

*Buddhism:
Ancient Medicine
for Healing Modern
Minds*



*Genla Venerable
Thubten Tenzin*



Always in appreciation Ven. Thubten Pema



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These books are free but still should be treated with care as they are a liberation method. If you would like a copy sent to you, please contact us.
Thank you.

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Chapter One

Introduction



I hope that you understand what the word 'spiritual' really means. It means to search for - to investigate - the true nature of the mind. There's nothing spiritual outside. My rosary isn't spiritual; my robes aren't spiritual. Spiritual means the mind and spiritual people are those who seek its nature.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche



What is Buddhism?

His Holiness the Dalai Lama:

Usually I make three categories of Buddhism - the first part I consider as Buddhist science; secondly Buddhist concept or Buddhist philosophy - which comes on the basis of today's reality; and then Buddhist religion, because of the possibility of the elimination of all negative emotions, then it is worthwhile to start some practice.

Patrul Rinpoche:

Buddhism is a voyage towards wisdom, serenity and goodness.

Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche:

One is a Buddhist if he or she accepts the following four truths:

All compounded things are impermanent.

All emotions are pain.

All things have no inherent existence.

Nirvana is beyond all concepts.

These four truths, spoken by Buddha Himself, are known as "the four seals".

Thus Siddhartha discovered that impermanence does not mean death as we usually think, it means change. Anything that changes in relation to another thing, even the slightest shift, is subject to the laws of impermanence.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, from Nagarjuna's Teachings:

Buddhism is conduct and view. The conduct is non-violence and not harming. The philosophical view is interdependence.

Bikshuni Thubten Chodron:

What is the essence of the Buddha's teachings? Simply speaking it is to avoid harming others and to help them as much as possible. Another way of expressing this is, "Abandon negative action; create perfect virtue; subdue your own mind. This is the teaching of the Buddha."

Genla Venerable Thubten Tenzin:

Buddhism may be said to be pessimistic but in fact it is realistic. The Buddha described a perfect path to wellness.

As you read through these chapters please refer to the Glossary of Terms at the back of the book for explanations of any concepts you do not understand.



Introduction

For us as Westerners, we could see Buddhism not as a psychology, not as a philosophy, not as a religion, but as healing.

Through examination, meditation, study and learning the Buddha's liberating words, we can experience our true way of being, our natural, clean purity of mind. We are able to lift away the unsatisfactory, negative veils of ignorance that cause suffering, and awaken a true, spiritual, wellness way of being. What I mean by ignorance is that we are totally unaware of our own special, compassionate, kind, loving, naturally abiding, true state of mind.

Buddhism is about seeing and awakening to who and what we really are, our own full potential, and our interconnectedness and interdependency with all beings in this and other universes. Buddhism is about transforming our dissatisfied mind into a happy, contented, peaceful mind/awareness.

It has been said by many motivational speakers that everything comes from the mind. "If we believe, then we can achieve." Maybe these speakers have some understanding of the coalition of the body and mind, that by transforming the mind, liberating our mind of wrong views, we simultaneously free the body of suffering states of illness and pain.

Questioning and examining our minds now is necessary. This mindfulness helps us to live in the moment, not in the past or in the future. This is not just a mental exercise to be practised occasionally, but is a tried and true method to free the mind and subsequently the body from the habitual pain of clinging to fantasies and lies. Of particular help is the thought: "Do unto others as you would have done unto you." This means thinking about your interactions with others, and actually making the conscious effort not to harm other beings. We have in the past and we do harm others by thinking about them incorrectly, speaking to them harshly, and touching them without their permission. As well as

stopping all harm to everyone, we should also treat others with respect and care. Right now to heal others we must heal, care for and love ourselves.

This may not be easy, and it does take effort. It means looking very closely at ourselves, with honesty. We can begin by reflecting, contemplating and meditating on the nature of our life. Is our life suffering? If we answer yes, then this life, this precious life, is an excellent opportunity to find out why the Buddha is regarded as the Doctor to heal all ills. The Buddha is the Doctor who prescribes the medicine: the relief from mental or physical suffering. The Buddha's teachings are how to do this and how to achieve Saint-like qualities. The Teachers or Sangha administer the medicine (the Dharma) which is all the teachings about the truth that exists and the reality that is there for all of us.

Aren't we all suffering? By merely having a body we suffer. By knowing we are impermanent and that we will die, we suffer. In this, we are all equal. Through examination and acceptance of this process we can then behave towards ourselves and others in a caring, loving and responsible way. Here we begin our path to freedom and open up to ultimate reality, the wondrous possibility of our mind free of all afflictive emotions and delusions.

More and more we will reveal and unravel all the intricate causes and ways we have created to find happiness. We have sought happiness in others, in objects, in attachments, all of which are temporary. If we are honest with ourselves, we could recognise what true happiness is and gain real simplicity and contentment. So what is holding us back? Here, we must continue with reasoning and questioning, this is the power of our own intelligence. Why is it necessary? It is important to analyse and question any teachings on our path to freedom, especially the teachings of the Buddha. At least put a little effort into it, have joy and when an understanding comes, be happy!

When we laugh at ourselves and are happy, not taking ourselves so seriously, we become more in tune with our own light, honest and aware nature. By not holding and cherishing ourselves above others, we can drop away all acting and all pretence. As Shakespeare said,

“All the world is a stage and all the persons on it are merely players, women and men each have their own entrances and exits...”

The study of Buddhism focuses on healing our delusions, it is not esoteric and it is not mystical, it is fundamental reasoning. It is simply the truth. Some people may be drawn to Buddhism by dissatisfaction or unhappiness. Some of us may see qualities we want. Others still may wish to heal themselves and want that same medicine for others, for loved ones, for even those considered enemies. This means that we stop harming ourselves and others, and we practice the methods to benefit all.

Why is the Buddha the Doctor? The Buddha understood that all beings are born and die in cyclic existence. He understood that if this life, this one cherished life, was a permanent state of being, then we would not die. The very best attitude to life, therefore, is to make it meaningful. The medicine (the Dharma) that the Buddha gave was useful, pertinent, the healing path/way to stop continual cycles of birth and death. We need to ask ourselves: Why is it that I am going to die? Is there something that continues? The answer is yes, the mind continues. So we need to have a healthy, happy mind, not just in the present, but in the future as well. This is achievable by letting go of past misconceptions, and letting go of the ego intellect that thinks “I know all the answers”. It is achievable by being open and penetratingly honest with ourselves, so that we can seek out a way to get well and happy.

If we could be open to the reality of our existence, then we will be liberated from unpleasantness, suffering and pain. If we study at all, we can study the awakening path, the awareness of our inner universe. If we meditate, we can reflect upon and contemplate our life, the meaning of life, and how to make it truly meaningful.

The healing methods (meditations) contained in this book are easy to use. They should be helpful to begin the path to the cessation of unhappy states of mind. The Holy Being Lama Yeshe said that Buddhism is not cultural, it can be used by all human beings because it is about our minds. He also said it contains all the necessary methods, medicines and antidotes for us to be well and happy.

We have the right to do this, and we are worthy and need to do this. We can help ourselves become peaceful and recognise our true, naturally-abiding state, our loving, kind, empathetic and compassionate nature. All of our problems have solutions. All of our problems are creations of our own minds and must be remedied by using our own minds (please see "Exploring Mind" by the author). To help us there is the truth, and we need to learn about the truth through study. This clears away lies and fantasies. We then need to reflect on the truth through meditation using the Dharma teachings. Finally, we experience that truth and path for ourselves through realization and awakening. There is no time like the present to begin! I pray this book helps you as you traverse the path.

Chapter Two

Depression



*Why be unhappy about something
If it can be remedied?*

*What is the use of being unhappy about
something if it cannot be remedied?*

Shantideva



The Reason for Depression

Depression is the term coined to describe dissatisfaction. 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? Do we have enough money to do what will bring us short-term happiness? Are we dissatisfied with family, friends or a partner? Are others living up to our expectations? Are we unhappy or worried about our future? Are we dissatisfied with society? Do others provide us with a nurturing, respectful attitude? How much in our lives actually brings us happiness? How do we find some happiness? We should ask these questions because we should find happiness. We deserve to be happy. We must find ways or develop ways to become happy for longer periods or even our eternal future!

Depression has a specific cause: In past lives and in this life we have had attachment to people, things and ideas, wanting everything to be permanent, to be just how we want it to be, setting up in our mind recurring patterns of thoughts and feelings that become easy habits and consequently lead to feeling depressed. It is all the 'needy mind' at odds with our true, perfectly qualified nature.

Depression is a mental health disorder.

According to the medical fraternity, the possible causes of depression are biological, psychological and social sources of distress.

WHAT DEPRESSION FEELS LIKE—MIND PLAY

We might be feeling that we just can't find an answer. We might be feeling more and more disappointed and dissatisfied. We might be feeling sad, emotional, and unworthy. We might feel lost and alone. These emotions feel so real and although we don't want to, we cling onto them.

WHAT FACTORS TRIGGER DEPRESSION

Loss may well trigger depression. We might have lost a friend, a way of life, a parent, a pet, our favourite possession... the list goes on. Expectations are 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 it could be or would be, and often life doesn't turn out that way... This leads to loss again, and we can feel deprived, bereft.

When we spend some time reflecting on our situation with a calm mind, very often the trigger for our depression will suddenly arise. This is where honesty is so important. There are as many reasons for depression as there are mental factors. As we all have minds, this is where we begin, with our own mind, rather than focusing on external parameters. According to Bhikshuni Thubten Chodron, there are fifty-one mental factors which are categorized into six groups. Please see the Glossary for the five omnipresent mental factors.

CONNECTION

We already know that isolation, laziness, loneliness and unhappiness harm us. These are debilitating situations we may find ourselves in. It's true too that our consciousness and behaviour impact and affect others around us. A good way to motivate ourselves to act against our depression is by seeing that very connection we have with others. This could lead us into worthwhile tasks that are humanitarian, useful and meaningful.

ANTIDOTES, FOR REFLECTION

We might be able to find some quiet time to ourselves. Then we could just breathe, and concentrate on our own natural breath, letting go of how everything should be, and accepting everything as it is, then we would feel more peaceful (*see Simple Breath Awareness*). From there we could look at 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 appreciate the fact that we are fortunate to have the life we have. We could think positively, "I want a happy, meaningful life. With all honesty and wellbeing for myself, I will be happier and contented." Saying uplifting, positive affirmations may assist in strengthening our intentions.

LIVING IN THE PRESENT MOMENT

Letting go of the past and all our plans for how our life should be in the future helps us find peace right now. We can find a sense of contentment and happiness in the present moment. Just 'being' also means we're calmer and gentler to others. This means that instead of harming anyone else, we're more likely to benefit them because our attitude has changed. When we let go of our expectations of others, and just let them be, it's more relaxing and freeing for us (and them!).

MEDITATION

Meditation has been scientifically proven in numerous studies to improve physical health and emotional well-being as well as help people prioritize their lives. By looking within in meditation, we can find our own spiritual path. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama says, "our own innately loving, kind, compassionate nature". Start with simple meditations such as white light healing, or any meditation which notes the impermanence of our thoughts, how everything is in flux.

Depression has adjuncts—mental and physical laziness, sleepiness, agitation—all of which are one lifetime's opposites of the unbounded qualities of

true mind, the subtlest refined existence of our awakened mind.

FEELING WORTHY

We need to look inside ourselves to understand that we are worthy, we can feel better, we can overcome all our negative states of mind and depression—we have the right to be happy. Part of feeling worthy is not worrying about living up to other people’s expectations of oneself—we don’t have to measure up to society, parents, the media, etc. Our worth is inside, not outside. We might think we are unimportant, but the universe is within us. So we are important, our life is precious. We have the potential to be an Enlightened Being. Our confidence grows when we start to treat ourselves and others with respect and loving-kindness, simply because we have the intelligence to be and do great!

THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

We really need some kind of spirituality in our lives, spirituality as opposed to a worldly, materialistic, wasted life that ends in death. Depression could be about a spiritual crisis. It arises because we don’t reflect, we don’t look at the reasons we experience events—we don’t look at the causes we have made. Instead, we’d rather blame others. This is a perfect opportunity to look intelligently at why we are experiencing certain effects, so that we could take responsibility for the problems in our lives, and stop being a victim. We need to take a good, hard look at ourselves.

According to the law of cause and effect, we are experiencing the results of previously made habitual attachments, anger, and not knowing the consequences of causes (please see the three poisons in the Glossary). For example, a cause for depression might be mentally wishing harm to others. But we can remove the cause that leads to

depression, that is the power of our mind.

EFFORT

When we have time alone and feel comfortable being alone, we can replace our depression time with healing 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 policing effort is needed to change our mind from negative to positive, it is however a worthwhile pursuit for our mental health.

COURAGE

We might need courage to face our indulgences of self-pity and depression and admit that we are dissatisfied with our lives. We might need courage to let go of the trigger of our depression (such as grief or loss), courage to let go of the stress of a complex, over-indulgent life, courage to live simply. We might need courage to see that there are no quick fixes. If we spend some quiet time not bombarding our senses, we could begin to have faith in our own innate clarity of mind. Bravery is a quality of our true nature that we need to utilize now.

FURTHER ANTIDOTES

The mental pain we feel should be healed by correct 'antidotes' which are the opposite of the negative thoughts and emotions. For example, we replace anger with loving-kindness and patience. We patiently apply loving concern to others who have the suffering of fear and anxiety. We apply the antidotes of courage and effort when we feel unworthy. The truth of selflessness means not holding onto a sense of "I" continually, but allowing space in our minds to consider others. Loving compassion for others is the best antidote to heal ourselves and the best way to feel connected empathetically. Our attitude and ability then is

imbued with qualities and improvements.

WHO IS DEPRESSED?

Our mind experiences depression so we have the ability to heal depression. It is an inner experience. The mind is likened to a continuum of moments of thoughts. If we want future moments to be positive, we need to create those positivities *now*. If we want to have a happy mind in the future, we should create that happiness now. The first step to happiness is getting to know our own mind, meditating peacefully in a quiet place, allowing space, giving ourselves some peace. All of us need to heal, in the present all of us can make our future better.

IMPERMANENCE

Depression is not permanent. We are capable of easing and eventually ending our depression. We can analyse what is making us unhappy now, and we could analyse what will make us happy now and in the future—we will have a spiritual, simple life and reflect to find out what is the most important, worthwhile existence for ourselves.

*"No matter what comes up, if I apply an
antidote with courage, I can
push through anything."*

*Depression comes from
attachment to this very life.
The mind of attachment has no space
for empathy and compassion or ease.
It is a mind of expectations
and when expectations are not met,
unhappiness and depression arise.
Giving up attachments and expectations
is a mind bent on liberation.*

COMPASSION FOR DEPRESSION

We should develop empathy for ourselves and the sufferers of depression and note the conditioned suffering of life for all beings. Empathy is the precursor to compassion. We should contemplate how in this world there are so many different forms of suffering. There are the suffering conditions of thirst, starvation and natural disasters. We have droughts, floods and bushfires which all lead to loss of life. There are man-made sufferings due to war, greed and avarice. All around us in the West, here in Australia, are the physical attachments of alcohol, drugs, cigarettes and material goods, all said to make us happy. But are we truly happy? In fact, overindulgence causes pain.

We can see that all beings, including ourselves, are dissatisfied. This is empathy - understanding that we are all in this together, and that we all become dissatisfied or unhappy with certain parts of our lives, or life in general. However, this dissatisfaction is also the opportunity to be open to our own natural qualities not hindered by greed and need or the presumption that others will intercede on our behalf. We can do this! We have natural abilities to be realistic!

What is compassion? Compassion is seeing suffering and wanting to alleviate that suffering, take it away, in the long term, forever. It is a sincere feeling from our heart - ideally renouncing our own suffering and genuinely wanting to take away others' suffering. If we see a need for compassionate action, then we can proficiently apply methods to help others. Skilful help involves showing others a short-term and long-term solution to problems which does not resort to artificial means such as drugs, escapism through alcohol, or through impermanent pleasure-seeking such as travelling. Freedom to contemplate is so important.

Meditation on compassion is necessary to live a meaningful life. Developing and actually

experiencing compassion for oneself and others is possible. We should do this. We could help alleviate suffering for everyone by cherishing others more, thinking of others more. In society, this gives us a sense of well-being and confidence, which then helps us to lead fulfilling, meaningful lives, to become qualified, thoughtful carers of the planet and its residents. Then we will be of benefit to others in small and large ways. That is the truly honest, virtuous friend we are in reality and should be to each other.

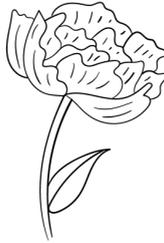
A strong sense of expectation comes up in the mind if we only see others as being there for us, as the ones who have to pick up all the pieces for us when we fall apart. If we think others are there just to make us happy, it's as though we don't have a responsibility or even a right to make ourselves happy. As a result, we will feel unworthy. When those people we have expectations of either can't or won't come through for us, we can develop a sense of an undeserving, inadequate self. However, this should be overcome by our self-confident way of being: deep empathy and compassion for ourselves and others. This unworthiness can be reversed by letting go of every expectation we have of others and taking on the responsibility to help others.

*The purpose of life is to strive for happiness.
With hope and a happy feeling our body feels well.
Peace and happiness are positive factors. Health
therefore depends on a happy state of mind.
His Holiness the Dalai Lama*

We could then see how much others suffer from depression, which enables us to turn everything around, change our view, and see that what really brings us the most happiness is helping others in whatever way we possibly can. This is the 'good heart' His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

often describes.

The development of the 'good heart' is so necessary in today's world. Inspiration can come from all those people who give their time, their experience, their effort, their money to benefit others, although they seem to lead ordinary lives. We all need this altruistic intention. Then life has so much heart essence and love, which spills over and expands to be of the ultimate benefit.



Chapter Three

Anger



We need to see how anger starts deep down, and cut it there, at the root.

Geshe Sherab



Healing Anger

This is not a teaching to manage anger, but to help us to stop anger, to cut it. Instead of anger management, we should sever the cause of anger and remove anger completely. This is classified as real healing.

Anger is very damaging for ourselves and everyone in our line of fire. Anybody who is close to us could suffer mental and physical pain because of our anger.

We need to remind ourselves that there are many ways of exuding anger, such as tension, testiness, impatience, and frustration, and of course full-blown anger of our body, speech and mind. There are physical manifestations resulting from anger, including illnesses of the liver, bile and gall bladder, as well as the stress of anger leading to the possibility of a heart attack. Mental illnesses also arise because we continue to think *we have the right* to be angry. This causes much more anger to arise in the future. Another result of anger is that we create more negative behaviour such as harsh words, swearing and violence of body and actions.

We may be passive-aggressive, with constant low-lying anger. This inner arrogance, that seethes beneath the surface, should be eradicated for our sake and for the happiness of others, because it is damaging now and for our future. For our own well-being we need to stop it. Yet we may think we're justified to be angry. We may think that others are making us angry. But the truth is that anger comes from us. There is no reason to get angry, we can't justify it. Anger comes up because of past moments of anger. And being angry now only leads to more moments of anger, more negativities of body, speech and mind. While it may seem that nothing can help or alleviate our anger, this is not true!

The first step is to avoid all situations, circumstances and people who may trigger our anger,

angst and frustration. I feel that anger exacerbates drug-taking and alcohol intake, and vice-versa. If you feel angry because of social injustice, then find a way to help with action, don't just talk about it. Social justice needs to come from peaceful, open protest and from voting, or finding ways to actually give aid.

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

Then with our inner wisdom, we should look at why we get angry in particular situations. We can see that we have expectations of ourselves and others. Things don't go the way we want them to.

Next we must make a conscious effort to stop anger immediately as it begins to arise. We should pay particular attention to the fact of anger swiftly arriving in the mind, trying right at that moment to apply some loving-kindness and patience.

Even the tiniest impatience or testiness will have a karmic result - more of the same increased testiness and lack of patience, and more ripening of lower rebirths. Textual confirmation from the Buddha's *Sutra of the Causes and Effects of Actions*, and confirmation from our own Teachers of Buddha-Dharma, shows that anger causes lower realm rebirths, such as hells. Therefore, we must stop buying into any situation that ripens our anger. Avoid all confrontations.

We should use mindfulness in order to apply patience, mindfulness of extra space in the mind allowing us to respond rather than react, and mindfulness of extra effort to avoid anger, all of which contribute to the practice of patience. The absence of anger certainly makes for a happier person and a more peaceful environment. It also allows caring, understanding, kinder, more patient people into our lives.

