes and begin to look after ourselves, to respect and care for ourselves. This can flow on to others. These same thoughts of selflessness and care are not weakness but a strength of character, a self-quality.

"If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete." Jack Kornfield, Buddhist Teacher

"To cultivate genuine compassion, we need to take responsibility for our own care and have concern for everyone's suffering - including our own." A Force for Good: The Dalai Lama's Vision for our World

To evolve, we can have confidence in our qualities, be kind and have self-compassion rather than be overly concerned about our appearance. Even if we are unhappy with our body, we still have inner qualities, which are our best possible advantages. We see that we do not become better human beings by altering or trying to improve our image, but by living a meaningful life that holds good inner qualities and values. We can become free of the high self-esteem that pulls others down and the low self-esteem that pulls ourselves down.

CONTEMPLATIVE THOUGHTS

Like me, everyone wants to be happy.

The qualities of my inner nature are compassion and love. I want to develop those qualities and I effect the change necessary to do this.

May I make the positive cause to get the wholesome effect I want.

"One should love oneself in order to give love to others." Lama Yeshe, Buddhist Teacher

Self-discipline and Integrity

Self-discipline at its core is the practice of **non-harm** to anyone, then integrity will arise. It is the freedom of allowing ourselves to have space in our minds to form the ideas of control, respect, awareness and the intelligence of our worth and humanity. Integrity aligns with our willingness to be honest with ourselves and with others, our all-encompassing holistic approach to life.

We can try to develop self-discipline and have respect for others in dependence upon the understand-

ing we have of morality. In most spiritual systems, there is a component of morality and as a being with intelligence, it is essential to use a system that will help us interact with others on a respectful and caring level. We can have helpful, honest interactions with others with integrity. But most of all, it helps us personally to grow and to be true to ourselves.

"Self-discipline involves acting according to what you think instead of how you feel in the moment." Anon.

In everyday life, we help others when we care enough to be honest and respectful. His Holiness the Dalai Lama says that we think of discipline as stressful, but at its essence, it is the creation of virtue.

The mind of integrity is about being part of the solution rather than part of the problem. What we present on the outside is what we are cultivating on the inside, that is, practising non-harm, checking and being attentive to our body, speech and mind actions. We attempt not to impinge or intrude on others. We recognise and remember that stealing, lying, harming others and thinking of ways to hurt them is detrimental to ourselves. We harm our mind and our outward demeanour by acting unethically and immorally with harmful intentions.

"Self-discipline is when your conscience tells you to do something and you don't talk back."

W.K. Hope, Author

We can consider not lying to our family and friends, not stealing from employers, from the government, and in general from anyone. This can only be done by an examination of what is incorrect and immoral and what is the correct ethical attitude and behaviour in our interactions with others. By positive thoughts and the practice of scrutinizing our actions, we can become our own most virtuous friend and acquire a real sense of belief, strength and confidence.

*"Integrity, the choice between
what's convenient and what's right."
Tony Dungy, American Football Player*

AFFIRMING WITH THOUGHTS OR PRAYERS

Today may I speak the truth.

*Today I will be completely honest with myself, may I
check my thoughts of neediness and intrusiveness.*

*Today I can notice that when I take something that isn't
offered to me it isn't helpful for my practise of self-
respect and self-discipline.*

*May I practise restraint with my body, my speech and
my mind.*

*May I try not to overreact or to speak without having
the space to consider the consequences.*

D
O
/
A
C
T



S
A
Y
/
T
H
I
N
K

*Wisdom is knowing the right path to take.
Integrity is taking it. Integrity: soundness of moral
character; the quality of being honest.*

Worthiness

Worthiness is the idea that each being has qualities and is able to develop these qualities. It is also having enough confidence in ourselves to be able to live in morals and ethics.

The idea of self-worth is not about our appearance or how much money we have in the bank, it should be about a strength of character that lies in the values and qualities we possess, that we can develop and cultivate especially when we interact with others.

We can evaluate our feelings and emotions, noting that if we intend harm to others then this is not a worthy or good intention and will bring only unhappiness. If we can find positive ideas and helpful ways to be a conducive presence in people's lives, then this makes us worthy and gives us a sense of meaning in life.

If we do believe our own inner goodness and character are dependent on our moral conscience, then we do not need praise or fame but we are able to accomplish tasks for others, based in the confidence of our own self-worth. Thus we do not always want gratification for the ego, but we can rest in the quality of being ourselves, our true selfless, unselfish, thoughtful self!

We can cultivate within ourselves an idea of self-worth based on the quality of equality. In the 1960s this became a world-thought and helped many to gain a sense of self-worth, wanting a peaceful, happy world for all races and creeds. This continues today through the individual expanding this idea to all others. Happiness and worthiness are linked and are integral to our humanity.

*"An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity."
Martin Luther King Jnr., Civil Rights Advocate*

Expectations arise in the mind if we see others as only being there for us, as the ones who will pick up all the pieces for us when we fall apart. If we think others are there just to make us happy, it's as though we do not have a responsibility or even a right to make ourselves happy. We may feel unworthy, and when we have expectations of those people and how they should be or behave, we push that agenda as a force. Willingness to consider alternative views of inner worth will help us to bravely see and understand the world with wisdom. Unworthiness can be reversed by letting go of every expectation we have of others and taking on the responsibility to help ourselves and embrace others without criticism and judgements.

Interdependence is the reality, whether on a microscopic or macroscopic level, whether within an individual or within a community, whether within a cell or throughout the whole universe, everything depends on other things, we depend on each other, nothing and no one is independent.

Introspection and thoughtfulness can make us confident and happy, and we can try them as an alternative. We can look inside ourselves to understand that we are worthy and that we can feel better, content with the qualities we have, qualities we can cultivate so that we can overcome all of our negative incorrect views.

Responsibility

Nothing says responsibility more than respect, care and love for oneself and others. In this we are equal. Responsibility for others cannot be achieved if we are not prepared to give up blame and the feeling of unworthiness. If we are responsible for our own actions, whether negative or positive, then we can really make a responsible effort to cultivate the qualities necessary to be of value. With ethical thoughts and the idea of

no-harm, we make honest progress. We might provide comfort or sustenance, love and companionship. This should not be considered a burden, but an opportunity, and we feel happier and contented with our human attributes to face whatever occurs.

When we blame and complain, we alienate people. If we take the responsibility to look at our own mental and physical unease, we can then look at others with empathy, knowing that we are responsible to give and find happiness. Each and every person can recognise some form of mental or physical suffering. We should not want to add to their problems. Therefore, we should not blame them or complain to them, or about them, especially to parents or family, we should try honesty. Acceptance of others and their life is respect and wisdom. If we can be honest and responsible then we are able to be steadfast, caring, respectful and mature, to cope in all circumstances using integrity.

To conclude, what we need to do is to stop negative blame and negative complaining, and create positive happiness and give joy - this is respectful care and responsible action.



RESPONSE-ABILITY

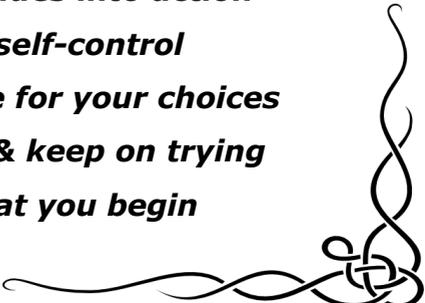
Transform values into action

Practise self-control

Be accountable for your choices

Do your best & keep on trying

Finish what you begin



Responsibility
 Honesty
 Attentive
 Non-harm
 Morality
 Respect

Attentive
 Responsibility
 Integrity
 Honesty

Sincerity

Responsibility

Morality
 Non-harm
 Responsibility
 Honesty
 Attentive
 Non-harm

Responsibility
 Honesty
 Attentive
 Non-harm

R
E
S
P
E
C
T

Respect
 Sincerity
 Integrity

Responsibility
 Honesty
 Attentive
 Non-harm

Responsibility
 Honesty
 Attentive
 Non-harm

"You are always responsible for how you act and what you say, no matter how you FEEL." Anonymous

Gratitude

Gratitude for ourselves means that we are happy to be alive with whatever circumstances and conditions we are experiencing right here and right now. But how can we possibly be grateful if we constantly think we should be cared for and that we should be given all we want? If we can remember the many kindnesses that our family and friends have given us, we can cultivate a real feeling of gratitude that can develop and align with deep respect and love for them. We can feel we are fortunate in many circumstances, and recognise that these good fortunes actually come through the kindness of others, the experience of the value of the interconnect-edness of human beings.



