

WORKING WITH EMOTIONS

COURSE OUTLINE

Overview for teachers

This course is less topic driven than many. The basic logic is that one can acknowledge the basic chaos of emotions and include that completely (maitri), using sitting practice as the ground for establishing that workability. The ground, path, and fruition in the blurb following summarizes this course clearly.

Descriptive blurb for publicity/brochures for students

Confused, wild emotions can dominate us in obvious and subtle ways. Without suppressing feelings or acting them out, Buddhist meditation works with emotions directly. The energy of emotions becomes the basis for developing wisdom and compassion. The ground is experiencing the pain and confusion of emotions, and looking for a way to work with them. The path or process of working with emotions is explored. The fruition leads to further clarity in communication with others.

Reading List

Class 1: The Confusion and Pain of Emotions

Student's readings: none

Instructor's readings:

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 63-68
- *The Path Is the Goal*, pp. 55-65
- *1975 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp. 57-58
- *1978 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp. 52-53

Basic logic:

1. *Ground*. Our emotions are a source of confusion and pain.
2. *Path*. We employ different strategies or projects to manipulate them. Such projects result in further frustration. At some point we realise there is something fundamentally wrong with our approach.
3. *Fruition*. We are inspired to search for another way to work with emotions.

Class 2: Meditation Practice

Student's readings:

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 1-7, 43-48, 63-68

Instructor's readings:

- *Glimpses of Abhidharma*, pp. 55-61
- *The Path Is the Goal*, pp. 66-87
- *Basic Meditation Course* (Old Vajradhatu Course Syllabus), Talk 2
- *Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts* (any or all years), Talk 1

Basic logic:

1. *Ground*. Experiencing frustration in our usual way of working with emotions, we recognise that there is a problem with our approach, and we have interest in doing something about it.
2. *Path*. We begin with an attitude of non-struggle, and proceed to examine the nature of our mind and emotions thoroughly, without preconceptions, strategies, or evaluations. The proper tool for this type of examination is sitting practice. The thoroughness of this exploration produces boredom. Out of that arises clarity, lightness, and gentleness.

3. *Fruition*. These are the environment in which we can make friends with ourselves, to appreciate our own intelligence, and start to make a proper relationship with our emotions.

Class 3: Developing Unconditional Friendliness

Student's readings:

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 48-56, 69-72
- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 111-119
- *Meditation in Action*, pp. 19-29, 45-50

Instructor's readings:

- *The Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, pp. 18-21
- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 69-72

Basic logic:

1. *Ground*. The clarity and gentleness from sitting practice are the environment in which we can begin a proper relationship with our emotions, which involves overcoming the sense of separateness and alienation underlying our previous approach.
2. *Path*. This is a process of making friends with ourselves and our emotions. First we become familiar with our emotions in an open, non-judgemental way; then we expand that friendliness to the objects of our emotions.
3. *Fruition*. Our world begins to feel workable instead of alien and threatening. We are less concerned about protecting ourselves and find ourselves naturally drawn out to a larger world. Our emotions begin to become an expression of communication with the world, rather than a shield against it.

Note: If possible, a nyinzhün should be scheduled between the third and fourth classes.

Class 4: Working With Emotions

Students readings:

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 12-15, 83-92
- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 23-28
- *Meditation in Action*, pp. 51-60

Instructor's readings:

- *1973 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, Talk 10
- *1978 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp. 10-14
- *The Path Is the Goal*, pp. 76-79
- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 83-90

Basic logic:

1. *Ground*. Since we feel touched by our world, we become inquisitive as to who or what is touching us. Making friends with ourselves is the ground.
2. *Path*. Relating with the emotions in a skilful, artful way is the practice. Artfulness is the experience of all details of our lives without impatience or aggression. We extend sitting practice into meditation in action: full awareness and involvement in whatever we are doing. Complete meditation without breaks (*samadhi*) comes from applying discipline in our lives (*shila*).
3. *Fruition*. As a result of shila and samadhi, we appreciate our emotions with sharpness, humour, and inquisitiveness. Emotion becomes living and spontaneous; action becomes the compassionate skilful means.

Class 5: Wisdom of Emotions and Development of Compassion

Student's readings:

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 106-110
- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 167-184, 208-215
- *Meditation in Action*, pp. 65-74

Instructor's readings:

- *The Path Is the Goal*, pp. 145-153
- *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, pp. 46-49
- *The Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, pp. 31-32

Basic logic: recapitulation of previous talks

WORKING WITH EMOTIONS SOURCEBOOK

LOGIC OF THE COURSE

The course as a whole has an overall logic. The ground or basis is presented in Talk 1 and the beginning of Talk 2: experiencing the pain and confusion of emotions and looking for a way to work with them. The path or process of working with emotions is presented in Talks 2, 3, and part of Talk 4: mindfulness practice, developing maitri, and awareness practice. The fruition or result and further implications are presented in the end of Talk 4 and in Talk 5: prajna and greater vision, communication with others and inspiration to the mahayana outlook. Connection with this overall logic should be maintained in preparing each individual talk.

There are also some basic threads or themes that carry through the course, and again each individual talk should acknowledge these themes:

1. **Quality of emotions.** How the feeling of emotions changes from solid and wild to fluid, transparent and workable, to alive, expressive and communicative.
2. **Attitude toward emotions.** From alienated and struggling to "objective" investigation to friendly inquisitiveness to a sense of oneness, dancing with emotions.
3. **Egolessness.** From a solid but confused sense of "me-nests," driven by hopes and fears to clarity and friendliness toward all the aspects of oneself to a glimpse of egolessness, transcending the "dualistic barrier" between oneself and one's emotions, a sense of the emptiness and fullness of emotions at the same time.
4. **Relationship of intelligence and confusion.**

Each talk has its own logic of development:

1. Introduction or transition from the previous talk
2. Basic approach or starting point
3. Process or application
4. Result or conclusion.

ADDITIONAL POINTS IN PRESENTING TALKS

1. **Logic:** Have a clear feeling for the progression of the talk and the transitions within it. It makes it easier for people to follow, understand and remember. It also reflects how well you actually understand what you are going to present.
2. **Image and analogy:** These are particularly important in conveying experiences and attitudes relating to the emotions.

3. **Explanation and commentary:** In explaining a process, such as experience of sitting practice, or an attitude, or view, use common sense language and avoid purely intellectual logic or jargon. A particularly effective approach is using an image or example from everyday life to demonstrate the cause-and-effect logic which you are trying to get across.
4. **Recapitulation:** Summary of what has taken place so far is important at the start of each talk; it is also sometimes helpful at the end of a talk or after a discussion period. Recapitulate during a talk anytime there is extended logic, or a transition to a major new theme, or if you feel you are losing the student.