If we feel we have always been angry, and some of us believe that we have been angry from

birth, we must learn to eradicate anger by continuously applying the antidotes of patience and loving-kindness while recognising that this does work - and this is also patience! Being happy that this is beneficial for us is such a positive action and dedication.

PATIENCE

Taking time, slowly, carefully, helping oneself to be patient is courageous. Patient loving-kindness is the best healing for oneself in overcoming anger. Of course, this needs practice and mindfulness. The flow-on effect is that others, and that includes people and animals, receive peace, love and patience from us, how Saint-like!

As I age I find that I get angry with my incapability. But I find relief in the practice of patience as it feels so good and positive for my body and mind. I would like to think that it also causes or makes for mentally and physically healthy future lives.

Look for the pivotal moment and transform your mind into patience and happiness. Then dedicate (or offer) that peace and happiness to others. We can think: "In just this moment I remembered to apply the antidotes of love and patience. I must be this way for everyone! May I always be this way for everyone! May others adopt this method of loving patience practice with happiness for themselves!" *Please see The Emptiness of Anger Meditation and the Meditation on Patience.*

*"Good works gathered in a thousand ages,
Such as deeds of generosity,
Or offerings to the Blissful Ones -
A single flash of anger shatters them.*

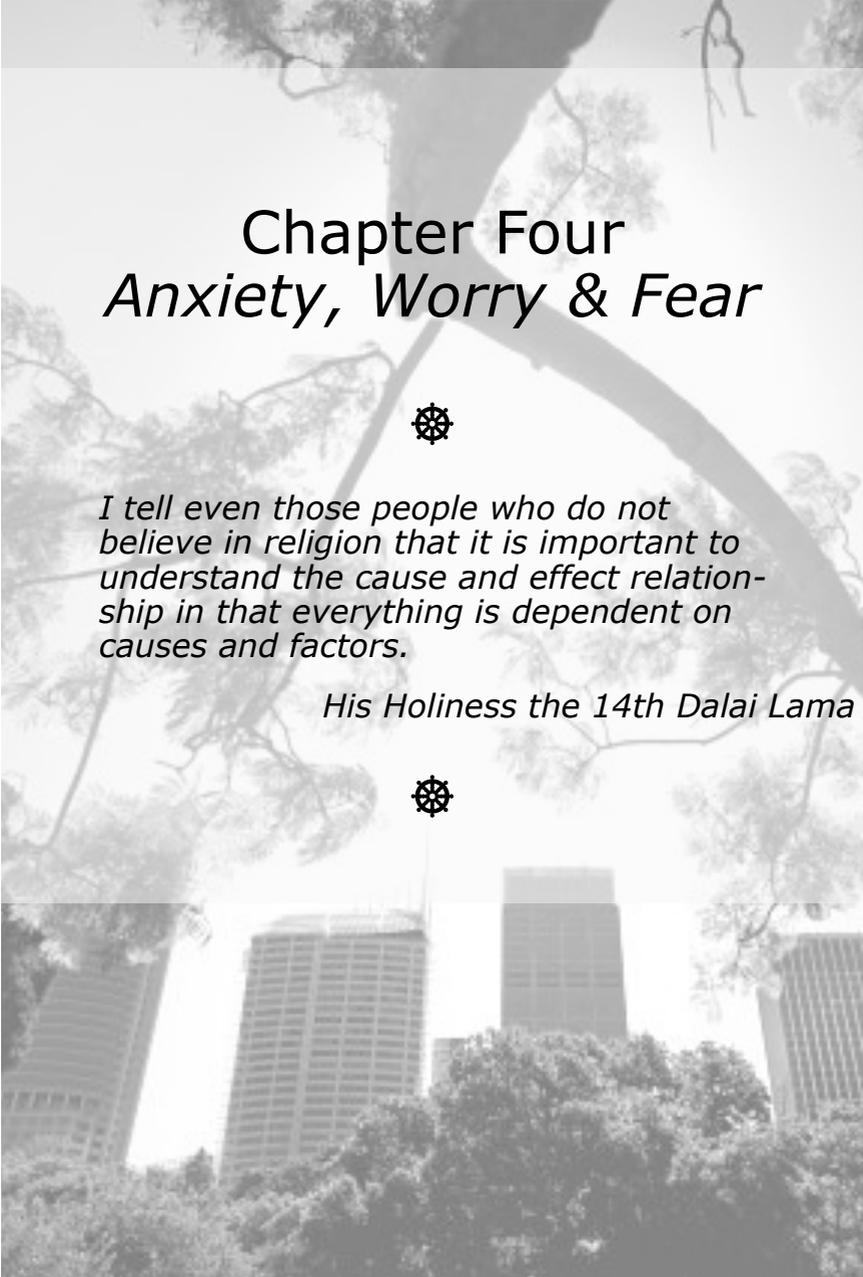
*No evil is there similar to hatred,
Nor austerity to be compared with patience.
Steep yourself, therefore, in patience,
In all ways, urgently, with zeal.*

As a destructive force, there is nothing as strong as anger. An instant of anger can destroy all the positive actions accumulated over thousands of kalpas through the practice of generosity, making offerings to the Buddhas, keeping discipline, and so on. Indeed, there is no fault as serious as anger.

Patience, on the other hand, as a discipline that neutralizes and prevents us from succumbing to anger, is unrivalled. Through it, the suffering we endure from the heat of the negative emotions is relieved. It is therefore of the utmost importance that we resolve to practice patience, gaining inspiration through reflecting on its advantages and on the terrible effects of anger."

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama
*From "A Flash of Lightning in the Dark of Night:
A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life"*
Shambala Publications





Chapter Four

Anxiety, Worry & Fear



I tell even those people who do not believe in religion that it is important to understand the cause and effect relationship in that everything is dependent on causes and factors.

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama



Healing Anxiety, Worry and Fear

FEAR

Fear exists for all of us. Animals and humans experience fear. We might be afraid of losing our very own life, our own body, we might fear death, strangers, or change. Everyone feels fear—we could learn how to have compassion for ourselves and everyone who suffers from fear every day. We could come to see we're all the same, we all have worries, but in fact it's merely a temporary situation. If we do not want it to occur we must be realistic and develop courageous endurance. We may well lose our body, our life, but our mind always is and always will be.

LOSS

We might be anxious and worried about losing our friends, a job, our lifestyle. Holding onto these thoughts can stress us out and make us sick. If we could learn how to let go of these thoughts we would be less worried about worldly matters, and lead a more contented life. Then this would flow on to everyone around us. As a lifestyle and for a comfortable mind we should try to find contentment in simplicity and happiness even for this one life. Then thinking of future lives of wellbeing and happiness will be possible.

ATTACHMENT

Our worldly concerns make us feel anxious, aggravated moments. Our attachment to getting what we want makes us worried, even panicky. Our attachment to avoiding what we don't want makes us dissatisfied and angry. Attachment might feel like: "I deserve this", "I need this", or "This is my right!". But if, as His Holiness the Dalai Lama says we should be happy, how do we do this?

Mental health is very important. Methods to alleviate unhappy states of mind will give rise to a

healthier body. Mental causes are our motivations and are very weighty in their results. Cultivating positive motivations that are free of attachment will bring us joy.

WHAT IS ANXIOUS?

Who is worrying? What is getting anxious? Will I still be worried if I get what I want with attachment? Will I still be upset if I don't get what I want? The more we cling to this life as everlasting, the more worried we get. We should practice letting go of that sense of "I" and be more spacious, drop all emotions, discursive ideas and worrying, annoying thoughts into space. Then we will open up to more possibilities, to being correct. We can just 'be' without expectations or feeling separate from others. Correctness = spaciousness. This is happiness from non-clinging or non-attached states of mind.

THE PRESENT MOMENT

In the present moment we can let go of worrying about the future. We should experiment in coming back to the present moment, no longer chasing thoughts of the future, or reliving the past. The past seems better only because it's in the past! When we long for people and things, we suffer from worry and anxiety.

THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

When we widen our perspective and look at our planet, we can see the suffering of all the other beings. With logical reasoning we can understand why things happen like hurricanes, droughts and earthquakes. We should learn about the law of cause and effect and see that our worry and fear can't change these natural disasters. A collective cause is the real reason these worldly occurrences happen—it's only real and logical—and we should also collectively create the causes for good, as in

the way we are trying to fix the hole in the ozone layer, reducing carbon emissions, taking care to recycle and so on—these are physical antidotes we should apply.

OTHER BEINGS

Mindfully, when we see others' pain, we can do something about it. Others are extremely kind like this—they help us to open our heart. They aren't the cause of our fear or worry or anxiety, instead they're our reason to become a compassionate being. In fact, other beings help us to see real interconnectedness and interdependency and are our cause to evolve and actually benefit all.



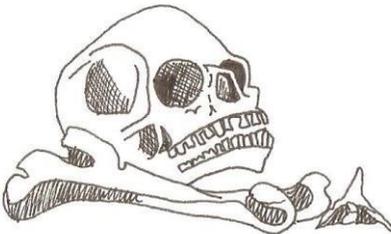
Chapter Five

Grief and Loss



*Because of our Western up-bringing,
many of us have been shielded from the
truth of impermanence and death.*

Venerable Thubten Tenzin



Healing Grief and Loss

The most important thing we should look at to heal grief and loss is that although everything about our grief and loss seems so physically permanent and painful, it is in fact so impermanent.

When we are going through any emotional crisis, what we crave is to find something or someone who will give us some physical or mental relief and happiness and for all the pain to end. For most people, to meditate at this time is very difficult, to concentrate is very difficult, but these difficult emotional times can be seen as a great opportunity to take a look at the deep spiritual aspect of our lives.

In quiet contemplation, we can question ourselves: "Why? Why did this happen?" To look at life in general, to look at why we are alive and why all of us die is an honest, beneficial activity at this time, or any time. Of course, the Buddha taught the explanation, which is that we are the creator and we have the ability to bring about cessation.

UNDERSTANDING LOSS

Understanding the impermanent and suffering nature of our existence lifts the veils of delusion about the cause of life and the end of life. This reasoning helps us to see why *all* of us go through birth, sickness, old age and death. We all seek happiness from life, and we try hard to extend life and moments of happiness. It is a great shock when we are faced with the impermanence of everything, especially the loss of someone close.

We may be thinking, "Poor me! Why me?" But if we can drop a 'victim' sense of self, and understand that all people experience death and the loss of someone close to them, then we will shift the focus from ourselves. We can 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, with no physical or mental pain.” We could make up our own wish, saying the person’s name. For example, when I lost my father, I said, “May my father [then I said his name] be free of a lower rebirth, attain a human rebirth, meet the deep and profound truth and especially a precious Mahayana Teacher.” As he knew the great Geshe Dawa, this is possible.

If we said this prayer each and every time we missed that person, 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 ourselves and the person we are grieving over. We would also see the transitory nature of the way we view ‘the loss’. We would see the loss as a way to develop spiritual understandings, to see that all people must go through the death process. It is factual, truthful.

The loss that we feel should enable us to pray and benefit the person and all others who have died or who will die in the future, including ourselves. We actually don’t know the time of our death, and these prayers help us to prepare for that eventuality.

This empowered view and our action of prayer should be a liberating experience, especially for those of us who feel overcome by grief and loss. It can free us to become more open to a spiritual, virtuous and beneficial aspect to our existence. How extremely kind then, is this person who has passed away. He or she has given us an incredible opportunity to become awake to the truth, the impermanence of life and death, and the love and care we feel will benefit them now and in the future. The Buddha Himself explained that even He could not stop death or loss. How we experience that grief is up to us. Then we can always think of others and our own temporariness. *Please see A Meditation to Transcend Grief and Live with Loss.*

Further Insights to Heal Grief and Loss

All of us could experience different types of loss in our lives, such as death, divorce, separation, our children leaving home, job loss, losing our house, loss of livelihood, losing our country, losing our health or losing our mobility.

We could try to understand why the loss has happened, and why some people suffer more than others. Meditation or quiet time to reflect and work on our mind is the very best way to understand *why* these things occur. We also need to have compassion for ourselves, and understand the truth of suffering - the fact that everyone suffers, and everyone will suffer from a myriad countless number of mental infestations, delusions and wrong views (forms of not knowing and misknowing).

But really, what we need to learn is how to stop our suffering forever. To do this we need to be honest with ourselves. Firstly, we must let go of guilt, which is a useless, degrading, depressive emotion. We can't change the past, and going over it just causes us suffering now. We seem to extend that pain to others as well, involving them in our misfortunes and upsetting them.

We are experiencing life now, *not* in the past or the future. The aim of a deeply aware, understanding person is to cause no suffering and have no anger towards anyone. Letting go of the past stops the pain of re-hashing and reliving events that makes us immobile, stagnant, unable and unwilling to change. Willingness to change involves the transformation of incorrect views to positive, correct understandings of what is really going on!

DENIAL

Unfortunately, we are all in denial. We block out reality, not understanding why we are alive. We shut down to death and impermanence, which are physical truths. Think for yourself, from your

own understandings and your own views. See that your life, this life, is just a journey in beginningless and endless time. Death and rebirth are part of this one particular journey. Let go of seeking any worldly lasting happiness. It is not available in an enduring way because there is an end to the body and its' sensual pleasures, and it ages. The best thing is to have compassion for yourself. See the truth of impermanence and death: everyone and everything will physically end. This is truth imbued in compassion and vice versa. Then work for the benefit of oneself and others, those near and those distant.

We need to understand why loss happens. There is no chaos theory and no God theory - every person is under the relative influence of the law of cause and effect, until we desire to stop our afflictions and delusions. Every being with sentience suffers from birth, old age, sickness and death. If someone dies, the karma of that life is exhausted, but because of a heightened sense of self we try to hang on, we try to manipulate death, ours and others. We don't understand the truth of death, that it is a natural ending to life. We try to bring them back, when we should let them go. We need to stop feeling guilty - what is done, is done. We should have compassion for ourselves by recognising that loss is real, it is a physical reality. Only by the spiritual understandings of life and death can we be honest with ourselves.

Our mind continues on, and we can change our mind into that of an Awakened Being, awake to the truth of our existence. There is no reason to go through the anxiety of fear and worry about ourselves or about others. We can find a useful, peaceful way to help ourselves and others through meditation, reflection, study and prayer - this is the deep, truthful, spiritual component of life.

RELATIONSHIPS

We think relationships are permanent, but they're not. We feel guilty if we end a relationship or partnership, but often the karma has just exhausted itself. We become upset, worried and fearsome, even unworthy and depressed if others sever a connection. But in fact we still remain interconnected and interdependent mentally.

CHILDREN

Children have their own karma. We need to let go and see that they have their own karmic propensities to live out. They have made causes to experience their own effects. They should never be pushed to fulfil some lifetime dream of their parents. Their idea about how they should experience life may not ever be ours—so be it!

DEATH

Death feels so final. "They/he/she left me here." We seem to enjoy wallowing in this suffering. "If only you were here, everything would be better." But isn't that about us, and our own issues? We can transform our mind from these emotive thoughts, let them go, stop our grief, and let those who have died go to their future, their new life. Specifically, we should wish them to be well and happy, peaceful, free, and find methods to access the truth that lies within.

PHYSICAL PAIN

When someone suffers physical pain, their negative karma is ripening, and they could be using it to finish that negative karma. We feel sorry for ourselves having to see their suffering. But we can make the prayers: "By their suffering, may they never go to lower realms, may they exhaust any negative karmic imprints, may they stop the cycle of existence, and become an Awakened Being." This is a must and a prayer we

should apply to ourselves as well. Please see *Ton-Len* Meditation which includes Ton-Len (giving and taking) instructions.

THE PAIN OF GRIEF

Even suffering through the grieving process is karma that ripens and an opportunity to see correctly what is going on. So we offer the heartfelt prayer to others: "By experiencing this suffering of deep loss, may others not have to experience the pain of it. May we accept it as part of cyclic existences. May all beings everywhere be free of suffering. And when death and rebirth come, may they both be auspicious. May I and all others see many, many qualified omniscient beings."

STOPPING SUFFERING

We go to doctors, hospitals, psychologists and healers expecting them to stop our suffering. If we could go instead to our own wisdom mind, we could stop all suffering by the true view of our own inherent qualities. The most perfect way of stopping physical and mental suffering is to recognise that it comes from a past creation. This we can purify. We will also prevent any future ripening of physical and mental suffering with our correct insight now by meditation and right practice, continually telling ourselves the truth.

EMPOWERMENT

When someone is dying or suffering, we are empowered to:

- *Say prayers for them - a natural physical and mental response*
- *Understand it from a bigger perspective - the truth of everything*
- *Try to understand the law of cause and effect*
- *Contribute to or practice Medicine Buddha pujas (offering ceremonies) and dedicate the merit*

and the puja to them

- *Do healing for them and ourselves simultaneously with white light healing meditation*
- *Genuinely give them all our love and positive thoughts*
- *Do Ton-Len meditation for them (giving our love and prayers and taking away their pain)*

We can say prayers for loved ones, no matter how much later it is. We can say prayers before, after and during their death. This also helps us to let go of our own suffering, because we would actually be doing something. We can even pray for our children that may have gone to live in another state or country, for example. We can practice Ton-Len (giving and taking) with the altruistic intention to stop all their pain and suffering forever, with the heartfelt wish to take them to Enlightenment.

INNER CHANGE

We need to look for something truthful in any situation we find ourselves in. Firstly we could see that the pain involved is something that happens to all of us, otherwise we may get locked into feeling sorry for ourselves. We are all in this together. Often we think we can physically fix problems but in this instance it is much better to understand the truth. Instead of transferring our problem to others to try to fix it, we need to relieve our own suffering and have love and compassion for ourselves. This is not selfish, this is positive mental healing with honesty.

POSITIVITY

We should replace any negative perspective with a positive view. We should also allow our loved one to go. We let go so we can move on, without the manipulative efforts we put onto situations by thinking all about ourselves: "Why me?"

Poor me! Why does this have to happen to me?
Why are you leaving me? I must be unworthy!"
And then, "I must find a replacement."

We could transform our minds from negative emotions to positive qualities, then we really could see how to help all others. We can do this! A change in attitude will give us the self-confidence to continue with virtuous ideas and thoughts. We have an innately peaceful, compassionate mind which is intrinsically loving and kind. Therefore, when we are positive, we affect others by conscious example. They may ask, "What are you doing to yourself? You seem more peaceful."

Everlasting happiness is within all of us. Changing our mind is a positive step, it is the antithesis of Western indoctrination and our own expectations. Accepting alternative viewpoints is intelligent thinking. We might even be thinking, "Everyone is expecting me to be emotionally grieving", or conversely "Everyone is expecting me to grin and bear it." Whatever we think others expect of us and what we expect from ourselves is irrelevant and simply thoughts/thinking. What we really need is to have support from and faith in the truth, understanding that something continues, that something of that person we lost is reborn. Whether we believe in rebirth or not we should have faith that part of all of us continues. Our mind is endless. Bodies may come and go but mind and luminosity always is and always will be.



Chapter Six

Internalised Trauma

*If we cannot embrace suffering now,
we will not see its end.
Geshe Ngawang Dhargey*



Healing Internalised Trauma

What is the trigger that has caused us to internalise our experiences so deeply that we are now experiencing such emotional pain?

Sometimes we can immediately recognise the trigger as physical pain or physical suffering caused by war, abuse, famine, drought, loss, illness or disease. But sometimes the trigger is lost over time and we need to find and examine it, for the purpose of understanding it as cause, condition and effect.

I believe that many of us need a psychiatrist or medical practitioner to help us with deep-rooted problems. If, however, we would like a spiritual answer, as some of us do in the West, then we could possibly find that answer with the view of our own qualities of wisdom and compassionate love. The subtle mind remains underneath all the fabrications and fantasies we make up with our gross mind, it is always pure and luminous.

Sometimes meditation is the application that can soothe away many pains, because when we look within, we are able to help ourselves. If we believe in the teachings of Jesus or Mohammed or Buddha, of course we should look to them for guidance and help. They can certainly help us with meditation as well - by their example and experiences. We can meditate on their loving-kindness and compassion. Simple meditations such as white light healing can benefit ourselves and others. Doing the meditations in this book can produce a balance in life and alleviate immediate suffering. However, if we cannot meditate or pray, a step-by-step regime of practice could help us calm our body and mind. Sitting in a particular place at a particular time brings structure and balance, helping us gain control over our thinking and our life.

