# Chapter 3 Mind and Emotions

Our feelings of pleasure or pain provoke different emotions and our emotions motivate us to act. Some of our emotions are afflictive and unrealistic; others are more realistic and beneficial. As a result, some of our actions bring more pain, while others bring happiness. Learning to differentiate destructive from constructive emotions so we can subdue the former and nourish the latter is a worthy endeavour on a personal as well as societal level.

By going through the gradual process of overcoming destructive emotions such as greed and anger, buddhas have built up and expanded constructive emotions such as love and compassion. Due to this inner transformation, their work in the world is wiser and more effective.

## Buddhism, Science and Emotions

From the Buddhist perspective, emotions are mental states and subjective experiences. They may be accompanied by changes in the body's physiology, but the brain's activities are not the emotion itself—anger and affection are internal mental experiences. Feelings, emotions, thoughts, views, attitudes and so forth occur in the mind—they are mental states experienced by living beings.

The vast majority of our physical and verbal actions are prompted by intentions in our minds and these intentions are influenced by our feelings, emotions and views. The fact that our intentions and emotions are the forces behind what we say and do means that by changing them, we can transform our actions and our lives. We have human intelligence and the seeds of love, compassion, wisdom and other magnificent qualities inside us. These can be consciously developed and many great sages in a variety of cultures and spiritual traditions have done this.

With meditation practice, there were changes in the brain circuits of people who cultivated four selected qualities: resilience, positive outlook, attention and generosity. Each of these has corresponding Buddhist practices to develop them. **Resilience** is the speed with which we recover from adversity; a **positive outlook** is seeing the basic goodness in others and letting that influence all that we do; **attention** is the ability to focus on an object and enables us to complete what we begin; and **generosity** is an attitude of giving and sharing.

Conclusion, well-being can be learned.

## Happiness and Unhappiness, Virtue and Non-virtue

In Buddhism, what differentiates positive and negative emotions is not our immediate feeling of happiness or discomfort but the happiness or suffering that is the long-term result of those emotions. That is because the long-term effects of our actions are more important than their short-term effects, which are fleeting in comparison. If, in the **long term**, an emotion produces unpleasant experiences, it is considered negative; if it brings happiness in the long term, it is positive.

Virtuous (positive, constructive, wholesome) emotions lead to long term happiness. Non-virtuous (negative, destructive, unwholesome) emotions, to suffering.

The Buddha presented four scenarios in which present happiness/pain and virtue/non-virtue are at play:

> Here, when someone feels a certain kind of pleasant feeling, non-virtuous states increase in him and virtuous states diminish; but when someone feels another kind of pleasant feeling, non-virtuous states diminish in him and virtuous states increase.

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1. Feeling happy when we successfully deceive others about a vile action we have committed. Even though it may be accompanied by a pleasant feeling, our action is not virtuous, since it is the cause of future suffering.
2. Taking delight in making a generous offering to a charity that helps refugees or the poor and hungry. This kind of happiness is win-win: we feel joyful now and our action creates the cause for future happiness for self and others.
3. Pain of someone who angrily rejects being sentenced to prison after being convicted of embezzlement. Not taking responsibility for his non-virtuous action, he angrily blames others, creating more non-virtue. If he accepted responsibility for his action and regretted it, his virtue would increase and his pain would lead him to change his ways.
4. Taking a lower-paying job to avoid having to lie to clients or customers. In this case, creating virtue that will bring happiness in the future and peace of mind right now also brings some unhappiness of a loss in income. But it is undoubtedly worthwhile in the long term.

Value our ethical integrity more than the fleeting happiness of getting what we want at the moment.

Our self-esteem and feelings of self-worth depend more on our ethical integrity than on sensual pleasure, it is worthwhile to take the time to remind ourselves of these values before an impulse arises, so that when the time comes we will make wise decisions.

REFLECTION

1. When you act against your ethical values, how do you feel at the moment of doing the action? How do you feel later, when reflecting on your action?
2. When you give up an immediate pleasure due to your sense of personal integrity or for the sake of long-term happiness, how do you feel at the time? How do you feel later, when reflecting on your action?
3. How integral is ethical conduct to your happiness? Based on what you conclude here, make some determinations about how you want to live.