PROVOKING AND GUIDING DISCUSSION

1. **Possible questions arising from the talk.** Part of preparing a talk includes thinking about the kinds of questions the material will bring up for the students. Try to anticipate these by studying the readings and the course outline with a fresh, inquisitive mind.
2. **Hints on how to approach questions and discussion:**
 - Some questions are asked for clarification, some as a challenge to the teacher, some to express personal ideas or opinions, and so on. Be aware of the students' own assumptions and logics as the context of their actual questions or statements.
 - Do not defend what you have presented in a dogmatic way. Give students room to express their own experience. Then bring that back to the basic dharmic understanding of the situation.
 - It is important to stick with personal experience. Bring things back to the kitchen sink level. Do not get into complicated speculative discussions.
 - Refer to "Basic Skills in Teaching the Dharma" for further suggestions.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Always announce the schedule for the course, including sitting periods before talks and nyinths, and any other events that would be of interest to students.
2. Tell students where and when they can receive meditation instruction.
3. Give students suggestions on how to approach the reading material:
 - reflect on how it connects with their experience.
 - if something is hard to understand or does not make sense, do not struggle with it. Make a note of it and bring it up in the discussion period next class.

FORMAT OF THE COURSE OUTLINE

The outline for each talk includes four sections:

1. **Preface.** This includes the basic logic of the talk and important things to emphasize. There are "teachers references" that indicate how the material for the talk was developed. Teachers should study and contemplate these themselves. Finally there are also possible pitfalls to avoid in working with the particular material for that talk.
2. **Body.** The content of each talk is presented as of main points that follow the logic of the talk. Under each main point is explanatory commentary, as well as examples or images that could be used. Teachers should use these as guides to develop their own explanations and images. References are included at intervals in the outline, and apply to the material preceding them. These should be consulted for clarification or elaboration.
3. **Assignments and announcements.** Assignments for the next talk include readings and general attitudes to take in studying this material. Any announcements pertinent to the course (such as scheduling) can be made at this time also.

TALK 1

THE CONFUSION AND PAIN OF EMOTION

PREFACE

1. Basic logic:

- *Ground.* Our emotions are a source of confusion and pain.
- *Path.* We employ different strategies or projects to manipulate them. Such projects result in further frustration. At some point we realize there is something fundamentally wrong with our approach.
- *Fruition.* We are inspired to search for another way to work with emotions.

2. Major emphasis:

- feelings of separateness and confusion in relating to emotions
- frustration in trying to struggle with emotions
- intelligence expressed in recognition of the unworkability of usual strategies and projects.

3. Teacher's references:

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 63-68
- *The Path Is the Goal*, pp. 55-65
- *1975 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp. 57-58
- *1978 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp.52-53.

4. Pitfalls to avoid:

- Dogmatic attitude of "this is how *it is*." Instead, encourage and provoke students to examine their own experience and discover things for themselves.
- Images and examples in the text should not be used unless they connect with something you experience personally. They are supposed to be homemade and fresh, not canned. So rely on your own understanding and style of expression to create an environment of openness and inquisitiveness.

TALK OUTLINE

RELATING WITH EMOTIONS

1. **Emotions as we experience them.** We call many things emotions, from intense rage, passion or depression to little pleasures or irritations. They might last a few seconds or seem to go on for months.

Examples: Give examples of emotions. If appropriate, ask for a few from the class.

2. **Our relationship to emotions——confusion.** Do we know what emotions are? Where do they come from? Why do we feel emotion? Are we in control of our emotions or are they in control of us? Which emotions are good to have, which are bad?

Image: Like riding a surfboard. Are we in control of the wave or is it about to overwhelm us?

3. **Our attitude to emotions——conflict.** Confusion about emotions brings feelings of tension, conflict. Emotions feel part of us and yet alien at the same time. Sometimes they are pleasurable, sometimes painful. Sometimes the pleasure turns into pain. Sometimes we feel both pain and pleasure simultaneously. If we try to maintain an even disposition, emotions burst out and overwhelm us. If we try to crank up emotions, nothing happens. All in all, we feel uneasiness, frustration and conflict with our emotions.

Images: Like a car with the accelerator and brake on at the same time, or like a fickle lover.

References: *The Myth of Freedom*, p. 64 to top p. 65

SEPARATENESS OF "ME" AND "MY EMOTIONS"

1. **The source of the confusion and conflict** with emotions is the feeling of separateness between "me" and "my emotions." We feel emotions as something alien, threatening to our sense of identity. The energy of our emotions is often in conflict with our version of who we think we are or how we think we should behave.

Examples: The way we usually describe the experience of intense emotion: "Sorry, I just wasn't myself," or "I don't know what came over me," or "I just got carried away."

Another aspect of separateness is our attitude toward emotions and the objects of emotions. Having confusion about what emotions actually are, we look for external

reference points to blame for our discomfort. Sometimes we feel that if we could eliminate the other people or problems in the physical situation that seem to be causing emotional upheavals, then we would have no problems with our emotions.

Examples: Think of objects of hatred we cannot get rid of, objects of passion that we cannot possess, irritations we try to ignore that will not go away, etc.

2. **Strategies to resolve confusion and conflict.** Treating the emotions (and objects of emotions) as something separate from ourselves, we develop strategies to deal with them. The goal of the strategies is to overcome or escape from the confusion, tension, frustration, and pain caused by our emotions. We try to make our relationship with the emotions something *definite* and *regular*, so that everything is safe and predictable. In other words, instead of seeking the real cause of confusion and conflict, we just try to eliminate the discomfort.

Examples: Battling the emotions to keep them under control. Giving in to them and letting everything hang out. Ignoring them, trying to make oneself numb to the experience of emotions.

We implement these strategies by treating our relationship with emotions as a project to work on.

Examples: We don't "feel" enough, can't loosen up, and want to get in touch with our feelings. Or we feel too much and get carried away so we want more control and evenness. We want to figure out the emotions, so they don't interfere with our plans. We want more pleasurable emotions and less painful ones, so we embark on a self-improvement course.

All of our strategies and projects are attempts to somehow manipulate self (me) or other (my emotions or the objects of emotions), and are based on treating emotions as separate from and threatening to ourselves. Since this attitude is the source of the confusion and conflict in the first place, our efforts to escape discomfort serve only to perpetuate it.

References: *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 65, 66, top of 67

POVERTY MENTALITY

The ways we try to deal with emotions express the kind of attitude we have toward ourselves and the world. Our attitude toward ourselves is generally one of poverty mentality, feeling that there is fundamentally something wrong about the way we are, rather than that there is basic goodness or basic sanity. This manifests as:

1. being driven by hopes and fears from one project to the next
2. judging ourselves constantly, liking some things about ourselves and hating other things, and

3. seriousness, lacking a sense of humor about ourselves and taking every experience of emotions as a text, a challenge to our identity.

Our attitude to the world is generally security-oriented. We try to create security by putting everything into categories, giving things labels, trying to fit the world into our own picture of how it should be.

References: *The Myth of Freedom*, p.65
1975 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts, pp. 57-58

FRUSTRATION

1. **Frustration of strategizing.** Our strategies result in continuous frustration, because they are based on misconceptions or distortions of what is actually going on. We treat our emotions as something alien, when in fact they are not something separate from us. We feel threatened and struggle in a deadly serious way. Without having a sense of humor, little things get blown completely out of proportion.