Words are used to communicate and sometimes there is more than one meaning for a word, so to help others understand the true meaning of the words we

use, we should attempt to be specific and truthful so as to convey how we feel. Saying a thank you with genuine feeling from the heart is a great gift. It certainly makes us feel better and it gives happiness to others. Gratitude for everyday gifts and help is important as charitable people are necessary and often we are dependent on them to live comfortably. We may not expect people to be kind but when they are we should recognise it and express thanks. If we give, whether it is time, money or care, we would be happy with a smile and a thank you. So, we can always be 'on-guard' and give a big smile and a thank you when appropriate.

*"If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough."
Meister Eckhart, Philosopher*





10 Steps to Self-Care

1. If it feels wrong, don't do it.
2. Be honest, tell the truth.
3. Don't be a people-pleaser.
4. Rely on your own good judgements.
5. Never speak badly about yourself (or others).
6. Don't be afraid to say "no" and don't be afraid to say "yes".
7. Love yourself enough to be kind to yourself.
8. Let go of what you can't control.
9. Stay away from drama and negativity as much as possible.
10. Live simply and live with happiness.

Chapter Four

From Anxiety to Empathy and Love

Anxiousness - an uneasy state of mind usually over the possibility of an anticipated misfortune or trouble.

It seems in the world today it is quite difficult to find some relief from being anxious or worrying about problems. Anxiety and fear can be destructive, increasing our focus on ourselves and our situation in a narrow way, they are anti-serenity. When anxiety and fear are not present in our minds then we have peace of mind and serenity is possible.

By recognising our fears, seeing them with honest evaluation, we can begin to eliminate their cause. If we fear loss or are anxious about our life circumstances, then we should honestly question what makes us so troubled and perhaps we can find an honest answer. What is my fear? Am I frightened of others? Of my future? Is it lack of money? Maybe lack of adequate housing? Is it a self-concern or is it about my family and/or friends? Is this a worldly concern? Is it about leaders of the world? Of course we want solutions and want quick fixes, however it may take time and thought. It is a process to work with ourselves, for ourselves, to live a stress-free life.

We need to make a connection to our fears and recognise exactly what it is that makes us anxious. We can gain awareness and understand with firmness that we can remove the problem. Instead of the confusion that accompanies anxiety, worry or fear, we can see clearly the real origin of our concerns and use an anti-dote of our own making to overcome them.

"Interrupt anxiety with gratitude." Anonymous

Fear - an unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of danger, pain or harm.

Mindfulness and attentiveness can help. Being concentrated on how we feel is the attention we can use to recognise any physical sensations related to our worries. We can then question: why and what effect does all this worry have? Do we blame others? How do we behave when we feel like this? Does this affect or impact on others? Can we get help from others? It is important to step back and understand that the uneasy, fearful emotion is ours alone, but we can always find a solution.

Through mindfulness, being present, we can apply open-ness to the emotions of fear and anxiety, cutting through by no longer getting carried away. When we allow ourselves to experience fear and anxiety from more of a distance, and apply this again and again, we can reduce the uneasy emotions over time.

*"We need to focus on our minds as being as deep and vast as the ocean, and when fear or unhappiness arise, let it pass like a swell on the ocean. The swell does not disturb the calm and quiet depths."
Alexander Berzin, Buddhist Scholar*

Fear of others is often exaggerated by our surroundings, the circumstances of society and the connections we make. The things we hear may just be gossip. Though they may make our whole community or group of friends uneasy, they are often baseless with no foundation in truth. It is always important to be selective in the company we keep and we can check ourselves before we act or speak so as not to arouse fear from others and fear in others. In interactions we should be honest and respectful, as of course we would appreciate reciprocation of the same.

In this technological age the emotion of fear is exaggerated by the media, by the constant replay of world and local news. Technology shows us that worldwide we all have similar problems and we are interconnected.

If we have worry about loved ones or family, then it is more important to find skilful ways to help them with patient understanding and honesty. To use an example by Alexander Berzin, whatever happens to our loved ones or us is the ripening of a huge network of causes, as well as historical, social, and economic forces. Accidents and other unwished for things will happen and we cannot protect our loved ones from them, no matter how careful we may be and how much we advise them to be careful. All we can do is try to give sound advice and wish them to be well and give help when it is asked for.

"One of the best anti-anxiety medications available is generosity." Adam Grant, Organizational Psychologist

No anxiety or worry will help, however the development of calmness will definitely help us to cope with whatever we find confronting. Has worry and anxiety ever changed the outcome? Continually over-thinking any problem leads to more worry and fear and causes us emotional pain. Do we in our own way face any anxious moment with the clarity of knowing that we can be our own best doctor? We create our own future – do we create what we need as a better solution or just more moments of anxiety? To get a positive outcome we could think about our circumstances and accept what it happening, then we can proceed with a view that is helpful for everyone.

Emergency Methods & Using Meditation to Overcome Worry

When we have time in our day, we can remember to breathe. We can remember to remain still and allow spaciousness to pervade the mind and imagine light flowing through the body. Over time, this ability will increase into an effortless method and helpful solution. Then, if and when a panic attack occurs, we may be able to draw upon the memory of light with the breath,

picturing it, allowing it to wash over us and clear away the panic, anxiety and worry.

Awareness of fear, the feeling and the emotion of it, noticing it and allowing it to subside, will help to reduce the force of the emotion over time.

We can use the logical methods described to be honest that the cause of our anxiety lies within ourselves, therefore the effective pain-free outcome lies within as well. Here is a list of the main points, or affirmations, which we can apply when we feel anxious:

I can come back to the present moment and let anxious or worrying thoughts of the future and the past dissolve away. This feeling will pass. These anxious thoughts will pass. This situation will pass.

If I allow the emotion and stress of worry and fear, physical pain and problems can arise, so I will make the effort to confront my fears and breathe them out so they dissolve away.

If I can fix it, why worry? If I can't fix it, why worry? Is this a worldly worry? Does it really matter? Chances are I cannot change things at the global level!

There is a part of me and those I love that will continue on, no matter what happens. The indestructible essence of being is there forever, in this all of us are the same so from now on I will never give fear to others.

Awakening is peace beyond extremes.

This is the fourth seal that the Awakened One taught.

Awareness is ideal nature, the natural state of awareness, clear luminosity.

Our aim is to awaken to the truth.

This is done anywhere, any time we are forced to face the reality of our emotions and pain.

Breathing

Breathing is simple and natural and we all do it. To remember we are simply breathing in the present moment can help us focus in times of stress, times of anxiety and worry. This natural process can aid us

though our whole life because it brings us back to the moment, to be in the moment, and to feel a sense of being in the present. Awareness of the very breath can help us to be grounded in this moment of time. It can help us to create a sense of peace and space when we recognise our natural breath. Saying to ourselves, "Just breathing, in and out," has a calming effect.

*"We can't breathe in the past, we can't breathe in the future, we can only breathe in the present moment."
Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo, Buddhist Teacher*

His Holiness the Dalai Lama recommends, especially if we are emotionally distressed, to sit and watch the breath, counting 21 rounds of breathing. So when we are in the throes of an emotion we will remember to rely on our breath. When we become familiar with breath meditation we realise it is the antidote to getting carried away by our emotions, and we stay in the moment, present and contented. We use the natural breath to come back to the here and now, to heal our emotions, simply allowing the painful negative emotions to flow away on the out-breath.

According to breath work, Tai Chi, Tibetan Yoga and Indian Yoga, when emotions become overwhelming our muscles tense and we tend to hold our breath, but if we can breathe through whatever stress, pain or difficulty we are experiencing, then we ease the secondary suffering and find it easier to cope with our situation.

NOTE TO SELF: JUST BREATHE

Simple Breath Awareness

Relax your posture, sitting comfortably with your back straight. If you are sitting on a chair, let your feet rest flat on the floor a short way apart. Place your hands in your lap, right hand on top of left, thumbs touching. Let your tongue rest behind the upper teeth. Close your eyes.

Take three deep breaths in and out of the body. Then breathe normally. Focus your mind on the sensation at the tip of the nostrils as the air enters and leaves the body. Stay aware of the full inhalation and exhalation.

Count the breaths in cycles of ten if that helps to stop the mind from wandering. For example: "Breathing in, breathing out, one. Breathing in, breathing out, two," and so on, up to ten. Then start again at one.

If thoughts appear, do not react to them or get involved. Just note them and let them go. Kindly and gently to yourself, keep returning your attention to the breath. Let go of thinking about the past and making plans for the future. Just try to be in the present moment and keep returning your attention to the breath.