## Emotions and Kleśas

Tibetan does not have a word for ‘emotion’ or ‘emotions’. However, Tibetan does contain words for the various emotions spoken of in Western languages.

The Sanskrit word **kleśa** is a commonly used word in Buddhist texts that refers to mental factors that afflict the mind and do not allow it to abide peacefully. These disturbing emotions and views enslave the mind, confining it to a narrow perspective and motivate actions that hinder the happiness of both ourselves and others.

Kleśa are obscurations (fog or cloud) on the path to liberation and Buddhist texts speak of their disadvantages and the antidotes to them.[22]

## Constructive and Destructive Emotions

When speaking of positive and negative emotions, Buddhists have multiple meanings of the words for some emotions. For example, attachment, fear, anger and disillusionment have multiple meanings depending on the circumstance. To avoid confusion, it is important to distinguish the different forms of these emotions.

### Attachment

At least two types of attachment:

1. Feeling of closeness or connection between people. Eg baby for mother. This feeling of closeness or attachment is present in families and enables them to function together as a unit for the benefit of each member. Healthy attachment in a harmonious family has a realistic understanding of the other family members' capabilities and fosters mutual respect. Similarly, attachment unifies the citizens of a country, facilitating their cooperation for the benefit of their society. This form of attachment produces good results.

   Bodhisattvas are said to be "attached" to sentient beings because they feel a tremendous sense of closeness and responsibility for the welfare of each and every sentient being that spurs them to practice. Their love for sentient beings invigorates them to do whatever they can to alleviate suffering and bring happiness. They do this with greater energy and joy than we do to benefit ourselves.
2. More commonly in Buddhism, however, attachment is one of the three poisons[23] and one of the six root afflictions. This form of attachment is a mental factor that, clings onto its desired object. With attachment, we hunger after, crave, cling to and become obsessed with an object, person, idea, place, etc. When we succeed in procuring the object of our attachment, we are happy (for a short time); but when that desire is frustrated, we become angry, resentful

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[22] There is no English equivalent to the word **kleśa** that encompasses mental factors as diverse as emotions, attitudes, philosophical views and inherent, unquestioned assumptions about ourselves and the world. For the sake of simplicity in this series, we translate kleśa as "afflictions" (see page 2 footnote 1) and sometimes expand it to "disturbing emotions and wrong views." Some afflictions, such as that of a 'personal identity', are called views in English, while others—for example, anger and jealousy—are called emotions. Mental states such as not believing that awakening is possible are called views.

Translation can be difficult when the cultural underpinnings are so different. There may not always be an exact correspondence in meaning between the Sanskrit or Tibetan word and the English term used to translate it. When reading Buddhist works in English, we must take care not to impute the ordinary meaning of a word onto a term that has a specific meaning in the Buddhist context.

[23] In Buddhism, the Three Poisons (also known as the Three Unwholesome Roots or the Three Kleśas) are fundamental afflictions or defilements that are considered the root causes of suffering and cyclic existence (samsara).

1. **Ignorance**: This is the fundamental misunderstanding or lack of knowledge about the nature of reality. It represents a distorted perception of the nature of the self and the external world, specifically failing to perceive the impermanent, unsatisfactory and non-self characteristics of existence. Ignorance is considered the primary poison, from which the other two arise.
2. **Attachment**: This poison refers to the desire or craving for pleasure, objects, ideas or experiences. It includes attachment not just to physical objects but also to concepts, beliefs and sensations that are pleasing. Attachment is based on the mistaken belief that certain things or experiences can provide lasting happiness or satisfaction.
3. **Aversion**: This represents hatred, anger or ill will towards what is perceived as unpleasant or undesirable. Aversion includes all forms of rejection, hostility and animosity toward people, situations or objects that cause discomfort or displeasure.