Example: It is easy to get a perspective on the problems two acquaintances have in their relationship, because we are impartial and see both sides. It is much harder to see what is going on in the relationship we are so emotionally involved in, because we are so biased and defensive.

Our relationship to our emotions is sometimes overcomplicated or distorted to the point where we confuse one emotion for another, or feel confusion or conflict and take *that* to be the emotion.

Examples: Confusing a feeling of passion for what is actually rooted in jealousy, or getting angry when you begin to feel passion for someone.

2. **Futility of strategizing.** Since every strategy or project we try leads to frustration rather than satisfaction, we begin to realize that our usual way of working with emotions is futile, doomed to failure. On the intuitive level we feel there is something fundamentally wrong with our approach. All of our attempts to escape an uncomfortable relationship with the emotions are expressions of the attitudes and strategies that caused the problems in the first place. We have been trying to pin our emotions down, get a handle on them, which is impossible in this lively, ever-changing world. Therefore, it feels like there is no way out. Our *struggle* to deal with the "problem" we think we have with emotions is itself the problem.

Examples: The way we struggle with emotions is like the Uncle Remus story of the "tar baby." The more we struggle, the more stuck we feel. It is also like quicksand; the more we struggle to escape, the more we feel we are caught or sinking.

STARTING FRESH

1. **Need to start fresh.** Since our usual approach to working with emotions seems futile, we should start fresh. Where does all this leave us? It does not make sense to come to a course, Working With Emotions, to be told that we cannot work with emotions. The point is that we need to abandon our *usual*, habitual strategies toward emotions. Instead of struggling to find a way *out* of our difficulties, perhaps we should look *in* to them further. If our questions do not have satisfactory answers, we should examine the questions themselves.
2. **Starting at the beginning.** The first step to developing a proper relationship with emotions is to understand how we relate to emotions *now*. Otherwise, hearing a different approach would only lead us to treat it as another strategy, with the usual results. So we first need to examine all the facets and variations of our attitudes, feelings, and styles of relating to the emotions. That is the function of the sitting practice of meditation, which goes hand in hand with our study.

ASSIGNMENTS

Books needed for the course:

- *The Myth of Freedom*
- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*
- *Meditation in Action*

Readings for the next class:

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 1-7, 43-48, 63-68

Additional suggestion:

During the next week, students could try to experience their emotions without trying to manipulate them: "Simply be curious without analyzing or trying to change emotions. When manipulation is happening, recognize it for what it is and examine the process of how that takes place."

TALK 2

MEDITATION PRACTICE

PREFACE

1. Basic logic:

- *Ground.* Experiencing frustration in our usual way of working with emotions, we recognize that there is a problem with our approach, and we have interest in doing something about it.
- *Path.* We begin with an attitude of non-struggle, and proceed to examine the nature of our mind and emotions thoroughly, without preconceptions, strategies, or evaluations. The proper tool for this type of examination is sitting practice. The thoroughness of this exploration produces boredom. Out of that arises clarity, lightness, and gentleness.
- *Fruition.* These are the environment in which we can make friends with ourselves, to appreciate our own intelligence, and start to make a proper relationship with our emotions.

2. Major emphasis:

- the nature and qualities of sitting practice
- how it is *not* just another strategy
- boredom and spaciousness

3. Instructor's readings:

- *Glimpses of Abhidharma*, pp. 55-61
- *The Path Is the Goal*, pp. 66-87
- *Basic Meditation Course* (Old Vajradhatu Course Syllabus), Talk 2
- *Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts* (any or all years), Talk 1

4. Pitfalls to avoid:

- Any hint of analytical conceptualization or philosophizing. This talk has to come from personal experience with the practice.
- Be especially careful about the topic of boredom. It is confusing for most new students. Be very clear about what boredom means within the context of sitting practice.

TALK OUTLINE

RECOGNITION OF THE PROBLEM WITH EMOTIONS

1. **Summary of Talk 1.** We feel separate from our emotions, and take a critical attitude toward ourselves (poverty mentality). We become our own worst enemies. The basic stance of struggle or battle produces habitual patterns to try to cope with the emotions. These are combined into projects of all kinds. The nature of these projects takes the form of a cycle:

- (1) a flash of uncertainty, dissatisfaction
- (2) desire or impulse to escape that
- (3) action without clear understanding
- (4) frustration and disappointment.

Out of disappointment comes another flash of uncertainty, and the cycle continues.

Image: Like having an empty lot, rushing to build something on it. But we did not notice that the ground was all sand, and the sand shifts. The building collapses and we are back to where we started—plus a mess to clean up.

2. **Intelligence within confusion.** We can recognize our confusion, frustration and the whole process of our projects in spite of the fact that we are still caught up in them. This means that there is intelligence functioning along with confusion. Intelligence also expresses itself in our interest in seeking another approach, rather than wallowing in despair. The experience of intelligence and confusion functioning simultaneously is the working basis for meditation practice.

SITTING PRACTICE

1. **Proper attitude.** The proper attitude towards the emotions begins with boycotting our usual approach. This means short-circuiting usual habitual patterns and projects.

Image: Declare a moratorium on building so that the ground can be explored.

This does not just happen on its own, because our struggle with our emotions, although painful and frustrating, is entertaining and absorbing. It provides occupation. We are almost hypnotized by the drama and excitement of emotionality. So we need an attitude of willingness to simplify our lives in order to get a clear picture of what is going on. This means confronting aloneness, loneliness, which is a very important step. The fact that we could be willing to adopt such an attitude, although it goes against the grain of how we believe we would like things to be, is a further expression of intelligence functioning amidst confusion.

2. **Proper tool.** To apply the proper attitude requires the proper tool. Such a tool must provide a way to look at, explore, examine our emotions without complication, evaluation or distortion. From the experience of a long line of practitioners over the centuries, the sitting practice of meditation is the proper tool.

Image: Sitting practice is like a good microscope, giving a clear detailed picture without evaluation, bias or manipulation.

THE NATURE OF PRACTICE

1. **Intimate relationship with ourselves.** Ordinarily, we try to run away from ourselves.

Example: If we feel bored, we try to find entertainment. If too much is going on, we try to find peace and quiet. Basically, the grass is always greener somewhere else.

Sitting practice involves making an intimate relationship with ourselves, alone, with minimal distractions. It is a precise and thorough exploration of all of our mind: thoughts, emotions, patterns, concepts, etc. All of ourselves: what we like and what we don't, what we think we are or would like to be, and what we actually are.

2. **Not another project.** Sitting practice is not an attempt to achieve another state, or to make one feel "high." It is not something exotic, but very plain and ordinary, somewhat dull in fact. It does not involve some goal to reach, set by yourself or by someone else. Instead, it is a personal, individual exploration of just what is going on right at the moment. It is not a project that can be held onto or manipulated because all it uses is what is already there, already happening, without adding or complicating anything.
3. **Boycotting struggle.** In sitting practice we make contact with every aspect of ourselves, including all of our emotions—good or bad, pleasurable or painful. This is the first step in boycotting the war we have with ourselves.