When you feel calm and focused, return your attention to the room, open your eyes, and finish the meditation there.

Contemplation

We choose our topic for contemplation, perhaps to see what is really worthwhile in our lives. Is it useful for our wellbeing to apply checks and balances to ourselves? We can keep an eye on, or police, our inner thoughts and emotions as well as our outward speech and bodily actions by beginning the practice of contemplation. Is it helpful to pull ourselves up if we feel we are being over the top? If we are aware, through contemplation of any situation, we can see that harming ourselves or others brings unhappiness and an on-going sadness, even depression, in our life.

Contemplation: the action of looking thoughtfully at something for a long time.

Concentrating, musing, thinking about what can make us better, happier human beings and then acting accordingly means we become the mindfulness

operators. Then we can be of the greatest worth to ourselves. Careful consideration of our actions can follow our time in contemplation.

*"Millions saw the apple fall,
but Newton asked WHY."
Bernard Baruch, Financier*

We can control or master our afflictive emotions that manifest as uncontrolled behaviour. Just because we have previously given in to bad actions does not mean that we cannot change. *We can* apply the brakes and control our own minds, our actions, and our speech. We can consider and reconsider any course of action, checking that it is going to benefit us. We can have thoughts that are more honest and natural, that arise from contemplation of our shared experience, humanitarian thoughts that can help us act and transform from the mundane to the extraordinary.

"Dadirri is inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness. Dadirri recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us... It is something like what you call 'contemplation'." Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, Ngangiwumirr Elder

In quiet contemplation, we can question ourselves: "Why? Why did this or that happen?" We can look at life in general, look at why we are alive and why we all die. Honest reflection and preparation will guide us and assist us to be truthful and live life with kindness and love. It brings us to live in the moment, not in the past or in the future. Contemplation is not just a mental exercise to be practised occasionally, but is a tried and true method to free our mind and body from the suffering of clinging to fantasies and lies.

We can contemplate the thought: "Do unto others as you would have done unto you." We can think about our interactions with others, and actually make the

conscious effort not to harm them. We harm ourselves by thinking about others incorrectly, then speaking to them harshly, and touching them without their permission. As well as stopping any harm to anyone, we can also begin to treat them with respect and care and develop love towards them and have empathy for them. When we become introspective and guard ourselves from the mischievous monkey mind, we are much less likely to give rise to negative, harmful speech and bodily actions. We are much freer to be our true selves and we are definitely more peaceful, and this attitude of mind is so beneficial to our overall well-being and always begins with contemplation.

"Contemplation is the highest form of activity. The ultimate value of life depends upon awareness and the power of contemplation rather than upon mere survival." Aristotle, Philosopher

We cannot go to the doctor or the hospital to fix our anger or our jealousy or our anxiety. Any drugs available for afflictions such as depression or grief are only a band-aid treatment, covering up the problem for as long as the drug or alcohol lasts, or we can lose inhibitions and act with violence and become uncontrolled. While self-control can be a long-term solution, we can put effort into contemplating our actions, our minds, to give rise to thoughtfulness, introspection, peace and a healthier lifestyle, it is our choice.

"Causality (also referred to as 'causation' or 'cause and effect') is the agency or efficacy that connects one process (the cause) with another (the effect), where the first is understood to be partly responsible for the second, and the second is dependent on the first. In general, a process has many causes, which are said to be causal factors for it, and all lie in its past. An effect can in turn be a cause of many other effects, which all lie in its future." Wikipedia

Meditation

We sit in meditation as a way (a cause) to get the result of letting go of harmful, unhappy, negative ideas. We become able to let go of anything that might be harmful for ourselves that can arise in the mind in a moment.

Firstly, meditation is to be concentrated on the breath, letting go of over-thinking. The result could be to just find some peace and relax, however what we find can be truly surprising and inspiring. If we think about healing white light, breathing in and out, letting go, this can bring healing to emotional and physical pain. The choice is up to us - can we set aside quiet time to become more introspective and reflective? If we can, then what can arise is the ability to be calmer and kinder to ourselves and then to others around us.

Healing meditations are so useful if we place an emphasis on being kind to ourselves, and start with simple meditations to get used to the process. As we go methodically into the depths of healing or reflective meditations, what unfolds inspires us, which can then help us to continue.

Meditation has been scientifically proven in numerous studies to improve physical health and emotional wellbeing as well as help people prioritize their lives. Resilience, positive outlook, attention and generosity play an important role in wellbeing, and can be cultivated in meditation, according to the Centre for Healthy Minds at the University of Wisconsin. These four actions describe the skill of wellbeing that we can all cultivate using meditative techniques. Meditation is the application to our mind that can soothe away emotional and mental pain, because when we look within, we are able to transform ordinary habitual thinking, negative thinking and harmful ideas. We can realise an ability and a continual process that can bring happy beneficial change.

Some people have said that meditation is not that much of an advantage when we are in the middle of emotional upheaval. But even if we do not feel we can

formally meditate, we can check out our breath and sit in quiet time instead. Perhaps we can try to understand why the expectations we had of our life were not fulfilled, and we can begin to let go of holding firmly to how we think things should be. It would be extremely beneficial to ourselves and others for all of us to spend some quiet time alone to reflect and meditate.

According to Healthline.com one study found that 8 weeks of mindfulness meditation helped reduce anxiety symptoms in people with generalized anxiety disorder, along with increasing positive self-statements and improving stress reactivity and coping.
US National Library of Medicine

Beginner meditators can start with short sessions of ten to fifteen minutes. Then as concentration improves and the body becomes used to sitting longer, we can extend sessions up to an hour, or for as long as we can maintain good focus. Sitting on the floor is not immensely important. It is better that we are able to maintain concentration rather than trying to squeeze ourselves into positions the body is not used to. If we are sitting on the floor, it is important to find a comfortable cushion that elevates and helps our spine to remain straight. A straight-backed chair may be an alternative.

We meditate to truly let go of any emotions that are characterised as anger, lust, greed, hatred, jealousy and pride. But this means patience and commitment, so for whatever reasons we meditate, we will find the tranquillity to be free. Audio recordings and books are great tools for meditation. Meditating in a group is often helpful, especially when starting out. It is important to find the style of meditation that suits you and with advanced meditations our situations change.

Some important points for meditation practice:

- Find a conducive place to meditate
- Try not to meditate after a heavy meal
- Make sure that it is at an appropriate time such as when there is less noise

- Wear comfortable, loose clothing
- Let your house-mates know that you do not want to be disturbed
- Prepare a comfortable cushion or chair to sit on
- Motivate your meditation to benefit yourself & others

"The most effective tool I have when I'm alone is meditation. The great thing about meditating is that it allows you to fully feel and experience pain without identifying with it. Meditating teaches you to notice pain and then to notice that the pain is not you, it is just an experience you are having. That's a critical distinction and can really help separate us from spiralling into negative thoughts." Misha Collins, Actor

Honesty

Being honest, pursuing honest evaluations in our minds will always lead to open interactions with others. Our honesty does not have to be brutal, we can find ways to have open, truthful interactions with ourselves and others so that we have well-rounded conversations that enable us to make healthy life connections. We can begin by honest heartfelt care, telling ourselves what is really happening. People trust honest people. People respect truthful and open interactions. Deceit brings about separation, loneliness and isolation. With a lack of deceit there is open-hearted dialogue and we can make good connections with kind consideration of others' experiences.

Why do we need to be truthful and honest with ourselves? Honesty should help us to learn, change, prepare and to understand "why?" This is the truth of life – the very fact that everything, everyone, 'ME' – we are all transitory. We can accept this truth or we can lie to ourselves. It is our own responsibility to understand the truth of life and death and of everything meaningful. It is confronting to be so honest, but it also helps us to value what we have at this time. Honesty is a quality that is an intelligent ability and certainly freeing.

Equality

Equality - the state of being equal, in status, rights and opportunities.

When we think about equality from the human perspective it is that we all equally want happiness and do not want to suffer. The evolution of our mind's consciousness depends upon knowing this equanimity. In our human existence, we have the opportunity to benefit living beings. Whether we take up these opportunities and be of benefit depends on our cultivation of equanimity, our sense of equality, empathy and compassionate love.

"Equality comes from treating everybody the same regardless of who they are." Matthew Bomer, Actor

When we are free from our pride that judges and criticizes, we allow the wisdom of equality to arise, and we are able to enrich the lives of ourselves and others. We no longer look at beings as less than or more than ourselves. How extremely kind it is to develop this form of equanimity, to relinquish our 'puffed up' sense of self. By finding a common ground, recognising equality, we can develop the thought of loving-care for others, we can love all beings. This feels natural, it feels real and as though this is the ideal way to develop and evolve and become an increasingly better human being.

