

Guided Meditations on the Lamrim



Bhikshuni
Thubten
Chodron

The
Gradual
Path to
Enlightenment

Outline

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There are two principal forms of meditation: stabilizing (single-pointed) and checking (analytical). The former is done to develop single-pointed concentration and the latter to develop understanding and insight. When meditating on the gradual path to enlightenment, we first do checking meditation. Here, we investigate a topic taught by the Buddha in order to understand it deeply. We think about the topic logically and relate it to our personal experience by making examples from our life. When we have a deep feeling or strong experience of the meaning of that meditation, we focus on just that experience with stabilizing meditation, concentrating on it single-pointedly so that it becomes part of us.

Before a meditation session, you may wish to read sections from books on the meditation topic and jot down a few notes so you can incorporate those points into your meditation session.

*For an expanded explanation of how to do checking meditation and its role in our overall practice, see *Transforming the Heart* by Geshe Jampa Tegchok, pages 52–53.*

This outline of the meditations on the gradual path was prepared by Bhikshuni Thubten Chodron. It is intended to be used as a study aid to supplement the audio recordings on Guided Meditations on the Lamrim: The Gradual Path to Enlightenment. Reading and studying the outline beforehand can be beneficial to understanding each recorded meditation session, but it is best not to read along while meditating. If you are not listening to the recorded meditations, you can guide yourself in a meditation session by reading a point on the outline, meditating on it, reading the next point, meditating on it, and so forth.

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Introduction to the Buddhist View

Since most Westerners have not been raised Buddhist and have not lived in a Buddhist culture, some initial reflections on basic Buddhist approaches are helpful. The first three meditations help us understand how our mind operates in daily life and how our mental processes—our thoughts and feelings—influence our experiences.

Mind is the Source of Happiness and Pain

1. Remember a disturbing situation in your life. Recall what you were thinking and feeling (not what the other person was saying and doing). How did the way you described the situation to yourself influence how you experienced it?
2. Examine how your attitude affected what you said and did in the situation. How did your words and actions affect the situation? How did the other person respond to what you said and did?
3. Was your view of the situation realistic? Were you seeing all sides of the situation or were you seeing things through the eyes of “me, I, my, and mine?”
4. Think of how you could have viewed the situation differently if you had had a broad mind and been free from self-centeredness. How would that have changed your experience of it?

Conclusion: Determine to be aware of how you interpret events and to cultivate beneficial and realistic ways of looking at them.

Taking the Ache out of Attachment

Based on a superimposition or exaggeration of the positive qualities of a person, object, idea, etc., attachment is an attitude that clings to an object as the source of happiness. Attachment differs from positive aspiration. For example, being attached to money is different from having a positive aspiration to learn the Dharma. Reflect:

1. What things, people, places, ideas, etc. are you attached to? Make specific examples.
2. How does that person or thing appear to you? Does it really have all the qualities you perceive and attribute to it?
3. Do you develop unreal expectations of the person or thing, thinking that it will always be there, will continuously make you happy, etc.?
4. How does your attachment make you act? For example, do you disregard your ethical standards to get what you're attached to? Do you get into dysfunctional relationships? Do you become manipulative or aggressive?

Conclusion: See attachment not as your friend bringing you happiness, but as a thief destroying your peace of mind. Recognizing the disadvantages of attachment helps to let go of it.

Transforming Attachment

Thinking of the object of your attachment, apply an antidote to attachment. Each of the four points below is a separate antidote. You can use an example from your life for each point.

1. If you possess this thing, person, etc. or if you get your way, will it bring lasting happiness and satisfaction? What new problems could arise? Does it or any external person or thing have the ability to bring you lasting happiness?
2. If you separate from this, what is the worst thing that could happen? Is that likely to happen? What resources—internal and in the community—can help you deal with the situation?
3. Look back at the thing, person, etc. that you are now separated from and rejoice at the time you had together. Go into the future with optimism.
4. Imagine giving the thing or person to someone else who receives it with joy. With a joyful mind, imagine offering the thing or person to the Buddha.

Conclusion: Feel balanced and free to enjoy without clinging.

Having observed how our mind operates in daily life, let's look at the mind itself—its nature and its continuity from life to life.

The Nature of Mind

The word “mind” does not refer to the brain, for the brain is made of atoms while the mind is not. The mind is that part of us that experiences, feels, perceives, thinks, and so forth. The presence of the mind is what makes the difference between a living being and a dead body. The mind has two qualities:

1. Clarity: it is formless and allows objects to arise in it.
2. Awareness: it can engage with objects.

Calm your mind by observing the breath, and then turn your attention to the mind itself, to what is meditating, experiencing, feeling, that is, to the subject, not object of the meditation. Observe:

1. What is your mind? Does it have shape or color? Where is it? Can you find your mind somewhere?
2. Try to get a sense of the clarity and awareness of what is perceiving, feeling, and experiencing. Focus on the perceiving subject, not on the object of the perception.
3. If thoughts arise, observe: What are thoughts? Where do they come from? Where are they? Where do they disappear to?

Conclusion: Experience your mind as being clarity and awareness, free from thought.

Mind and Rebirth

We are not isolated, independent individuals, but part of a continuity. We have existed in the past and will exist in the future, even though we are not static individuals.

1. Are you the same person that was an infant and that will be an aged person, or are you in a state of constant flux? Recognize that your body and mind have changed from conception to the present and that they will continue to change in the future. In this way, loosen the concept that views yourself as permanent and the concept that identifies “I” with the present body and mind.
2. The body is material in nature. The mind is formless; it is clear and knowing. Thus the continuities of body and mind are different. Look at the qualities of your body and mind and see how they are different.
3. Rebirth can be explained in terms of cause and effect. Each moment of mind has a cause: the preceding moment of mind. Get a sense of the continuity of mind by going back in your life, noting that each moment of mind arose from the previous moment. When you get to the time of conception, ask, “Where did this moment of mind come from?”

Some other ways for getting a sense of rebirth are to:

1. Contemplate the stories of people who remember previous lives.
2. Try on accepting rebirth. What other things could it help to explain, for example, déjà vu experiences, the differing personalities of children within the same family, and familiarity with certain skills or subjects?
3. Since your body—the life form you are born into—is a reflection of your mental states, think of how it is possible to be born in other bodies. For example, a human being who acts worse than an animal could be reborn as an animal.

Conclusion: Feel that you are not simply this present person, but instead exist in a continuum that spans more than just this life.

The mind is clarity and awareness. It has a continuity that is beginningless and endless, taking rebirth in one body after another. The Four Noble Truths describe the unsatisfactory situation of uncontrolled rebirth in which we are presently caught, as well as our potential for liberation and happiness.

The Four Noble Truths

The first two of the Four Noble Truths outline our present situation and its causes; the last two present our potential and the path to actualize it.

1. It is true that we experience unsatisfactory conditions, suffering, difficulties, and problems.
Suffering is to be recognized.
What difficulties, both physical and mental, do you have in your life? See them as part of the human experience, as arising simply because you have the body and mind that you do.
2. It is true that these unsatisfactory experiences have causes: ignorance, attachment, anger, and other disturbing attitudes, as well as the actions (karma) we do under their influence.
These causes of our unsatisfactory situation are to be abandoned.