TRANSFORMATION

If we do see what has caused our traumatic frame of mind, then we can think about an end to this state of pain. Do we understand the cause? Do we understand that this pain is removable? Of course, we have to be firm and let go of the idea of being a 'victim': "Why me? Why do I have to undergo this?" The idea that oneself is the only one who has to undergo suffering, this suffering or any suffering, is incorrect. What is correct is that all beings suffer, in all realms of existence, as humans, as animals, as hell beings and as hungry ghosts. This is the truth. However, the final state beyond sorrow is attainable—omniscience. We could practice all methods of mental concentration to do this!

With that thought in mind, we can look at the present and heal it with the firmness of never having to experience it again. This suffering of internal and external pain will be finished. We have the ability to heal ourselves now, and for the future as well. By being very firm in ending this pain now, we never have to experience it again.

If we could undertake to follow such a steadfast thought, and bravely maintain it, we allow all the things around us to change - life and conditions won't be so harsh or difficult. We can transform ourselves into a state of happiness, which His Holiness the Dalai Lama says is 'our right' and 'something all beings strive for'.

We could then begin to think of others who may have experienced similar suffering, with thoughts of empathy and genuinely wishing to heal their sufferings as well. What a wonderful, altruistic thought. Each individual's experience, be it rape, abuse, disease or war, drought or physical depression, should be viewed as something each of us can transcend. We have all, continually in life after life, been in pain mentally and physically. For more insight into this reality, please study the twelve links

of dependent arising.

And instead of blaming others, instead of holding individuals or communities to account, we can understand the universal law of cause and effect: what we sow, so shall we reap. This relative law is infallible and encompassing. It will help us understand in a complete way exactly why everything and everyone has had a cause and will experience a result. It also allows us to think of others and to see how everyone is under the influence of this law, and will experience physical or mental suffering if they have sown or will sow a negative, incorrect seed. We should all create counteractive positive causes for positive results, this is wholesome.

Thinking of others experiencing the torment of suffering should help us understand the truths of interdependency and interconnectedness, and help us develop empathy and compassion. We are all dependent on each other for our health and well-being, our food, our electricity, etc. By understanding our dependent nature, we can then be of benefit to others without expectations of gain or loss.

Only by creating positive causes will we get positive results. By realising this, we see that our intrinsic qualities of empathy, compassion and loving kindness will be developed. We finally realise that whatever result we are experiencing now must have come from past creations.

The greatest and most profound truth is the truth of compassion for all beings, not idiot compassion but wise, skilful wisdom with compassion. This is the foundation of all the Buddha's teachings. We need this truthful understanding that alleviates suffering for everyone, including ourselves. What we need is the wisdom that realizes the truth of reality, the truth of what is really happening, cutting through our wrong conceptions and not knowing.

All friends, relatives, foes and strangers alike equally suffer from mental and physical problems,

and consequently need each one of us to develop wisdom. They are indeed crying out for a protector, an Awakened Being, an empathetic compassionate being who will develop insight into reality, become omniscient and show us how to do exactly that! Transcending suffering is something that we should do, and then we must help others to do it.

So how and where do we begin this change? Perhaps with Ton-Len (taking and giving) meditation. *Please try the Ton-Len Meditation for Healing Trauma and Addiction.*

*Try to remember there is a cause
in result and vice-versa.*

Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche on karma

*Idealism is an unrealistic belief in perfection and karma is messy but both depend on mental acuity.
Genla Venerable Thubten Tenzin*



Using the Bigger Picture to Heal Trauma

*Trauma: a deeply distressing
or disturbing experience.*

There are many different traumatic experiences we may have undergone, such as violence, physical and emotional abuse, or the suicide of a person close to us. This trauma may have happened to us when we were young children, or as teenagers, or as adults. Trauma can come from anything, any experience, and often we continue to experience the suffering throughout the rest of our lives.

In order to heal trauma, we should ask ourselves: Why did this happen? For example: Why was I raped? Sexually interfered with? Why did

someone close commit suicide? Why is there physical and mental abuse? Why don't people care? Where do I find some compassionate understanding for my unhappiness? What pushes me to behave incorrectly or inappropriately?

Our life must be beyond just the material or the greedy perspective. The truth is there is a part of us that carries on, mental qualities continue when we die. This part of us, the mind, has always been and will always be linked to our actions of body and speech, thus linked to the universal law of cause and effect relatively. This is also how we are interconnected and depend on others.

This is very different to 'God's wrath'. It's also not a chaos theory or fate, just random chance that someone gets abused, for example. It is the result that we experience because of having created the cause. This perspective is not religious, because as Buddhists, we don't believe in God. Instead, it is the truth of "what you sow, so shall you reap". This is the inner perspective or understanding, a factual account of what is going on in all universes governed by this law of karma (action). Because we are all under the sway of this universal law, it would be natural that we would feel empathy and compassion for others. This is endemic in our true nature.

There is another truth - the truth of compassion. We need to have strong compassion for ourselves. Compassion for ourselves means that we become aware of how and why we are suffering, and that we really want to take suffering away from ourselves now and in the future. With courage, we need to generate the heartfelt wish to stop living in the pain of remembering our trauma over and over again. We do this by saying to ourselves, "It's over. I never have to experience that again. The karma is finished! I will not have to go through that result again." For all those who suffered the same, may it be over for them also. May they never have to suffer that pain and degradation ever

again. We should continually say this to ourselves, and then over time we will be able to let it go. By our simple dedication prayer, we could offer others the opportunity of never having to suffer this same experience ever again.

*Interdependency: mutually dependent
on each other.*

Now we need to generate compassion for the perpetrator of the crime. That person will go through so much suffering in all the lower realms of existence, especially if they don't regret what they have done. This should be noted as part of the truth of the infallible law of cause and effect.

We've all pushed the button before. So we shouldn't demonize those doing it now, as we have done the same kind of thing in the past.

Professor Robert Thurman (paraphrased)

Motivation is very powerful. Whether we classify it as good or bad it is still a powerful force because it is a mental action. The strong wish to harm others, including revenge and pay back, will return to us as harm. The strength of the harm and the plan to harm in our negative motivation, the stronger the result coming back to us. The worse the composition of the battle plan, the worse it becomes for us in the future. Whatever harm we are planning now we should stop and desist and transform this harm into a virtuous motivation. Our negative motivations, plans, ideas, verbal and physical actions done in the past have contributed to cause this traumatic experience. The major part of trauma is the mental anguish which can be seen as a direct result of the mental causes of negative ideas of the past, created in a past life. Thus we should make a strong effort to not only stop but to drop this thinking.

The perpetrator was a condition to ripen the negative karmic causes created in our past. Now when we think of how they will suffer, we should try to arouse some compassion for them. If this feels like an impossible task, come back to having compassion for all those who suffer or will suffer in the same way. This is genuine empathy leading to great compassion.

Great compassion: doing all things possible to free beings from their torment.

So many people go through so many different extremely painful experiences of rape, violence, abuse and torment, so many experiences of pain. We should develop strong compassion for all those people. We are able to expand our compassion out to everyone who has been through the pain and traumatic experiences similar to what we ourselves have suffered and gone through. With deep compassion, we can connect to others and we can feel our interconnectedness with them all, understanding that the sufferings of body and mind are always a karmic result and temporary. Even if we carry it on in our minds, we need to focus on mind healing. Letting it go, ending it, finalization.

If we can feel some compassion for the person or persons who inflicted the pain, then we are finally getting to the truth, and this should also enable us to let go. The Buddha truthfully said, "the being or beings who inflicted any form of pain on us are a condition in place to ripen our own karma, and by their actions, they will go to lower realms." Can we then have love and compassion for them!?

Fate: the development of events outside a person's control, regarded as predetermined by a supernatural power.

*Buddha never taught that (fate)!
Karma is not that!
Truth is ever-pervading,
As-it-is-ness is suchness.*

*Finalization: mental action of no more karmic
imprints, just allowance and acceptance.*

*The definition of love is to long for other beings to
be happy. Wisdom is recognizing that in order to
find lasting happiness living beings need to create
the causes of future happiness. It is a recognition
of the process of interdependence.
Kenchen Thrangu Rinpoche*

DO UNTO OTHERS...

...as you would have done unto you—the Law and the Prophet's "Golden Rule". We can look at this golden rule with a thinking, reflective mind in relation to the Eight Worldly Dharmas which are the desire for praise, fame, comfort and gifts, and aversion to blame, infamy, discomfort and no gifts.

We should never praise or blame others for their unfortunate approach to the truth of suffering. As there is always a cause and mental motivation we should ask ourselves, "Would I like this done to me?" And although fame, gifts and comfort are enticing to have, the awareness to know what really is of the most benefit is more advantageous. Now and in the future the negative approaches to our interactions with others will not benefit or bode well for our future happiness. To be positive and have joy with others is more useful and helpful.

Dedication

"May I place all beings only in happiness,
And bring them all only happiness and joy."
From 'The King of Prayers'

Patient Endurance by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

It is only natural that we dislike suffering. But if we can develop the willpower to bear difficulties, then we will grow more and more tolerant. As it is said in the text:

*'A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life'
by Shantideva*

*There is nothing that does not
Grow easier through habit.
Putting up with little troubles
Will prepare me to endure much sorrow.*

*Heat and cold, the wind and rain,
Sickness, prison, beatings -
I will not fret about such things,
For doing so will aggravate my trouble.*

If we are very forbearing, then something we would normally consider very painful will not appear so bad after all. But without patient endurance, even the smallest thing becomes unbearable. A lot depends on our attitude. Similarly, if we can develop patient endurance, we will be able to bear even great difficulties when they come our way.

*From 'A Flash of Lightning in the Dark of Night'
Shambala Publications*



Chapter Seven

Addictions



Intoxicants are the ultimate poison, since relying on intoxicants leads to the degeneration of all virtues. There can be no stability of mind for someone living with an intoxicant habit. And dharma cannot abide in an unstable mind. Therefore, abandon intoxicants.

*The Buddha,
from The Sutra on Close Mindfulness*



Can We Heal Addictions?

WHAT MAKES ME AN ADDICT?

We all try to find happiness in our lives, but we will become addicted if we try to prolong feelings of euphoria or suppress unwanted feelings. We have the right to be happy, but we should see that the best way to find happiness is by revealing our own positive clean, clear mind, not relying on any mind-altering substance or by opting out of facing the truth, of being honest.

Taking intoxicants gives rise to and increases attachment. Likewise, it promotes anger and ignorance continuously. Therefore, cut out all intoxicants.

Geshe Konchog Tsering

WHAT ARE THE EXCUSES WE USE?

Sometimes we feel that there are reasons we're addicted—loss, grief, low self-esteem, bad company, etc. But really these are the triggers that ripen the use of substance dependency that we created in the past (past lives). When we are in the throws of an addictive karmic pattern, we lose sight of responsible or moral behaviour. In fact, relying on these addictive substances only ever creates incorrect ideas and more addiction.

HEALING

Dependency is not the way to heal any type of karmic results. It just creates more problems to be experienced later—more dependency, more negative results. We might even steal, harm ourselves or even kill others when we're under the influence of substances. If we're in this situation, we need to look for a healing process that works for us, a psychologist or AA/NA etc. To have previously come upon the teachings of the Buddha may be the best way to understand our predicament. It has been a

positive karmic ripening even to contemplate the very words of truth tellers who have been explaining suchness for 2,600 years. *Please see the Ton-Len Meditation for Healing Trauma and Addictions.*

NEGATIVE COMPANY

When we end up hanging out with people who are also dependent on substances and who act in a negative, harmful way, we are more likely to add extra negativities to our already existing problems. We involve others in our addictive behaviour, we find friends that are ok with what we're doing, we stay with people to sponge off them, we get into a cycle of bad habits, and we let others influence us to stay dependent. To get out of a group or a scene of friends who are dependent takes bravery, and to stay away takes courage again and again. To rely on oneself is affirmative action. It is also honest and revealing.

GREEDY?

We might feel like we will try anything to fill a hole inside us. But really, this empty space can't be filled with physical addictive substances, can it? We could see that we have greater worth and that there is a meaning to our life. Looking inward and self-reliance to carry on with fortitude leads to a cleaner, clearer, simpler life.

COP OUT

Lots of us make excuses, because we don't want to accept responsibility for our life. We'd rather opt out, withdraw from what we consider confronting. We'd rather not put any effort into our life to make it meaningful. But one reason we're addicted is past moments of addiction, and if we're going to change that karma (cause to effect), we need to purify or cleanse our mind of our reliance on the addiction.

COMPASSION FOR OURSELVES

Compassion means we begin with taking away our own suffering. We might see now that our addiction is causing us pain, that we can't find any real long-lasting happiness in our addiction. So if we're going to take away our own suffering, we need to stop the whole dependent addictive pattern. It means we have to start taking care of ourselves, because we could die addicted. That means uncontrolled rebirth in many different hellish realms.

CONDITIONING

We might have experienced conditioning (or 'brain-washing') from our parents or society that says it's ok to be dependent on drugs or alcohol. If that's happened, it can be very hard to break. We need to think outside the square and be true to ourselves, not what everyone else thinks is right. Generalizations, assumptions and expectations are mind games inflicted and cannot help us. We should not adhere to them or engage in them either, but remain steadfast in the belief in our own incredible clarity of mind.

PURIFICATION

To cleanse the mind of toxic dependency, we can practice a meditation that overcomes habitual problems. This is called purification practice. It uses the 4 "r"s: regret, refuge, resolve and remedy. But it must be said there has to be a karmically created propensity in place to even contemplate doing the actions that lead to addiction. But there is no time like the present. Start now then assuredly the future will be better. *Please see Simple Purification Practise.* In fact, many tantric practices given by qualified people could be used for ridding ourselves of any delusions and addictions.

THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

The law of cause and effect is classified as a relative truth, therefore it cannot be disrespected, it is a fact! It is infallible! We are under the sway of our own mental fabrications and creations. We will experience a result similar to or coterminous with the cause we have made. Break the cycle of addiction by recognizing the karmic imprints, by our own force of will, then capabilities succeed and we evolve. We must love and care for this human life we have so that it becomes the useful embodiment to find our way out of all cyclic existences.

EIGHT WORLDLY DHARMAS

There are eight ways of behaving which can reinforce our dependency. Here is a list of them and how we could do the opposite in order to overcome our dependency:

Praise and Blame: We can try not to blame others for our addictions. We can avoid praising people to get drugs, cigarettes or alcohol from them or through duplicitous methods.

Gifts and No Gifts: We can stop expecting gifts of money or drugs that lead to even more addiction. We can stop giving gifts to others that add to their habits such as alcoholic beverages.

Fame and Infamy: We can stop trying to be the life of the party or a dealer or someone who can drink others under the table. We can make sure we don't steal or hurt others to satisfy our addiction, or to become notorious. Here, money really is the root of this evil.

Comfort and Discomfort: We should stop clinging to our comfort zone of addiction. We can accept that we have a real problem rather than wallowing in addiction, and be courageous to let it go and move on towards freedom.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche says:

If you abandon the thought of the eight worldly dharmas, you'll have no problem with any object: when you experience pleasure, no problem; when the pleasure decreases again, no problem; when somebody praises you, no attachment to that praise; if you're surrounded by all kinds of material objects, no problem of craving or conflict in your mind. Those who abandon the eight worldly dharmas never suffer from attachment.

Kopan Monastery, 1973

EMPATHY AND ALTRUISM

Empathy is the recognition that each one of us suffers alike. Deep empathy is the recognition that we should do something about it for ourselves and others.

Compassion is the strong wish to take the suffering away from everybody, including ourselves. The altruistic intention is stepping outside our comfort zones and actually doing something. Bodhichitta is the strong desire to lead all beings out of suffering to enlightenment *forever*. We really do have to want to be enlightened ourselves to take others to that bliss.

The First Step to Healing Addictions ***By Geshe Konchog Tsering***

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. It is the root of every kind of negativity - stealing, lying, deceit, with *no opportunity to practice Dharma* and a waste of our *precious human rebirth*.

*For a practice to overcome addiction please see
Dissolving the Chains of Addiction Meditation.*

Tibetan Prophecies from Enlightened Beings About the Suffering of Smoking Tobacco.

*While ever one's mind is clouded by the
nicotine chemical, one cannot perceive the true
nature of reality.*

The following prophecies come from Enlightened Beings of the past in Tibet, whose teachings on the future were buried until the time was appropriate for them to be revealed. They explain the use of tobacco and the suffering it will cause.

*The time when people smoke these vile
substances is also the time when close friends will
poison each other's minds.*

The Buried Prophecy (Terma) of Longsel

*In the final period of disputation, a substance
will appear which one ingests orally, and it will
aggravate all five neuroses. It will originate in
China, extend to Mongolia and Tibet. Wherever it
travels it will be consumed, and wherever it is
consumed - rainfall will become irregular,
accompanied by severe frost and hail.*

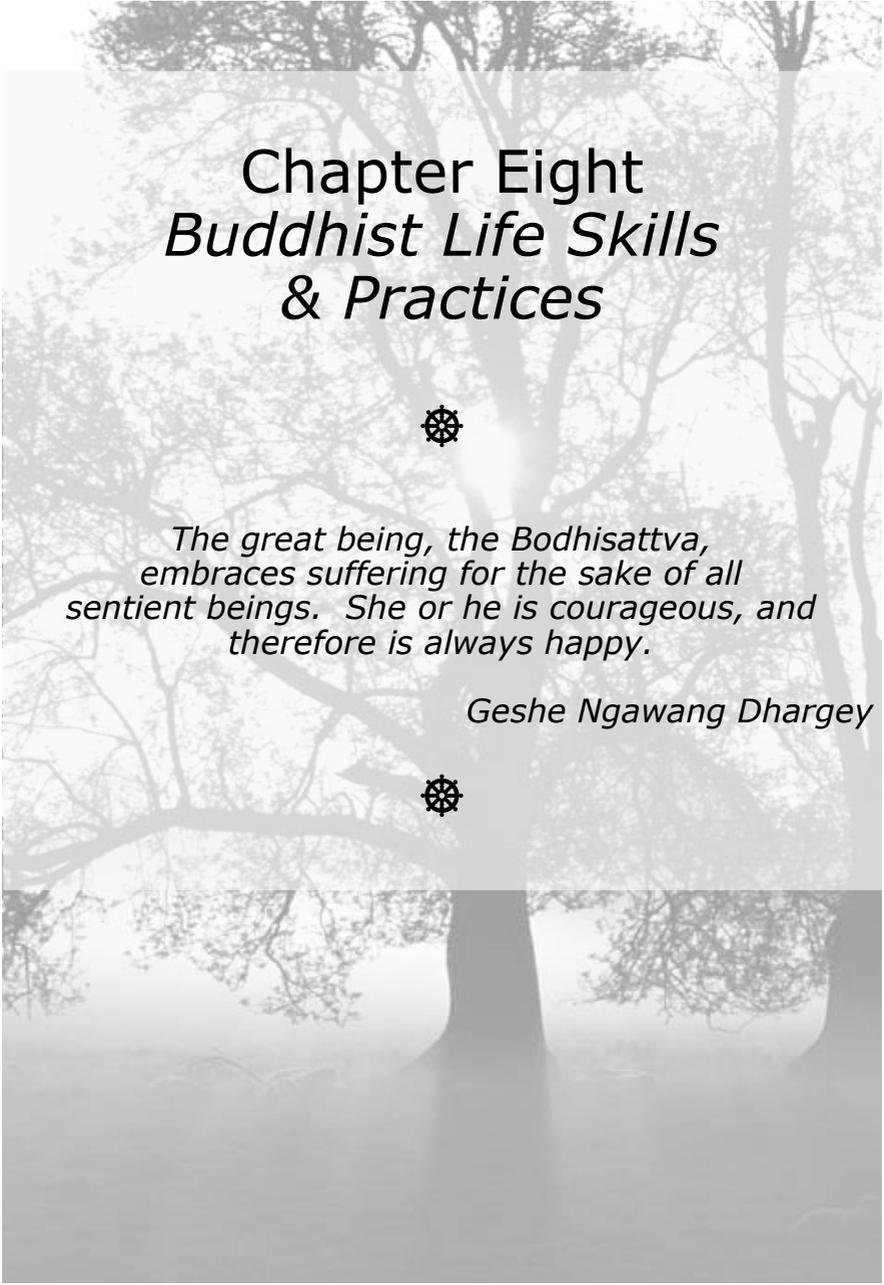
The Terma of Machig Labdrön

Because of the five neurotic poisons, the obsessions, animosities, strife, arguments and miseries of beings will blaze like an inferno. As the ten good qualities are discarded, negativity will rage like a storm. Wholesome behaviour will be neglected, while perverse practices will be promulgated... People will inhale tobacco smoke and the spatial-veins of discriminative wisdom will become blocked, whilst agitation and distorted emotions become intensified. The central channel will be obstructed and the clarity of awareness dies. Exhaustion of energy will cause agitation around the world. Religious artefacts, the objects of veneration, will deteriorate; perverted ideologies and false religions will spread... Foreigners will invade Tibet and Tibetans will be forced to stray in the border lands. Doctrines of Illusion will spread and the world will become a dimension of hell.