*"If you judge people you have no time to love them."
Saint Teresa of Calcutta, Catholic Saint*

Empathy

Empathy is a human quality that arises when we truly understand the pain of another, we actually feel and connect with them. When we consider and reflect

on empathy, we can see how interconnected and equal we all are, since we all experience some form of pain and suffering at some point in our lives. We all want happiness and contentment, we all do not want to have problems. We are dependent on each other, we need help from others and we can help others with empathy, truly connecting and understanding them. When we are sick, we can comprehend that there are people who are sick like us, have the same problem, or are even sicker than we are. These thoughts give rise to compassion and actually wanting to take their suffering away.

Empathy is the capacity to understand or feel what another being (a human or non-human animal) is experiencing from within the other being's frame of reference, i.e., the capacity to place oneself in another's position. Wikipedia

Some people actually feel the pain of others even when they are not feeling ill themselves. Maybe we can emulate these people knowing that this is exactly the same quality we possess. With heartfelt empathy towards fellow beings, we can truly understand the sickness and the afflictive emotions of another. We are the same under the skin, we can all get blood diseases or aches and pains in muscles and bones and with the wisdom of empathy we note this sameness. Often it is easier to have empathy for family, but if we look around, all of us have some form of problem that we can identify, connect with and have empathy for.



**EMOTIONAL
EMPATHY**
Makes us feel
what somebody
is feeling



**COGNITIVE
EMPATHY**
Allows us to
understand,
rationalize & help

Impermanence

In the here and now we could use the truth of impermanence as a practical method of analytical reflection. In one moment we can let go of unhelpful emotions like anxiety and their related incorrect thinking by knowing both the emotion and the thoughts are transitory and fleeting. Noting their temporary nature we quickly drop them and bring about some instant ease. With attention and mindfulness we learn to live in the present—not planning for the future nor remembering and amplifying the past. Right now, the present, is the only time we have some control, it is where we are experiencing the results of our creations and creating new experiences.

*"The concept of impermanence is that it is an undeniable and inescapable fact of human existence."
Urban Dharma*

At times we struggle with impermanence. We want everything to stay the same and we are surprised when it does not. We are extremely unhappy with changes to our comfort, physical changes, and the dissatisfaction we find in 'mortality'. Yet the view of impermanence is a particular type of truthful, common-sense approach to life.

*"The beauty of temporariness." Zen saying
Temporariness is the state or quality
lasting only for a short time.*

Understanding impermanence may not be easy but being honest contributes to finding freedom from anxiety. What we are anxious about is impermanent, comes and goes, as does the anxiety itself. The constant flow of experience is not concrete and solid even though it might seem to be at times. Even when we look

back at past experiences we can re-frame them with a different perspective. The fact that everything is in flux means there is nothing we can permanently fixate on. This should bring a sense of relief and relaxation.

According to Positive Psychology, "Living with balanced mental states that are founded in impermanence counteracts the negative cycles of rumination that cause many people to suffer." (positivepsychology.com)

**All compounded phenomena
are empty and selfless.**

This is the third seal that the Awakened One taught.

Is there anything that stays as it is forever,
unchanging, independent?

No object is independent, every object depends
on other things for its creation.

Nothing is fixed, solid, concrete,
even though it might appear like that.

A little bit of analysis and we can see that
whatever we can think of
is dependent, changing, in flux.



Chapter Five

From Addiction to Honesty and Mindfulness

Geshe Konchog Tsering,
Tibetan Buddhist Teacher:

The addicted person has to see the faults of their addiction (the loss, disadvantage or uselessness of their addiction). Without complete conviction that their addiction is completely an anathema to them, no program or one method will bring about healing.

Only when they view their addiction as the enemy to be destroyed, and when they see their addiction as having no good qualities whatsoever, can many methods be used to help them, because they are ready to listen and follow advice. Ways in which addiction is harmful include: it wastes time, wastes money, destroys family and friends, and isolates them from society.

*"Addiction is a serious disease; it will end with jail, mental institutions or death."
Russell Brand, Comedian*

Understanding Our Addiction

We all try to find happiness in our lives, but we can become addicted to substances because we want to prolong feelings of euphoria, or suppress unwanted feelings. We have the right to be happy, but the best way to find happiness is by being present now, not covering up any form of unhappiness or feeling of inadequacy. Happiness comes from making the best of the life we have right now, living free of mind-altering substances, living naturally.

Often we rationalize why we are addicted—loss, grief, low self-esteem, loneliness and seeking company, and so on. But really, we all experience these at some

time and not all of us become substance dependent. If we can recognise the reason why we use alcohol or other substances, this honesty will enable us to transform the addiction and be free. Faith and belief in ourselves only ever comes from being honest about our situation.

Substance dependency is not the way to heal what we are experiencing in our lives. It is a mechanism for coping that just creates more problems to be experienced later—more dependency and more negative results such as health problems. We might even steal, harm ourselves or even wound others when we are under the influence of substances. If we are in this situation, we need to look for a healing process that works for us, seeing a psychologist or going to AA/NA etc. This is better and more conducive to healing than becoming involved with people who are also dependent on substances and who act in a negative, harmful way.

We tend to involve friends and family in our addictive behaviour, we find friends who are okay with what we are doing, we stay with people to sponge off them, we get into a cycle of bad habits, and we let others influence us in order to stay dependent. It takes bravery, and courage again and again, to develop the state of mind that wants to feel well and happy, free to live in a natural state. Happiness does not come from outside or from our addiction, in fact it comes from inside our own mind. We have to want to be free!

"Life is way too short to spend another day at war with yourself." Anonymous

Because the reality is that we are connected and dependent on others, we gravitate towards those who influence us and enable us to continue with substance abuse. Empty spaces, loneliness or life's problems cannot be filled or fixed with addictive substances, but with a change of mind we can be free and live bravely, honestly making the responsible change that is necessary.

Recovery Begins in the Mind

To cleanse the mind of toxic dependency, we can practice a meditation to overcome the habitual patterns that keep the addiction advancing. This reality practice is called purification practice and uses the four "r"s: regret, refuge, resolve and remedy. We can, with the heartfelt thought of regretting our addiction or dependency, take refuge in our ability and the idea to stop our own self-harm and the harm we inflict on others. By resolving to live a better, more meaningful life, which can also mean a life of helping others, this is the remedy that will continue throughout our whole life.

Thoroughly check your inner dialogue: Over-use and addiction to prescription drugs may be a problem we can look at with a truthful discourse within our own mind.

Recognitions that help us to become courageous:
*We can try not to blame others for our addictions.
We can avoid involving people, asking them to get drugs or alcohol for us.
We can stop giving things and money to others that adds to their habits or involves them in our own addictive behaviour.
We can with complete honesty look at ourselves and our situation, and want to change.*

Certainly we can look at any hurt we may have caused others by stealing to uphold our addiction, and the hurt we have caused others by being immersed in the addiction, so we make the change. The altruistic human intention is that we take responsibility, step outside of our problem and actually doing something hopeful and helpful.

*"The message of hope and freedom is that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use and learn a new way to live free."
Narcotics Anonymous, The Basic Text*

Health

Mental and physical wealth is what we should strive for. Respect and love seem to go hand in hand. We should have enough respect and love for ourselves to look after our own body and mind. Our body's food intake and health need care, our mind's stress-free state is maintained by being mindful. To be kind to our own body is responsible care, love and compassion for ourselves. To choose not to abuse ourselves, instead to think of being kind to ourselves, we can care and respect ourselves enough to choose healthy options.

"It is health that is real wealth. Not pieces of gold or silver." Mahatma Gandhi, Civil Rights Leader

People, friends and relatives, find their own ways and methods to care for themselves and we cannot interfere in their choices. Healthy choices for our food intake are advertised everywhere. We could take on board informed discussions about what suits us best. We can choose to care enough, love ourselves enough, to be mentally healthy and physically healthy by being open to changing our habits and our habitual incorrect thinking. Happiness and health go hand in hand to make a well-rounded human being.

Mindfulness

Why is mindfulness such a 'catch phrase' today? It seems that it helps to sell the idea that we really are unaware of how we think and what we are doing. The first step towards mindfulness is to live in the moment and be free of the stress caused by continual over-thinking. Mindfulness is not living in the past and not making plans for the future. Although we cannot capture the present we can be more focused and be aware of living in the moment. Time passes, as do memories and plans. In the present moment, we complete activities with care and concentration. There are many ideas

of mindfulness such as mindful living, mindful eating and mindful breathing, but to choose to do one or all of these types of mindfulness means we must really want to effect change in what may be a stressful life.