The three poisons are central to the cyclic existence of birth, death and rebirth and are the driving force behind karma (actions) that lead to continued suffering. The path to liberation involves recognising, understanding and ultimately uprooting these Three Poisons. Through practices such as meditation, moral discipline and the cultivation of wisdom, compassion and loving-kindness, individuals can transform the poisons into the path toward enlightenment, ultimately achieving freedom from suffering and the cycle of rebirth. (See footnote 24 on page 18.)

and jealous. These emotions, in turn, motivate destructive actions to procure or protect the cherished object. We often see that the greed of a CEO for money or the craving of a sports or movie star for fame leads to harmful actions and suffering for himself and others.

Society in general considers moderate attachment a positive emotion. There is a feeling of happiness or excitement at meeting someone wonderful, receiving a desired possession or being praised by people we value.

However, from a Buddhist viewpoint, such attachment is exaggerated[24]. Although it may be delightful at the beginning of a new relationship, because attachment leads to unrealistic expectations, it will hinder the relationship from being harmonious and mutually beneficial in the long term. Difficulties and disappointments naturally follow when we discover that the object of our attachment doesn't possess all the wonderful qualities we thought it did.

This type of attachment is sneaky. Eg, when family members' affection moves to neediness and possessiveness and generates demands based on unrealistic expectations, it turns into unhealthy attachment. If someone's appreciation for his country makes him suspicious of foreigners on the basis of nationality or ethnicity alone, attachment has set in. This emotion can cause prejudice and discrimination and the person may deny others their human rights.

Even attachment to the Buddha might not be healthy—if there is any sense of grasping, pride, etc. If someone then clings to nirvāṇa and desperately wants to attain it as if it were an external object, grasping is present in the mind.

REFLECTION

1. What are some of the common meanings of the English word attachment.
2. What are the disadvantages of the afflictive type of attachment?
3. Is it easy to tell when attachment in the sense of affection and respect slips into exaggeration and expectations?

## Fear

1. In common speech, fear is associated with panic, anxiety or distress; it is considered a negative emotion because it feels so unpleasant and is often based on unrealistic thinking. In Buddhism, this kind of fear is afflictive because it is based on exaggeration, self-grasping, self-centredness and self-preoccupation and leads a person to engage in unwise decisions or actions.
2. Another kind of fear has an element of wisdom; it is an awareness of possible danger that causes us to exercise caution. While this fear may sometimes

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[24] The concept of "**exaggeration**" plays a significant role in the way practitioners are encouraged to understand their perceptions and the nature of reality. Exaggeration relates to the mental processes that distort our perceptions of reality, leading to attachment, aversion and ultimately suffering.

Buddhist teachings, especially those concerning the nature of the mind and phenomena, highlight how the mind can exaggerate or fabricate layers of interpretation over the raw experience of reality. This is particularly relevant in the discussion of the Three Poisons (ignorance, attachment and aversion) and the concept of "mental fabrications", which are volitional formations or conditioned actions driven by ignorance. (See footnote 23 on page 17.)

For instance, the mind might exaggerate the attractiveness or repulsiveness of an object, leading to attachment or aversion. This is often described in the context of "ignorance" or "delusion", where one does not see things as they truly are—impermanent, unsatisfactory and not-self. Instead, one's perception is clouded by exaggerated beliefs about the stability, happiness or inherent essence of things.

In teachings on mindfulness and wisdom, practitioners are guided to see through these exaggerations and recognise the true nature of phenomena, thereby reducing suffering. This involves a direct and unembellished perception of reality, without the distortions of personal biases, fears or desires.

The concept of "exaggeration" is crucial to understanding how delusion arises and is overcome through insight and practice. Recognising and moving beyond exaggeration is part of developing clear seeing and wisdom.

feel unpleasant, it is useful and is free from the emotional torment of ordinary fear. Wisdom-fear. Eg, care when driving; fear of earthquakes gives careful planning and house building. The difference between afflictive fear and wisdom-fear is the presence or absence of overemphasis. When we are attuned to facts of the situation, fear is not distorted, but when we overemphasise some aspect of the situation, fear is unrealistic and leads to suffering.

Certain meditations in the stages of the path are designed to arouse wisdom-fear in us. When we meditate on the disadvantages of cyclic existence, wisdom-fear motivates us to practice the path to liberate ourselves from saṃsāric suffering. Meditation on death is meant to provoke a wise awareness of our mortality that leads us to set good priorities in life, abandon harmful actions and live ethically and kindly—not an emotional, panicky fear of death, which is of no benefit at all.