Image: Like two families feuding for generations, refusing ever to have contact with each other. Animosity, fear, and prejudice are habitual; the cause of the feud has long been forgotten. Peace is impossible until some contact or communication happens.

Boycotting struggle means relating with the process of our minds without adding the commentary of praise or blame, pride or shame.

4. **Simplicity.** Simplicity means not adding unnecessary complications. We begin with what is already there, the simple resources of our natural state: mind, body, and breathing. We relate to these in a straightforward and simple way, without any gimmicks, tricks, or short-cuts. It is a natural organic process, one that happens slowly, step by step.

Image: Walk of an elephant, slow but sure.

We do not add the complications of what has happened in the past or what the future might bring. Thoughts or feelings about the past or future are seen as something that is happening now. We make a thorough investigation of what is happening now, because that is our only starting place, the only material that there really is to work with.

Image: If one night you dream that you have a lot of money and the next day you start writing checks, you will soon get feedback that you are not relating with reality.

5. **Fullness.** Such a simple, thorough process of investigation brings us into contact with all that goes on in our state of being—raw, rugged, painful, pleasant, disgusting, uplifted, irritating—everything that is there. We may discover things we do not want to relate to at all.

Image: Hidden emotions begin to come to the surface like a dead fish.

Even so, we should continue to look into our state of mind. We can begin to appreciate the fullness of it, the rich and colorful qualities of our emotions.

Image: (a broad metaphor for "simplicity" and "fullness") Since we do not have a helicopter or land rover, we start walking with our own two feet, step by step. We get into the country-side or wilderness, which has its own natural beauty—an intimate walk through the landscape of our mind, appreciating the flora and fauna of our emotions. We might meet a lion or a pussycat.

References:

- *Glimpses of Abhidharma*, pp. 55-57
- *The Path Is the Goal*, pp. 66-70

BOREDOM

1. **Restlessness.** Experiencing ourselves in such a simple and full way is something new for us. At first it might provide a new form of entertainment, a new project to work on. But as the fascination with sitting practice wears off, we begin to get restless.

Example: "Well, that was very interesting, but I am getting tired of it. Don't you have something new for me to try? I have been doing this for a whole hour already."

We get irritated at going over the same thing again and again. We feel impatient: why are we not making any progress? We find ourselves confronted again and again by things we did not want to see in the first place. We feel terribly bored.

This is not really boredom but irritation. Our habitual patterns and strategies no longer provide entertainment. We feel trapped by our own mind with no place to escape to. It

feels very claustrophobic to be stuck with our own thoughts and emotions so thoroughly and intimately. So we might feel somewhat wretched and very restless.

Image: When we were children and had to go to a family reunion, surrounded by relatives, stuck there. Or stuck in a full elevator between floors.

2. **Spaciousness.** In fact, we are still trying to struggle with our thoughts and emotions as we always did. We cannot battle our restlessness and subdue it. That is just another way to struggle. So the approach of sitting practice is to include restlessness, accommodate it. We acknowledge restlessness and irritation, let them come and let them go. This is the spaciousness of sitting practice.

Image: Giving a spacious meadow to a restless cow. Restlessness continues, but there is so much space and nothing for the cow to struggle against, so soon restlessness becomes irrelevant and the cow settles down.

This is the meaning of boredom in sitting practice, a wider sense of boredom. Settling down, accommodating whatever is going on without trying to turn anything into a new entertainment, a new cause for struggle. That could be very refreshing.

Image: Like a cool stream, which flows methodically and repetitiously, but is cooling and refreshing. It accommodates rocks, trees, fish, and fishermen.

References:

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 46-49
- *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, pp. bot.31 - top 33, and 55-57

CLARITY, LIGHTNESS, AND GENTLENESS

1. **Clarity.** Relating to our emotions in this way provides clarity. The spaciousness of sitting allows us to acknowledge the emotions as they are, without coloring them with our preconceptions and evaluations. We begin to appreciate the subtlety and variety of our emotions as they are, instead of how we would like them to be or think they should be.

Image: The difference between meeting someone you know nothing about versus meeting someone who is very famous and whom you want very much to impress, or someone who has a bad reputation and whom you have already decided to avoid.

2. **Lightness, a sense of humor about our predicaments.** Giving space for our emotions to arise without manipulating them, we get a perspective on the whole process that takes place: how emotions arise, manifest, and subside. Being properly bored, spaciouly bored, we see our dramas *as* dramas, instead of the deadly serious struggle we fee when we are caught up in them. So the whole process begins to become

somewhat transparent, not so solid and compelling. We can actually take our situation lightly, seeing the irony of our whole struggle mentality. There is some sense of humor about our own predicament.

Image: (a true story) A couple were in the midst of an intense argument. They looked over and saw their cat watching them. The flash of perspective and irony cut through the heaviness and seriousness of the whole situation instantly.

3. **Gentleness.** This kind of lightness undermines the impatience and aggression that we have towards ourselves, the constant battling without our emotions. We do not have to be so harsh with ourselves. We can open up to all the different aspects of ourselves, acknowledge them without feeling so threatened by what we find. This is the beginning of making friends with ourselves. We can trust ourselves, appreciate our emotions without constantly being on guard, without constantly checking up on ourselves.

References:

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 65-66
- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 111-115

ASSIGNMENTS

Student's readings:

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 48-56, 69-72
- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 111-119
- *Meditation in Action*, pp. 19-29, 45-50

Announcements:

- Ask if anyone still needs meditation instruction. If so, tell them how they can receive it.
- Emphasize the importance of practice in understanding the material.
- Remind people to come for sitting before the next talk.

TALK 3

DEVELOPING UNCONDITIONAL FRIENDLINESS

PREFACE

1. **Schedule:** Schedule a nyinthün for the weekend between Talks 3 and 4.
2. **Basic logic:**
 - *Ground.* The clarity and gentleness from sitting practice are the environment in which we can begin a proper relationship with our emotions, which involves overcoming the sense of separateness and alienation underlying our previous approach.
 - *Path.* This is a process of making friends with ourselves and our emotions. First we become familiar with our emotions in an open, non-judgmental way; then we expand that friendliness to the objects of our emotions.
 - *Fruition.* Our world begins to feel workable instead of alien and threatening. We are less concerned about protecting ourselves and find ourselves naturally drawn out to a larger world. Our emotions begin to become an expression of communication with the world, rather than a shield against it.
3. **Major emphasis:**
 - overcoming separateness and alienation from emotions
 - friendliness as relating to both positive and negative as workable (unconditional friendliness).
4. **Atmosphere:** The style with which the teacher presents this talks is as important as the logic. We are trying to communicate and evoke openness, trust, and warmth.
5. **Teacher's references:**
 - *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 69-72
 - *Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, pp. 18-21
6. **Pitfalls to avoid:**
 - Moving from topic to topic without feeling for how they connect experientially.
 - This talk covers a lot of ground, so you may want to recapitulate in the middle to make sure everyone is with you so far.