The Prophecy of Thugchog Dorje

Tobacco is a plant that is combined with over one hundred chemicals to produce cigarettes. The plant itself is poisonous and breathing in the smoke causes significant problems to our body and mind.

It really takes fortitude not to bow to peer pressure about this substance. We have to use our own inner strength to stay away from people who are smoking. When we think about how it destroys the subtle systems of the body, it's easy to understand how it amounts to death - we can't be clear and we can't access the pure energy of our mind. Our good heart/nature isn't there and we can't help others effectively, let alone ourselves. We end up believing totally in the grip and greed of a materialistic society without access to our own inner luminous wisdom.



Chapter Eight

Buddhist Life Skills & Practices



*The great being, the Bodhisattva,
embraces suffering for the sake of all
sentient beings. She or he is courageous, and
therefore is always happy.*

Geshe Ngawang Dhargey



Introduction to Buddhist Life Skills and Practices

Buddhists believe that the mind is the continuum, that it is *the* knowing, awake, continuing, subtlest energy of us. It follows that we believe everything comes from the mind. By changing our mind from negative thinking into positive thinking and then positive speech and actions, we can develop the kindness, love and compassion necessary to benefit ourselves and others.

The biggest component of our life should not be the accumulation of worldly goods and objects, but to develop the "Good Heart" as His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama says. He also says that the most important aspect of Mahayana Buddhism, and actually the entire teachings of the Buddha, is *compassion*.

*Compassion is defined as:
Deep awareness of the suffering of another,
coupled with the wish to relieve it.*

*From The American Heritage Dictionary of the English
Language, Fourth Edition*

We as Westerners need to define compassion for mindful understanding - what is compassion to us? What does it mean to have compassion? Why should we and how do we develop compassion? The good heart?

Compassion means to 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, and cause them suffering. When we make conscious attempts to be kind, compassionate and loving towards our friends and family, *we feel good*. This is what I call the Win/Win situation of the good heart!

His Holiness says, "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." How do we do this? It begins with just the thoughts to change, change the way we think and act towards ourselves and others. In other words, we transform our minds into positive, correct views of everything and everyone.

Western motivational speakers often say that everything comes 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, very often not even visible, we could contemplate that each one of us is the same in that we wish to be free from suffering. Actually, we want *happiness*, and we are all equal in this. This is then our practice of empathy. We can further develop this empathy into deep empathy. Then we can begin the transformation, the changing of our mind, to *not thinking about ourselves and our own selfish needs*, but to think of others, their needs. We can put others' needs before our own, globally and communally, with consciousness, especially if others are unwell or need our support. Then we will feel a little happiness in our mind and others feel better and happier. This is the beginning of the healing process of our lives. How kind and precious others are by showing us a way to put a halt to our own negative behaviour, so that we are no longer caught up in thoughts of 'Why me? Why always me?' These thoughts are not at all helpful and add to feeling unhappy and even unworthy.

Often we feel we have a right to be dissatisfied and angry with life and the world. This is also not useful and is actually unproductive. We cannot evolve with this attitude.

We could always begin our healing process by

using a forgiveness meditation and then progress to a loving-kindness meditation, and what should follow naturally is deep empathy/compassion, and finally we should use the Ton-Len (giving and taking) meditation. This is the amazing meditation of taking and giving perfected by the Tibetan Lamas - true altruism. Meditating means we need some quiet time, some 'alone time', and often the rewards are seen in our life, our health and our looks. I firmly believe that Buddhist thought and meditation is *healing*, healing all our afflictive emotions that cause pain in the present.

"Our thoughts can be considered a violence towards others, our actions can be considered a violence towards others and our speech can be considered to be a violence towards others. Check out your motivation and meditate on this."
His Holiness the Dalai Lama, from a Commentary on "The Truth of Suchness" by Nagarjuna

His Holiness the Dalai Lama describes Buddhism in the context of modern Western parameters as a mind science that has a firm basis in compassion. Lama Thubten Yeshe always described Buddha-Dharma as a sense of responsibility, a universal responsibility, to all beings (beings with sentience) and taking a responsible attitude of loving care and kindness to those beings.

The idea of universal responsibility to all sentient beings is in truth the development of compassion for the plights and sufferings that those beings undergo. Then we develop the aspiration to liberate all beings and take them to enlightenment.

In our human existence, we do have the opportunity to benefit beings. Whether we take up these opportunities and be of benefit depends on our equanimity, our sense of equality, empathy and compassion.

The methodology we should use is complete in detail and depth in the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni and the lineage that comes down from the Indian pandits such as Nagarjuna and Shantideva, to the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, the learned Tibetan scholars, and all realised beings that exist, emanate and manifest in the world today, in many and varied forms.

In order to bring the 2,600 year old instructions on the Buddha's Path to Enlightenment to the attention and awareness of our Western minds, we need to put aside all past theorising and concentrate on what the actual truth is - that which makes us really happy. We can experience this truth with an openness and recognition of the profundity of the truth of how we really exist.

We are all interconnected and interdependent but have our own individual mental consciousness and awareness which is in essence perfectly clear and clean and equal to all other sentient beings in potential and qualities. The deep understanding of this is a fundamental truth of our human existence and leads to such high qualities as humanitarianism and absolute equanimity. We should therefore strive to feel the deepest empathy and compassion for everybody, and show love and kindness to all.

Egalitarianism: for all sentient beings.



The Three Vehicles as practices on the Path of Healing

When the Buddha taught, about 2,600 years ago, He taught a complete path to full Enlightenment. However, there were people of many dispositions, who are not attracted to one, all or any of the vehicles on the path to Enlightenment. Today, as followers of this complete path, we use the three vehicles as recommended by His Holiness the Dalai Lama: outwardly practising the Hinayana, inwardly practising the Mahayana and secretly practising the Vajrayana. *Yana* means vehicle, and this is what we adopt to reach our goal of omniscience.

The *Hinayana* means lesser vehicle, but in the terms of Tibetan Buddhist practice, we call it the Foundation Vehicle. This basis is the practice of ethics and morality: no harm to any sentient being, and this means no harm with body, speech or mind.

The first teaching of the Buddha (the first turning of the Dharma wheel) was The Four Noble Truths aligned with the Noble Eightfold Path. Practising and meditating on these truths enables us to become more human, humbly aware of the purpose of life.

The Four Noble Truths:

- 1. This is Suffering.*
- 2. This is the Cause of Suffering.*
- 3. This is the Cessation of Suffering.*
- 4. This is the Path that leads to the Cessation of Suffering.*

The Noble Eightfold Path:

- 1. Right View*
- 2. Right Thought*
- 3. Right Speech*
- 4. Right Action*
- 5. Right Livelihood*

6. *Right Effort*
7. *Right Mindfulness*
8. *Right Concentration*

What makes us a Buddhist according to Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche is the Four Seals:

1. All compounded things are impermanent
2. All emotions are painful
3. All phenomena are empty
4. Nirvana is beyond extremes

With continual concentration, meditation and meditative absorption, we can purify negativities and obtain selflessness. When our ultimate qualities are experienced, we have absolute belief in the purified state of mind, free of all defilements. This is the mental quiescence of an Arhat that becomes a state of liberated bliss. On the Hinayana vehicle, it takes approximately 50 to 55 innumerable aeons to attain Enlightenment.

Mahayana means greater vehicle, which is in effect, the essence of all the Buddha's teachings - compassion imbued with wisdom. Zen, Chan, Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhists more often practice the Mahayana. The goal is to become a Bodhisattva, one who wishes to attain Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. One enters the Bodhisattva Bhumis by seeing emptiness directly, or at least deeply understanding the profundity of true nature, then follows the Six Perfections or Paramitas:

1. *Generosity*
2. *Ethics*
3. *Patience*
4. *Joyous Effort*
5. *Concentration*
6. *Wisdom (specifically of the two truths, relative and ultimate)*

The *Vajrayana* vehicle means the Diamond Vehicle, which is the swift vehicle, with the purpose of becoming the supreme evolved being. If you do Deity practice (such as Mother Tara or Chenrezig the Buddha of Compassion) and you see the Teacher as having the same qualities as the Deity, you can achieve Buddhahood in sixteen lifetimes. However, seeking a Teacher or having faith in a Teacher means that one must scrutinize the Teacher well, and have the belief that the Teacher has both compassion and wisdom.

The foundation of the Buddha's complete teachings is the Hinayana, the good heart of the Mahayana, great love and great compassion, which enables us to practise the Vajrayana with wisdom and compassion.

The Hinayana is likened to travelling to Enlightenment by horse, the Mahayana is going by sports car, and the Vajrayana is travelling by jet plane.



Two Truths: Impermanence and Death

Most likely, because of our Western upbringing, we have been shielded from the truths of impermanence and death. However, these two truths actually rule our lives.

Thoughts are impermanent. Ideas are impermanent. We try extremely hard to hold onto pleasure and comfort, as we want these as a permanent part of our lives, but they are also impermanent.

We want to be permanently looked after, and we have expectations of others to do this for us. We have expectations of our family, our society, and our partners, but they too are impermanent. We make no effort to look at the truth of everyone's death.

We should not hold onto everything and everyone as a permanent fixture in our lives. Our family and partners will die, and may die sooner rather than later, so why have expectations of them or hold onto grudges? Letting go, accepting things and other people as they are gives us ease of mind.

The very important fact that we are impermanent should allow us to be *honest*. Why do we need to be so truthful and honest with ourselves? Well, the fact is that we are all moving towards death. The time of our death is unknown. This honesty should help us prepare and to understand.

This is the truth of life - the very fact that everything, everyone, me - all are impermanent. We can accept these two truths or we can lie to ourselves. It is our own responsibility to understand the truth of life and death. We hold onto this idea that we are special and outside this truth. We think: "Why do I have to understand or even look at death?" Affirm it is a fact!

We often blindly follow what everyone else is doing. We don't seem to have the where-with-all

to look at our very own existence. We quickly, easily try to fix others and don't even look at our own misunderstandings. As the reality, we should try to look at the truth of our lives and accept the fact that we are impermanent, and try to prepare for death, both our own and others.

These two truths are uncomfortable to understand, but *they are facts*. By studying and learning about these two truths, we begin our journey to freedom from death and rebirth.

Two Truths: Relative and Ultimate

Nagarjuna, the philosophical pioneer of the Middle Way system, proclaimed the importance of the two truths in his *Treatise on the Middle Way*:

*The doctrines that Buddha taught
are based upon two truths:
Worldly conventional truths and
truths that are ultimate objects.
Those who do not know the distinction
between these two truths
Do not know the profound suchness
in Buddha's teaching.*

We are existing relatively, conventionally, dependent on interrelated causes, conditions and effects. The play of cause, condition and effect is totally interdependent but empty of inherent essence. We can develop a penetrating wisdom in our common-sense relative view which gives rise to the wisdom truth of the ultimate view. Ultimate truth is to be correct, compassionate, always upholding awareness of our true nature, while bravely cutting through illogical fantasies and untruths.

Our causes made determine the result/ outcome we experience. Therefore, it is important

that for the most desirable effects we make positive, virtuous causes and determinedly we continue until all is unnecessary.

Recycling Ourselves on the Wheel of Life

The Buddha taught three kinds of suffering (Dukkha). *Please see Lionsroar.com for more on the categories of suffering.*

The first of the three types of suffering is the suffering of suffering (blatant suffering). This is the most common, gross form of suffering, and is easily recognisable. It refers to the ordinary suffering that we experience in our everyday lives, heat, cold, environment etc. but primarily sickness, old age, death and then rebirth.

The second type of suffering is the suffering of change. It operates in the context of all those things in our lives that we ordinarily consider to constitute happiness. In fact, all of the feelings of happiness and pleasure that we experience in cyclic existence are, in reality, classified as the suffering of change. According to Buddhism, what we actually label happiness is only the moment of relief that arises between the previous experience of suffering and the next. In the rise and fall of a happy thought or action is the pain of mental and physical experience, and we are susceptible to pain in each moment.

The third type of suffering is all-pervasive suffering. This is the generic, every day existence that all beings have in common. His Holiness more and more wants us to understand that in this common era, the all-pervasive suffering that the Buddha referred to is more the continual recycling, the re-hashing of ourselves, life after life after life. His Holiness talks about how we should get tired of it, how we should want freedom from it, and how we need to stop it forever.

I think it is very important for me to add something about this suffering from a Western perspective. If we don't understand that although life seems attractive, in some circumstances what is happening is that we are losing our ability to feel empathy and compassion for others and we are losing our understanding of being interconnected. We even lack the ability to see how we are interdependent. So, going beyond this suffering means the recognition that we are all in this together, that we dependent on one another, and that we are all suffering from this continual rebirth and recycling. We need to get off this wheel completely. We could recognise the simple truth that we could and should liberate ourselves and also help others to free themselves. This is the correct and true antidote to this particular suffering. This is also the first step to stopping the factual continual long-term pain of birth, old age, sickness and death.

The method we should employ lies with the authentic teachings and practices, to help us traverse the realistic path. One must find a genuine Teacher, one who has done this and will show us the way perfectly. The Teacher doesn't have to wear specific clothes or have attractive hair or a particular skin colour or be a particular gender. The authenticity of the Teacher is more about the way they show us, by their example, how they have conquered the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death, and how they are able to assist us in our understandings to do the same.

We must always question ourselves by asking why? This refers to why we are born and die, and why this happens to everyone with common equality. Then we should seek an answer, preferably from a qualified Teacher, concerning our true everlasting nature, and reflect upon that answer.

To arrive at your own answer, reflect upon what you have understood and learnt from the Teacher. Then by putting it into practice, this life

will be meaningful and useful.

Upon reflection, you will answer many of your own questions about the true nature of life. It will also empower and enable you to let go of the strong sense of attachment to *self* that completely binds you to the Wheel of Life.

When good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to good people, all is dependent (as in dependently arising) due to cause, condition and effect. A Teacher should competently teach karma.



Different Views

View: what is seen from a particular point; an inspection by the eye or mind; a mental attitude; a manner of considering a thing.

Concise Oxford Dictionary

Ordinary view is being totally involved in this life, totally involved in a pursuit of moments of happiness. It is the non-reflective ignorance actually ignoring our own kind and compassionate nature, and in realistic terms is a waste of a life. In Buddhist terms, this is classified as suffering and something we should renounce. We should renounce being totally involved in this worldly life, only seeking temporary happiness, not seeing the transitory, suffering nature of life. Most of all, there is no realistic endeavour to find the truths of continually dying and being reborn.

Extraordinary view. When we develop extraordinary view, we begin to have some understanding that life is, in fact, suffering. We begin to firm up our view that we are all suffering. This recognition unveils our innate empathy and compassion. This strong feeling is the understanding that we all equally have the desire to be happy and not to suffer, and if we develop this view to encompass all beings on this planet, whatever colour, race, sex, etc, we have a point of connection and understand our interdependence.

World view expands the extraordinary view and empathy view into the view of compassion - the wish to relieve the suffering that the whole world, all sentient beings on this planet, are experiencing. In essence, we become humanitarians, egalitarians or warrior saints, taking responsibility for our lives to be useful, making our lives meaningful.

Universal view is the view knowing we are all interconnected, that recognises we are part of the bigger picture, that we are part of the universes

that encompass truly Holy Beings and ordinary beings. Each one of us is interconnected and interdependent. We really do need each other.

Correct view says that all things, everything, is dependent upon causes and conditions created, that nothing arises independently, nothing occurs independently, and nothing inherently exists. We are all projecting our world, and each and every single sentient being is interconnected. What we do, what we create, has an effect, a result. So, living in morality and behaving ethically stops our suffering, and we are able to help others completely.

Pure view is the spiritual attainment, the firm, profound knowledge of how we all in fact truthfully exist. This is not debatable, this pure view is the attainment and the realisation of emptiness - the truth - the mind completely free of all negative afflictive emotions and delusional thoughts.

Buddha view is the connection we make of compassion arising with correct view, the ultimate attainment, the omniscient mind, the Enlightened Being, knowing the past, present and future karma of ourselves and all beings, thus having the wisdom and skilful means to help *all* beings.

Interdependence example from the 17th Karmapa:

For example, we are alive right now because we are enjoying the right conditions for our survival. We are alive because of the countless meals we have eaten during our life. Because the sun shines on the earth and the clouds bring rain, crops can grow. Someone tends to the crops and harvests them, someone else brings them to market, and yet another person makes a meal from them that we can eat. Each time this process is repeated, the interdependence of our lives links us with more and more people, and with more and more rays of sun and drops of rain.

BUDDHIST PRACTICES FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

Motivating my Day with Loving-Kindness and Compassion

- Upon waking, I should consider how to bring into my life more love and deep empathy for and towards others.
- This idea first thing actually lessens my selfishness, and allows me space to think of others more inclusively.
- I could then begin to think of those close to me, how they want happiness, love and kindness.
- I could think about how I and those close to me actually wish to be free from suffering.
- I could then include those who live in my own town/city/country.
- I could expand this idea to beings across the planet, motivating my own life to bring them all happiness and free them from any pain - mental or physical.
- I can motivate my life, no matter what I do during the day. I can motivate with my very breath for the sake of others. On the in-breath, take away any suffering, and on the out-breath offer love and kindness, wishing all beings to be well and happy.

- Just for one moment each day I could try to be very mindful of all those beings with whom I share this planet.
- At times during the day, I could remember my interdependency and interconnectedness with sentient beings all around our world, physically and mentally, who long for happiness as they go about doing whatever is necessary for them to do.
- If I thought that this day, this one day, I could bring about the happiness of anyone, *may I do so!*
- And at the end of my day there will be joy and happiness derived from love and sharing.

How do I lessen my karmic imprint of harm?

1. Live simply.
2. Release over-involvement in life, over-exertion in socializing.
3. Stop harmful pursuits like gambling, hunting, fishing, etc.
4. Less spending, thus less packaging.
5. Less lazying around, more finding ways to help others.

Imagine a culture in which everything is geared toward helping individuals become the best human beings they can be, in which individuals are driven to devoting themselves to becoming enlightened by the natural flood of compassion for others that arises from their wisdom.

Professor Robert Thurman

*This is the power of motivation.
Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche*

Offering of Three Candles

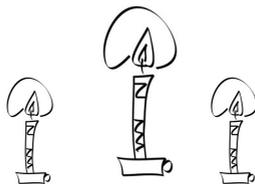
If you do nothing else, you should do this: Set up three candles in front of the Buddha image on your altar.

The first candle you are offering to the Buddha (the Doctor). In particular, you are remembering the Bhagawan Buddha of our time, Shakyamuni Buddha. You are remembering the compassionate teachings and making the request, 'May they remain'. Say OM AH HUNG three times as you light the candle.

The second candle is offered to the precious, deep and profound Dharma that has been held purely and given to us by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, His lineage and all your lineage Teachers from whom you have received teachings, in the form of books, texts, CDs, DVDs and tapes - the entire teachings (the medicine). Say OM AH HUNG three times as you light the candle.

The third candle is offered to the Arya (Noble) Sangha, those realised beings who live in pure morality (vinaya) of body, speech and mind. Request them to remain, nurture and teach us until our own samsara ends. Say OM AH HUNG three times as you light the candle.

When you have finished this practice, have happiness and rejoice that you have the virtuous merit to recognise the benefits of the profound healing medicine and practitioners in your life.



Shopping with Compassion

- Be kind. Be patient. Patience is the antidote to anger.
- Allow people to go before you.
- Be patient with the check-out person.
- Practice patience if items need checking. Try breathing in slowly and exhaling slowly.
- Practice patience if anyone gets in your way with a trolley, etc.
- Be patient with goods stacked in aisles.
- Check your mind - what are you there for?
- Be mindful of others with patience and empathy. Acknowledge that everyone there would probably rather be somewhere else.
- Remember that we all have to eat!
- Think also of the kindness to gather in food to feed others – our family, friends, pets, etc. This is great thinking and when done with joy, so special!
- Dedicate your practice of patience and empathy to all embodied beings.

Patience is compassion.
Patience is loving-kindness.
Patience is respect.
Patience is care.