Monks sometimes meditate in fearful places—forests with ferocious animals, encountering a tiger, cemeteries—motivated by the suffering that such fear produces, they would make a strong effort to generate samādhi or wisdom realising emptiness to overcome it. Or generate deep bodhicitta and wisdom.

Taking refuge in the Three Jewels is also an antidote.

## Anger

Anger is a destructive emotion. Under its influence, we speak in ways that break the trust in relationships with people we care deeply about. Overwhelmed by anger, we act in ways that are dangerous and destructive to our own and others' well-being. We might think our anger is justified. When we later calm down, we can see that our mind was exaggerating the negative qualities of a person or situation or even projecting negative qualities that aren't there.

Abusive behaviour is never justified. Moral outrage at injustice in the world is another form of anger that some people say is beneficial because it leads to constructive change in society. But we need to examine if exaggeration is present.

Anger is not the only emotion that can motivate us to tackle social injustice. Compassion can be a strong motivating factor as well. Because a compassionate mind is concerned with the well-being of all parties in a conflict, there is a greater chance of reaching an outcome that benefits everyone. We are able to think more clearly when we are free from anger.

Ārya bodhisattvas (liberated from cyclic existence) have no anger whatsoever. If they see one person harming another, they have compassion for both people and intercede to avert the harm. Compassion does not mean being passive and ineffective—it impels us to act assertively when appropriate, without anger or hatred.

It is difficult to experience the emotions associated with anger—hatred, resentment, vengeance, etc—without some degree of hostility toward others. When we closely examine such emotions, we find that they are based on self-centredness.

From a Buddhist perspective, emotions falling under the umbrella of anger are distorted and harmful mental states to be abandoned.

Sūtrayāna (the path based on the sūtras) sees all instances of anger as based on distortion and hence damaging. Tantrayāna (the path based on the tantras) speaks of using anger in the path.

**Antidote for anger is practice restraint and patience**.

## Disillusionment

We usually speak of disillusionment as a negative emotion that brings unhappiness. We feel disillusioned because a person does not 'meet our expectations'; we feel uncomfortable, which may lead to despondency, depression or cynicism. This happens because we previously constructed an unrealistic expectation of the other person, clung to it as true and we now see the falsehood of it.

Not all disillusionment is bad. When we contemplate the defects of cyclic existence, the shortcomings of saṃsāric rebirth and the deceptive nature of temporary pleasures, we feel disillusioned with chasing after a type of happiness that we can never secure. From a Buddhist viewpoint, this disillusionment is positive because it will lead us to aspire for liberation and create the causes to attain it.

Being disillusioned with cyclic existence, practitioners are happy to relinquish their attachment to it. Although disillusionment makes our mind sober, we need not be despondent or demoralised—because there is a remedy to the misery of saṃsāra. Such disillusionment makes the mind peaceful and is helpful for cultivating deep states of concentration because it frees our minds from needless worry about the concerns of only this life.

## Emotions and Survival

On a purely biological level, emotions such as attachment, anger and fear may assist animals and human beings to stay alive and from that perspective, they may be considered beneficial.

Why, then, does the Buddha call emotions such as attachment, anger, jealousy, arrogance and fear "afflictions"? Why does he say they cause suffering and recommend counteracting them? The difficulty with these emotions is that they are fuelled by exaggeration and grasping and thus do not perform their functions in a reasonable way. They may exaggerate[25] the potential danger of the situation, the primacy of one's own self-interest or the potential benefit to be gained.

When afflictions are present, our minds are clouded and we don't think clearly. Instead of responding to a situation intelligently, we react impulsively, following an urge without sufficiently contemplating the likely effects of doing so. The results are often disastrous. In some conflicts, anger exposes us to far greater danger by making us act irrationally, inciting the other party to counter more violently.

Some psychologists say that disturbing emotions are 90% exaggeration and projection[26]. While there may be a biological component, exaggeration and projection come from the mind and we are not generally aware when they step in.