Conclusion: See how your negative emotions cause you suffering. Reflect that they distort your perception of an object and cause you to act in ways that bring suffering to yourself and to others.

3. It is true that the possibility to completely cease these unsatisfactory conditions and their causes exists.
These cessations are to be actualized.
Reflect that it is possible to be free from these. What would it feel like not to be under the influence of disturbing attitudes, negative emotions, and the actions motivated by them?
4. It is true that there is a path to bring about this liberation.
The path is to be practiced.

Conclusion: True cessations and true paths are the Dharma refuge. Make a determination to abandon any chaotic or misinformed ways that falsely promise happiness and to follow the paths of ethics, concentration, wisdom, as well as to generate love, compassion, and bodhicitta.

The Three Characteristics

Contemplating the three characteristics of all things in cyclic existence helps us to better understand our present situation and potential. All people and things in cyclic existence have three characteristics:

1. Transience. By looking at your life, reflect:
 - Everything in our world—people, objects, reputation, etc.—is transient and changeable by its very nature.
 - Our refusal to accept this reality causes us pain.
 - In your heart, try to accept the transient nature of all things.
2. Unsatisfactory conditions. Not everything is 100 percent wonderful in our lives. We experience:
 - Unsatisfactory situations of pain and suffering, both physical and mental.
 - Happy situations that are unsatisfactory because they are actually no more than a temporary alleviation of suffering. In addition, they change and disappear.
 - The unsatisfactory situation of having a body that ages, gets sick, and dies, and a mind that is under the control of disturbing attitudes and karma.

Reflect on transience and unsatisfactory conditions, and then remember your potential. Make a determination to let go of the clinging and ignorance that keep you bound to unsatisfactory situations.

3. Selflessness. Reflect that all these seemingly solid and independent things—ourselves and other phenomena—are without inherent, findable existence. Understanding this counteracts ignorance, thus eliminating the root cause of all the unsatisfactory experiences of cyclic existence.

Having a general idea of the Buddhist approach, let's now begin the meditations of the three levels of practitioners: initial, middle, and advanced.

The Path in Common with the Initial Level Practitioner

Before actually engaging in the path in common with the initial level practitioner—someone who contemplates death and impermanence, generates as a result of that an aspiration for a good rebirth, and then practices refuge and observing karma and its effect in order to actualize that aspiration—we must reflect on our current human life, its meaning and purpose, and its rarity, so that we do not take our present opportunity for granted.

Precious Human Life

Check if you have conditions conducive for spiritual practice. Consider the advantage of each quality, rejoice if you have it, and think of how to gain it if you don't. (Note: the points of this meditation have been summarized from the outline of eight freedoms and ten fortunes found in Lamrim texts.)

1. Are you free from unfortunate states? Do you have a human body and human intelligence?
2. Are your sense and mental faculties healthy and complete?
3. Do you live at a time when a Buddha has appeared and given teachings? Do those teachings still exist in a pure form? Do you live in a place where you have access to them?
4. Have you committed any of the five heinous actions (killing one's father, mother, or an arhat, drawing blood from a Buddha's body, or causing schism in the sangha), which obscure the mind and make practice difficult?
5. Are you naturally interested in spiritual practice? Do you have instinctive belief in things worthy of respect, such as ethics, the path to enlightenment, compassion, and the Dharma?
6. Do you have a supportive group of spiritual friends who encourage your practice and who act as good examples? Do you live near a sangha community of monks and nuns?
7. Do you have the material conditions for practice such as food, clothes, and so forth?
8. Do you have access to qualified spiritual teachers who can guide you along the correct path?

Conclusion: Feel like a beggar who just won the lottery, that is, feel joyful and enthusiastic about everything you have going for you in your life.

The Purpose and Opportunity of Our Precious Human Life

1. What does it mean to you to live a meaningful life? To what extent are you doing that now? How could you make your life more meaningful?
2. Consider the purpose of having a precious human life:
 - Temporary goals within cyclic existence: we have the ability to create the causes for happy rebirths in the future.
 - Ultimate goals: we have the ability to attain liberation or enlightenment, that is, to be free of all problems and capable of helping others effectively.
 - We can make each moment of our lives meaningful, transforming it into the path to enlightenment by practicing thought training. We can generate bodhicitta each morning and remember it throughout the day as the motivation for everything we do.

Conclusion: Recognize that there are many beneficial things to do in life and be enthusiastic about doing them.

The Rarity and Difficulty of Attaining a Precious Human Life

To develop a sense of the value of your present life, consider:

1. The causes for a precious human life are:
 - keeping pure ethics by abandoning the ten destructive actions
 - practicing the six far-reaching attitudes (paramitas)
 - making pure prayers to be able to have a precious human life and practice the DharmaExamine the actions you and others do. Do most people create these causes each day? Is it easy to create the causes for a precious human life?
2. Attaining a precious human life in the ocean of cyclic existence is as likely as a blind tortoise who comes to the ocean's surface once every hundred years and puts his head through a golden ring floating on the ocean's surface. How likely is this?
3. Are there more human beings or animals on this planet? Of those who are human, are there more who have precious human lives or more who do not? Looking at the numbers, is it rare or common to have a precious human life?

Conclusion: Feel amazed at your fortune to have this present opportunity and determine to use it well.

We are extremely fortunate to have a precious human life with its freedoms and fortunes. It is rare and difficult to attain and have great purpose and meaning. But, how much does this understanding influence our daily lives? Do we spend most of our time and energy cultivating our minds and hearts? Or, are we ruled by our attachment and anger, getting tangled up in distractions, such as the eight worldly concerns, which seem important now, but in the long term are not?

The Eight Worldly Concerns

The eight worldly concerns are the chief distractions to practicing the Dharma and transforming our minds. Examine how the four pairs of worldly concerns operate in your life:

- Make specific examples of each type of attachment and each type of aversion. Do they make you happy or confused? Do they help you to grow or do they keep you in prison?
 - Reflect that the greater the attachment to something, the greater the aversion when you don't get it or are separated from it.
 - Apply some of the antidotes to attachment and anger in order to transform those attitudes.
1. Attachment to receiving material possessions and aversion to not receiving them or to being separated from them.
 2. Attachment to praise or approval and aversion to blame or disapproval.
 3. Attachment to a good reputation (having a good image, others thinking well of you) and aversion to a bad reputation.
 4. Attachment to pleasures of the five senses and aversion to unpleasant experiences.

Conclusion: Feel that you don't want to continue living your life on "automatic" and that you want to change the attitudes that cause you to have problems.

The eight worldly concerns dominate our lives, cause us problems, and make us waste our potential. They arise easily when we think only of the happiness of this life. Reflecting on impermanence and death enlarges our perspective and helps us set our priorities wisely. This, in turn, enables us to turn our attention away from the eight worldly concerns to more important activities, such as cultivating compassion and wisdom.

The Nine-Point Death Meditation

Considering the mortality of ourselves and others helps us clarify our priorities in life so that we make our life truly worthwhile and meaningful. Thinking of your own life, consider:

1. Death is inevitable, definite. There is no way to avoid dying.
 - Nothing can prevent our eventually dying. Everyone who is born must die, no matter who we are. Reflect that you and everyone you know and care for will sometime die.
 - Our life span can't be extended when it is time for us to die. With each passing moment we approach death. We cannot turn the clock back or escape from death.
 - We will die even if we have not had time to practice Dharma.