TALK OUTLINE

DEVELOPING UNCONDITIONAL FRIENDLINESS

ENVIRONMENT FOR RELATING TO EMOTIONS

1. **Summary of previous talk.** Sitting practice provides a method to examine our emotions, as well as being a new way of relating to emotions. We do so in an atmosphere of spaciousness, thorough boredom, out of which come the experiences of clarity, lightness, and gentleness. The softness and openness to our own emotions is the environment in which we can begin to trust ourselves, make friends with ourselves.
2. **Settling down with our situation.** When we develop real boredom in sitting practice, we feel settled down with ourselves, not scrambling frantically to be something different, better, or other than what we are. And then we discover that that is enough, that we can function on our own spontaneous resources and that intelligence is already there. Ironically we find that this has been true all along. In fact, we never could be anything but ourselves. It is somewhat horrifying and somewhat humorous to find that all of our struggles and strategies against the seemingly separate emotions were expressions of these very emotions.

Examples: We feel too aggressive, so we clamp down on ourselves to shape up, aggressively. We feel we cannot control our passion any longer, so we give in, fall in love with our own passion.

However we try to be someone else, we do it in a way that is characteristically, uniquely ourselves.

References:

- *Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, p. 19

OVERCOMING SEPARATION

1. **Making friends with ourselves.** Because we have developed gentleness and humor in sitting practice, when we realize that we are both stuck with ourselves and at home with ourselves at the same time, we begin to make friends. This means accepting everything about ourselves, good and bad, neurotic and sane, complete acceptance of our being. Because we have become so familiar with our emotions, whatever arises is accepted and acknowledged on the spot without disappointment or self-criticism or self-congratulation. Actually, we can trust ourselves because we always are just who we are. Surprisingly, when we experience ourselves as we are *now*, there are no second thoughts at all.

Image: (central image for the talk) When you make friends with someone, you accept

his neurosis as well as his sanity. If you just make friends with the part you like, that is not true friendship; it is fair-weather friendship. You can trust your friend because you already know all the negative aspects about him. That is the basis for long-term friendship. If you make a relationship based only on positive experiences, you feel cheated when you discover faults later on. The relationship is one of suspicion rather than truth.

2. **No separation from emotions.** When we make friends with our emotions, we no longer fear them. They are familiar, no something separate from us. The separate categories of "me" and "my emotions" become irrelevant. We can experience emotion without fear of being overwhelmed, without trying to be something else. Whatever comes up is workable. We can go toward it, get into it, instead of running away or fighting it. Although people may experience sudden glimpses of just doing this on the spot, it is a gradual process of becoming intimate with our emotions. This process can continue despite temporary setbacks.

References:

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 69-71
- *Glimpses of Abhidharma*, pp. 56-59
- *Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, pp. 19-20

EXPANDING FRIENDLINESS

1. **Relating with the objects of emotions.** Emotions include not only what we feel, but also the objects of our emotions and how we relate to them. We have friends, enemies, parents, lovers, teachers—all people with whom we have "emotional" relationships. Expanding friendliness to those relationships is expanding spaciousness from sitting practice to include them. All our relationships become workable.
2. **"Other" as ourselves.** Actually, we are still relating with ourselves. We are making friends with our version of the "other" and how we relate with it. This is expanding friendliness beyond our limited notion of ourselves to included our whole relationship with our world. It is a complete relationship with ourselves, our whole territory that defines our notion of "me" and "my world."

References:

- *Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, p. 20

UNCONDITIONAL FRIENDLINESS

1. **Workability of whatever we encounter.** Making a complete relationship with ourselves means that friendliness becomes unconditional. In other words, we do not

place conditions on what we will relate to.

Examples: "I will talk to you *under the condition* that you promise not to get angry with me (or not to seduce me, or not to ignore me, etc.). I feel okay about myself when I am clam, but after I lose my temper I could kill myself."

So when things become chaotic or intense, we do not have to run away or try to control them or try to just pick out what is safe and pleasant and relate to that. We can stay with the situation, relate to everything that is going on, work with it on its own terms rather than how we would like it to be or how it will make us feel best.

2. **Willing to be vulnerable.** Relating to situations on their own terms means being less self-centered, not having our own pleasure and safety as our only reference point. We are willing to be vulnerable to our emotions and to the objects of our emotions. Then the most powerful energies become absolutely workable instead of taking us over, because there is nothing to take over if we are not putting up any resistance. When we are not concerned with protecting "me," we no longer feel threatened by "that" emotion or situation.
3. **Willing to be vulnerable means willing to be alive.** If we try to protect ourselves continually, try to avoid embarrassment or challenge or chaos, we find ourselves trapped in a prison of our own defenses. Nothing can get through to threaten us, but we cannot feel anything either.

Images: Like being bandaged up like a mummy—no fresh air at all. Or like a suit of armor; it always has cracks at the joints so there is still vulnerability. If we patch all the joints, we cannot move. We are dead.

References:

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 69-71
- *Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, pp. 20-21

COMMUNICATION

1. **Overcoming pettiness.** Because we open up to life and are not so concerned about protecting ourselves, we get a proper perspective on how we relate to things. We see that we continually make big deals out of little deals. That is how emotions actually develop. They start with a little flicker of thought, a little shift of our attention. Energy combines with thought and it grows into intense feeling. Then we justify our intense emotion by building up a whole drama of complaints and good reasons. Recognizing this, we can discriminate between what is important and what is not. We see pettiness of what it is. So we see what is actually happening, see that it is no big deal, and therefore we can drop our pretensions and begin to communicate with what is happening around us.

2. **Being touched by the world.** Because we have made friends with ourselves, we feel we can afford to step out beyond our own territory, without having to check back or protect ourselves. Since our own territory has been explored, and we do not need to look back, we go *forward*. Because we feel a sense of friendliness and workability towards the world, the world feels less harsh and threatening to us. Life feels somewhat softer, more open, more playful. So we find ourselves drawn out to the world, we expand our visions beyond our concerns. And at the same time we feel vulnerable, soft. The world can get through to us, it can touch us, and we feel it fully—all of its painfulness and all of its pleasure.

Example: When we feel something fully, with some sadness and tenderness, we can be vulnerable to it without defensiveness. And we feel real communication has taken place: "What she said really moved me," or "That story was really touching."

3. **Emotions as avenues of communication.** The world touches us all the time. Usually our reaction to having our vulnerability exposed is to cover up, defend ourselves with our emotions.

Examples: We respond with anger to push others away, or with passion to try to win them over to our side, or with ignorance to make believe we were never touched at all.

Our emotions and our reactions to our emotions serve as barriers to shields from the rest of the world. But when we make friends with ourselves, acknowledge our vulnerability, the emotions can become vehicles for communication. Acknowledging our vulnerability means recognizing that we are *already* in communication with our world, that it is touching us constantly. So when emotion arises, rather than shutting ourselves off from it and its object, we can welcome it as a reminder of our vulnerability and connection with the world. This is a further expression of intelligence functioning along with confusion.

At this point emotion actually brings us back to the qualities that emerged in sitting practice:

- we see clearly the process of communication taking place
- we have a light touch, a sense of humor about ourselves, the object of our emotion, and about their interaction
- we feel gentle, connected, already in communication.