People become addicted to adrenaline from anger or fear.

There is a world of difference between constructive and destructive emotions. In ordinary beings, afflictive emotions arise easily; they are impulsive and reactive.

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[25] **Exaggerate** is explained in footnote 24 on page 18

[26] "**Projection**" refers to a psychological defence mechanism where individuals attribute their own unwanted feelings, thoughts, or motivations to someone else instead of admitting to or dealing with them themselves. Essentially, projection involves taking aspects of oneself that one finds unacceptable or uncomfortable and ascribing them to others. This mechanism can occur on both a conscious and unconscious level.

For example, an angry person might accuse others of being quick to anger, or someone who is insecure about their competencies might frequently criticise the abilities of others. Projection serves as a way to externalise one's own internal conflicts or traits, thereby avoiding direct acknowledgment or confrontation with those aspects of oneself.

People may perceive others as have traits or intentions that are actually their own. Coupled with **exaggeration**, where the intensity or significance of an emotion or situation is overstated, projection contributes to a skewed perception of reality that can exacerbate emotional disturbances.

Genuinely constructive emotions like compassion and generosity come through investigation and effort. While destructive emotions distort our view of a situation, constructive emotions lead to accurate assessment. Destructive emotions cause us to regret our actions, while constructive emotions do not.

By examining the disadvantages and unrealistic view of the afflictions, we come to a point to make a determination to stop letting them run our lives. Seeing the benefits of realistic, beneficial emotions, we consciously cultivate them.

In his teachings, the Buddha described ways to think and meditate to make positive emotions arise. By familiarising ourselves with these and with the antidotes to the afflictions again and again, our habitual emotions will change and instead on anger we radiate compassion.

Kindness and compassion do not develop instinctively, but only through reasoning and training. When we truly care about others' welfare, we won't engage in harmful actions. An even more advanced motivation is restraining ourselves from harming others because it only causes them pain and also interferes with our ability to attain full awakening and be of the greatest benefit to sentient beings. Here we see the effect of having bodhicitta—the altruistic intention striving for full awakening in order to benefit sentient beings. Refraining from non-virtue with this precious motivation is extremely virtuous and beneficial.

## Working with Afflictions

Although disturbing emotions arise naturally in us, they can be eliminated. They are not an intrinsic part of the mind; they haven't penetrated its clear and cognisant nature. Afflictions are rooted in ignorance and other distorted conceptions and as such they are fragile and can't stand up to the powerful states of mind that understand reality. The stronger our wisdom grows, the weaker the afflictions become, until eventually they are completely eradicated.

In contrast, constructive states of mind can be developed limitlessly. The fundamental nature of the mind is pure and stable. Our inherent, subtle mind of clear light, the basis of cultivating positive states of mind, is stable; it continues eternally without interruption. Although afflictions have powerful antidotes that can destroy them, no counteracting forces exist that can eliminate constructive emotions and attitudes forever; because they are based on accurate perception.

Learning how destructive emotions arise and observing this process with mindfulness enables us to see that they are not givens. We can learn to detect harmful emotions while they are still small and swiftly apply their antidotes.

Deliberately cultivating accurate perspectives increases the strength of constructive emotions. Due to the force of habituation, these new perspectives gradually become natural, along with the beneficial emotions. Eg, changes in breathing, heart rate and mood. Making a habit to check our body regularly is very helpful.

The more aware we become of our thoughts and emotions, the quicker we are able to evaluate them and decide whether to cultivate or counteract them. Engaging in regular meditation helps us consciously practice cultivating constructive emotions and counteracting destructive ones. Through such training, we can establish new emotional habits and with time, they occur naturally in our daily life.

Intelligence can be a benefit or burden—when it gets something wrong it sticks with it; erroneously deciding something exits (absolutism) or doesn't (nihilism).

We need to make our mind receptive so that the seeds of constructive emotions and attitudes can grow in it. We do this by engaging in spiritual practices that di-

minish and purify the seeds of harmful deeds in our mindstream. In addition, practices that accumulate merit[27]—seeds of constructive karma—increase the force of our wholesome tendencies. These practices include being generous, living ethically and cultivating lovingkindness.