Conclusion: You must practice the Dharma, that is, you must transform your mind.

2. The time of death is uncertain. We don't know when we'll die.
 - In general there is no certainty of lifespan in our world. People die at all ages. There is no guarantee we will live long. Reflect on the people you know who have died. How old were they? What were they doing when they died? Did they expect to die that day?
 - There are more chances of dying and less of remaining alive. It takes great effort to stay alive and very little to die. Protecting our body by feeding, clothing, and sheltering it takes a lot of energy. Dying, on the other hand, requires little effort.
 - Our body is extremely fragile. Small things—viruses, bacteria, or pieces of metal—can harm it and cause death.

Conclusion: You must practice Dharma continually, beginning now.

3. Nothing else can help at the time of death except the Dharma.

- Wealth is of no help. Our material possessions can't come with us after death. We spend our lives working hard to accumulate and protect our things. At the time of death, the karma we created doing this comes with us, while we leave the money and possessions behind.
- Friends and relatives are of no help. They remain here while we go on to our next life. However, the karmic seeds of the actions we did in relation to these people comes with us into the next life.
- Not even our body is of any help. It is burnt or buried and is of no use to anyone. The karma we created in beautifying, pampering, and seeking pleasure for this body, however, will influence our future experiences.

Conclusion: You must practice the Dharma purely. You may have spent your entire life accumulating and caring for these things, but at the time of death, you must separate from them without choice. What, then, is the use of chasing after these things while you're alive and creating negative karma to get them? Since your karma comes with you and only your spiritual development aids you at death, isn't it more worthwhile to pay attention to these? Knowing this, what is a healthy and balanced attitude to have towards material possessions, friends and relatives, and your body?

Imagining Our Death

1. Imagine a circumstance in which you are dying: where you are, how you are dying, and the reactions of friends and family. How do you feel about dying? What is happening in your mind?
2. Ask yourself:
 - Given that I will die one day, what is important in my life?
 - What do I feel good about having done?
 - What do I regret?
 - What do I want to do and to avoid doing while I'm alive?
 - What can I do to prepare for death?
 - What are my priorities in life?

Conclusion: Feel the importance of making your life meaningful. Make specific conclusions about what you want to do and to avoid doing from now on.

Reflecting on our transient nature and mortality makes us concerned with preparing for death and for our future rebirths. To do this, we need guides on the path and thus turn to the Buddhas, Dharma, and Sangha for refuge.

Refuge: Its Meaning, Causes, and Objects

1. Refuge means to entrust our spiritual guidance to the Three Jewels: the Buddhas, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Taking refuge opens our heart so that they can teach us and guide us along the path to freedom. Contemplate the effect that taking refuge in the Three Jewels could have on your life and lives.
2. To deepen your refuge, cultivate its causes:
 - Considering what your future would be like if you continued to live on "automatic," be aware of the possibility of experiencing suffering in the future.
 - Thinking about the qualities of the Three Jewels and how they can steer you away from potential suffering and its causes, develop confidence in their ability to guide you.
 - Remembering that others are in the same situation as you are, let your compassion for them arise so that you seek a means to progress spiritually for their sake as well as your own.
3. To enrich your faith and confidence in the Three Jewels as objects of refuge, develop a general idea of their qualities:
 - The Buddhas are those who have eliminated all defilements and developed all good qualities completely.
 - The Dharma is the cessations of all unsatisfactory conditions and their causes, and the paths leading to those cessations.
 - The Sangha are those who have direct perception of reality.

Conclusion: With a sense of caution regarding suffering and with confidence in the ability of the Three Jewels, from your heart turn to the Three Jewels for guidance.

Refuge: Analogy and Qualities of the Three Jewels

1. Contemplate the analogy of the sick person seeking a cure to his illness. Beings trapped in cyclic existence are like sick people. We turn to the Buddha, who is like a doctor, to diagnose our illness and prescribe a cure. The Dharma is the medicine we must take and the Sangha are the nurses who help us take it. In this way, we can be liberated from misery.
2. To enhance our faith and confidence, consider why the Buddhas are suitable guides on the path:
 - They are free from the extremes of cyclic existence and self-complacent peace.
 - They have skillful and effective means to free others from all fear.
 - They have equal compassion for all, regardless of whether we have faith in them or not.
 - They fulfill the aims of all beings whether or not those beings have helped them.

Conclusion: From your heart, make a determination to follow these reliable guides and to put into practice their guidance.

Having entrusted our spiritual guidance to the Three Jewels, we want to follow their counsel. The first advice they give us is to stop harming others and ourselves. We do this by observing actions (karma) and their effects.

Karma

Karma is intentional action. Such actions leave imprints on our mindstream that influence what we will experience in the future. Karma has four general aspects. Relate each of these to events in your life.

1. Karma is definite. Happiness always comes from constructive actions and pain from destructive ones. Therefore it is to our advantage to create the former and abandon the latter.
2. Karma is expandable. A small cause can lead to a large result. Thus we should take care to abandon even small negativities, and to do even small constructive actions.
3. If the cause hasn't been created, the result won't be experienced. If we don't act destructively, we will not experience hardships and obstacles; if we don't create the cause for realizations of the path, we will not gain them.
4. Karmic imprints do not get lost; we will experience their results. However, negative imprints can be purified by the four opponent powers and positive imprints can be impaired by getting angry or generating wrong views.

Conclusion: Determine to observe your motivations and actions so you create the causes of happiness and avoid the causes of suffering.

The Ten Destructive Actions

Doing a life review to take stock of our harmful and beneficial actions enables us to purify the former and develop a strong intention to live wisely and compassionately in the future. To do this, reflect on which destructive actions you have done. Understand how you got involved in them, as well as their immediate and long-term results. The ten destructive actions are:

1. Killing: taking the life of any sentient being, including animals.
2. Stealing: taking what has not been given to you. This includes not paying fees or taxes that you owe, using supplies at your workplace for your own personal use without permission, and not returning things you have borrowed.
3. Unwise sexual behavior: adultery and carelessly using sexuality that harms others physically or emotionally.
4. Lying: deliberately deceiving others.
5. Divisive speech: causing others to be disharmonious or preventing them from reconciling.
6. Harsh words: insulting, abusing, ridiculing, teasing, or deliberately hurting another's feelings.
7. Idle talk: talking about unimportant topics for no particular purpose.
8. Coveting: desiring possessions that belong to others and planning how to obtain them.
9. Maliciousness: planning to hurt others or to take revenge on them.
10. Wrong views: Strongly holding to cynical views that deny the existence of important things, such as the possibility to become enlightened, rebirth, karma, and the Three Jewels.

Conclusion: Experience a sense of relief because you have been honest with yourself about the past. Remember you can purify the imprints of these mistaken actions. Resolve to direct your energy in constructive directions and to avoid acting in ways that harm yourself and others.

Constructive Actions

It is equally important to be aware of our constructive actions, our motivations for doing them, and their results. For each type of positive action mentioned below:

- Make specific examples of the times you have engaged in it.
- What was your motivation?
- How did you do the action?
- What were the short- and long-term results?
- How can you protect your tendencies to act constructively? How can you increase your positive actions?