Now the emotions become an aspect of participation in our world, instead of arousing feelings of separateness, alienation, and defensiveness.

Example: We might have a terrible temper. It embarrasses us, puts people off, makes us feel apart, lonely. Instead of struggling with ourselves and our temper, which only makes us more frustrated and angry, we can make friends with it. Then when anger arises, it reminds us that something got to us, to our softness. We realize that we got angry because we *care* about something. Our hard edge is softened, our temper is

softened.

References:

- *1975 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp. 56-57
- *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, pp. 86-89
- *The Path Is the Goal*, pp. 88-91

ASSIGNMENTS

Student's readings:

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 12-15, 83-92
- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 23-28
- *Meditation in Action*, pp. 51-60

Announcements:

- Announce the up-coming nyinthün and explain what it involves.
- Emphasize that the nyinthün is an integral part of the course.
- Encourage everyone to attend for the whole day if possible.

TALK 4

WORKING WITH EMOTIONS

PREFACE

1. Basic logic:

- *Ground.* Since we feel touched by our world, we become inquisitive as to who or what is touching us. Making friends with ourselves is the ground.
- *Path.* Relating with the emotions in a skillful, artful way is the practice. Artfulness is the experience of all details of our lives without impatience or aggression. We extend sitting practice into meditation in action: full awareness and involvement in whatever we are doing. Complete meditation without breaks (*samadhi*) comes from applying discipline in our lives (*shila*).
- *Fruition.* As a result of shila and samadhi, we appreciate our emotions with sharpness, humor, and inquisitiveness. Emotion becomes living and spontaneous; action becomes the compassionate skillful means.

2. Major emphasis:

- appreciation of subtlety
- wholesomeness of discipline
- totality of meditation in action
- sense of living spontaneous emotion

3. Instructor's readings:

- *1973 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, Talk 10
- *1978 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp. 10-14
- *The Path Is the Goal*, pp. 76-79
- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 83-90

4. Pitfalls to avoid:

- Getting involved in a discussion of what true "art" is. Artfulness in everyday situations is the point.
- Do not be too idealistic in presenting shila, samadhi, and prajna. Make it kitchen-sink level and use familiar examples. It is unnecessary to rely on the Sanskrit terms, although you can mention them. On the whole, use ordinary language.

TALK OUTLINE

WORKING WITH EMOTIONS

EMOTIONS AS COMMUNICATION WITH THE WORLD

1. **Summary of previous talk.** In the environment of spaciousness created by sitting practice, we develop friendliness to ourselves, to others, and the ways we relate to others. Overcoming the sense of separation and threat of emotions, our willingness to relate to whatever arises is unconditional. Every situation is workable. We acknowledge our vulnerability, and feel touched by the world. The emotions become reminders that communication is happening constantly, we are being touched constantly.
2. **Inquisitiveness about what is touching us.** We can be vulnerable without covering up, without trying to protect ourselves. Instead of protecting ourselves by muting whatever come up, putting padding between ourselves and the sharp edges of the world, we feel things much more vividly, intensely, without manipulating them. Be we are not so concerned with ourselves, when emotion arises we experience it as a feeling of going out, connecting with the world. Since we have been touched, instead of trying to defend ourselves we become curious, inquisitive about what it is that touched us.

APPRECIATING ORDINARINESS

1. **Subtleties of emotions.** At this point we are actually beginning to work with emotions in a proper way. We no longer are completely subject to our impulses to clamp down and suppress emotions when they arise, nor to go wild and act them out. Instead, when emotions arise, they wake us up. We feel their texture, and then begin to appreciate the environment in which emotion is taking place. So they alert us to subtlety, we notice the details of our state of mind and our world. Every moment, every new detail has its own uniqueness and intimacy.
2. **No high points.** We usually think that dealing with big eruptions is how to work with emotions. We live from one crisis to the next, sustaining ourselves on victories, trying to survive failures. However, since we can make friends with ourselves, with our emotions, the issue of success and failure and any notion of crisis become irrelevant. So working on big eruptions is grabbing the wrong end of the stick.
3. **Artfully working with emotions.** Focusing only on high points, highlights, is not an artful approach to working with emotions. We would like to conquer the world in one fell swoop. We do not want to be bothered with insignificant little things; there are important matters to attend to. This is the expression of aggression and impatience,

which are basically anti-artfulness. Artfulness is experiencing all the details, patiently and intimately. There is positive appreciation and warmth, real interest, that takes us outside ourselves, involves us in a larger world.

References:

- 1973 *Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, Talk 10

DISCIPLINE AND TOTALITY

1. **Discipline based on gentleness.** How can we actually practice working with emotions in a proper, artful way? We have some glimpse, a taste of it, but we have to stabilize that, make it a part of us. This requires discipline. It is *not* discipline as imposed rules and regulations, or some harsh training process to whip us into shape. Proper discipline is based on gentleness towards ourselves. We should do things properly, because we deserve proper treatment. We are inspired to practice because we see how harsh we are with ourselves.

Example: Eating cold beans out of a can is an expression of poverty mentality and meanness to oneself. Proper discipline means taking the time and effort to treat oneself properly, to a nicely prepared meal.

2. **Discipline is waking up what is already there.** This kind of discipline is not something imposed from elsewhere. It is the process of waking up what is already there. This is again the intelligence that is present all along, in spite of confusion. So the discipline of working with emotions properly is always coming back, constantly coming back to gentleness, to the wholesome quality of the experience of emotions. It is wholesome because we are relating with all the qualities of our mind, precisely, full, on the spot. We appreciate the details Of the emotions and the fullness of the communication with the world. [Here you might elaborate on the practice of mindfulness and awareness in post-meditation.]
3. **Discipline produces ongoing meditation.** Coming back to the moment, to *now*, is the expression of meditation in action. When the discipline of doing so becomes natural, the sense of meditation becomes continuous. It is spaciousness and openness without a break, complete accommodation of everything we experience. So we can work with whatever emotion arises properly because we are fully there with it. It is quite a switch from our usual relationship to practice. Before, moments of openness were a little gap in our struggles and confusion. In this case, any sense of struggle or confusion is accommodated in a vast background of wakefulness.

Image: From the point of view of a small boat, one wave creates tremendous chaos. From the point of view of the ocean, the wave is nothing special. Waves churn around,

but they are contained within a wider stillness and depth of the ocean.

4. **Sense of totality.** The world become a full world, in which all the details are seen vividly and precisely, and relationships are seen as they are. Because we are fully there with whatever is occurring, we can experience emotions artfully, fully and intimately. Continuous meditation brings a sense of totality, a complete involvement, an absence of separateness. There is no separation between "me" and "my emotions" and "the object of my emotions." There is no separation between the practitioner and the practice. There is no self-conscious watcher to check, evaluate or comment on ourselves and our activity. Totality means that meditation become self-existing. It is the way we *are* instead of something we *do*.

Examples: How it feels in sitting practice when for a moment we become one with the technique and relax our struggle with it. In daily activity we sometimes become completely involved in what we are doing, at the same time we are aware of the whole environment. This is a kind of the sense of totality. It is the expression that we can function properly without watching ourselves in a self-conscious way.