Questions we could ask ourselves include, "What am I feeling in this moment? Do I feel like overeating, for example, due to feeling or thinking I am depressed, angry, sad, or resentful? Mindful of these feelings and emotions, I can and will let them go." This is the change we can engender in a moment.

*"We [can] promise ourselves that we shall make all efforts to stop repeating our self-destructive behaviour. To ourselves we might pledge: I shall stop mistreating myself physically by overworking, by eating poorly, or by not getting enough sleep."
Alexander Berzin, Buddhist Scholar*

Mindfulness of the body means not harming our own bodies through taking intoxicants for example, and it means not harming others' bodies. We practise this mindfulness because we recognise that harming ourselves and others has a long term and cumulative harmful effect. If we benefit others, it brings happiness, whereas, if we harm ourselves and others, it creates illness, stress and other problems. Addressing a problem bravely in the moment will help over time and with effort will bring about a wholesomeness and a well-being.

*The mental discipline you can develop through meditation may help you break dependencies by increasing your self-control and awareness of triggers for addictive behaviours.
Addiction Science and Clinical Practice Journal*

Mindfulness can include eating properly, slowly and contemplatively and with the correct nourishment. Mindfulness of the body means becoming mindful of our emotions in relation to the body – not allowing our

emotions to dictate food intake, intoxicants, drug use, prescription drug use, and so on. We become mindful of emotions arising in the body and we let them go.

A study published in Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation cites evidence that mindfulness training can help prevent relapse in people with substance abuse disorders. It does this by targeting the "neurocognitive mechanisms to produce significant therapeutic effects."

Mindfulness helps us to stop doing the same old things that we think will make us happy but which in fact do not make us happy and instead contribute to depression. We remember contentment in which we do not seek continual gratification for the senses. When we are mindful of holding emotions which result in physical pain such as liver and heart problems, we practise letting go as much as possible, and this can lead to mindfulness of our speech, recognition of how often we speak negatively which we should understand as lying or harsh words. Negative speech can come back at us by the dependence principle in that we will be on the receiving end of lies and abusive language and divisiveness.

If we use abusive language and manipulative speech we will be shunned. If we are often just talking for the sake of talking, we will hear constant chatter that does not give us rest or peace. If we use our words to try to separate people, we are never going to have friends. When we lie, people will deceive us and will not listen to us. Often we say the first thing that comes to mind and it can be inappropriate, therefore the practice of mindfulness of speech is beneficial to self and others.

"What we sow, so shall we reap." Biblical Idiom

Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, a Buddhist Teacher, has said that we love or have a liking for thinking in negative terms and the feelings that result mainly

because we are used to these feelings, they are a habit.

*"Shallow men believe in luck or in circumstance.
Strong men believe in cause and effect."
Ralph Waldo Emerson, Poet
All the ups and downs of life, as well as birth, death and
rebirth are the results of causes made. Every day we
create more causes and experience more results.*

Instead of justifying our thoughts and feelings, we can let go of what is negative and uphold what is positive. The power of recognition in mindfulness means that instead of thoughts and emotions having power, recognition of them creates a space to say "I don't have to do the same old thing. I'm breaking age-old habits. I am changing and breaking habitual patterns. I am able to find some freedom."

*"The selfish, they're all standing in line
Faithing and hoping to buy themselves time
Me, I figure as each breath goes by,
I only own my mind."
Pearl Jam (lyrics)*



Being in the Present Moment
WITH MINDFULNESS

Don't just look... **OBSERVE**

Don't just swallow... **TASTE**

Don't just hear... **LISTEN**

Don't just think... **LEARN**

Don't just learn... **EXPERIENCE**

Don't just exist... **LIVE**

Don't just isolate... **INCORPORATE**

Don't just be mind full...

BE MINDFUL!

Chapter Six

From Trauma to Compassion & Forgiveness

Healing Trauma

To begin, we can be open and honest to understand why we are living with the pain of trauma. We might ask ourselves and consider what has caused us to internalise our pain so deeply that we are experiencing such pain. We could immediately recognise what suffering we have experienced caused by war, abuse, famine, drought, loss, mental illness or disease. As part of humanity, with all the feelings and emotions that go with it, we can become aggressive and angry, but this does not help. Instead of using anger to retaliate, we can look at letting go of all of the pain and we can forgive, this only helps us to be free and find happiness. Love and compassion for ourselves is crucial, it is the foundation from which we can build the kinder, more humane being that is oneself.

Meditation can be the application that can soothe away many pains, because when we look within, we are honestly able to help ourselves by seeing the truth. If we seek help from others, we should be prepared to be completely open and honest. Honest open reflection followed by action may be what is necessary because we have decided on the best way to move forward. It may take time and from the depths of our hearts we should want to find freedom from the pain, and have care and love for ourselves.

A psychiatrist or medical practitioner can help us with deep-rooted problems. If, however, we would like to work on it ourselves, then with courageous conviction we can look at the truth of what is happening to us behind all the fabrications and excuses we make up with our mind. We can be open and honest and look with bravery at our experience and heal!

Making Positive Change

If in honest evaluation we can see what has caused our traumatic frame of mind, we can then think about putting an end to this state of pain. Do we understand the cause? Do we understand that this pain is removable? Do we have the firmness to let go of the idea of being a 'victim'? We can let go of thoughts like, "Why me? Why did this happen to me? Why do I have to undergo this?" The idea that we are the only one who has to undergo suffering, this suffering or any other type of suffering, is incorrect and with this empathy we can relate to others and see we are not alone, and this can be encouraging.

With honest evaluation we can look at the present and heal it with the firmness of never having to experience that suffering again. This internal pain can be finished. We have the ability to heal ourselves now, and in an ongoing manner for the future as well. We do not have to experience it again.

If we can undertake and follow such a steadfast thought, and maintain it, we allow all the things around us to change - life and conditions will not be so harsh or difficult. We can then begin to think of others who may have experienced similar suffering, a truly altruistic thought. In each individual's experience, however traumatic, whether it was physical or mental, be it rape, abuse, man-made problems of war, environmental changes, and any circumstance that contributed to our uneasiness and pain, we can realise that we are not alone. Finding stable peace within ourselves can only be cultivated and maintained by letting go of the hindering emotions of anger and hatred.

Blaming others, holding individuals, our environment or communities to account, will hinder our inner peace. Acceptance is a far better approach, for acceptance now allows us to find peace and ease in our hearts and minds, and this is in our own best interest.

"Radical acceptance is the willingness to accept ourselves and our life as it is." Tara Brach, Psychologist

Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is extending compassion to one's self in instances of perceived inadequacy, failure, or general suffering. Kristin Neff has defined self-compassion as being composed of three main elements – self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness.
Wikipedia

We should make an effort to have compassion for ourselves. We do not want the pain of remembering or reliving over and over again. Hiding and avoidance could be something we engage in. However, the best thinking would be ridding ourselves of it altogether and to do this we must accept and forgive. We accept that it happened and is now over and we make huge effort to let go. If we don't we will continue to have the pain of it. Much better to admit that it is in the past. Physically we may have scars but the mental torment is much worse. Meditation may help. Breathing may help. Thinking of others with the same experience may help. Now forgiveness seems like the best advancement in self-compassion and healing, not carrying around the burden of it all. Forgiveness may seem very difficult but there are meditations and advice available in this chapter.

In psychology, Posttraumatic growth is a concept describing positive psychological change experienced as a result of struggling with highly challenging, highly stressful life circumstances. Wikipedia

A scientific study in the Journal of Religion and Health of parents who lost children in conflict, implied that trauma would lead to spirituality which in turn would lead to self-compassion and which would finally result in posttraumatic growth.

Compassion

As a human being, the compassion we have for ourselves and for others has at its core equality and empathy. Knowing we are all the same coupled with our empathetic concern is the best way to feel connected to others and to feel happiness and joy for them.

Compassion is defined as:
*Deep awareness of the suffering of another,
coupled with the wish to relieve it.*
The American Heritage Dictionary, 4th Edition

The biggest component of our life does not need to be the accumulation of worldly goods and objects, but the development of the "good heart". The good heart means we want others to be well and happy, ourselves included, beginning with those close to us. We want for our shared relationships to be beneficial and conducive to a healthier, happier life for each and everyone one of us.