Constructive actions include:

1. Being in a situation in which we could act negatively but choosing not to.
2. Doing the ten constructive actions, which are the opposite of the ten destructive ones. Saving life is the opposite of killing, protecting and respecting others' possessions is the opposite of stealing, and so forth.
3. Cultivating the six far-reaching attitudes: generosity, ethical discipline, patience, joyous effort, concentration, and wisdom.

Conclusion: Rejoice at the positive deeds you have done and encourage yourself to act in beneficial ways in the future.

The Results of Karma

Each complete action—that is, one with preparation, actual action, and completion—brings four results. Contemplating the relationship between specific actions and their effects helps us to understand the causes of our present experiences and the future results of our present actions. This, in turn, enables us to take responsibility for our happiness by avoiding destructive actions, purifying those already done, and acting constructively. For each of the ten destructive and constructive actions, contemplate their:

1. Maturation result: the body and mind we take in our future lives. All destructive actions result in unfortunate rebirths. All constructive actions result in happy rebirths.
2. Result similar to the cause:
 - In terms of our experience: we experience things similar to what we have caused others to experience. For example, if we criticize others, we will receive unfair criticism.
 - In terms of our actions: each action causes us to form habitual behavior patterns. For example, frequent lying develops the habit of lying.
3. Effect on the environment: living in a pleasant or unpleasant place. For example, divisive, disharmonious speech brings rebirth in an inhospitable environment with severe storms.

Conclusion: Not wanting to experience the painful or unpleasant results of your harmful deeds, resolve to purify them through applying the four opponent powers.

Four Opponent Powers for Purification

Doing the four opponent powers repeatedly can purify the karmic imprints of our destructive actions and relieve the psychological heaviness of guilt.

1. Visualize the Buddhas and bodhisattvas in front of you and generate regret (not guilt!) for your negative actions and motivations by honestly admitting them. Feel that the Buddhas and bodhisattvas witness your unburdening of these things and look at you with complete acceptance and compassion.
2. Repair the relationship with those whom you have harmed. In the case of holy beings, reaffirm your refuge in them. In the case of ordinary beings, generate a positive attitude towards them and the altruistic intention to benefit them in the future. If it is possible to do so, apologize to those you have harmed. When it is not possible, focus on wishing them well.
3. Make a determination not to do the actions again in the future. For those actions you cannot honestly say you will never do again, make a determination to abandon them for a specific amount of time that is reasonable for you.
4. Engage in remedial behavior. This may be community service, spiritual practice, prostrations, making offerings, visualizing light and nectar flowing from the Buddhas into you while you recite mantra, meditating on bodhicitta or emptiness, and so forth.

Conclusion: Feel you have purified all negative karmic imprints and released all guilt. Feel psychologically and spiritually cleansed so you can go on with your life with a fresh and positive attitude.

By gaining a firm understanding of the meditations in common with the initial level practitioner, we begin to change our attitudes and behavior. As a result, we are happier and get along better with others. In addition, we prepare so we can die peacefully and have a good rebirth.

The Path of the Middle Level Practitioner

As we go deeper into Dharma practice, we see that while preparing for our future lives is good, it does not free us from cyclic existence altogether. For this reason, we contemplate the various disadvantages and sufferings of cyclic existence and its causes in order to generate the determination to be free from it and to attain liberation (nirvana).

The Eight Sufferings of Human Beings

To get a better sense of the unsatisfactory conditions of our present situation, consider the difficulties we experience as human beings:

1. Birth. Is being in the womb and then going through the birth process comfortable, or is it confusing?
2. Aging. Imagine yourself as an old person. How do you feel about the inevitable decline of your physical and mental abilities?
3. Sickness. How does it feel to get sick without choice or control?
4. Death. Is death something you look forward to?
5. Being separated from what we like. Think about the suffering involved when this has happened to you.
6. Meeting with what we don't like. How does it feel when problems come even though you don't want them?
7. Not obtaining the things we like even though we try so hard to get them. Make examples of this from your life. Do you like this situation?
8. Having a body and mind under the control of disturbing attitudes and karma. Reflect that the very nature of your present body and mind is unsatisfactory because you have very little control over them. For example, you cannot stop your body from aging and dying, and it is difficult to deal with strong negative emotions and to concentrate your mind during meditation.

Conclusion: Develop the determination to free yourself from cyclic existence and to practice the path to do so. While this aspiration is sometimes translated as “renunciation” (of suffering and its causes), it actually is having compassion for ourselves and wanting ourselves to have lasting, Dharma happiness.

The Six Sufferings of Cyclic Existence

To develop a strong determination to be free from cyclic existence and to attain liberation, contemplate the unsatisfactory conditions of cyclic existence by making many examples from your life:

1. There is no certainty, security, or stability in our lives. For example, we try to be financially secure or secure in our relationships, but this constantly eludes us.
2. We are never satisfied with what we have, what we do, or who we are. We always want more and better. Dissatisfaction often pervades our lives.
3. We die repeatedly, in one life after another.
4. We take rebirth repeatedly, without choice.
5. We change status—from exalted to humble—repeatedly. Sometimes we are rich, other times poor. Sometimes we are respected, other times people are condescending towards us.
6. We undergo suffering alone. No one else can experience it for us.

Conclusion: Wishing yourself to be free from cyclic existence, generate the determination to attain liberation (nirvana).

The Causes of Cyclic Existence

Our unsatisfactory experience of being in cyclic existence has causes—the disturbing attitudes and negative emotions in our mind. Make examples of the following attitudes and emotions in your life. For each one, consider:

- How does it cause you problems now by unrealistically interpreting events in your life?
- How does it bring about future unhappiness by making you create the cause, negative karma?
- What antidotes can you apply when it arises in your mind?
- Which one of these is the strongest for you? Have an especially strong aspiration to be aware of and to counteract this one.

1. Attachment: exaggerating or projecting good qualities and then clinging to the object.
2. Anger: exaggerating or projecting bad qualities and then wishing to harm or get away from what makes us miserable.
3. Pride: an inflated sense of self that makes us feel we are either the best or the worst of all.
4. Ignorance: a lack of clarity regarding the nature of things and active misconceptions about the nature of reality and about karma and its effects.
5. Deluded doubt: doubt tending towards incorrect conclusions.
6. Distorted views: wrong conceptions.
 - View of the transitory collection: the conception of an inherent “I” or “mine” (grasping at the self as inherently existent)
 - View holding to an extreme: eternalism (grasping at inherent existence) or nihilism (believing that nothing at all exists)
 - Wrong view: denying the existence of cause and effect, rebirth, enlightenment, and the Three Jewels
 - Holding wrong views as supreme: thinking the above are the best views
 - Holding bad ethics and modes of conduct as supreme: thinking that unethical actions are ethical and that incorrect practices are the path to liberation

Conclusion: Seeing the damage these disturbing attitudes and negative emotions cause in your life, develop the determination to be aware of their arising and to learn and practice the antidotes to them.