Driving with Compassion

- Take three deep breaths, filling the lungs and exhaling slowly.
- Bring to mind that you are going to put an effort into driving with empathy and compassion—thinking of others.
- Aspire to become a warrior saint driver, and that means to practice patience and concentration, and have joy that you can do this! This is the practice of three of the Six Perfections. *Please see the Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life by Master Shantideva.*
- Please practice mindfulness and be aware of others' potential to cause harm. Be aware that others may not be careful or mindful when driving, or they may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Be mindful of road, local government and RTA rules.
- Keep your car legal and road-worthy, therefore safe not only for yourself but others as well.
- Dedicate your practice of safety with care to everyone's wellbeing and protecting life.

Being a Parent with Compassion

His Holiness stated that if children receive maximum affection when they are growing up, then they will grow to be better human beings.

- Remember that your children have their own karmic imprints and propensities, and thus they have their own life to live.
- Recall your own childhood. This may help empathy to arise for them.
- Show your children love and kindness, whether you were shown love and kindness or whether you were not. This is an opportunity to overcome many psychological obstacles in your own mind.
- Remind yourself that your children are not an extension of you. They are children and in their own right they may or may not live up to your expectations. Acceptance is a quality when dealing with others, it is desirable and freeing. Please accept them as they are.
- Do not live your life through your children, i.e. don't push them into activities they do not like or want to do.
- Do not give up your life expecting rewards or love in return from your children, or for them to give up their life for you.
- Be mindful of your children's *needs*, they may not be your needs.
- Saying NO can be the greatest loving kindness you could show your children.
- Always be responsible - someone has to be! Remember who is the parent.
- Motivate and dedicate your parenting to all beings and to being a better human being in an unsettled age.

Stopping Suffering by Stopping Blame

- Each and every person has some form of mental or physical suffering. We should never want to add to their problems.
- Therefore, we should not blame them or whinge to them, or about them, especially parents or families. Acceptance of others and their life is respect on the deepest level.
- If we blame others in any situation, we cannot recognise our own true suffering and our own responsibility in each situation.
- When we don't look correctly at the universal law of cause and effect, we blame anything or anyone. We should be aware that what we think mentally and how we act physically will have a ripening effect in the future.
- If we look at the *infallibility* of the law of cause and effect (what we sow, we shall reap), we will learn how to stop blaming and accept responsibility for our own created causes and results experienced each and every moment.
- Note how blaming and whingeing are related.
- Whingeing is a form of blaming, but can be done in an underhanded way, going behind someone's back and involving many others in our wrong ideas, usually with unadulterated opinions.
- When we blame and whinge we alienate people. We have the responsibility to look at and take care of our own mental and physical well-being.

- When we consciously stop blame, then we will bring happiness to ourselves and others. We actually feel better, our life is easier.
- We use the law of cause and effect as a win/win situation for ourselves and others.
- By creating a 'no blame' and 'no whinge' mind and speech, we drop our own suffering and our cause of suffering to others.
- We should allow ourselves to drop whatever is our biggest blame. We can stop our greatest whinge, accept responsibility and create positive karmic imprints, transforming all negativities into positivities.
- When we do positive actions for others, they feel happy and we feel joy in our hearts.
- To conclude, what we need to do is to stop negative blame and negative whingeing, and create positive happiness and give joy. In our hearts we become a special person whose thoughts are about benefiting others and we receive benefit and happiness along the way.
- Then we dedicate and offer our merit from this practice to the happiness and well-being of all beings.

Mindfulness Evolving into Thought Transformation

Recognition of what and how we think is a great first step to transformation. When we know how we think is harmful to ourselves we will want to transform the negative, even habitual thinking, into positive virtue. Thus begins the loving and compassionate thinking that transforms not only mind, but body as well.

Begin with the motivation:

- Today I will endeavour to be mindful of my body, speech and mind.

Then we continue with these affirmations:

- I will be mindful not to harm myself. For example, I will not overeat or overindulge in intoxicants.
- I will be mindful of my actions towards others with the thought of no harm to their bodies.
- I will be mindful of my speech, not swearing, not using harsh words, in fact, no anger in my speech towards others, therefore no harm, only kind and gentle words.
- I will be mindful of my thoughts, with no malice, jealousy or envy towards others. Thus protecting my mind and them.
- With my body I will be mindful so as not to entice, use inappropriate touching or insinuation. I will benefit others with actions of kindness and generosity, with care and thoughtfulness.

- With my speech I will benefit with kind and gentle language, words of encouragement and love.
- With my mind, I will think well of others and try to notice that they may be in pain, and find a way to benefit them using my mind, taking and giving with the breath. I will do this with my very breath, inhaling and taking in their problems, exhaling and wishing them to be well, happy and at ease.
- In fact, I will use my mind to transform my thoughts into becoming a better person. With this motivation, I can begin my mind transformation - recalling empathy, loving-kindness and compassion.
- I can then offer my body, speech and mind transformations to all kind connected beings in this and future lives and try to make the future of myself and others happier and better.



The Suffering of Eating Meat

Tharpa Choeling Australia takes its responsibilities to humans and animals seriously, so we need to let you know about the suffering that is caused to animals and humans through eating meat.

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. That great fear can be perpetuated in future lives as well. It's in the meat you eat.

We have to be born not as animals but as humans, so that we can attain Enlightenment as quickly as possible. It is our responsibility to stop animals from suffering and look after them, and not kill them, especially for sport. As intelligent beings we should have evolved, after going through wars and revolutions you would think we would be smart enough not to eat dead flesh. We have been born animals in the past and may well be animals in the future.

We should avoid wrong livelihood and stop others from indulging in wrong livelihood as well. In our own way, we withdraw our support of the meat industry.

Every being with an animal rebirth has been a kind mother to us in previous lives in different realms of existence, where they cared for us and looked after us with as much love and kindness as our present parents of this life.

Animals and all sentient beings should be cared for properly, with loving kindness and compassion, and should not be killed for any reason, not for the sake of feeding the stomach of our friends and family, not for profit, and not for our own stomachs.

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.

The production of vegetarian food involves the killing of animals such as insects by poisoning, harvesting and processing. However, the bigger the animal, the more negative karma one collects. For example, by eating meat we are participating in the taking of the life of cattle, pigs, chickens, fish and sheep, etc. We should empathise and realise that their life is absolutely just as important as our life is to us, that they suffer fear, and that they know their end has come as the axe is lowered.

Liberating, protecting and caring for animals is the directly opposed karma to killing them. It is not just rescuing them and buying them from a shop, but it is placing them somewhere safe and making an effort to ensure that they do not get caught again. For example, placing sea creatures in the water, not just throwing them from a pier. It is being mindful of what we do with the animals once we buy them or rescue them. For example, if it is a puppy or kitten, we have to be mindful that we will need to look after them for a long time once we have rescued them. In the feeding and protecting of the animals is the make-up exercise of the harm we have given sentient beings in the past.

Because liberating animals is a way to prevent untimely death and to prolong life, we should do this with concentrated, heartfelt understanding of the practice of saving life. The motivation is that we are saving a particular life and the dedication is that this was a kind mother in a previous life. We should think that whatever we experience in life in the way of suffering and pain could not possibly be as much as being captured, tortured and the fear

experienced knowing that your time of death is at hand and you are going to be eaten. So we should dedicate the saving of a life, so that no sentient beings have to suffer and to the full Enlightenment of all sentient beings.

*All tremble at violence;
all fear death.*

*Putting oneself in the place of another,
one should not kill nor cause another to kill.
The Buddha (Dhammapada)*

*To avoid terror to living beings,
let the disciple refrain from eating meat.
The Buddha (Dhammapada)*

*The eating of meat extinguishes
the seed of great compassion.
The Buddha (Mahaparinirvana Sutra)*

*I do not see any reason why animals should be
slaughtered to serve as human diet when there are
so many substitutes.
His Holiness the Dalai Lama*



The Seven Point Cause and Effect Instruction *Food for Thought*

Preliminary: EQUANIMITY

Equanimity means recognising that all living beings are the same as we are – not wanting suffering, and wanting happiness. All sentient beings have the potential to become Enlightened. Please see the “Three Person Meditation” based on the Seven Point Cause and Effect Instruction in “Natural Potential” by the author.

Affirmation: I will remember equanimity even when I see others’ actions as harmful and negative. There is the advanced idea in the Warrior Saint instructions, the view of seeing all beings as equal to oneself. Of course it takes wisdom and compassion to have this view. It is evolution and is what we will all attain.

1. RECOGNISING ALL LIVING BEINGS

We should recognise the interconnectedness that shows us that in our past and present each and every living being has been our friend, enemy and relative, and may be so again.

Affirmation: I will remember this when I see living beings’ actions as unkind and uncaring.

2. APPRECIATING KINDNESS

No matter what others look like, whatever their skin colour, race or religion, we appreciate that they are the same as we are and that they often are capable of committing random acts of kindness.

Affirmation: I will respect them and appreciate all their kindness towards me.

3. REPAYING KINDNESS

If we could recognise others as close ones, equals, just the same as us, we may be able to repay their kindness, seeing them as a dear friend.

Affirmation: I will make an effort to repay the

kindness of friends, strangers and of course all enemies, even if I can just manage to recognise their kindness in a superficial way, e.g. the pleasantries of a shop-keeper.

4. CARING LOVE

If we could find that connected idea that allows us to see our 'sameness' in wanting happiness, we will learn to have some affection for others. Following on from this, we will develop empathy for others' troubles and woes. We should then begin the practice of seeking their welfare.

Affirmation: I will assist and care for others with care and kindness whenever possible.

5. DEVELOPMENT OF COMPASSION

Committing to compassion means that with respect, love and concern for others we cannot bear to see them suffer. His Holiness the Dalai Lama says in "Widening the Circle of Love":

"As compassion grows stronger, so does the willingness to commit yourself to the welfare of all beings, even if you have to do it alone."

Affirmation: With the growing strength of compassion, I commit to becoming adept at benefiting others.

6. HEARTFELT INTENTION

We need extraordinary effort and a holistic commitment so that even if we have to do it alone, we can free living beings from their torment and place them in happiness.

Affirmation: Everyday, in different circumstances, I will make the commitment to free beings from mental and physical pain and place them in happiness and ease.

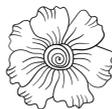
7. ENLIGHTENMENT

The desire to do this means an every day commitment to achieving a state of Full Enlightenment. Relatively, in this life, we need to contemplate the benefits of love, empathy, equality and compassion. For the future, we need to have a firm and honest commitment to alleviate the sufferings of cyclic beings, caught and bound to the wheel of life.

Affirmation: I will attain Full Enlightenment with all the qualities and resources to free sentient beings from the sadness of repetitive lifetimes in any of the realms of existence. For more information of the Six Realms of the Desire Realm, please see "Exploring Mind" and "3,2,1 The Three Turnings of the Dharma Wheel" by the author.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama suggests we repeat three times each morning and three times each night the following Bodhisattva Vow:

*With the wish to liberate all sentient beings,
I take refuge forever to the Buddha, Dharma and
Sangha, Until I attain Enlightenment.
Making effort for sentient beings with wisdom and
compassion, I abide before the Buddhas and
cultivate the mind of Enlightenment.
As long as space remains, as long as sentient
beings remain, May I too remain to dispel the
sufferings of all sentient beings.*



The Eight Verses of Thought Transformation

- 1. By thinking of all sentient beings
As even better than the wish-granting gem
For accomplishing the highest aim
May I always consider them precious.*
- 2. Wherever I go, with whomever I go,
May I see myself as less than all others,
And from the depth of my heart,
May I consider them supremely precious.*
- 3. May I examine my mind in all action,
And as soon as a negative state occurs,
Since it endangers myself and others,
May I firmly face and avert it.*
- 4. When I see beings of a negative disposition
Or those oppressed by negativity or pain,
May I, as if finding a treasure, consider them
precious,
For they are rarely met.*
- 5. Whenever others, due to their jealousy,
Reville and treat me in other unjust ways,
May I accept this defeat myself,
And offer the victory to others.*
- 6. When someone whom I have helped
Or in whom I have placed great hope,
Harms me with great injustice,
May I see that one as a sacred friend.*
- 7. In short, may I offer both directly and
indirectly
All joy and benefit to all beings, my mothers,
And may I myself secretly take on all of
their suffering and hurt.*

8. *May they not be defiled by the concepts
Of the eight mundane concerns,
And aware that all things are illusory,
May they, ungrasping, be free from bondage.*

Bhikshuni Thubten Chodron recommends that we meditate on each of the verses. We say the verse, pause to contemplate its meaning, then apply the verse to situations in our life. We can combine the verses with Chenrezig (Buddha of Compassion) practice, or by referring to “Natural Potential” by Genla Venerable Thubten Tenzin we can use Geshe Konchog Tsering’s practice that combines the verses with Amitabha Buddha practice.

Contemplating these verses should open us up to transform our minds from selfish, ordinary thinking to thinking of others and, as always, to becoming the Buddha.



Dedicating my Day with Loving Kindness and Compassion

Reflection of the day should include the question: Did I think of one being besides myself today, even if it was only for a few moments? If I thought about someone, did I love them and wish them to be happy? I do so now, *may they be well and happy!*

If I thought of or recognised a complete stranger and wished them to have happiness because they looked sad, then *may they be very happy!*

If I thought of someone who is suffering from anything like cancer, HIV related illness or COVID, then *may they be free from suffering forever and may they be well!*

If I thought of someone who may be depressed or suffering from mental pain, then *may they be free from this pain in this very instant!*

If I recognised the suffering of one animal then I should think and say, *may this animal be immediately freed from suffering, never again be born an animal but always be born human and never harm another!*

What if I thought about my enemy, who like me only wants to be happy, who has a family and parents who care for them and depend on them, *may they be very happy and at ease!*

If I did bring about even one small amount of happiness today, *may it continue always!*

I offer my life so as to make it meaningful, *please may it be so now and in the future!*

As I join my hands together in prayer, *may I and all sentient beings attain sorrowless bliss as all Holy Beings have done, are doing and will do!*

Chapter Nine

Meditations



*It may be important to see what arises
in our mind, analyse it and purify it,
or best just drop it!*

Genla Venerable Thubten Tenzin

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. The more we do this the more peaceful we become.

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

The core of this breath awareness could be done at times of stress or when you feel overwhelmed.

Mindfulness of Breath, Easing our Pain

Introduction

It is good to be aware of the natural flow of our breath in each moment. Mindfulness of our breath in each moment is a healing effort we can apply to stop the suffering in our mind. It allows us space and a window of opportunity, to bring ourselves home to a peaceful, calm mind, thereby enabling us to check up on ourselves, and recognize the clarity of the luminous state of our mind.

Meditation

1. The Breath

As we sit and meditate, we try to recognize the most evident suffering in our mind in this moment. It could be gross physical pain, or it could be gross mental suffering such as a mind of jealousy, hatred or desire, a mind of expectations, hopes or fears.

We must try to breathe into the suffering. If the suffering is physical, recognise the part of the body that is hurting, and breathe deeply into it. If it is a mental suffering, begin by recognizing its source, for example, anger, attachment, impatience, hatred, or any thought which upsets and disturbs our mind. Then, we see the mind as being at the heart, and we breathe into the heart area.

Breathe really deeply, feeling the breath lessen the suffering. Do this for at least seven rounds of breath, counting the inhalation and exhalation as one round. Feel firmly that our own natural, special breath can help us to find some ease and let go of any particular suffering.

When we have finished the seven breaths, check out the body and mind and see if there has been some lessening of the suffering, or if it is the same.

If the suffering has lessened, we can see how we have the power to reduce and ease our own dissatisfactory states of mind.

If the suffering is the same, we should remain concentrated and breathe into the suffering again, with the firm determination of lessening it, of easing it.

We should now feel with every inhalation and exhalation that our breath attention can ease any pain, any suffering, in our body and mind. We will learn to deal with any situation by remaining open and mindful of ourselves in this very present moment. We no longer need to resort to hiding from the problem, our addictive patterns, or falling back into the comfort zones of falsehoods. We no longer need to lie to ourselves. Positively, with abilities engendered, we could lead a better, more meaningful life.

2. White Light Healing

We can now begin white light healing. On the in-breath, visualize universal, healing, white light. It is warm, gentle and soothing in nature. It enters the body, and we direct this pure light towards the pain or problem. We should already firmly feel that the white light is actually lessening the suffering every time we draw in our breath.

On the out breath, we visualise our suffering leaving our body through the nostrils, similar to smoke leaving a chimney stack. We can see this smoke dissolving instantaneously when it leaves the

body, or we can see it disappear far beyond this world.

When we feel any kind of mental or physical suffering arise, we can use either method to alleviate or lessen the suffering in that very moment.

At any time, in any place, we have the power with our very breath, to calm our mind and lessen suffering.



Peaceful Essence Within

Begin by getting into a comfortable meditation position. Take three deep breaths and breathe out all negativities, including pain and tiredness, on the out breath.

Then breathe naturally and normally. Retain an awareness of the natural breath entering and leaving the body, and with this, relax into a space of calmness, adopting a feeling of peace.

As we meditate, we come to understand that our mind is still under the sway of suffering, whatever we perceive that to be in this very moment. For example, it may be that our mind is full of angry thoughts, or we may be feeling lonely, guilty, anxious or depressed. As we analyse our mind, we can identify the specific suffering we are experiencing right now.

Now that we see how much we are suffering, we must find a simple way to have some compassion for ourselves, to alleviate the mental pain.

We recall from our past (or just recall) a place of safety, of refuge, a place where we felt completely at ease and quiet. Our refuge place may be the bush, or a mountain top, or beside the sea. We now spend a few moments getting in touch with and abiding in our refuge space.

Breathe in the essence of this light, airy place, which embraces and infuses our body with stillness and calm. We feel more and more peaceful, calmer and quieter, with each inhalation and exhalation. The natural breath is stopping our suffering, allowing us to be in the present moment of refuge.

Concentrating on each breath brings us a healing, precious moment, gradually stopping the suffering in our mind.

Not trying to change the past or make the future what we want, by just staying in this special place, and just being, we allow compassion to wash over us like a healing balm. We allow ourselves a cessation of suffering, washing away all pain.

As we continue to breathe in and out, we become more and more peaceful, recalling the essence of stillness and calm in our own special refuge place.

We also begin to see that like us others suffer. Think firstly of those loved ones closest to you, and embrace them with your mind. Hold them dear, think to nurture and protect them. Offer to take them into your own safe space, and share with them the refuge, peace and quiet of your heart/mind.

Then take the people who may be suffering from the same afflictive emotions as you into that refuge space, your space of peace. Take away those very same sufferings from all those people. Because this refuge space is within us, we can go there any time. We should take ourselves and others there in our mind at any time. Extending the present moment into the future, through peace, calmness and stillness now, we cause ourselves to have peace and happiness, living in harmony now and in the future.

The Emptiness of Anger

We begin by sitting with our back straight, palms resting in the lap. The right hand rests on top of the left hand, both palms upwards, and the thumbs touch in the middle. The tongue rests at the back of the top teeth. We close our eyes and attempt to remain comfortable and at ease.

Take three deep breaths, filling the lungs with air and then breathing out slowly. Then resume an awareness on the natural flow of the breath in and out of the body.

We recall our most recent moments of anger.

We will slowly go through an analysis, point by point, to see how that anger arose...

What did we get angry at? Was it a person? Was it an object? Was it ourselves?

We begin to see that from their side, the person or the object is actually empty of making us angry. The person or object is empty of being the object of our anger. They are not what made us angry. Anger comes solely from previous moments of anger within our own created habitual anger and our allowing it to continue.

If it was an inanimate object we got angry at, that object is absolutely, certainly empty of making us angry. It has no way from its own side to upset us.

If it was a person we got angry with, was it a stranger, someone we've never met? Someone physically unaware of causing anything? A stranger is empty and devoid of us venting any emotion on them. Because we don't know them well enough,

do we think we have the right to get angry with them? A country full of people? A government? But they probably don't think they make anybody angry! So what is the point?

Sadly, anger is usually directed towards somebody close, near and dear. Thinking we can get away with being angry may also be a factor. If it was a loved one, we obviously did or do love them, so they are empty of our reasons to be angry with them. Like us, they want happiness, and we cared for them or still do care for them!

The truth is that each moment of anger creates more moments of anger. So in this very moment we should feel regret for the hurt we have caused to anyone by our selfish anger, especially the hurt we have caused to a dear one.

Next we ask ourselves why did we get angry? Being totally honest with ourselves, we ask, was it impatience? Frustration? Was it our expectations? Or thinking we have the right to be angry? We don't!