References:

- 1978 *Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp. 10-13

SHARPNESS, HUMOR, AND INQUISITIVENESS

Because we are not constantly pitting this against that, we see all of what is going on in our world with a feeling of clear-headedness. We can look at and experience our life, our emotions fully, so that nothing is missed. Everything has a quality of sharpness.

We see emotions in all their subtlety and vividness, without being fixed in a particular perspective. So along with the sharpness, comes a sense of humor, the delightfulness of such a full and colorful world. It is simple appreciation, working with emotions in a light-handed way, not a serious project to accomplish.

Sharpness and humor together means that we are awake and interested in everything that goes on, in a gentle way. It is inquisitiveness with intimacy and warmth.

References:

- 1978 *Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp. 13-14

NATURAL SYMPATHY

1. **Living emotion.** Direct, clear involvement with our emotions and our world cuts through any kind of speculation or belief about what kind of person we should be, what

kind of emotions we should have, how our emotions should be expressed or controlled. When our emotions are not filtered through interpretations and manipulations, they become alive, fluid, and vivid. There is a spontaneity in feeling and expressing emotions.

This is somewhat painful and frightening, as well as delightful. We do not feel that we possess our emotions, but we do not feel separate from them either. We are not in control, but we do not fear them either. We have lost our usual reference points, our strategies for handling things, but we have gained a new, lively world that is fresh, colorful, and full of surprises.

Image: Like giving birth to a child. There is a sense of loss, no longer having your dear possession inside you. But there is a sense of gain as well. There is your child in all its fullness in front of you, fresh, alive, and full of surprises.

2. **Warmth toward the world.** Because we can be fully involved, without separateness or defensiveness, because we are touched by the world, a natural sympathy toward others is aroused. This is not pity, looking down on someone less fortunate, nor looking for some reciprocal sympathy in return. It is a feeling of openness and warmth toward the world. Appreciation isn't passive. We do not lie back and "get into our emotions." We find ourselves drawn out, and we could actually dive into the fullness of the world. This is the same as becoming completely vulnerable, one great big soft spot. We are open, completely in touch. We can communicate with others without any self-centred reference point. This means that we are there for others completely, full, properly. The expression of our emotions is itself warm and skillful communication.

References:

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 86-90

ASSIGNMENTS

Student's readings:

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 106-110
- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 167-184, 208-215
- *Meditation in Action*, pp. 65-74

TALK 5

CONTAGIOUS FRIENDLINESS

PREFACE

1. Basic logic (recapitulation of previous talks):

Clear headedness with humor, living emotion and warmth towards the world are the expressions of a proper relationship with emotions. We have described a journey from confusion and frustration with emotions to a proper way of working with them. What has been presented in this course can be applied in the practicality of living our lives day to day. Doing so is living a genuine, gentle, healthy life.

We find that this kind of healthiness is contagious. When we feel uplifted and confident, open to our emotions, we communicate that sense of workability and positiveness to others. We do it just by being confidently, genuinely, simply who we are. Without sitting practice, none of this really happens. It remains somewhat a myth.

2. Major emphasis:

- clear review of the material of the first four talks
- implications for applying it to daily life
- propagating wakefulness to others
- necessity of sitting practice.

3. Atmosphere:

A sense of softness, genuineness and fundamental confidence based on nothing except buddha nature. Since students will have connected with the course material on different levels of understanding, the feeling to project is that, wherever one is in one's own practice and personal development, one can embody a confident and gentle approach.

4. Instructor's readings:

- *The Path Is the Goal*, pp. 145-153
- *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, pp. 46-49
- *The Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, pp. 31-32

5. Pitfalls to avoid:

- Getting to "rah-rah" about genuineness, confidence and gentleness without invoking a feeling of what they mean personally. Then it all comes out mumbo-

- jumbo jargon.
- The point is to connect with a healthy state of mind, oneself, through one's sitting practice, and genuineness in dealing with one's daily life situations, including the challenge of teaching.

TALK OUTLINE

FROM FLU TO HEALTHINESS: RECAPITULATION

1. **Confusion and pain of emotions.** When the emotions are felt as something separate and alien to us, we feel in conflict with them and are confused about how to relate to them. We have a poverty mentality, which is a sense that there is something fundamentally wrong with us. So we are always trying to make ourselves into something different. All of our strategies and projects to deal with the emotions are attempts to get rid of the discomfort of the confusion and conflict, instead of relating to the cause of the problems. This leaves us continually frustrated, because our efforts perpetuate the confusion and conflict.

However, there is intelligence functioning in the midst of confusion. We begin to realize that our approach does not work, that we always wind up where we started. So we can be open to a way to actually start fresh, approach working with emotions in a completely different way.

Image: Like having the flue for a long time. We feel like something has invaded us. We do not know what it is, but it has made us miserable and might do us in at any moment. At the same time, we have forgotten what it feels like to be healthy. It is as if we have always been sick. So instead of looking into how we lost our healthiness, our only concern is to keep from feeling miserable. So we take whatever pills, diet or magic amulets anyone recommends to relieve our pain. But they wear off and we are miserable again. At some point we realize that we need to relate to our flue some other less superficial way.

2. **Sitting practice.** We can recognize the problem with our approach to emotions even while we are carrying on with it. This expression of intelligence functioning in the middle of confusion is the working basis for sitting practice. In sitting practice, we boycott our usual approach of trying to manipulate the emotions. We simply examine our whole state of mind without evaluation. Not trying to achieve any particular state or feeling, we make a precise, thorough, intimate exploration of all that goes on in our state of being. We do so in a very simple way, using our own resources: mind, body, and breath. We come into contact with the fullness of our emotions.

The spaciousness of sitting practice accommodates everything that we experience: restlessness, peacefulness, irritation, excitement, depression, etc. As we continue practicing, we can actually become fully and thoroughly bored. This kind of spacious boredom allows clarity, lightness, and gentleness to emerge.

Image: Realizing that pain-killers are temporary solutions at best and often produce awful side effects, we decide we would better look into the nature of this flue. Pain-killers make us numb to how the flu actually feels. So we decide to go cold-turkey and examine our state of illness thoroughly.

3. **Making friends with ourselves.** In the spaciousness of sitting practice, we settle down with our situation, see all the aspects of ourselves. We feel stuck with ourselves and at home with ourselves at the same time. The humor and gentleness towards ourselves that develop from sitting allow us to relate with ourselves, our emotions, in an open and friendly way. We can make friends with our emotions and the objects of emotions, in a full way, without conditions. This does not mean everything becomes nice and pleasant, that our enemies become our lovers. It means that every situation we encounter is workable; there are no dead ends.

When we are willing to relate to whatever comes up in our experience without defensiveness, we discover our own vulnerability. We can see that the world is touching us all the time. The emotions cease to be felt as barriers and instead become reminders that we are already involved with others.