Factors that Stimulate the Arising of Disturbing Attitudes and Negative Emotions

Making examples from your life, understand how the following factors stimulate the arising of negative emotions and misconceptions:

1. The predispositions of the disturbing attitudes. Do you have the seed or potential to generate disturbing attitudes and negative emotions even though they may not be manifest in your mind now?
2. Contact with the object. What objects, people, or situations trigger the arising of disturbing attitudes and negative emotions in you? How can you be more aware when you encounter these people, situations, or objects?
3. Detrimental influences such as wrong friends. How much does peer pressure or what other people think of you influence your behavior? Are you strongly influenced by friends or relatives who act unethically or who distract you from the spiritual path?
4. Verbal stimuli—media, books, TV, Internet, radio, magazines, etc. How much do the media shape what you believe and your self-image? How much time do you spend listening to, watching, or reading the media? How can you have a healthy and reasonable relationship with the media so that they don't control your life and your thoughts?
5. Habit. What emotional habits or patterns do you have?
6. Inappropriate attention. Do you pay attention to negative aspects of situations? Do you have many biases? Are you quick to jump to conclusions or be judgmental? What steps can you take to remedy these tendencies?

Conclusion: Understanding the disadvantages of the disturbing attitudes, determine to abandon them. Think of how you can avoid the factors causing their arising and determine to change your lifestyle accordingly.

The Paths that Cease Disturbing Attitudes, Negative Emotions, and Karma

The Three Higher Trainings—in ethics, meditative stabilization, and wisdom—are the paths to cease our unsatisfactory conditions and to attain a state of lasting peace and happiness. For each of the higher trainings, reflect:

1. What advantages accrue now and in the future by practicing this training?
2. How can you implement this training in your daily life? Have some specific ideas and make a firm determination to do this.
3. How does each higher training build upon the previous one? Why are they practiced in this order?

Conclusion: Aspire to practice and actualize the Three Higher Trainings.

The Path of the Higher Level Practitioner

Although we practice the paths in common with the initial and middle level practitioners, we do not stop with the attainment of their objectives, of upper rebirth and liberation, respectively. Rather, seeing that all sentient beings, who have all been kind to us in our many lives, are in the same situation, we work to generate bodhicitta—the altruistic intention to attain enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings most effectively. This is the motivation of the higher level practitioner. The foundation for bodhicitta is equanimity, an attitude that is free from bias, aversion, clinging attachment, and apathy towards others and that cares about them equally.

Equanimity

1. Visualize a friend, a person you have difficulty with, and a stranger. Ask yourself, “Why do I feel attachment for my friend?” Listen to the reasons your mind gives. Then ask, “Why do I have aversion toward the difficult person?” and do the same. Finally, explore, “Why am I apathetic toward the stranger?”
2. What word do you keep hearing in all these reasons? On what basis does your mind consider someone good, bad, or neutral; friend, disagreeable person, or stranger? Is it realistic to judge others based on how they relate to “ME”? Are others really good, bad, or neutral from their own side, or is it your mind that is categorizing them as such? How would others appear to you if you stopped discriminating them based on your own selfish opinions, needs, and wants?
3. The relationships of friend, difficult person, and stranger change constantly. One person can be all three within a short period of time. If someone hit you yesterday and praises you today and another person praised you yesterday and hits you today, which is your friend? Which is the difficult person?

Conclusion: Acknowledging that your attitudes create the seemingly solid relationships of friend, difficult person, and stranger, let go of the attachment, anger, and apathy towards them. Let yourself feel an openhearted concern for all beings.

Before we can feel genuine love and compassion for others, we must see them as lovable. Seeing them as our parents or kind caregivers and remembering their kindness to us, both when they are our parents or caregivers and when they are not, enables us to have a positive view of them.

All Sentient Beings Have Been Our Parents, Their Kindness, and Repaying Their Kindness

1. Since beginningless time, we have taken one rebirth after the other, in many types of bodies in all the realms of cyclic existence. As human beings, animals, and hungry ghosts, we have had mothers who have given birth to us. Since our previous lives are infinite, all sentient beings, at one time or another, have been our mothers and fathers. Seeing that others are not just who they appear to be today, try to get a sense of your beginningless contact with them.
2. When they have been our parents, each sentient being has been kind to us, loving us as parents love their children. As an example of the kindness of parents, remember the kindness that the parents of your present life have shown you. If it is easier for you to think of the kindness of another relative, friend, or caregiver, do that. As you consider each kindness, let yourself feel gratitude towards the person. If, in the process of recalling childhood events, painful memories arise, remember that your parents are ordinary sentient beings who did their best, given their abilities and the situation they found themselves in.
 - Our mother happily bore the discomfort of being pregnant and giving birth to us.
 - Our parents took care of us when we were infants and toddlers and could not care for ourselves. They protected us from danger and got up in the middle of the night to feed us even when they were tired.

- They taught us how to speak and how to take care of our basic needs. We learned so many small, yet essential, skills from them, such as how to tie our shoes, how to cook, how to clean up after ourselves, and so forth.
 - As children we predominantly thought of ourselves only, and our parents had to teach us manners, social skills, and how to get along with others.
 - They gave us an education.
 - They worked hard to get the finances to give us a place to live, toys, and other enjoyments.
3. Since all sentient beings have been our parents, they too have shown us similar kindness again and again.
 4. Remembering their kindness and knowing that you have been the recipient of so much kindness from them throughout your beginningless lifetimes, let a wish to repay their kindness arise naturally in your heart. Let your mind rest in these feelings.

The Kindness of Others

To develop an awareness of your interconnectedness with all others and the sense of being the recipient of much kindness from them, contemplate:

1. The help we've received from friends. This includes the support, encouragement, gifts, practical help, and so forth that we've received from them. Do not think of the friends in a way that increases attachment to them. Instead, recognize their help as acts of human kindness and feel grateful.
2. The benefit we've received from parents, relatives, and teachers. Reflect on the care they gave us when we were young, protecting us from danger and giving us an education. The fact that we can speak comes from the efforts of those who cared for us when we were young, including our teachers. All talents, abilities, and skills we have now are due to the people who taught and trained us. Even when we didn't want to learn and were unruly, they continued trying to help us learn.
3. The help we've received from strangers. The buildings we use, clothes we wear, food we eat, and roads we drive on were all made by people we don't know. Without their effort—the contribution they make to society by whatever work they do—we wouldn't be able to survive.
4. The benefit we've received from people we don't get along with and from people who have harmed us. These people show us what we need to work on and point out our weaknesses so that we can improve. They give us the chance to develop patience, tolerance, and compassion, qualities that are essential for progressing along the path.

Conclusion: Recognize that you've received incalculable benefit and help from others throughout your lifetime. Let yourself experience the care, kindness, and love that others have shown you. Let a sense of gratitude arise and generate the wish to be kind to them in return.

Equalizing Self and Others

To feel that all sentient beings—friends, strangers, difficult people, self, and others—are equally worthy of respect and help and are equally valuable, contemplate the following nine points:

1. All beings want to be happy and to avoid pain as intensely as we do. Try to look at each individual you see with this thought in mind.
2. Ten patients may suffer from different illness, but all want to be cured. Similarly, sentient beings have different problems, but all equally want to be free from them. There is no reason for us to be partial, thinking some beings are more important than others.
3. Ten beggars may need different things, but all want to be happy. Similarly, each sentient being may want different things, but all want to be happy. It would be unfair for us to have a discriminatory attitude, helping some and ignoring others.

Conclusion: All beings, including yourself, equally want to be happy and avoid suffering. Think that you must work to eliminate the suffering of all equally and help all equally. Although you cannot do this externally, you can hold this attitude internally.