Anger itself, which is thought or energy, is not physical or tangible, but empty of anything solid. It is not permanent, and we cannot hold onto it as we would something solid. It does give rise to nasty speech and harmful bodily actions. And it can cause ourselves and others physical pain and mental suffering, so we need to end it now. We can do this by finding our trigger or condition for anger to arise, and make every effort to stop it.

Think, "This anger must be coming up due to past anger, therefore I could stop it now. There is no need to create future anger. Right now I will stop all anger. I will definitely experience the

ripening of anger in a myriad of painful physical and mental results.”

Loving oneself is a better mental action than ever getting upset or hating oneself or anything about an intangible situation. Remembering again that we are not permanently angry, we can ease our mind by thinking, “If I see this anger as fleeting, impermanent, I can allow it to dissolve away into emptiness... There is no reason to hold onto it... No logical reason at all... It only causes pain to myself and others...”

Also think, “If I can keep a vigilant mind, being mindful, I can let go and just ease my mind... If I immediately apply antidotes of patience and loving-kindness, I can begin the process of stopping anger forever.”

We allow our mind to rest in an empty, spacious, open clarity, allowing ourselves to let go of angry thoughts and moments, just sitting, dropping into spaciousness, and we develop a feeling of peace. This is an empathetic and compassionate way for us to be for ourselves and others.



The White Light of Compassion

Introduction

It is sad that there are many of us who undergo mental torment due to some traumatic experience. Of course, from a Buddhist perspective, this is not a random occurrence but due to our personal causes and effects, the law of karmic action (please see the chart in the Ton-Len Meditation).

Often the word "karma" is used as a throw-away term to explain what happens to us, "Oh, it's your karma." But to look at the truth of what karma really means is the understanding that we all experience some kind of mental and physical ripening of suffering that comes from our past creations. So to heal the present ripening suffering, we need to heal and purify the past causes. The twofold purpose in reflective meditation is to draw comfort and solace from the Holy Beings who have transcended all suffering and to find some answers, the links to our past creative activities.

With respect to Those Gone Beyond, we can develop compassion just as They have done. We can remove our own suffering with compassion for ourselves. And our compassion will be useful as a practice for understanding the truth of cause and effect and the truth of suffering. In fact, we need to develop compassion for the perpetrators of crime and negativity because in the future they will suffer from their creations and ripening results.

We begin to understand that we are in the physical and mental suffering of this trauma now because we have participated in such events in the past. This will be the biggest truth we face in our lives. In these present moments of meditation, we should do our best to heal the past and the present suffering we are experiencing and make a better future altogether. We owe it to ourselves to do this, to understand fully. We cannot change the

past but we should develop some peace and ease now, for our future.

Meditation

Prepare for the meditation by sitting comfortably or lying down. Begin by breathing in the warm, gentle, purifying, compassionate, healing, white light of wisdom. This universal healing white light radiates from all the Holy Beings in the universe, who from Their great compassion only want you to be free from the torment of suffering. With every breath we think about breathing in this gentle, healing light of wisdom.

Then with each out-breath, we think about breathing out all sickness, sadness, sorrow and suffering. Breathing it out of the body in the form of black smoke. Letting go of all negativities in the form of black smoke, which dissipates immediately upon touching clean, clear space. For as long as we are able maintain this visualization of healing in the present, the better it is for us in the future.

Now whatever the cause was in the past, may it become healed in this process of meditation of love and kindness. We feel the power from all the Holy Beings in the form of healing wisdom light, warm, gentle and compassionate. They strongly wish us to be free from this pain. We should now strongly affirm that we are ending the pain of it all, we are finishing any negativity that we may have created in the past that has caused this suffering in the present.

Breathing in the light and breathing out the black smoke of negativities. Maintain the visualization with attention and confidence.

Specific negativities may surface but still we breathe light into the past life, recognizing the result we are experiencing. We continue to breathe in the healing, cleansing, warm and gentle white universal wisdom light, given as an Enlightened gift from all the Wisdom Beings surrounding us.

Then we should have the strong feeling that it is finished. We can say to ourselves, "The torment is finished." We firmly and bravely *let it go*. Make the hand gesture of letting go. And we remember the person benefitting the most from letting it go is ourself. We do not have to suffer this pain anymore.

Dedication

By doing this meditation, may anyone who suffers, or has suffered, or will suffer from exactly the same resulting karma, reach a state of contentment and bliss as quickly as possible. May all beings attain the state of peerless happiness and loving-kindness that desires only to benefit others and cause them happiness.

Karma created by the mind is the most important and most powerful.

Mind karma is motivation.

Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche

A Meditation to Transcend Grief and Live with Loss

Begin the meditation by sitting comfortably with a straight back. If we are sitting on a chair, we place our feet flat on the floor, a small way apart. We rest our hands in our lap with the right hand on top of the left, and the thumbs touching. We rest the tongue behind the top teeth and relax the jaw. We can either close our eyes, or keep them almost closed and looking down the bridge of the nose.

We calm our body and mind with simple breath awareness and then we move into healing with the white light healing meditation.

Simple Breath Awareness

The simple breath awareness begins with three deep breaths, letting go of any tension on the out breath. We then watch the natural flow of the breath for at least seven breaths, or for as long as we like, keeping a calmness and peace within us.

White Light Healing

For at least seven breaths, we breathe in universal healing white light. We breathe out all negativities in the form of black smoke.

Then we recall that we are grieving. We see our emotions of grief, our sorrow, and our loss, that are the thoughts of our mind, and we breathe these out, easing our pain, experiencing a sense of relief.

We see our loss and sorrow and we breathe them out as empty thoughts blown about on the wind.

Whatever type of relationship it was, and whatever type of grief we are feeling, we must be

completely honest with ourselves. The relationship was never permanently good or bad, happy or unhappy. Recognizing this may help us to let go.

We begin letting go of our own pain, our own depression, our anger at the person, or our emotional pain of guilt and/or grief.

Then we can think:

I want you to be happy because I care for you.

I want you to be peaceful.

I want you to be at ease.

And more than anything, I want you to be free from suffering.

And we can send white healing light, warm and gentle, to this person. We send to her or him all our love, all our compassion, all our wishes for them to be contented, peaceful, and at ease, wherever they are, whatever they may be doing.

So, for as long as possible, we can breathe into ourselves universal healing white light that breaks up our own pain like a lightning strike. We then send healing white light to our loved ones, and to all beings experiencing grief and loss right at this moment.

This practice is also especially good for divorce and separation from loved ones, to heal any pain of anger at our loss or grief.

As we finish the practice, it is very good to dedicate this meditation, this precious time, to that person, who was the cause for us to meditate.

Think:

May I take him or her to full and complete Enlightenment. In fact, may I take all beings in the circle of birth, old age, sickness and death to liberated bliss.

Walking Meditation

Remove your shoes and place your feet on the ground. Stand and breathe deeply three times, exhaling all negativities. Then begin the walking meditation.

Every step is slow and your mind turns inwards and becomes reflective. Lift one foot slowly then place it down slowly, feeling the earth; solid, firm ground under your feet. Lift the other foot slowly with direct attention, then place it down slowly, once again noting the solid, firm ground beneath, the very stable essence of your life. With your hands either gently clasped behind your back, or loosely at your sides, continue very slowly contemplating the stepping and placing of your feet. Your head should not be looking around. Your gaze should be directed to the placement of your feet or just in front of them.

Now we contemplate as we walk:

1. Taking and Giving

As you lift each foot, feel that you are lifting the burdens of this life from yourself and all your loved ones. As you place each foot down, feel that you are giving them the solid foundation of happiness – their natural true nature – everpresent.

2. Calmness and Joy

As you lift each foot, you can lift your own spirits, and as you place each foot down, you can place yourself in joy, feeling the solid calm firmness of the earth. Allow yourself to be peaceful and calm with the basis of solid ground. Allow yourself to be uplifted as you lift each foot, placing yourself in joy and happiness.

Whichever method you use, with the rise and fall of each foot, you can include all your loved ones, all your friends, all strangers, and particularly all enemies. You are giving them the joy of placing them in the quality of their forever innate mind. You are giving them the happiness of your loving-kindness, taking them happily with you in your meditation. And you should want to free them from suffering with your compassion.

By repeating your steps you will see how even walking to the shop or to post a letter can be most meaningful. By walking for your health, you can also give health and happiness to others. Then each part of your life is caring, giving, meaningful, placing yourself and others in happiness.

When you finish your walking meditation or walking in life, you can dedicate all that positive virtue to yourself, to become awake quickly, and to all those you included in the meditation, so that everyone can live in peace, happiness, harmony and the truth of reality.



Ton-Len Meditation (Taking and Giving) For healing trauma and addictions

We prepare for meditation by sitting with a straight back and taking three deep breaths. We become aware of the present moment, the feeling of our body, the feeling of the thoughts in our mind. We become aware of the suffering and dissatisfied nature of our body and mind. What is this suffering? Remember, we are not alone in dissatisfaction. We are not alone in wanting happiness – actually it is our right and the right of all others to be happy.

Before going back in time to the cause of our trauma or addiction, please once again become aware of the present moment: the breath, our breath, our body, our mind, dissatisfaction, perhaps the hole that we try to fill but never can no matter what we do. Just remain aware of the nature of this composite suffering... tire of it. We become fed up with this suffering and we generate a feeling of strength and resolve to free ourselves from this suffering – finally letting go of all this pain.

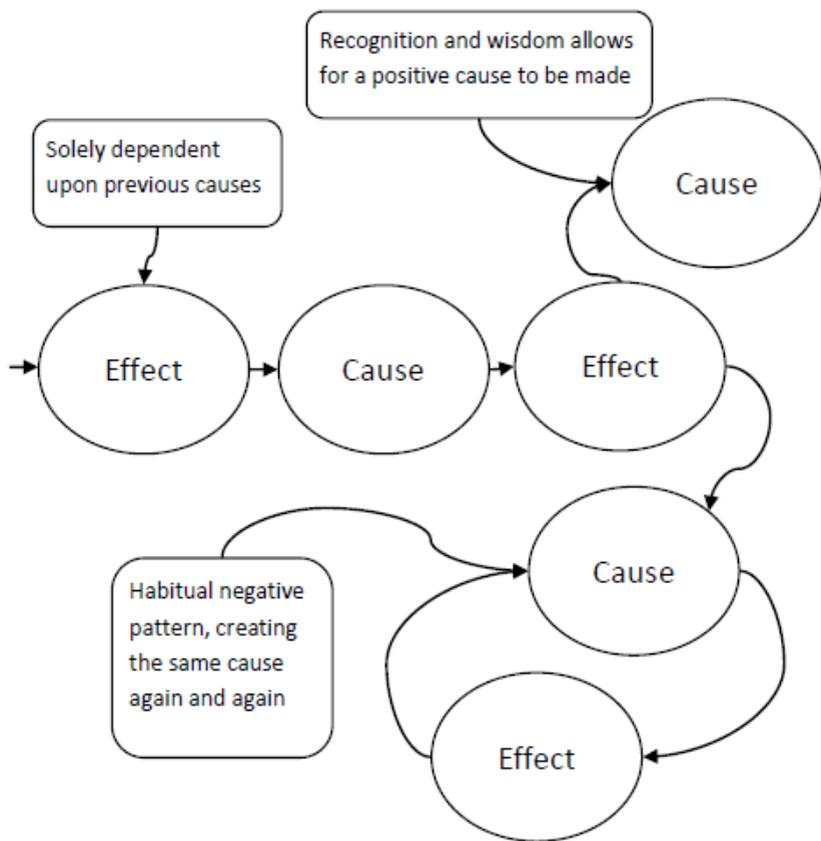
With fortitude and determination we will now travel to the past. For many people this is a frightening thought. If so, try to feel the safety and refuge in your space, which is full of Holy Beings who only wish you well. We can feel that the memories are in the past, like a bad dream, and cannot cause us any harm.

We just recall the suffering, addiction or trauma that we have experienced. We must confront the situation and say “Yes, I experienced it” but we need not relive the experience. In fact, to keep reliving it is the greatest suffering. We did go through this, there must have been a cause, it can't be a random occurrence.

Cause & Effect

In meditation, one of the simplest ways to comprehend dependent arising is through cause and effect.

An effect comes about because it is solely dependent upon its cause. The effect gives rise to further causes.



If one sees this process as unnecessary and wants to end it, the liberating path will open up.

We must be accepting of cause and effect. Accepting that we caused the problem originally, possibly in another lifetime, is the first step to recovery. The second and most important part of recovery is letting go. Accepting, letting go and not reliving are the three steps in the process of recovery.

Instead of blaming ourselves or others, we breathe loving kindness and compassion into the experience and then try letting go, make a hand gesture of letting go. We feel a calmness and peace that the feeling of finally letting go gives us. We can do this for as long as we like, or for as long as it takes, continually, perhaps every day, giving ourselves the space to find resolution.

Then we come back to the present time. We extend our present moment of calmness by breathing in deeply all the loving kindness, all the compassion, from the Holy Beings around us. We are transforming our mind, becoming more peaceful, more at ease, understanding that the Holy Beings were once just like us, and now wish us to be well and happy, not wanting us to suffer in any way. We continue to breathe in deeply this loving kindness and compassion in the form of a warm, gentle, white light, feeling all the care and support we need from Those Gone Beyond.

We could now breathe out all the negativities and the sadness of the present moment in the form of black smoke.

Call to mind the you of tomorrow, maybe sadly still afflicted with this suffering, and generate strong compassion. We decide with a firmness that out of compassion, we will take on the suffering of our future self. Imagine the suffering in the form of a black pool of light within the body and mind of the future you, and wish from the bottom of your heart to free "the future you" from this suffering forever.

Take it on now so there is no pain in the future, no thought of it continuing.

Steadfastly we breathe in and draw out what we believe will be the suffering of our future self, completely drawing it out and towards us in a long thin trail of black light. Then feel the black undesirable nature of the negativity. Feel firmly that you are extricating the pain of it out and get a strong feeling that it is happening. When the black light approaches, we draw it in through our nostrils and as it enters our body, it is instantly transformed by the compassion of our present self with the help of all the Holy Beings into warm, white healing light which we breathe out, and into our future self. We fill that future body and mind with health and peace, totally obliterating the pain. The white light permeates future time and space, filling our future body, totally extinguishing the mind of pain and leaving only peace and a calm well-being.

We can free ourselves from all this suffering, but what about all the countless beings undergoing the same suffering, who are helpless and in pain with their suffering mind? They need a Teacher and protector to stop them from wandering aimlessly and helplessly. We visualise them all around us. We don't feel at all threatened, we just remain in our space of peace, and generate strong empathy for all these beings. Thinking of our own past suffering and the compassion we were able to generate towards ourselves, we realize that these beings are no different in wanting happiness and not wanting suffering. Also, we could envisage someone who has shown us great kindness or to whom we are close, and recall any suffering they might have, with the heartfelt wish to do this practice for them.

Then recall that all beings are close to someone, they have parents or a family, and care for

them by thinking how wonderful it would be if we could generate genuine equanimity for all beings at this very moment, wanting to equally alleviate all their pain. How fortunate we are at this very moment in thinking of the suffering of all these beings and wishing that they be free from any pain. Generate the determined desire that we ourselves will free them with our own thoughts of empathy, loving kindness and compassion. Each one of us doing this for others must create a butterfly effect.

We visualise their suffering in the form of black icky-ness in their bodies and begin to draw it out of them on the in-breath, until it is totally drawn out of their bodies and minds.

Now we draw it into ourself and immediately transform it into that white, healing light of oneself and all the Holy Beings, and we breathe it straight back into those beings who had been suffering, giving them a wholeness, a well-ness, and a peaceful calmness. We think, "May they be well and happy, peaceful and at ease. May they have happiness, and by making the effort to do this practice, may they all attain a liberated state of bliss."

We sit and do this practice and think this way for as long as possible, all the while being happy with joy that we are actually empowered to alleviate sufferings.

The Butterfly Effect is the sensitive dependence on initial conditions in which a small change in one state of a deterministic non-linear system can result in large differences in a later state.

Wikipedia

Dissolving the Chains of Addiction ***by Tulku Thondup***

This is a meditation to strengthen our resolve to live drug-free. Call up the negative feelings, physical suffering, and the disturbance to one's life and freedom that is caused by taking drugs. Visualise that the object of your addiction is at some distance from you, dragging you forcefully around on a rope. You have no strength to stay still, and you are tossed about wildly.

Then pray from the bottom of your heart to your source of power for liberation, Jesus, Buddha, a Holy Being. Visualise this source as clearly as you can, and imagine that He/She emits a sharp, laser-like light aimed directly at the rope. By its touch the light not only breaks the rope, but burns it all up without any trace, like paper consumed in a fire.

Or imagine being pulled and dragged about on a chain. As the blessing light touches the chain, it is pulled away from the object of addiction, like iron being forcefully pulled away by a magnet. Then visualise the chain melting into soft, joyful light.

In either of these visualisations, enjoy the great relief of freedom from the addiction. Feel your own inner strength. Relax in the positive feeling as long as you like.

If you must continue to be in circumstances that bring you into contact with the object of addiction, the exercise can and will be very effective. You should break free of the slavery to the cravings, or at the very least become less bothered by them. If you are more cheerful and take the problem less seriously, the external situation can begin to improve.

Relieving the Suffering "I"

Introduction

There are many meditations on finding an "I" that is a permanently existing "something". They search for some "I" that has existed and will exist, at the very least in this lifetime. And they try to find this "I", this "something" that undergoes so much, so many ups and downs and so much emotional turmoil, for the sake of what? Trying to find happiness!

It is possible to see this "I" as not permanently existing and not permanently undergoing suffering, not permanently under the sway of afflictive emotions such as anger, greed, attachment, envy, wrong views, or any mental suffering that can cause or give rise to physical suffering.

Meditation

Begin the meditation by adopting the correct meditation posture, keeping the back straight. If we are sitting on a chair, we rest the feet flat on the floor a short way apart. We relax the face and jaw, and rest the tongue behind the top teeth. And we close the eyes. The hands should be at the level of the navel, right hand on top of left with the thumbs touching.

For at least seven rounds of breath, allow the mind to focus on the sensation of the breath entering and leaving the nostrils, adopting a feeling of calmness and peace.

Recognise the "I", the dualistic mind that thinks good/bad, ugly/beautiful, right/wrong, praise/blame, pride/unworthiness, always comparing and judging with anger, jealousy, envy and fear. See how we concretize these thoughts,

and how thinking is only ever empty, individualistic projection that causes more pain and involvements.

See the impermanent, transitory nature of everything - emotions, thoughts, life, people, and *let go* of this suffering of "I" into that spaciousness of the impermanent quality of everything.

By simply placing an awareness on the breath we mentally *let go* of clinging to any particular emotion that causes so much pain and suffering. Seeing the emotion as impermanent helps us to just let go of it. Mentally, firmly let go!

Breathe into the suffering, loosen the grip of the suffering. Allow it to dissipate into the empty, spacious vastness of our luminous natural awareness. Your clean clear nature, spacious and perfect, is always there, always present. We are learning to realise that we don't have to hang on to any idea/thought within a vice-like mental grip.

In that place of spaciousness there is freedom. In the spaciousness of our mind there is no room for anything negative. It is a natural, abiding state of perfection, it is within us all. Nothing that is unwholesome or the antithesis of truth can exist there in this moment. All that exists is your willingness to let all afflictive, suffering, painful thoughts and emotions dissolve away into the blissful void of freedom.

Learning to let go is a process. We keep bringing our mind back to not grasping at any thought or emotion. We let go of our own idea of self, "I am feeling this or that". We let go of the permanently existing "I" or the "something" that has a hard, permanent core, that holds and remains within afflictive emotions.

With our out-breath, we let go of all holding, grasping and clinging thoughts of "I" and we allow ourselves to be lighter. We let go into the empty, peaceful void of the naturalness of our mind.

Dedication

We dedicate this practice so that no one has to suffer from the great mental sufferings of greed, jealousy, desire, hatred and anger. And so that all beings have access to their pure nature of mind, devoid of any hardness, guilt, blame or ignorance. And we dedicate that we may take this responsibility ourselves, and cause this to happen, just as all previous, present and future evolved beings do!



Emptiness Meditation

Take three deep breaths.

We begin by imagining walking to the edge of a cliff. In front is a spacious, open view that stretches to the horizon. We make an effort to lose ourselves in the stillness and quiet of the view by taking very slow, meaningful steps one foot in front of the other.

Now we walk to the very edge of the cliff and slowly sit down. We become aware of our body sitting on the ground and notice the peace and quiet, thinking of the air as light, brisk and clean-clear.