Reflecting on and defining compassion means questioning ourselves - What is compassion to me? What does it mean to have compassion? Why should I and how do I develop compassion? What is the 'good heart'? Is it healthy to develop the 'good heart'?

"There is a nobility in compassion, a beauty in empathy and a grace in forgiveness." John Connolly, Writer

Compassion means we recognise in ourselves that we are dissatisfied, that we suffer from many different ailments, physical and mental, and that in our search for happiness, we often make others unhappy and sad, causing them pain. When we make conscious attempts to be kind, compassionate and loving towards our friends and family, we *feel good*, healthy in fact. We can see the real interconnectedness of the human condition and it is the cause for the 'good heart' now and for the future.

Motivational speakers and Buddhist teachers often talk about everything coming from the mind. For the 'good heart' view, this is absolutely true. When we recognise that everyone - each one of us - has some form of suffering in our lives and we believe that each one of us is the same, equal, in that we wish to be free from suffering, then we can actually make the change to find ways to be happy. We can have empathy for others' situations and further develop this empathy into compassion, leading to the transformation, the changing of our mind, to *not thinking about ourselves and our own selfish needs*, but the ability to think of others, and recognise our human connection. We can put others' needs before our own, especially if they are unwell or need our support. Life certainly changes because we physically change and our ideas change. We are never really alone, we share and have in common our human condition.

"Compassion is the very foundation of why we exist and the practice of the good heart and developing the altruistic mind is aimed at deepening our understanding of compassion and invigorating the compassionate potential that exists within us all."
His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Buddhist Master

Our human evolution depends upon the idea of equality, both at the surface level and at the deepest level, because we all want happiness, to be well and loved. When we have empathy and compassion for others' pain and needs, it is the remedy and quality to extend past our own corner of the world to the world at large. It is always our own responsibility and in our own best interest to develop all good positive attitudes and thoughts.

"When "I" is replaced by "we" even illness becomes wellness." healthyplace.com

Forgiveness

Why forgive? Who do we forgive? Do we really need to forgive and do we want forgiveness? Do we need to forgive ourselves? Do we forgive another?

"Forgiveness is a gift to your heart." Anonymous

One of the reasons we might want to forgive someone is because holding a grudge causes us pain. Another reason is that we may have regret and sorrow at our own misbehaviour. We are human beings and our purpose is to be happy - not with sadness holding grudges or retaliating. Holding onto pain from the past and not forgiving means continuing a circle of suffering that goes on and on, hurting ourselves, and we can become stuck in the past that cannot be changed. We want to move on but we cannot. As Einstein said, "Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

Truthfully consider what and who we should forgive. If we can answer with honesty and find some thoughts of forgiveness, then the one who benefits from letting go of the pain is us ourselves.

In our society today revenge, seeking justice and judging others are common dis-eases. Holding onto these concepts means we continue to hold onto the pain of hatred. With forgiveness, we can let go of these thoughts and feelings and find some peace. Forgiveness entirely benefits the self. Forgiving ourselves we could look at what motivates us - our anger? Not getting what we want? With thought and honesty, is it jealousy? How about pride or ego as a motivation, a push behind any of these actions? What we are feeling or have felt is the real pain. We should find a countermeasure to any of these emotions and meditate on the recognition and have the forgiveness for ourselves.

Levels of Forgiveness

His Holiness the Dalai Lama speaks of three levels of forgiveness.

1. Lower Level - letting go of anger for our own inner peace. Keeping anger in our hearts means we extend the anger, it becomes stronger therefore there is more suffering.

2. Middle Level - we make a distinction between the action and the person. Similar to the Christian idea of the sin as opposed to the sinner, we can have justice without anger, without hatred. Forgiveness does not mean accepting the wrong doing of the other person, but we can seek justice without anger.

3. Higher Level - respect and compassion. The other person is still a human being so they should still receive our respect and compassion. We therefore harbour no ill-feeling towards the other person.

"Thinking that we are punishing the person by being angry with them is wrong - we are actually punishing ourselves."
Bhikshuni Thubten Chodron, Buddhist Teacher

Reflection on Forgiveness

Firstly, we stop over-thinking the past. We begin to forgive others and forgive ourselves when we have regrets about the situation but we don't keep going over and over it in our thoughts.

Secondly, we focus on what makes us happy in the present. Helping others, breathing, healing with meditation, all help us to let go and live in the present.

Thirdly, we use reflection, meditation and affirmation to return to the present moment and forgive. As the forgiver, we can have peace of mind for ourselves - we cannot change the other person, but we can accept how others are, that is within our ability.

Simple Forgiveness Meditation

If the idea is to genuinely forgive with the heartfelt wish to let go of pain or the uneasiness of guilt, then we must be alone, find a quiet time and place, and begin with the breath. If we desire to let go of judging or blaming or guilt from the past, bitterness and anger towards others, we go through this process with confidence and a sense of firm capability. Slowly we progress through each point:

1. We start by giving up - letting go and releasing all pain, breathe it out.

2. We seek no recompense or punishment. We breathe calmly in the present moment.

3. We forgive the behaviour (the action not the actor). We breathe and feel a sense of forgiveness.

4. We seek equanimity, knowing that everyone wants happiness and doesn't want suffering, just like ourselves. We relax with the natural breathing process.

5. We empathise with the action - have we also caused harm to others? Does anyone else experience this pain? Does anyone else have this experience? We must not judge or criticise. And we breathe in and out.

6. We allow compassionate forgiveness to arise in our own mind. Sitting with this feeling, then coming back to the peaceful breath.

Forgiveness Meditation

This Forgiveness Meditation is based on His Holiness the Dalai Lama's three levels of forgiveness.

We begin by sitting comfortably in the meditation posture with the back straight, feet flat on the floor and hands resting right on left with the palms up and thumbs touching.

We breathe, focusing on the natural breathing process, in and out. In the present moment we let go consciously of the outside world.

This particular forgiveness meditation is an opportunity to give up the painful feelings and grudges that we have been holding onto. We feel strongly that we are going to make the most of this special time.

Begin by considering how holding onto anger towards somebody just extends that anger, making more anger in ourselves and therefore more suffering. Notice how we have been suffering from anger by holding onto it. We can begin to have compassion for ourselves by letting go of that anger, breathing it out of the body with the out-breath. Letting it all go... Breathing the anger out...

Anytime during the meditation, if our emotions become overwhelming, we can just come back to breathing, watching the breath, and letting emotions go on the out-breath.

Next we can think of the person we want to forgive. We separate the harmful action they did from the person themselves. While we may still consider the action as negative, we can start to forgive the person. Releasing anger, resentment and hatred towards them, we start by breathing white light into our body, and releasing all feelings of anger and hatred on the out-breath. We continue breathing in healing white light until our whole body and mind are filled with light and open-ness. When we are ready, we start to send white light to the person we want to forgive, healing any pain between us. Sending them white light, we understand that it is time to forgive them as a person.

Once again, we come back to the breath and let go of any painful emotions that might be arising from the practise of forgiveness, breathing them out as we exhale.

Lastly, we consider that the person we want to forgive is a human being just like us, who also deserves respect and compassion. We no longer want to harbour ill-feelings towards this equal human being. Instead, we accept them as a fellow human who deserves compassion for their suffering and as an equal, worthy of respect. Spend some time to allow feelings of acceptance, respect and compassion to arise. When we can equalise ourselves with others we can respect them as we would like respect, as we share our human condition. When we are ready, we return our awareness to the room and finish the meditation there.

Chapter Seven

Understanding Grief Honestly

The greatest thought we can have in a grief experience is that *everything* and everybody is transitory and impermanent. We have a great opportunity to take a look at the deeper meaning of our lives. We can question ourselves: "Why? Why did this happen?" To look at life in general, to look at why we are alive and why people die is an honest, beneficial activity at this time in particular. Our experience of the grief and loss may seem so physically permanent and painful at present, but grief and loss are impermanent and will change and fade with time. If we can take advantage of the opportunity, we can contemplate the deeper truthful meaning of our life and all life. But our whole body and mind seems to rage against this injustice. We really don't want this change, it is too much, too large. On the other hand we may be thinking it is a release or end to pain and suffering. But we could wisely look at the truth of what has abruptly been brought to our attention.

"It is difficult to accept death in this society because it is unfamiliar. In spite of the fact that it happens all the time, WE NEVER SEE IT."

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, Psychiatrist

By using this time we will lift the veils of delusion about the cause of life and the end of life and why *all* of us go through birth, sickness, old age and death. We all seek happiness from life, and we have always wanted to extend moments of happiness, so we really do not want this type of confrontation at all. It can be a great shock when we are faced with the impermanence of everything, especially the loss of someone close.