4. All beings have helped us so much. The mere fact that we've been able to stay alive since birth is due to the efforts of others. Reflect on the help you have received throughout your lifetime.
5. Even if some people have harmed us, the benefit we receive from them far outweighs this.
6. Holding grudges against those who have harmed us is counterproductive.

Conclusion: Let the wish to help others arise in your heart. Let go of any wish for revenge or retaliation for past harms.

7. The relationships of friend, disagreeable person, and stranger aren't fixed; they change easily.
8. The Buddha sees no inherent friend, difficult person, or stranger, so do they exist?
9. Self and other is not an inherent distinction between people. It is purely nominal and dependent, like this side of the valley and the other side.

Conclusion: There is no difference on a conventional or an ultimate level between yourself and others. Feeling this in your heart, give up any attitude of partiality that favors yourself or your dear ones and open your heart to respect and cherish all beings. Although you may not act the same with everyone—you must still accord with certain social roles and take others' abilities into consideration—in your heart you can still wish them well equally.

Having an equal attitude to all beings and seeing them as lovable and worthy of happiness, we now focus on uprooting the principal impediment to altruism, our self-centered attitude. In addition, we develop the mind that cherishes others and, based on that, love and compassion.

The Disadvantages of Self-Centeredness

We are not our self-centered attitude, which is an attitude clouding the pure nature of our minds. We and our selfishness are not one and the same, and thus self-preoccupation can be eliminated from our mindstreams. By reflecting on experiences in your life, you can see how your self-centered attitude has caused you harm and thus wish to overcome it. Our self-centeredness:

1. Makes us act in ways that harm others.
2. Causes us to act in ways we later regret and is the root of self-hatred.
3. Makes us overly sensitive and easily offended.
4. Is the basis for all fear.
5. Breeds dissatisfaction. It's impossible to satisfy the bottomless pit of our desires.
6. Underlies all conflict between individuals, small groups, and nations.
7. Motivates us to do harmful actions in a confused attempt to be happy. We thus create negative karma, bringing undesirable situations upon ourselves in the future. Our current problems are results of our past selfish actions.
8. Impedes our spiritual progress and prevents enlightenment.

Conclusion: See self-centeredness as your real enemy and determine to let go of it.

The Advantages of Cherishing Others

Thinking of examples from your own and others' lives, reflect on the benefit of cherishing others that accrues to both yourself and others:

1. Other sentient beings are happy.
2. Our lives become meaningful.
3. We get out of our self-centered ways that make us so miserable.
4. We can be happy anywhere, anytime.
5. Our relationships go better and harmony in society increases.
6. We create great positive potential, thus creating the cause for good rebirths and making it easier for us to gain realizations of the path.
7. It's the root of all happiness of self and others, now and in the future.

Conclusion: Resolve to care for others with genuine affection. Recognize the difference between sincerely caring for others and from caring for them out of guilt, obligation, fear, or codependency.

Love

Love is the wish for sentient beings, including yourself, to have happiness and its causes.

1. Reflect on: What is happiness? Think of the short-term benefits of temporal happiness (the happiness experienced in cyclic existence) such as that received from having wealth, friends, reputation, health, good rebirths, and so forth. Think of the long-term benefits of happiness received from practicing the Dharma: mental happiness and peace of mind, liberation, and enlightenment.
2. Begin by wishing yourself to have these two types of happiness, not in a selfish way, but because you respect and care for yourself as one of many sentient beings. Imagine yourself being happy in these ways.
3. Wish that your friends and dear ones have these two kinds of happiness. Think, feel, and imagine, “May my friends and all those who have been kind to me have happiness and its causes. May they be free of suffering, confusion, and fear. May they have calm, peaceful, and fulfilled hearts. May they be liberated from all the miseries of cyclic existence. May they attain the bliss of enlightenment.” For this and each of the following groups of people, think of specific individuals and generate these thoughts and feelings towards them. Then generalize to the entire group.
4. Generate the same loving feeling towards those who are strangers.
5. Spread your love to those who have harmed you or with whom you don’t get along. Recognize that they do what you find objectionable because they are experiencing pain or confusion. How wonderful it would be if they were free from those.
6. Generate love for all sentient beings. Think of those beings in all realms of existence—hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, demi-gods, and gods. Generate love towards arhats and bodhisattvas as well.

Conclusion: Let your mind rest single-pointedly in this feeling of love for all beings.

Compassion

Compassion is the wish for sentient beings, including yourself, to be free from suffering and its causes.

1. Remember a time when your mind was filled with fear and aggression. Imagine it becoming your entire reality, so that it manifests as your body and environment—the hell realms. Think that others are experiencing that right now and develop compassion for them, wishing them to be free from that suffering.
2. Remember a time when craving and dissatisfaction overwhelmed your mind such that you ran everywhere searching for happiness, but, unable to enjoy what you had, wanted more. Imagine it becoming so intense that it becomes your body and environment—the hungry ghost realm. Think that others are experiencing that right now and develop compassion for them, wishing them to be free from that suffering.
3. Remember a time when your mind was clouded with deep ignorance and confusion such that you could not think clearly or use your wisdom. Imagine it becoming so intense that it becomes your body and environment—the animal realm. Think that others are experiencing that right now and develop compassion for them, wishing them to be free from that suffering.
4. Reflect on the eight sufferings of human beings that you contemplated previously. Think that others are experiencing those right now and develop compassion for them, wishing them to be free from that suffering.
5. Remember a time when your mind was so saturated with pleasure that you became completely self-absorbed. Distracted by the pleasure, you could not focus your mind on anything meaningful and could not open your heart to others. Imagine it becoming so intense that it becomes your body and environment—the celestial realms. Think that others are experiencing that right now and develop compassion for them, wishing them to be free from that suffering.

Conclusion: Rest your mind single-pointedly in feeling compassion for all beings.

Exchanging Self and Others

Exchanging self and others does not mean “I become you and you become me.” It means changing who is important and cherished from self to others. To do this, reflect:

1. Suffering is suffering. No matter whose it is—mine or others’—it is to be removed.
2. Although we think of our body as “mine,” in fact it is not. Our genes came from the sperm and egg of our parents, and the food that made the fertilized egg grow into an adult came from other beings. It is only due to the force of familiarity that we grasp this body as “mine,” and therefore as important and worthy of comfort and happiness. Similarly, through familiarity, we can come to consider others’ happiness as important and worthy as we now consider our own.

Conclusion: Exchange ourselves and others, wishing that others be happy in the same way that you now wish yourself to be happy.

Taking and Giving

In our current self-centered confusion, whenever we are able to, we take any goodness and happiness for ourselves and give any difficulties and discomfort to others. Seeing the disadvantages of self-preoccupation and the advantages of cherishing others, and exchanging your wish for happiness from self to others, now cultivate strong compassion wishing to take their problems and give them your happiness.

1. Image in front of you a person or group of people who are experiencing difficulties in some way. Think, “How wonderful it would be if I could experience those problems instead of them.” Imagine taking on their problems and confusion by inhaling them in the form of black smoke.
2. The smoke turns into a thunderbolt or bomb, which completely obliterates the black lump of selfishness and ignorance at your heart.
3. Feel the open space, the lack of wrong conception about self and others. Rest in that spaciousness.
4. In this space, imagine a white light—the nature of your love—that radiates to all beings. Imagine you multiply and transform your body, possessions, and positive potential into whatever others need. With delight, give them to those people.
5. Imagine them being satisfied and happy. Think that they have all the circumstances conducive to attaining enlightenment. Rejoice that you’ve been able to bring this about.