We concentrate on our position for a few moments, noting the sensations of our body and the view. We imagine that the serenity and quiet pervade our mind. We breathe into our body, letting go of all hopes and fears, and we remind ourselves we are abiding in the present aware moment.

Slowly, we lift our body up and move it out into the spacious view itself. Gradually, allowing the ground to drop away, allowing the periphery views to dissolve away, allowing everything to dissolve away. We feel ourselves supported by all the good qualities of our clean-clear mind, this perfected idea of our sense of self, real true self, supports us.

We continue to let go of any expectations, any hopes, any fears, any longings, we just let them drop away into the surroundings.

We notice thoughts arising and we let them go. The more we sit there, the more we are able to relax, to let go, into the quietness, emptiness, peace. When a thought arises, we gently drop it

and come back to the serenity.

We consciously let go of the past and making plans for the future. They are just thoughts. Now letting go of worries and anxieties, they are just arising thinking. We allow all thoughts to dissolve away into the spaciousness surrounding us.

We may recognise negative feelings, perhaps towards a friend or an enemy. We allow that to go and recall the clarity and freedom of the present moment. We may feel afflictive emotions that cause us and others pain, such as jealousy and our expectations of others fulfilling our wants and desires, and with every intake of breath we fill the mind with peace and with every exhalation we let go of tension and the idea of pressure into the empty space, allowing ourselves to be in that moment of peace and happiness.

When we are ready to return, remember that we are able to go there any time because this spacious freedom exists perfectly within our own mind.



Buddha Tara's Heart Connection

Take three deep breaths, making a conscious effort to let go of any tiredness or pain. Then we begin to establish our heart connection with Buddha Tara's guidance.

Firstly, we analyse our own situation. How old am I? What gender am I? What is my ethnic background?

What we then do is make a connection to a similar being somewhere in the world. It could be someone who is the same age, or of the same ethnic background. It doesn't take imagination to do, because there is definitely someone on the planet who has the same birthday, and maybe they even have the same hair or eye colour, maybe they are the same gender, maybe they even have the same skin colour. Picture them somewhere on this planet.

We establish a connection with them. Empathy should arise because we recognize that they are the same as us. They are a human being, and their time on the planet is a limited time. What are their circumstances? Are they similar or different to ours? We can still empathize. Do they have children? Do I have children? Are they Indian, Asian, African, Muslim, Christian, or Buddhist? It doesn't matter, empathy can still arise in us. We can establish a heart connection with this or any person. Do they have a partner? Friends? Enemies? They must have had or still have parents or close companions who love them. How much depth of connection can we make? The connection depends on seeing the exact sameness, the equanimity of our humanity.

Next we can think about what we suffer from the most. Do we have serious illnesses, depression, mental problems, afflictive emotions? Do they suffer from lack of nourishment, from the pain of toil grubbing for food? Many other humans on this planet could also suffer from this pain. So imagine your heart connection, wherever they are in the world, and send white healing light to them, as they are equal to us in every enlightened way possible. Having developed empathy and equanimity, we send them warm, healing white light. Perhaps their circumstances are even worse than ours. In that case, send more healing white light, imbued with love. Wish that they be well, happy, pain-free and at ease.

Now think of someone similar to us in each country in the world. Send them healing white light. Think about their family or partner and send thoughts of loving kindness, wishing them to be happy, wishing them to have peace in their hearts, wishing them to be kind to each other within their own family units, to their friends, and to anybody they may have problems and disagreements with.

From our side, we are establishing a heart connection that is filled with empathy, deepening to compassion. We are wishing to take their suffering away, wishing to give them better circumstances, a better life, better food, better water, clothes, housing, giving them our happiness, giving them our truth of reality knowledge, giving them the best qualities we have in our life.

Send these people who are similar to us anything that comes to mind that may benefit them. Especially, send them all the good qualities of love and kindness, empathy and compassion, understanding that they are exactly the same as us, always seeking comfort and happiness and the truth.

Now think of some problem or mental affliction that our heart connection may have, and with equanimity and empathy, strongly wish to take it away. Think clearly about exactly what the problem is. Perhaps it is the same problem we have.

Develop genuine compassion for your heart connection and draw out the suffering in the form of thin, black smoke. This smoke hits the black ball of selfishness at your heart like a lightning bolt, striking with laser-like accuracy at your self-cherishing, self-grasping pain, the feeling of always thinking about yourself above others. Then we breathe out white, peaceful, loving light, filling their body and mind completely.

Think of all the people with the same problems that you have, the same illness, and do exactly the same thing for them. Draw away the illness and pain and fill them with peace and wellness.

The establishment of a heart connection is a meditation that will show us how we are all connected in the sameness of being human, having similar problems, and also having similar qualities deeply rooted in our own true nature: empathy, love, kindness, compassion and our equality.

It doesn't matter what gender you are, or the colour of your skin, Action Mother Tara will be present with you when you do this meditation. The Buddha Tara will help you to establish a heart connection to every being on the planet. How amazing then are you!

May our heart connections always have access to and the ability to know the truth.

Everyday Purification Tantra

This practice, as with all Tantric practices, could be more powerful when the initiation is given by a fully qualified Holy Teacher.

Introduction

The practice of Vajrasattva, the Buddha of Purification, is said to be the most effective Tantric practice to rid oneself of any negativity of body, speech or mind. Often we feel guilty about past wrongs we have done in this life, and we cannot remember those done in past lives. This practice has been offered as a method to let go of any negative mental afflictions that give rise to physical and verbal distress or pain.

If we have continual problems with a particular negativity, for example lying, then we can say with some confidence that we have developed a negative mental habitual pattern which would have come from past lives. Recognising this is certainly the beginning of purification. If we recall that we have lied at times, or were about to lie, then we should use this practice to purify those negativities. Using the kindness of the Teacher as Vajrasattva, and dedicating the practice to only telling the truth, we also gain the virtue to achieve liberation beyond suffering, and Enlightenment. We must learn to stop!

If for any reason we feel guilt, this practice can alleviate that pain, as guilt is a useless nagging, worrying emotion. It is important to see what arises in our mind, label it and then purify it. For example, if we feel angry at someone, then we should be honest and say: "This is coming from me, from my past, this person is not making me angry, I am feeling the suffering of anger"; labelling it correctly, so that we can then purify it and let it go!

The Ten Non-Virtues and the Ten Virtues

BODY

<i>Non-Virtue</i>	<i>Virtue</i>
<i>Killing</i>	<i>Protecting life</i>
<i>Stealing</i>	<i>Protecting others' property</i>
<i>Sexual misconduct</i>	<i>Respecting others' partners; Protecting others from your unsolicited advances</i>

SPEECH

<i>Non-Virtue</i>	<i>Virtue</i>
<i>Lying</i>	<i>Telling only the truth</i>
<i>Divisive speech</i>	<i>Bringing others together with speech</i>
<i>Harsh words</i>	<i>Kind and gentle speech</i>
<i>Idle gossip</i>	<i>Saying only meaningful things</i>

MIND

<i>Non-Virtue</i>	<i>Virtue</i>
<i>Coveting what belongs to others</i>	<i>Giving others what they want</i>
<i>Taking pleasure in others' misfortunes</i>	<i>Helping others attain happiness</i>
<i>Holding onto wrong and harmful ideas</i>	<i>Taking on only those beliefs that are good and true</i>

Body Purification

We begin with purification of the body. This could be done walking, cleaning, lying down before sleep, while eating in silence, or working. If we take one non-virtue a day for three days, the body can be cleansed of each one of the bodily non-virtues.

We try to create a strong visualisation of a translucent white OM at our crown, resting upon a lotus and a moon seat. This OM represents Vajrasattva merging with the Guru and you. He/She is in the nature of perfect, white, purifying light.

Feel firmly that this light is purifying any of the three negativities of body. For example, if we feel the strong emotion of desire, or feel we may have acted inappropriately towards someone, then we should remind ourselves that this is desire and we acted incorrectly. Then we purify it with the ever increasing pure white light of Guru Vajrasattva.

Imagine sending rays of light throughout the whole body, cleansing and purifying any suffering of body pain from the mental causes related to the body. Then the negativity leaves through the lower openings of the body. We should feel strongly that we are light, purified and free of that wrong view.

If we see others behaving inappropriately, then we can send pure white light to ease their pain. For example, if we see others eating meat (burgers, chicken etc), we can think: "May they reach Enlightenment so as to benefit completely the kind beings who were slaughtered to give meat." Having compassion for the slaughtered

animals is close to Vajrasattva-hood. Mental attachments have been linked to bodily cancer.

Speech Purification

For four days we could take one of the non-virtues each day and purify all wrong speech. We visualise a red, luminous, bright AH at the throat. Red light emanates from the AH out through the whole throat area and then through the mouth. All negativities leave through the upper openings of the body in the form of grey smoke which immediately dissipates upon touching clean space.

This red light can be used to purify ourselves or others, especially if harsh words are being used. Breathe out perfect red, luminous light from the AH at your throat, which then enters their throats. Or, you could place a radiating red AH at the throats of others with the thought: "May they be peaceful and at ease" or "May they be mindful of their speech and speak only gentle, loving words." May they never suffer from illnesses such as throat cancer or being non-verbal. We can think: "Please may I benefit this kind mother sentient being and take her/him to Enlightenment." This becomes an 'in the moment' dedication.

Mind Purification

For the next three days we purify the negativities of mind. We visualise a perfect blue HUM at one with Guru/Vajrasattva at our heart, emitting radiant blue light. This dissolves all the negativities of coveting, jealousy, miserliness, greed, perverted views and thinking ill of others. Each affliction can be taken on separate days, and this enables us to not give rise to particular afflictive emotions. It enables each one of us to be mindful and avoid causing harm to others by

inflicting on them our emotional pain. Instead, we give benefit to others completely, with our calm, serene, kind state of mind. We send perfect blue light from our heart to another's heart, wishing them to have absolute love and compassion for all others: "May they have love and compassion and may they give only peace and serenity from their mind."

Thinking correctly only ever gives rise to the truth, the perfect, unadulterated, pure truth of how things are! Thus, there will be no mental disorders such as depression, bipolar or Alzheimer's disease.

Dedication

May this purification practice I have performed benefit those who are the condition for me to see the necessity of my practice. By this merit, may I reach Enlightenment swiftly so as to take all beings equally to that state.



Unblocking the Chakras

In an effort to unblock our five main chakras, we should make positive and continual effort, using the colour associated with that region, to cleanse and purify that particular chakra. In fact, if we purify all of the negativities listed, we will not have to experience the ripening which could be in the form of cancer, blood disease, man-made or naturally occurring plagues, serious accidents, and even death.

The five main chakras are:

White at the brow, which affects our physical actions. We visualise a pure white lotus bud in the centre of our forehead. We can think of it as a gift from the universal Holy Beings, or we can think of it as being intrinsically always there, present within us. We visualise that we are cleansing our body as each petal unfolds, sending white rays up into the crown of our head and down into our body. The lotus slowly unfolds until it is in full bloom as we continue the visualization, feel firmly that this chakra is unblocked and cleansed. We affirm that in the future we will in no way harm others with our body actions.

A **red** lotus at the throat purifies our speech. Visualise a translucent red radiant light at the throat in the form of a lotus bud. As each petal unfolds, the pure red light is sent throughout the whole mouth and throat area. We firmly feel that all the unpleasant, harsh, lying words we have ever spoken are completely purified. This chakra is fully opened and radiant. From now on we will only utter kind, loving and gentle speech, never hurting others again with abusive, angry words.

Blue at our heart is associated with our mind. Visualise a clear crystal blue light at the heart in the form of a lotus bud. As it slowly unfolds, petal by petal, we feel free, unblocked and open. There is a lessening of the heavy dark tightness that has been caused by envy, jealousy, covetousness and ill-will. How well-balanced and open our heart feels, allowing loving and caring thoughts to arise for others. We hold onto this for as long as possible, wishing all beings to have everything they desire, especially the great kindness of the truth taught by the teachers of Buddha-dharma.

The **yellow** lotus bud at our navel is translucent and shining. As it slowly unfolds, the light leaving from each and every petal cleanses and unblocks our navel, frees us from all attachments to food and drink, meat products and alcohol. The light heals and cleanses the stomach, bile ducts, kidneys and liver. The light purifies and removes from our system all anger held in the body that may cause problems now and in the future. We will always hold others dear in love and respect.

The radiant clear **green** lotus bud at our secret place unfolds, sending perfect light out to all the sex organs. This allows all attachments that cause problems now and in the future to drop away, such as misplaced sexual desire and problems with our reproductive organs, as they are radiated by the clean, clear penetrating green light from the petals. We should think positively that no problems linked to this area by past wrong views will ripen.

Before finishing the meditation try to picture all the lotuses open in all chakras. The body feels light and refreshed. This meditation can be done any time for any particular chakra as needed.

Healing the Emotions with the Five Dhyani Buddhas

Picture each Dhyani Buddha in the aspect of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Buddha Vairochana is white. Ignorance is overcome. Ignorance is the root of all negative emotions. Feel that Buddha Vairochana is showering you with wisdom, enabling you to overcome the selfish sense of "I". Feel that He/She fills you with pure white wisdom light, perfect in every way. Feel energized, happy, less concentrated on the self, becoming a more open, aware being. Feel more spacious, allowing others into your life.

Buddha Amitabha is red in nature, and is the absence of attachment and negative desire. Attachment leads to frustration and dissatisfaction. When we don't get what we want, we become totally unhappy with our lives, unworthy and without a true sense of well-being. Feel the pure red light from Buddha Amitabha pervading your whole body, giving you a wholeness and wellness that is without grasping our wants and needs.

Buddha Akshobya is blue, the indestructible, unchangeable nature of our innate mind. For example, when anger is purified, everything is peaceful and stable. The stable, firm view of Buddha Akshobya is that we are always aware of our clean, clear reality of kindness and compassion, equally within us all. Every breath we take enables us to recall and be aware of our true clarity of mind, our radiant crystal view, free from all defilements, wise and knowledgeable about the truth of reality.

Buddha Amoghasiddhi is green. He is realised in the absence of the emotion of jealousy.

Jealousy does prevent an individual from accomplishing his or her own happiness and truth, and that individual will impede others as well. As we breathe in the translucent green light from Buddha Amoghasiddhi, we remember to free ourselves from all emotions of envy, jealousy and coveting. As we breathe out, we give to others all help and benefit in all that they do, wishing them to be well and happy, peaceful and at ease, wishing them to have all attainments and realisations.

Buddha Ratnasambhava is yellow. When one is free from pride, one has the wisdom of equality, and is able to enrich the lives of others. One no longer looks at beings as less than or more than oneself. How extremely kind to develop this equality of equanimity. As we recall this with every out-breath, we become firm in the idea of equally benefiting others, not holding some close and others distant. This translucent yellow light from Buddha Ratnasambhava is the enabling of the spiritual concept of pure equality and pure love for all of us.



Recalling the Impermanence of Everything Meditation

Remembering Impermanence

If every day or whenever we can, we remember that our life is temporary and all things in nature fade and die, that situations change and do not remain the same, that life begins and ends, then this is the relative truth of temporariness. We come closer to the truth of reality. Being bound in cyclic existence as we are living and dying means we never have permanent happiness or a permanent life; we change from moment to moment. When we understand all this, we grow, we evolve mentally. By understanding the depth of this truth we will drop the pain and suffering attached to old age, sickness, death and rebirth.

Recalling the Impermanent Nature of All Things Meditation

I sit quietly breathing in and out of my body.
I watch my breath.
I notice the impermanence of my breath.
I cannot hold it for a long period and the exhalation cannot be held for too long.
I notice that many thoughts come and go.
I make an effort not to hold onto thoughts, ideas, reliving the past, so although I remember what I was like as a child, I think, "I am not the same person."
Ideas and plans are not the same.

And I recall that many of my fixed plans have definitely not come to pass.

I make an effort to understand that the inner workings of my mind do not remain the same.
I change.

I notice too my body is not the same, it has definitely changed, aged, etc.
My outer surroundings have changed from my younger days.
People come and go, landscapes change, cities change and people leave or die.

Then I think, "Do I know anyone who has passed away? Anyone close to me? Do I accept the fact that, like them, I will pass away?"
My body will die.
But my mind will continue.

I can, have done, and will change my views, ideas, and in fact my thoughts.

Minute cells in my body change moment to moment, and in fact everything changes and is in a continual flux.

I remain in the present moment.
I continue to breathe.



Meditation on Patience

We should meditate on patience to familiarize our minds with this quality then we may be able to arise patience before we feel the rise of anger in the body/mind. Patience is a complete healing antidote to anger, anger that is a form of harmful abuse to our own body and mind and to the happiness of others.

We begin to contemplate with honesty: How and when does anger arise? Does it arise in moments of stress? Of life circumstances? And when do we give way to anger? And allow it to gush forth with vehemence? Are we impatient with others when they don't think and live as we deem appropriate?

While we sit in this place, at this time, we can think if the object of anger is our best friend or even our enemy, in fact, the anger harms me the most - it can and will make me ill. I breathe into that anger which is held in my body with pure white light or crystal light or the soft pink light of loving-kindness.

Spend a few minutes breathing light into the anger. Heal the body and mind, cleanse all anger and the pain of anger.

If the object of annoyance / frustration is of the inanimate kind, I should still breathe. This gives me space, the space not to give way to anger. If I think by being with a particular person I allow anger to arise then I will and must develop patience and loving-kindness for myself and the other person.

Spend moments breathing, calmly watching the breath entering and leaving the body.

The antidote of patience is applied when I can think, "This spaciousness of loving kindness is so much better for me!"

When I interact with others with the mixture of patience and loving kindness, happiness arises for both parties.

Affirmation: "I will allow this spacious peace into my mind with each breath, and sit with this clarity of loving patience."

I sit in this very moment of spaciousness.

As we leave the meditation, we carry away another affirmation, the thought that:

"When I practise this spacious serenity of mind, this practise of patience, I feel better and others benefit as well." This is true and I affirm it.



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, there is justice without anger, without hatred. Forgiveness does not mean accepting the wrong doing of the other person, but we should 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. This is the evolution of our positive, correct thinking, leading to freedom.

Reflection on Forgiveness

Firstly, we stop over-thinking and rehashing the past. We begin to forgive others and especially ourselves when we have regrets about a situation. But we should not keep going over and over the past in our thoughts. Guilt is a useless, empty emotion that assuredly serves to benefit no-one.

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

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

Acceptance Meditation

Relax, take three deep breaths, breathing in and breathing out. Then contemplate from the Serenity Prayer of AA/NA: "I should accept the things I cannot change." Pause—contemplate. "... and I should have the courage to change the things I can." Pause—contemplate.

Relax and watch the breath enter and leave the body for quite a while. Then contemplate what Shantideva said (paraphrased): "If something can be fixed, no need to worry." Pause—contemplate. "If something cannot be changed or fixed we should not worry about it..." We should try to let it go, saying I cannot worry or obsess, so I accept! Pause—contemplate. Worry and anxiety only upset me and cause more pain. We breathe into our worry and break it up. We shatter it into pieces then try to drop those pieces into spaciousness or emptiness, and try to accept things as they are.

Relax and watch the breath. Then contemplate what Nagajuna said (paraphrased): "The view of accepting things as they are, not as they appear, there is no greater virtue." Relax watching the breath. Accept this life, try not to rage against what you deem injustice or try to obliterate it with drugs or alcohol ("opt out").

With our in-breath we breathe in the white light of acceptance, cleansing the body, thinking to accept the people in our lives with a balanced attitude, knowing that they too want happiness and do not want unhappiness. Breathing in and

accepting the world as it is, people, friends and enemies, all have different worries and propensities. With our out-breath we breathe out the luminous light of our true nature, wishing all sentient beings to be happy and well.

Then as we breathe in again, we breathe in deeply pure, luminous, spacious light. With the out-breath try to be at peace with everyone and everything, consciously making an effort to be at ease with all. Try to feel connected to all beings with empathy, know they want comfort, happiness and really want to be free from pain. Your pure wisdom light of love and compassion pervades the world and the universe.

Also, we understand and accept that our own enlightenment is our most valued possession for our own future.

Some heartfelt genuine acceptances with confidence:

1st: Accepting where we're at.

2nd: If we are unhappy or need change, be brave enough to do just that!

3rd: Accepting our environment and once again if we don't like it, change, or at least begin some changes.

4th: As we cannot change others we most assuredly avoid those who make us angry. Help those close and try to find ways to benefit society as a whole across the planet!

These are mental and physical counteractions we could use if we are feeling anxious, worried or helpless. They work and we should affirm them as much as possible.