4. **Inquisitiveness and appreciation.** Acknowledging our vulnerability, realizing that the world is getting to us, touching us constantly, we become inquisitive about what is touching us. The emotions wake us up to the subtleties, the details, of our everyday life situations. When we have the discipline to relate with everything that comes up in a straightforward way, staying with what is happening *now*, being fully involved in our world and our emotions, then a sense of constant meditation develops. There is accommodation for all the variety and vividness of our emotions and the situations we encounter. There is a sense of totality, complete involvement in the present moment, without a feeling of separation between "me" and "My emotions," between the practitioner and the practice.

From constant meditation comes an attitude of sharpness, humor, and inquisitiveness. Emotions can be experienced as alive, fluid, spontaneous. Without defensiveness and preconceptions, we can be fully involved with the objects of our emotions in an open, vulnerable, communicative way. When we relate with others with softness and directness (immediacy), our natural sympathy and warmth is aroused.

Image of basic health: A feeling of basic healthiness that included ups and downs, colds and splinters. Feeling that mind, body, and environment are in tune. Not afraid of catching a flu from someone, because we know how to work with it, can accommodate it without losing our sense of basic healthiness. So when a friend has the flu, we feel sympathy, moved to go and help him get better.

Image of natural warmth: Even wild beasts or mad dictators have a soft spot. They have warmth for something: their young, a special place or person, whatever.

INSPIRATION AND WIDER VISION

We have discussed the journey, the process of development, from a frustrating and painful relationship with our emotions to working with emotions in an artful, skillful way, one in

which emotions actually open us up to our world. But what is the point in presenting the whole thing? If we feel emotions frustrating and confusing, isn't talking about making friends with ourselves and appreciating emotions and openness and all of that just pie in the sky?

The point is that we have little *glimpses* of all these things in our experience already. There is intelligence there amid our confusion. That is why we can make some connection with the sense of the whole journey, why the process of working with emotions that has been presented makes some sense. If there was not that intelligence there constantly, the whole thing would sound like a completely foreign language. So because we have some glimpse, some taste of all these things, the presentation of the teachings provides us with inspiration, a sense of forward vision.

PRACTICALITY: TREADING THE PATH

1. **Gradual path.** Having a vision of the journey and inspiration to work with emotions is not enough. We have to actually make the journey, walk the path. We have to do it ourselves; no one can carry us. The teachings represent the experience of people who have done that, and they point the way. But we have to walk the path on our own two feet. There we experience the path as a gradual journey. It is a step-by-step process, and we are full involved in our experience and practice each step of the way.

Image: A good mountain climber maps out his path to the summit, and prepares properly in base camp. But when he is climbing, he pays attention to the rock he is standing on and the ledge he is grasping right *now*, not to how far he has come or how far he has to go.

2. **Sitting practice and post-meditation.** Putting inspiration and forward vision into practice requires doing the sitting practice of meditation, and mindfulness and awareness in post-meditation. That is, sitting practice provides spaciousness to relate fully with our emotions, a gap in our habitual struggling. Then we can flash back to that openness in our everyday life situations. So there can be a general background of mindfulness and awareness happening constantly, twenty-four hours a day.
3. **Discipline of practice on the path.** Practice is the way we tread the path. As we do so, the nature of our discipline develops as well. That is, the particular way that practice mixes with our experience progresses along the path. At the beginning, we work on ourselves. First we have to make a clear relationship with ourselves, our own relationship to our emotions.

Only on that basis can we begin to make a straightforward relationship to the objects of our emotions, to begin to appreciate our world. Otherwise, we only spread our confusion to others. So our discipline progresses from working on ourselves, to developing awareness and appreciation of our world, to stepping outside ourselves and getting involved in our world.

Then our discipline, our practice, is directed toward working with others, extending ourselves to others constantly. We can do this because we have already established fundamentally healthy, trusting relationship with ourselves. The emotions could become the expression of self-existing connection, communication and warmth to others.

Image: Developing discipline along the path is like building a building properly. You begin with a good solid foundation, the sturdy beams and walls, and finally a beautiful roof. If you build walls without a good foundation, or a roof without strong walls, the whole thing will eventually collapse.

JOINING VISION AND PRACTICALITY

1. **Connecting with fundamental healthiness, awareness, and intelligence.** When we study ourselves and our lives and do sitting practice, we can join vision and practicality. Wherever we are on our personal journey, we can have a real connection with our fundamental healthiness and basic intelligence, no matter what it is we are relating to.

As a result we can develop tremendous interest and discipline in relating fully with all the details of any situation. Being interested and precise in our attention to detail automatically brings a wider view. We begin to see how the various aspects of a situation relate to each other. We see the negative and positive aspects impartially. We see patterns and relationships clearly. Then we discover that we actually have the resources, the real common sense, to relate to whatever comes up in a simple, straightforward way. This brings a feeling of unconditional workability that manifests as confidence.

2. **Confidence brings further resourcefulness.** We are not talking about confidence as conceit or arrogance or pride. That version of confidence actually comes from fear, feeling that things need to be conquered, feeling that one has to puff oneself up, be more than one actually is. Real confidence means that we feel no conflict with anything, so we can relate straightforwardly and spontaneously to any situation we encounter.

When we feel connected with our basic health and confidence, our natural resources——common sense, intelligence, intuition, experience of all kinds——can begin to function quite accurately. Often in a situation, we know just what to do or what to say. There is not problem if we are willing to be spontaneous and straightforward. Both hesitation and impulsiveness can be seen as sidetracks. If we speak and act genuinely and gently and with some liveliness, then although we might make mistakes, those mistakes are part of our learning process. Embarrassment, awkwardness and even confusion need

not be regarded as obstacles. Rather they are stepping stones. If we let ourselves feel what is going on, there will be continual insights (along with neurotic attacks).

Example: You feel very embarrassed and are about to withdraw from some encounter, and instead you discover more warmth and gentleness in yourself than you have thought possible. As a result you can connect with someone you normally are very distant with.

CONTAGIOUS HEALTHINESS

People notice when someone relates with things in that way. Some kind of connection is made to their own basic healthiness. They might feel a bit perkier themselves, or some might get irritated because you undermined their complaints. In any case, it actually happens, that just being yourself with a genuine, gentle, healthy sense of confidence, you help to wake other up to their basic healthiness. You do not have to push anything at all. In the same way that someone might catch your cold without you trying to give it to them, your own healthiness is contagious.

BRINGING TOGETHER SITTING PRACTICE AND DAILY LIFE

It is extremely important to realize that none of this can happen without sitting practice. That is the basic ground of the whole journey, the space in which the journey takes place. Sitting practice is the way that we can connect with our own fundamental healthiness, that we can begin to make a real relationship with our emotions. Without practice, the teachings, the possibilities of working with emotions in an awake way is nothing more than a fairy tale.

With practice, when we encounter emotions there is some space, some openness in which we remember what we have learned and we can join it with the situation on the spot.

So the real discipline is to bring sitting practice and the situations of your daily life together. We can do that. We can work with emotions continuously, on the spot, at any moment. There is always something to work with. But we can only do so if we also continually relate to sitting practice and post-meditation discipline.