At the beginning, do this meditation slowly and use specific people or groups. As you become more familiar with it, enlarge the group with whom you do the taking and giving meditation, until it becomes all sentient beings of the six realms.

Conclusion: Feel you are strong enough to take on others’ misery and give them your happiness. Be glad that you can imagine doing this and pray to be able to actually do this.

The Great Resolve and the Altruistic Intention (Bodhicitta)

1. To generate the great resolve, make a strong determination to take the responsibility yourself to liberate all sentient beings from cyclic existence and bring them to Buddhahood. That is, pledge to make the goals of your love and compassion a reality.
2. To generate the altruistic intention, contemplate the fact that you will be best equipped to work for the benefit of others when your own compassion, wisdom, and skill are fully developed. Then aspire to attain full enlightenment—the state in which all defilements are totally eradicated and all good qualities are fully developed—in order to be able to best benefit others.

Conclusion: Feel joyful that you have generated bodhicitta (the altruistic intention).

Once we have generated bodhicitta, we must engage in the six far-reaching attitudes (the six paramitas or six perfections) to complete the accumulation of positive potential and the accumulation of wisdom that are needed to attain enlightenment. These six practices—generosity, ethical discipline, patience, joyous effort, concentration, and wisdom—become far-reaching attitudes when they are motivated and held by the altruistic intention. They are purified and realized when they are held by the wisdom realizing the emptiness of the circle of three: the agent, action, and object. Therefore practice each far-reaching attitude with the motivation of bodhicitta, seal it with an understanding of emptiness, and dedicate the positive potential for the enlightenment of ourselves and all others.

Each far-reaching attitude should be practiced together with the others. For example, the ethics of generosity is not to harm others while giving. The patience of generosity is not to become angry if those we give to are unappreciative or rude. The joyous effort of generosity is to take delight in giving. The concentration of generosity is to maintain an altruistic intention while giving and to give without distraction. The wisdom of generosity is to reflect upon the emptiness of the circle of three. Integrating the practice of each far-reaching attitude into the others can be understood from this example.

The Far-Reaching Attitude of Generosity

Generosity is the wish to give our body, possessions, and positive potential to others without the wish to receive anything—including appreciation—in return. The three types of generosity are:

1. Giving material possessions to those in need, including people you know and don't know, and people you like and don't like.
2. Giving protection to those in danger: travelers, insects who are drowning in water, children who are fighting, etc.
3. Giving wise advice and Dharma teachings to those who need them. This includes helping to calm friends who are angry, saying prayers and mantras out loud so animals nearby can hear them, leading meditations, and teaching the Dharma.

For each of these:

- Think about what you can give
- Think about to whom you can give and how you can give
- Cultivate the altruistic intention and then imagine giving

Meditating in this way prepares you to actually give in your daily life.

Conclusion: Have a sense of what, how, and to whom you can give, and take delight in the opportunity to give.

The Far-Reaching Attitude of Ethical Conduct

Ethical conduct is the wish to abandon harming all others. For each of the following types of ethical conduct, contemplate:

- Your motivation for doing it
 - The actions involved in doing it
1. Abandoning destructive actions, for example, refraining from the ten destructive actions.
 2. Engaging in constructive actions, for example, joyfully taking opportunities to act constructively.
 3. Benefiting others by:
 - Helping the suffering or sick
 - Giving counsel and advice to those who are obscured or ignorant of means to help themselves
 - Providing help to those who need it to realize their goals
 - Protecting those who are afraid, in danger, or about to be killed or injured
 - Comforting those who are grieving, whose relative has died, or who have lost their social position
 - Helping the poor and needy
 - Providing for those who are in need of a place to stay, such as the poor, Dharma practitioners, and travelers

- Helping to reconcile those who quarrel and seek to be in harmony
- Supporting those who wish to practice the Dharma and act constructively
- Stopping those who are acting negatively or are about to do so
- Using clairvoyant powers, if one has them, to prove the validity of the Dharma if all other methods fail or to stop others' negative actions.

Conclusion: Feel joyful to practice ethical conduct with altruism and an awareness of emptiness.

The Far-Reaching Attitude of Patience

Anger (or hostility) can arise towards people, objects, or our own suffering (such as, when we're sick). It arises due to exaggerating the negative qualities of a person, object, or situation, or by superimposing negative qualities that aren't there. Anger then wants to harm the source of the unhappiness. Anger (hostility) is a generic term that includes being irritated, annoyed, critical, judgmental, self-righteous, belligerent, and hostile.

The Disadvantages of Anger

By reflecting on your own experiences, examine if anger is destructive or useful.

1. Are you happy when you're angry?
2. Do you see a pattern in the type of situations in which you become angry or the people with whom you get angry? What effect does this pattern have on your life?
3. How do you feel when you're angry? Underneath the anger, is there hurt? Fear? Sadness? Anger often makes us feel powerful when inside we feel powerless. Getting in touch with the feeling under our anger can help us understand it better.
4. Do you communicate with others effectively when you're angry? Do you aggressively lash out at them? Do you withdraw and not speak?
5. What is the effect of your actions on others? Does your anger bring about the happiness that you desire?
6. Later when you're calm, how do you feel about what you said and did when you were angry? Is there shame, guilt, or loss of self-esteem?
7. How do you appear in others' eyes when you're angry? Does anger promote mutual respect, harmony, and friendship?

Conclusion: Seeing that anger and resentment destroy your own and others' happiness, determine to observe when it arises in you and to apply the Dharma antidotes to subdue it.

The Antidotes to Anger

Patience is the ability to remain undisturbed in the face of harm or suffering. Being patient does not mean being passive. Rather, it gives us the clarity of mind necessary to act or not to act. Each of the following points is a different method of reducing anger. Take an example from your life of a time you were angry and practice looking at the situation from this new perspective.

1. Whether or not what the other person says is true, there is no reason to get angry when you are criticized. If what the other person says is true, it is like being told you have a nose. Both the other person and you know this is true, so there is no reason to be angry about it. You should simply acknowledge your mistake. On the other hand, if someone blames you for something you didn't do, it is as if the person said you have horns on your head. There's no reason to be angry at something that is untrue.
2. Ask yourself, "Can I do something about it?" If you can, anger is out of place because you can improve the situation. If you can't, anger is useless because nothing can be done.
3. Examine how you got involved in the situation. This has two parts:
 - What actions did you do recently to prompt the disagreement? Examining this helps you understand why the other person is upset.
 - Recognize that unpleasant situations are due to your having harmed others earlier this life or in previous lives. Seeing this as the principal cause, you can learn from past mistakes and resolve to act differently in the future.
4. Remember the kindness of a disagreeable person (enemy). First, he or she points out your mistakes so you can correct them and improve. Second, the enemy gives you the opportunity to practice patience, a necessary quality in your spiritual development. In these ways, the enemy is kinder to you than your friends or even the Buddha.
5. Give the pain to your selfish attitude by recognizing it is the source of all your problems.
6. Ask yourself, "Is it the person's nature to act like this?" If it is, there's no reason to be angry, for that would be like being annoyed with fire for burning. If it isn't the person's nature, anger is also unrealistic, for it would be like getting angry at the sky for having clouds in it.