Development of Gratitude as a Mindful Exercise

Relax, breathe three good, deep breaths. We picture our body and find the points of tension. With deliberation we place our mind's focus on any aches or pains. Notice them ease as thoughts lessen and we focus on relaxation. We ease our areas of pain.

Then we relax our attention and breathe. We tell ourselves "letting go" of mental business. We could think, "this is nice, this is good for me" and then let that go. When thoughts arise we let them pass like clouds in the sky.

As we sit we could reflect on the kindness of our mother who carried us for nine months, went through the pain of the birth process and loved and fed each one of us. We could feel a little gratitude for her nurture and care, giving up her time to be a mother. The gratitude we feel should be heartfelt, genuine. If this cannot be then we move on to someone who did give us love and care. Thinking of them, send love while being grateful for their time and effort. Send love and well wishes in prayer or visualization of light. Wish them to be well and happy. Offer them thanks for their care, love and nurture.

Then we could remember siblings, partners, friends. Think well of them, for it is in our love and gratitude that we feel happy. We share our happiness with them all. Then we could remember all those people we may have hurt or those people we feel hurt us. Then, if we could turn that pain around and really understand that they helped us. Reflect, find the ways they helped. Did they show

what to do or what not to do? Send loving kindness, think they must, like us, have painful emotions, be unhappy and want happiness. Then we try to find a way to be thankful that they are an object of our compassion and we forgive them. Or perhaps we do a forgiveness meditation. Then we come back to the breath. Breathing deeply three times, we relax our posture and sit.

Then we could remember certain things we could be grateful for—to live in a free country, to have good friends who tell the truth, to be able to practice a religious faith we choose. Be grateful for medicines, food, carers, loved ones, a job, a roof over our head, water to drink. Then wish that everyone everywhere has the same chances and opportunities.

Once again, we can relax and breathe. But we must dedicate our merit, be grateful and happy. We can enjoy our practice, give all that merit, happiness and joy to others. *Mudita* means joy, especially sympathetic or vicarious joy—the pleasure that comes from delighting in another person's well-being. The traditional example of this mental state is the attitude of a parent observing their growing child's accomplishments. *It is not pride*. A person feeling *mudita* may not have any interest or direct income from the accomplishment of another. It is pure joy unadulterated by self-interest.

Equanimous joy and gratitude are linked in appreciation and genuine happiness. Being grateful and joyful that others care for us and help us, that they are in our shared world.

Jewel Meditation by Ven. Yeshe

Imagine at your heart a brilliant, bright, luminous jewel about the size of a five cent piece, and make it any colour you like. Feel that the jewel is radiating light. It gives out a warm, calm energy, but at the same time it is very powerful.

Imagine that the bright light starts to grow, slowly spreading throughout your body, starting with the chest, lungs, shoulders, stomach and back, releasing any tension, pain in the muscles, bones and joints.

Feel that the light takes away any feelings of sadness, loneliness, anger, depression, any cravings (such as for a cigarette, alcohol or food etc).

The light now spreads through the body, down into the arms, hands and fingers, feel that it takes away any pain here, in the muscles, bones and joints. See the light as bright, healing and powerful, peaceful and warm.

Now it moves into the legs and knees, the ankles, the feet and toes, taking away any problems, all pain and sickness disappears, pushed away by the bright radiant light.

The light is spreading all over your body, to your throat and neck ridding you of pain and tension, any gland problems are eradicated by the luminous light. It now moves into the back of your head, top of the head, forehead. It spreads into the face, taking away any tension in the face muscles, behind the eyes, the ears, the mouth, the jaw. Any headaches or pains in the neck, head and face disappears, transformed by the shining, healing light.

Feel that you are completely filled with the luminous, radiant light, any pain physical or emotional can't exist in your body because of the power of this light.

Now think of someone you love. It can be someone you know is having a hard time, they may be sick, depressed, or in need of help. Imagine that you are sending your light to them. It starts as a jewel of bright healing light at their heart and spreads throughout their entire body, leaving them feeling peaceful and free of any problem, physical or emotional. Spend some time sending them this brilliant light.

When you finish the meditation have joy that you spent some positive healing time for yourself, and for your loved ones!



Overcoming Laziness by Ven. Yeshe

Introduction

Laziness is a huge obstacle to spiritual practice and difficult to overcome. The only way to temporarily and ultimately overcome afflictive emotions and problems is through concerted effort in our spiritual practice. However, laziness feeds depression and hinders us from giving up the self-indulgent focus on ourselves and our problems. The more we give in to laziness and depression - focusing only on our own problems - the harder it is to see the amazing potential we have to be of the highest benefit relatively to ourselves and others.

Meditation

Sitting down on either a chair or on the floor, we begin our meditation by shifting our stagnant energy to overcome laziness and depression.

First we take three deep breaths in through the nose and out through the nose, then we breathe normally. We bring our attention to the breath entering and leaving the nostrils. We try to maintain our focus on the breath for as long as possible by watching it enter and leave the body.

Then if and when we feel relaxed, we check our mind and see if we feel sleepy or excited. Are we depressed? If we are feeling tired or lethargic, we can imagine a small circle of bright white light about the size of a 5 cent piece in the centre of our forehead. As we breathe gently in and out, we try to hold the light there and feel that it is penetrating through our fog of self-indulgent apathy. We can imagine that the circle slowly grows bigger and bigger so that our whole head is enveloped in bright light. The light slowly descends through the body,

moving down the arms and into the torso and then down into the legs. Our body begins to feel light, even and at peace. Because our mind is depressed and sluggish we can then focus the light into the area of our heart. Feel that this white light is energizing and banishing any lazy or depressed feelings. Our heart/mind softens and opens to thoughts of how to benefit others.

When we feel that we are more energized, we can then contemplate the following questions in regards to our spiritual practice:

Why did I begin to look for a healing path?

How do I feel now that I have undertaken a healing path?

Is meditation helpful?

Am I more confident?

Am I a better person?

Am I finding peace?

Does my life seem more meaningful?

Am I of more benefit to others? Does this make me feel better about myself? Do I continue?

Now we finish the meditation by thinking:

“When I motivate myself to practice I *am* of more benefit to others and my life *is* more meaningful. Therefore, there is no reason to feel depressed or have self-loathing. I now have the opportunity to have time to care for others when I engage in caring practices - lucky me! I should dedicate my time and effort to enjoying and being happy around others”

Meditation on the Cultivation of Joy

We choose one person and we consider how we feel about that person.

Do we love and respect this person? Then we should feel and genuinely wish that they be happy, well and peaceful.

If we care from the depths of our heart we will feel joy at the connection, we will feel happy that we can depend on them, that they are in our life, that they share a life experience and that they have been kind, loving and compassionate to us, this makes us very happy indeed.

This could then give rise to joy and this feeling will then motivate our whole life and once again they have been unbelievably kind.

The feeling of joy could be extended to others, reaching out, broadening our view to incorporate love and respect for the people who try to benefit and not harm, those who have a considered kindness for others welfare, for community and society at large, and we have joy in their good works. This joy is also a great antidote to jealousy and can be a cause for us to delight in virtue. Being happy for the qualities and kindnesses of others really does benefit ourselves.

We should try to recall this joy we experience and feel with firmness that it adds to our own comfort, wellbeing and happiness. Joy and rejoicing in others' goodness and virtue can give us confidence to then help and respect others. By telling only the truth, speaking kindly and meaningfully this is protecting others and we are making positive changes in our interactions, we have and give happiness and joy.

Loving Kindness Meditation

We concentrate on the phrases below, stopping to think about each line, saying them to ourselves at least three times. We begin with ourselves because without loving yourself, it is almost impossible to love others:

May I be filled with loving-kindness.
May I be well. May I be peaceful and at ease.
May I be happy. (x3)

When we widen our meditation, we wish from the depths of our hearts for others to be well, happy, peaceful and at ease. We do this practice for our friends and family, so there are no disagreements within the family and no competitiveness, only equality with each family member.

May they be filled with loving-kindness.
May they be well. May they be peaceful and at ease. May they be happy. (x3)

Then we can choose an ethnic group or cultural group, it can be similar to our own. Believe strongly that you are benefiting this group of people.

May they be filled with loving-kindness.
May they be well. May they be peaceful and at ease. May they be happy. (x3)

Knowing the interconnectedness and interdependency of all of us, breathe out metta (loving-kindness) and peace to all beings in all countries, no matter what their race, skin colour or beliefs.

May all beings in this world be filled with loving-kindness. May we all be well. May we all be peaceful and at ease. May we all be happy. (x3)

Concentrate strongly that there are no arguments, no fights, no anger and no wars between people. Send metta and peace right across the world.

May all beings in this world be filled with loving-kindness. May we all be well. May we all be peaceful and at ease. May we all be happy. (x3)

Dedicate the time spent doing this practice to all beings on this planet earth. May they find comfort and ease. And especially the evolutionary path to omniscience.



Impermanence Contemplation by Ven. Jhampa

Why am I dissatisfied? Why am I constantly swinging between high and low feelings, grasping at new and old sensations, memories and thoughts?

I am hungry. I need food.
I am cold. I need to be warm.
I am bored. I need entertainment.
I am lonely. I'll just ring someone up and tell them my problems.
I feel bad. You need to cheer me up now.
I am angry. You need to do what I want you to do when I want you to do it.
Another cup of tea and I'll feel better. A piece of chocolate cake would be nice.
A warm bath would be wonderful.
If only I had the chance to do things differently then I would do things this way.
I would tell them

Tomorrow I think I will.....

Who is this "I" that constantly needs to have a voice, to be expressed, that we talk to day and night, feed, nurture and cultivate.

Have I ever noticed that what "I" call my happiness is really my suffering? That this grasping "I" causes me so much suffering. That this grasping "I" is the cause of so much suffering for everybody around me.

I see a flower. I think it will make me happy. I pick the flower and put it in a vase. I think the flower is beautiful and it makes me really happy. It is fresh and has vibrant colours. It smells very fragrant and sweet. I start to think of how the scent reminds me of some pleasant memories. I

build up a story of how pleasant and beautiful the experience is, how it will always remind me of pleasant and beautiful things. I want to hold the experience. I want it to be lasting and real.

After a week the flower withers and gradually dies. I no longer hold the flower with the same label as beautiful. I throw it in the bin. It is the same flower. It has not changed. The way I see the flower has changed. Why?

The Buddha taught that all things come into existence depending on causes and conditions. Because it came into existence, it will cease to exist. It will decay and die. So do I become so attached to the flower? It is the feeling/thought with which I label the "flower" which causes me to think and feel it to be "so beautiful", "lovely", "fragrant", "colourful". The flower will wither and die. I may understand this intellectually, but does this stop me from grasping to the beauty of the flower. When it dies, I'll just throw it away. Replace it with a new one.

When I label the flower dead, I must throw it away. I do not take the time to think about the labels "fresh flowers" and "dead flowers". They are self evident and self-existent. It becomes habitual to think and feel in this way. If I see the flower more realistically, I would not mistakenly grasp onto this feeling as "happiness" as I would know that the flower is in fact constantly changing. It is my view of the flower that does not change.

So many of my experiences are like this. From the moment I wake up, I begin grasping to fixed ideas. I am unhappy. I am depressed. I am excited. My attitudes to work, family, friends and relationships become conditioned responses.

How can I relate to anyone in a meaningful way when so much of my life has become habit? My life has become automatic. It is as though my mind sometimes functions like a computer program, press a button, get a response. I must make an effort to view life realistically, to shut down the automatic pilot.

Because I was born, I must die. It is inevitable. Every moment I live draws me closer to death. The only thing that separates me from death is my breath. How fragile and fleeting is my breath? The only thing that separates me from my death is my heart beat. How fragile and fleeting is each beat? Could it stop beating? Could I stop breathing? It could stop at any moment. It is dependant on so many causes and conditions: the heart, the lungs, blood vessels, blood and oxygen which are also dependant upon so many causes and conditions. I will age and die.

Why do I cling to this life if I know that it is going to end. I will die. My thoughts and feelings about who I am now will also die.

I walk over a dead leaf. It is dead and I never question why? I walk past a cemetery and never think why? I drive past a dead animal on the road. I have done the same thing over and over without thinking. Over the days and years it becomes a habit. I think I cannot change. That's just the way things are. I never have taken the time to question why. Something always gets in the way. I am too busy, that's too depressing, I have the right to be happy, can't be bothered. What was the cause? If I meditate and ask why, then I will see the leaf was dependant on causes and conditions. I will also realize I am dependant on causes and conditions. Because I was born I will die.

Impermanence to Selflessness ***by Ven. Pema***

Sit comfortably with your back straight. Take three deep breaths and breathe out all your tension and tiredness and negativities on the out breath in the form of black smoke.

Then just keep your attention on the breath as it flows in and out of your body. Do not place any attention on thoughts that arise - just notice them and let them go - just like clouds floating through the sky. Just keep your attention on the breath until your mind is calm and clear. Do this for at least 21 breaths.

Now picture in the middle of your chest at your heart chakra a beautiful crystal lotus bud that is ready to open. This lotus is made of pure light - pure crystal light, without a single blemish or stain. Concentrate on this image of a pure crystal lotus bud knowing that this is within you.

Recall a moment from today or yesterday when you clung to a self-existent "I" - a moment when you thought that you would not die or you would always have these permanent thoughts/ ideas. Maybe the thoughts were of jealousy or hatred or greed, and were so overwhelming that you labelled yourself "a jealous person" or "a greedy person". These moments of self-grasping have tightened the bud at your heart and so you have to open up and relax this feeling of tightness - this feeling of permanency...

Is the feeling as strong as it was earlier or have you relaxed slightly around the situation? Has your view changed? Have you changed? You are not the same person as you were earlier and so maybe your views have changed also. You will

not always have the same views and the same feelings and emotions.

So as you think of the crystal lotus at your heart, try to let go of the feelings of permanency. Each time you remember how you have changed your viewpoint from one of negativity to one of positivity or changed your mind from one of tightness and solidity to one of openness and loving-kindness, the lotus opens a little. Rejoice in this opening, this letting go of the self-existent "I".

Each time you recall a moment when you didn't act as you thought you would or a moment when you were able to change your mind - the pure crystal lotus opens, petal by petal. Each time your view of yourself is reviewed and pulled apart until you don't know who you are or what you like, the lotus opens. Each time your idea of yourself becomes more flexible and less fixed, the lotus opens. Each time you say to yourself, "Well, I used to be like that but I have changed" - the lotus opens, petal by petal.

Recall your views and challenge them. Is this really the way I feel? Try to open the lotus fully by changing your mind, by becoming less solid, more selfless. Every moment of every day recall your openness until the lotus has fully blossomed at your heart.

Simple Purification by Ven. Choden

Introduction

We all want to be happy. Unfortunately, we create the causes of suffering through negative actions of our body, speech and mind. In order to cleanse ourselves of these negativities, so that we don't have to experience the suffering results, we do this purification meditation.

Meditation

We begin with heartfelt regret, which is not guilt, but the recognition that we have done something harmful that will cause us suffering in the future. Then we naturally seek a refuge, someone who can help us to remove this negativity. Bring to mind a Holy Being you trust and have complete faith in, a Being who has transcended suffering completely. Picture this Holy Being in the space above you, glowing with healing energy and cleansing light. This light pours down over you and enters the crown of your head, filling your body completely with healing, purifying light rays, which cleanse away all negativities.

In particular, negative bodily actions – killing, stealing and sexual misconduct – are being washed away. Keep feeling the light from your Holy Being cleansing your body completely.

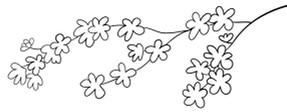
Next, negative actions of speech – lying, divisive speech, harsh words and idle gossip – are washed away by this pure light, and your throat area is cleansed and healed, and you are free of all negative speech.

Finally, your mind/heart area is washed clean of all covetous thoughts, ill-will and wrong views, by the purifying light of your Holy Being's love and compassion for you.

Feeling completely pure and clean, free of negativity, you take this opportunity to make a resolution in front of your Holy Being – resolve not to create negativities of body, speech and mind for a time you are prepared to keep this vow.

The Holy Being above you, so joyful that you have purified these negative actions, dissolves into light and comes to rest at your heart. Spend a moment in this state of happy peacefulness.

Take three deep breaths to end the meditation, feeling refreshed, joyful and purified.



Relieving the Aches and Pains of Harmful Emotions By Ven. Tashi

First, complete a stabilization meditation such as breath meditation or white light healing to relax, then analyse...

Recall a memory of attachment leading to disappointment perhaps... The aftermath of an action done under the influence of anger... Or the pain of jealousy...

These and other emotions cause us and those around us so much pain and misery... These mental pains can be likened to having a sickness of which we wish to be cured... Viewed as a sickness and an opportunity, these sufferings can be put into perspective to start overcoming, understanding and eliminating them forever.

Recall how, yearning for relief, you visit the doctor... The openness of seeking help... Your willingness to follow advice...

This is the attitude we should have when listening to and reading Buddha Dharma Teachings... Listen as a patient... Apply it to your own mind as an antidote to pain. The medicine becomes our own method and effort to overcome all pain.

Put this approach to immediate use, by reading through a teaching with the attitude of being a patient taking medicine to heal, wanting to become a great being just as the Buddha did!

“The bark of sugar-cane has no juice,
The delightful taste is inside.
People who chew the bark cannot
discover the flavour of sugar-cane.
Now the bark is like mere talk;
The taste is thinking about the meaning.”
From Liberation in the Palm of your Hand



Dedication

My precious Abbot Geshe Thubten Dawa said, “Be inspired by all the saints of the past, present and future.” My deepest gratitude to Him, Lama Thubten Yeshe, Kyabje Thubten Zopa Rinpoche, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama the Buddha of Compassion (so amazing). May all Your Holy Wishes be fulfilled, and may You remain and teach us until samsara *ends*.

May the healing meditations and advice included in this book benefit all those who read them. May all beings who read this book attain liberation. In future lives, may they all have extremely kind Mahayana friends to guide them to complete Enlightenment. Please share!



Glossary

Part 1: *Macquarie Concise Dictionary, 3rd edition*

Compassion: *a feeling of sorrow for the sufferings or misfortunes of another.*

Empathy: *the mental entering into the feeling of a person or thing; appreciative perception or understanding.*

Equality: *the state of being equal; correspondence in quality, degree, value, rank, ability, etc.*

Interdependent: *mutually dependent on each other.*

Methodology: *the branch of logic that deals with the logical principles underlying the organisation of the various special sciences and the conduct of scientific enquiry.*

Mind: *that which thinks, feels and wills, exercises perception, judgement, reflection etc., as in a human or other conscious being; the process of the mind.*

Opportunity: *an appropriate or favourable time or occasion; an opportunity to make good.*

Science: *the systematic study of humans and their environment based on the deductions and inferences which can be made, and the general laws which can be formulated, from reproducible observations and measurements of events and parameters within the universe.*

Sentience: *sentient conditions or character; capacity for sensation or feeling.*

Part 2: Venerable Thubten Tenzin

Awakened Being: those human beings who have attained spiritual attainments through the wisdom practice of the deep meaning and understanding of birth, old age, sickness and death.

Bodhisattva: Warrior Saint.

Buddha: the Buddha of this fortunate age (the age of this present moment), Buddha Shakyamuni, who had the fortitude to come and teach to the people here in this world system.

Chakra: said to be energy in certain places in the body which can be cleansed through meditation and prayers. See the Five Chakra Meditation.

Dhyani Buddhas: The five Dhyani Buddhas are mentioned in most of the tantric systems and represent various physical and mental aspects. They are known as the Heads of the Five Buddha Families. (viewonBuddhism.org)

Enlightenment: the ultimate state / reality which can only be realized through equanimity, love/kindness, compassion and wisdom as the best possible way to be for all sentient beings.

Five Omnipresent Mental Factors: 1. Feeling, 2. Discrimination, 3. Intention, 4. Contact, 5. Mental Engagement (Attention). From thubtenchodron.org

Interconnectedness: to connect (one with another, self with others).

Karma: means action and is the universal law of cause and effect. Whatever actions of body, speech and mind all of us have created or will create must have a result.

Meditation: whether single-pointed meditation or analytical, meditation is necessary to achieve the ultimate state. See Simple Breath Awareness Meditation.

Nirvana: the understanding that we have an innate quality of awareness, kindness and compassion; when we are awake to that state we are aware of interconnectedness and interdependency.

Puja: the gathering together of food, flowers, water offerings and light offerings with specific prayers said for specific beings with specific problems.

Samsara: the life we live without any spirituality; without any recognition that death will come.

Three Poisons: Ignorance, attachment and anger.