All compounded phenomena are impermanent.

This is the first seal that the Awakened One taught. Compounded means made of parts, combined, created, and therefore subject to dissolution and decay.

Bodies, cities, civilizations, planets—
they all break down over time.

We may be thinking, "Poor me! Why me?" But if we could drop a 'victim' sense of self, and understand that all people experience death and the loss of someone close to them, then we will transform the thought of "I" and "me" to the thought of, "How can I help the person who has died?"

We could think, "May they be well and happy, peaceful and at ease." We could make up our own prayer, saying the person's name. If we said a prayer each and every time we missed the person who has died, or each and every time we wished we could still have them in our lives, then our words and worrying thoughts would transform into something beneficial for the person or pet we are grieving over. We would also see the transitory nature of the way we view 'the loss', which is about ourselves, about our own feelings and emotions of fear and worry. We will develop a deeper understanding that all people must go through the death process. We could be completely honest and remind ourselves that we too will have to experience departure from this life's experiences.

"I have learned not to fear death – that death is a part of a new life." Keanu Reeves, Actor

Our empowered view and our action of prayer will be an enlightening and liberating experience. It can free us to become more open to a spiritual and beneficial aspect to our existence. To find meaning in life one should understand oneself and to understand oneself is to know the impermanence of oneself. It is an incredible thought - being human and being intelligent.

*Remember this is a
natural process and
we will continue*

*Cry and
remember
who you are
praying for*

*Accept in
order to
heal*

GRIEF

*Give time to
the process and
remember who
you are
praying for*

*Be honest,
feel sad and
remember
who you are
praying for*

*When we die, this life will dissolve
just as a dream dissolves when we wake up.*

Stages of Grief



1. Denial and Isolation

2. Anger

3. Bargaining

4. Depression

5. Acceptance

Loss may take many forms - a divorce, loss of a job, a pet, an abode or mobility.

Whatever it may be, we go through these stages of grief and we should.

We should do it in our own time and take time to do it. Find comfort in professional or like-minded people who help to understand this process.

We may be upset and angry that we lost someone. Then we can see that these emotions are focused on us, on our loss, not the person and their ongoing welfare. Or we might be feeling guilty because we wanted them to leave or die. Once again, these are our emotions and we can change them. We do not have physical control over the loss but we should pray, we should change our minds, then we will be peaceful internally and have heartfelt care for the person we have lost, sending our love to them wherever they are now.

*"Yes I understand that every life must end.
As we sit alone, I know someday we must go.
Under everything just another human being,
Stay with me let's just breathe."
Pearl Jam, 'Just Breathe' Lyrics*

Why are some children kinder and some not so kind? Parents understand that children are different from each other from the moment they are born. Where can that difference possibly come from? Could we consider the possibility that we came from another life and when this life ends, we will go to another life? Einstein said, "Energy cannot be created or destroyed, it can only be changed from one form to another."

Rebirth:

There is cause and effect,
therefore it gives rise to rebirth.
There is creation and dissolution of mental actions,
therefore this gives rise to rebirth.
Mental constructs remain in the mind and create
rebirth, another life.

Thought about another way, can you really be the most compassionate, kind and disciplined person through only the actions of one lifetime? We could at least begin, and then continually develop these qualities until omniscience! Our minds have three levels, gross, subtle and most subtle. The gross mind uses the senses and the subtle is the dreaming mind that does not use the senses. The most subtle is what continues from life to life. Perhaps this will help us to feel a continued connection to the person we have lost, and use that connection to pray for their wellbeing and happiness into the future.

Can you name an object that lasts forever?
Even if you think the universe lasts a long time,
it will eventually end.
Impermanence, change, entropy, flux,
these are the natural state of all beings,
objects and events. This is a relative truth.
Everything is impermanent when we are bound on the
karmic wheel of life after life.

Chapter Eight

From Selfishness to Selflessness

Compassionate Listening

With an open heart and mind we concentrate with compassionate listening while we are sharing time with someone who is emotional and uneasy, being aware that the person who is angry is experiencing uncomfortable pain.

We can think: "This person's anger is not about me, or even if they are unhappy with me, I don't need to become overwhelmed. I can reduce my emotions in the situation." One way to reduce our own emotions in the situation is through using the breath. In order to stay present with the breath, which is natural, yogic (therefore a healthy alternative) and simple, we can repeat to ourselves 'breathing in, breathing out, I remain in the moment.' This kindness to remain present in the situation can and will be very beneficial.

"Compassionate listening is a very deep practice. You listen not to judge or to blame. You listen just because you want the other person to suffer less. The other person might be our father, our son, our daughter, or our partner." Thich Nhat Hanh, Zen Teacher

Being emotional ourselves does not help the situation, however much spacious love we have. Instead of focusing on the person's words, we can hear the suffering behind what they are saying, and in those moments be present with empathy and love for them, with conscious concentrated effort that is focused through careful attention.

Being present with patience and love with kindness is essential in compassionate listening. Patience helps us not get over-involved but at the same time to keep persevering. Love helps us to think less of ourselves and

more of the other person kindly and with respect, creating space to see how the person is suffering. It might be useful to remember that we are not getting paid for our help and we are not listening so that we may be liked, instead we want to be helpful and compassionate enough to reduce the suffering in the situation.

Rehashing the past and fearing the future can become painful and stressful, both for ourselves and the person we are listening to. However, these worries can be stopped in the present moment by coming back to focusing on the breath together, we breathe together. We might want to gently take the hands of the person we are listening to and breathing in and out together we show and have a sense of real connected empathy. When we have seen the person as suffering and reduced our own emotions in the situation, we can be present with the person and bring them into the present: "Let's find a way to move on. Let's leave the past behind and let's find a way to be happy right now, at peace and at ease." Breathing in clean air and breathing out our anger and pain allows it all to dissolve away.

Wise Attention

Attention: The action of dealing with or taking special care of someone or something.

Wise attention means that we can focus with a clear mind that is open to hearing and listening to another with wisdom. We can ask ourselves "What is really going on here?" Wise attention is really hearing others and asking "What is the heart of the problem?" For example, is the anger covering up grief or loss? Or is it frustration with a particular life situation?

The approach is to listen but not to get involved emotionally. The idea we have is about suggesting, not fixing, it is about listening openly and not allowing ourselves to be overcome by any emotion, not judging

the person, but wanting instead to transform the suffering nature of the emotions, listening with wise attention and knowing that it is of benefit. For some people, complaining about problems is a symptom of deeper suffering and can be heard with compassionate listening and wise attention rather than problem-solving and creating more frustration on both sides.

With deeper listening, we can help others to understand that anger or whatever emotion they are feeling is in essence temporary, therefore it is beneficial to let go. With attention we are aware of when we start to suffer from emotions and when we can breathe or pray. If an affirmation changes the suffering then with this wisdom and attentiveness we can let go. We can provide the space for discussions and the means for open-hearted understanding of our relationship with each other, our shared companionship.

"Give whatever you are doing and whoever you are with the gift of your attention."

Jim Rohn, Motivational Speaker

We need to remain calm, patient and aware of what is going on around us. We may even need to relocate to another space in order to calm down and possibly get away from anyone who is trying to interfere in the interaction because of their own agenda or emotions.

Sometimes when we listen well to others, it brings to the surface our own issues and negative emotions. Recognizing the pain and realizing the qualities of empathy, we can let go, we can come back to the here and now just by using our own natural breath.

If we feel exhausted it is because we are becoming emotional, so we can check ourselves and think, "I cannot help others (loved ones) when I am emotional myself, or when I am fixated on an outcome. Maybe I am over-thinking and trying to find a solution. I am capable and able to listen in this situation."

One of the most helpful ideas we can suggest is to help people with their own prayer, affirmation, understanding or special place or activity that aids to overcome the afflictive emotions and transform their suffering. Reflection and meditation can help too. Problem-solving is not always the answer, just the space to allow the worry and pain to subside is enough. Loving open-heartedness is the key and preparation for compassion and the knowledge that we can help each other.

*"Our sorrows and wounds are only healed when we touch them with compassion."
Jack Kornfield, Buddhist Teacher*

Parenting

Scientific studies have proven that if we care for and love our children, they have a much better chance when they are older to interact well with others in a positive human way. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said that if children receive maximum affection when they are growing up, then they will grow to be better human beings.

We can remember that our children have their own karmic imprints and propensities, and thus they have their own life to live. Remembering our own childhood, if we recall situations that may have been negative, then we can empathize with our children and their concerns and problems. On the other hand, we could have had very positive interactions as a child, therefore we can encourage our children to emulate those ideas or we can allow them to be creative.