7. Examine the disadvantages of anger and holding a grudge. Having done so, you will want to give them up because you want to be happy and they cause only suffering.
8. Recognize that it is the other person's unhappiness and confusion that makes the person harm you. Since you know what it's like to be unhappy, you can empathize and have compassion for the other person.

The Far-Reaching Attitude of Joyous Effort

Joyous effort is taking delight in what is virtuous and worthwhile. To cultivate it, we must counteract the three kinds of laziness:

1. Procrastination and sleep. Do you put off Dharma study and practice? Do you sleep more than your body needs? Do you like to lie around and do nothing? If so, meditation on death will help you to not waste time being slothful.
2. Attachment to worldly affairs and pleasures. Do you keep busy doing things or worrying about things which are not very important from a Dharma viewpoint? Are you attached to worldly success, worldly pleasures, and activities that are not very meaningful in the long run? If so, reflect on the disadvantages of cyclic existence. This will help you to see the futility of being attached to cyclic existence, invigorate your desire to be free from it, and enable you to set your priorities wisely.
3. Discouragement and putting yourself down. Do you tend to be self-critical and judgmental? Do you have difficulties with self-esteem? Remember your Buddha nature and reflect on your precious human life. This will uplift your mind so you can recognize your potential.

Conclusion: Develop a sense of courage and joy so that you can engage in the three types of joyous effort:

1. Withstanding discomfort to work for others' welfare (armor-like joyous effort)
2. Doing all constructive action motivated by the altruistic intention
3. Working to benefit others

The Far-Reaching Attitude of Concentration

Concentration is the ability to focus single-pointedly on a constructive object. Unlike the other far-reaching attitudes, analytical meditation is not done on the far-reaching attitude of concentration. Instead, the points below are practiced to develop stabilizing or single-pointed meditation. You can apply the points when you do stabilizing meditation, for example, on the breath or the visualized image of the Buddha.

By examining your mind, notice when the five deterrents to concentration arise:

1. Laziness: feeling that meditation is difficult and being reluctant to make the effort
2. Forgetting the instructions on how to develop calm abiding or forgetting the object of meditation (your concentration on the object of meditation is not stable)
3. Laxity (heaviness or unclarity) or excitement (distraction to an object of attachment)
4. Not applying antidotes to the above deterrents
5. Applying the antidotes when they are not needed

When the deterrents arise, apply one of the eight antidotes.

To counteract laziness:

1. Confidence: knowing the benefits and results of calm abiding
2. Aspiration: wishing to practice calm abiding
3. Enthusiastic perseverance: having delight and eagerness to practice
4. Flexibility: having serviceability of body and mind while meditating

To counteract forgetting the object of meditation:

5. Mindfulness: remembering and staying on the object of meditation

To counteract distraction, laxity, or excitement by noticing their presence:

6. Introspective alertness

To counteract not applying antidotes to the deterrents:

7. Application of appropriate antidotes

To counteract applying antidotes when it is not necessary:

8. Equanimity: refraining from applying antidotes when it's not necessary

The Far-Reaching Attitude of Wisdom

Wisdom is the ability to analyze what is virtuous and non-virtuous as well as the ability to perceive emptiness, the lack of inherent existence of all persons and phenomena. Understanding dependent arising aids in understanding the emptiness of inherent or independent existence.

Dependent Arising

All phenomena (including people) depend on other factors for their existence. They are dependent in three ways:

1. All the functioning things in our world arise depending on causes. Pick any object and reflect on the various causes and conditions that were necessary for it to come into existence. For example, a house exists because of so many non-house things that existed before it—building materials, designers and construction workers, etc.
2. Phenomena exist by depending on their parts. Mentally dissect a thing to discover all of the different parts that compose it. Each of these parts is again made of parts. For example, your body is made of many non-body things—limbs, organs, etc. Each of these, in turn, is composed of molecules, atoms, and sub-atomic particles.
3. Phenomena exist in dependence on their being conceived and given a name. For example, Tenzin Gyatso is the Dalai Lama because people conceived of that position and gave him that title.

Conclusion: Because nothing exists on its own, see that things are more fluid and dependent than you previously thought.

Emptiness

The four-point analysis for meditating on emptiness of the person, oneself:

1. Identify the object to be refuted: an independent, solid, inherently existent person. Think of a time when you felt a strong emotion. How does the “I” appear at that time?
2. Establish the pervasion: If such an independent self existed, it would have to be either one and the same with the mental and physical aggregates or completely separate from them. There is no other alternative.
3. Examine all the parts of your body and all aspects of your mind. Are you any one of them? Determine that the “I” is not one and the same as the body or the mind, or a combination of the two.
4. Try to find a self that is independent from your body and mind. Can your body and mind be in one place and “I” in another? Determine that the self is not separate from the body and mind.

Conclusion: The self does not exist in the way you previously felt it did. Feel the lack of such an independent and solid self that needs to be defended.

This meditation comes at the beginning of the traditional Lamrim, which assumes that a person is already familiar with Buddhism. This is not the case for Westerners, however. Only after we have an idea of the general Buddhist view and aims—gained from the preceding meditations—will we want to commit to the path. For this, forming a healthy relationship with a spiritual mentor is essential.

How to Rely on a Spiritual Mentor

1. To progress on the path, it is important to rely on and be guided by qualified spiritual mentors. Think about why it is important to select teachers who have the following qualities:
 - Stable practice or realization of the higher trainings of ethical conduct, meditative stabilization, and wisdom
 - Vast and deep knowledge of the scriptures
 - Joy and enthusiasm to teach
 - Ability to express the teachings clearly
 - Loving concern and compassion for the students
 - Patience and willingness to undergo the difficulties of guiding others on the path

2. Consider the advantages of relying on a qualified teacher:
 - You will learn the correct teachings and know how to practice them properly
 - You will gain realizations and approach enlightenment
 - You will avoid unfortunate rebirths
 - You won't lack spiritual teachers in your future lives
3. Consider the disadvantages of not properly relying on a teacher:
 - None of the above benefits will accrue
 - You will continue to wander in cyclic existence, especially in unfortunate rebirths
 - Even though you may try to practice, your practice won't be successful
 - Your good qualities will decline
4. Practice relying on your teachers through your thoughts:
 - Develop faith in them by remembering their qualities and the role they play in your spiritual progress. They teach you exactly what the Buddha would teach you if he were here. They work to benefit you in the same way as the Buddha does. If your mind picks faults in your teachers, check whether the faults come from the teacher or instead are projections of your own mind.
 - Develop gratitude and respect by thinking of their kindness. You did not have the fortune to receive teachings directly from the Buddha or the great masters of the past. Due to the kindness of your spiritual mentors, you are able to listen to teachings, be inspired by their living example of the Dharma, take precepts, and receive guidance in your practice.
5. Practice relying on your teachers through your actions. You do this by:
 - Making offerings to them
 - Showing respect and offering your service to help them with various projects they do
 - Practicing the teachings as they instructed

Conclusion: Make a determination to check a person's qualities before taking that person as your teacher. Determine to put effort into cultivating good relationships with your teachers, so that you will progress easily and steadily on the path to enlightenment.