We can show our children love and kindness, whether we were shown love and kindness or whether we were not. Relationships always take effort and the interactions we have with our children can affect us and them for many years. So it is important that we recognise our children's qualities and not dwell on their negativities, but always be there to advise, give support and love when needed.

We can remind ourselves that our children are not an extension of us. They are children and will become adults in their own right and they may or may not live up to our expectations. It is up to us to let go of any and all expectations. We do not want to live our lives through our children. We do not want to push them into activities they do not like or want to do. We do not want to give up our lives, expecting rewards or love in return from our children, or for them to give up their lives for us.

We can be aware of our children's needs as they may not be our needs. Saying no can be the greatest loving kindness we might show our children. As parents, we need to be the responsible one in all situations - someone has to be! In this age of speed and instantaneous gratification, it is very helpful if we include 'quiet time' into our family life, experiencing a time with no distractions, when we are simply watching the breath or contemplating together. We can develop time well-spent, happy and playful interactions with our families.

Suggestions:

- Finding natural surroundings and picnicking together (without technology)
- Watching the sun rise
- Looking at the stars and moon
- Meditating in peaceful places, visiting the sea-side if you live in the country, or visiting the country if you live by the sea
- One hour a day of meditation will help your child manage stress and become happier, kinder and more open to the rest of humanity

"If every eight-year-old in the world is taught meditation, we will eliminate violence in our world within one generation."

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Buddhist Master

My Happy Place Meditation for Children

This is the My Happy Place Meditation. You can sit down or lay down. Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Breathe out slowly. Imagine a place where you feel really happy. If you're hot, imagine a nice cool place like a snowy mountain. Take your time to build up a picture of all the snow. Maybe you're drinking your favourite cool drink as well. Imagine yourself looking far and wide – what do you see? You no longer feel hot, you feel happy and cool. If you're cold, imagine laying out in the warm sun. Imagine you're lying on a nice blanket with the sun warming up your toes, your hands and your face. You don't feel cold anymore. You look around, what can you see? You feel happy laying in the warm sun.

If you're feeling bored, imagine an interesting place, like a jungle. Look up in the trees, you can see a monkey swinging on a vine from tree to tree. You can see a snake curled up on a branch, but you feel safe, you aren't worried at all. Imagine going to a water hole and seeing the animals drinking. You see howler monkeys, ocelots and jaguars. You are safe and happy to be in such an interesting place.

If you're sad, imagine a happy place where your friends or family are with you. Perhaps you're drinking a nice cool drink with them, or maybe you're having a hot drink together. Imagine yourself looking far and wide in this happy, friendly place. What do you see? You could go to a place like a beautiful park. Imagine yourself walking on nice soft grass, hugging a big old tree, picking a flower, running to a set of swings, and swinging as high as you can go. You don't feel sad anymore, you feel better and happier being in this place.

Keep imagining this happy place. Wherever you go in your meditation, it makes you feel good. Maybe you can go to one place today and one place another day. When you're ready to leave, you feel better and happier.

Environmentalism

*Living in Harmony with the Planet -
"Ultimately what makes the mind satisfied is enough.
We don't have to have greed and go to extremes, life is
complicated by always wanting more, therefore we
don't confront the issue of protecting the environment,
we just create more waste."
His Holiness the 17th Karmapa, Buddhist Teacher*

Positive Environmental Actions

- Check all your taps – make sure they don't drip
- Turn off the lights when you leave the room
- Plant a tree
- Be part of Clean Up Australia Day
- Buy Australian-made or "Fair Trade" labelled products ensuring ethical treatment of workers
- Recycle paper, plastic and cans
- Recycle toys and books at a local library or crèche
- Put your used bathwater on the garden
- Use paper bags to wrap lunches instead of plastic
- Compost old food
- Make your own yoghurt to avoid plastic packaging
- Grow a garden
- Use low-energy light globes
- Consider using rechargeable batteries
- 1/3 of Australian rubbish comes from packaging so check what you buy. When you buy something think: Can I reuse the packaging? Is any part of it recycled?
- Use paper wisely – write on both sides
- Be careful what goes down the drain – oils, fats and chemicals end up in our rivers
- Leave rock-pool animals and plants in the water – they die when left out in the sun
- Remember to bring your cat in at night so it doesn't hunt other animals
- Don't light fires
- Care for the bush, remove rubbish

- Care for wildlife – if you see an injured animal, call WIRES or a local vet
- Think about walking or using your bike instead of driving
- Set up your own recycling centre at home. Separate your garbage and put items in the correct bins. Separate waste into paper and cardboard, bottles, cans and cartons, and general waste.

Vegetarianism

Meat is the very flesh, the very body of animals, sensate beings, who have feelings and experience intense pain and suffering during their lives, and incredible fear and suffering when they are slaughtered. It is our humane responsibility to stop animals from suffering and look after them, not kill them, not eat them - we would not want to do this with our pets.

*"I don't eat my friends."
Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo, Buddhist Teacher*

In our own way, we can withdraw our support of the slaughter of animals by being vegetarian. Every being should be cared for properly with loving kindness and compassion, and should not be killed for any reason, certainly not for the sake of feeding the greed of ourselves and our family, not for profit, and not for what we think is healthy. As human beings with the intelligence that comes from knowledge, why do we not see the sensations and feelings of animals? We may see it in our pets, and have compassion, wanting to stop their pain. So we should be able to extend this view to other animals then many species of animals and animals on the endangered list who are threatened and endangered because of the desire for monetary gain.

The suffering of being an animal is seen by a compassionate being as unbearable, and we should do everything that we can to alleviate that suffering. There are so many alternate sources of nutrition available,

that it is completely possible and now quite easy, to live a meat-free life.

Consider that by eating meat we are participating in taking the life of cattle, chickens, fish and sheep, etc. With knowledge and understanding we can recognise that their life is absolutely just as important as our life is to us, that they suffer fear, and that they know their life has come to an end.

Liberating, protecting and caring for animals is directly opposed to killing and eating them. It is not just rescuing them or buying them from a shop, but it is placing them somewhere safe and making an effort that they do not get caught again. It is being mindful of what we do with the animals once we buy them or rescue them. For example, if it is a dog or cat, we have to be mindful that we will need to look after them for a long time once we have rescued them.

We could imagine what it would be like to have a hook in our mouth or to be caged so tightly we can't even move, so with intelligence, we could consider the wise alternative of becoming vegetarian. The benefits of vegetarianism:

- Wards off heart disease
- Keeps weight down
- We can live longer
- We can have more energy
- Reduces the risk of food-based diseases
- We can avoid toxic chemicals
- Helps reduce famine
- Helps prevent environmental destruction
- Saves animals
- Saves money

*"If you don't want to be beaten, imprisoned, mutilated, killed or tortured, then you shouldn't condone such behaviour toward anyone, be they human or not."
Moby, Singer*

In conclusion we could consider the following guidelines as an overall practice:

The Sixteen Wholesome Ways

As described by His Holiness the 13th Dalai Lama, 1923

1. Respect others' religious beliefs
2. Practise your own beliefs
3. Give service to your parents
4. Respect those with learning
5. Respect elders and those of good character
6. Be loyal to your friends
7. Be friendly and helpful to everyone
8. Be sincere
9. Keep your eyes fixed on righteousness
10. Be wise in the consumption of food and wealth
11. Appreciate and return kindness shown by others
12. Be honest and non-deceptive in financial dealings
13. Be impartial and without jealousy or envy
14. Do not listen to the advice of people with inferior attitudes (such as seeking gain by illegal means)
15. Speak softly and only after deep consideration
16. Have perseverance and an open mind

"There are no accidents in my philosophy. Every effect must have its cause. The past is the cause of the present, and the present will be the cause of the future. All these are links in the endless chain stretching from the finite to the infinite." Abraham Lincoln



"When I was 5 years old, my mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down 'happy'. They told me I didn't understand the assignment, and I told them they didn't understand life." John Lennon, Lyricist



"None of us are getting out of here alive, so please stop treating yourself like an afterthought. Eat the delicious food. Walk in the sunshine. Jump in the ocean. Say the truth that you are carrying in your heart like hidden treasure. Be silly. Be kind. Be weird. There's no time for anything else." Richard Gere, Actor



*"Come to send, not condescend
Transcendental consequence
Is to transcend where we are
Who are we? Who we are."
Pearl Jam (lyrics)*



*"If it is there, it can also not be there."
Michael Jeffreys, Motivational Speaker*