To be free of our anger, we must contemplate the kindness of others and train our mind in forgiveness, patience and love by practicing meditations that evoke these virtuous emotions. The real work is to contemplate the benefits of compassion and practice meditations to generate it. In our daily lives, we must repeatedly remember compassion when we interact with others so that it becomes habitual.

Compassion broadens the scope of our mind and makes it more accepting and inclusive of others. Destructive emotions such as attachment and anger usually focus on one person or one class of people, whereas compassion can be extended to all living beings. Because everyone wants to be free from suffering and seeks happiness, the object of our compassion needn't be someone we have met.

When our mind is unhappy, compassion and love uplift us. The best offering to make to all the buddhas is to stop harming others physically, verbally or mentally.

Unlike afflictive emotions, virtuous mental states do not have self-grasping ignorance as a support. So cultivating the wisdom that overcomes ignorance won't harm our virtuous emotions; it eliminates obstacles to generating them.

If we really care about ourselves, we'll generate an altruistic intention because it gives us encouragement, enthusiasm, resilience and a good heart. A wisely selfish person is altruistic!

Some afflictions are destructive emotions counteracted by generating opposing emotions. Eg to counteract anger and hatred, we meditate on love and patience.

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[27] **Accumulating merit** is considered highly important in Tibetan Buddhism as it is integral to the path towards enlightenment. Merit refers to the positive energy or potential generated through virtuous actions, thoughts, and deeds. In Tibetan Buddhism, the accumulation of merit is seen as essential for spiritual progress for the following reasons. Accumulating merit purifies and prepares the mind for deeper insight, supports the development of bodhicitta, ensures progress towards enlightenment, and aids in the welfare of all sentient beings.

**1. Facilitates Spiritual Growth and Enlightenment**

Merit is believed to create the necessary conditions for spiritual growth and the attainment of enlightenment. It purifies the mind, reduces negative karma, and helps overcome obstacles to spiritual practice. By accumulating merit, practitioners cultivate the positive conditions needed for the development of wisdom, compassion, and other qualities essential for enlightenment.

**2. Supports the Practice of Bodhicitta**

Bodhicitta is the altruistic intention to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings. Accumulating merit is seen as crucial for developing and sustaining bodhicitta. Meritorious actions are often undertaken with the explicit motivation to benefit others, thus directly supporting the practice of bodhicitta.

**3. Balances Wisdom and Merit**

In Tibetan Buddhism, the path to enlightenment involves the union of wisdom (understanding the nature of reality) and method (compassionate action and the accumulation of merit). These are often compared to the two wings of a bird, both of which are needed to reach enlightenment. Accumulating merit addresses the aspect of method, complementing the development of wisdom.

**4. Ensures Favourable Rebirths**

Although the ultimate goal in Tibetan Buddhism is enlightenment, accumulating merit is seen as crucial for ensuring favourable rebirths along the way. Virtuous actions create positive karma, which can lead to rebirth in circumstances conducive to continued Dharma practice, such as being born in a time and place where the teachings are available and being equipped with the faculties necessary for practice.

**5. Contributes to the Welfare of All Beings**

Accumulating merit is not solely for one's own benefit; it is also directed towards the welfare of all beings. Meritorious actions such as generosity, ethical conduct, and meditation practices like loving-kindness and compassion directly contribute to the happiness and liberation of others.

**Practices for Accumulating Merit**

In Tibetan Buddhism, common practices for accumulating merit include making offerings, engaging in prostrations, reciting mantras, practicing meditation, performing acts of generosity, and participating in or sponsoring Dharma activities and teachings.

Other afflictions are distorted attitudes and wrong views that are counteracted by seeing that the object they perceive is false. Eg, the ignorance that grasps true existence is counteracted by the wisdom realising the emptiness of true existence.

Use a skilful means to counteract harmful emotions. Eg, in cultivating lovingkindness as an antidote to anger, we may imagine others being happy and when cultivating compassion, we may reflect on their suffering.

We learn to become doctors to our own mind, diagnosing our mental ailments, selecting the correct Dharma medicine and then skilfully applying that medicine.

Working with afflictive emotions requires a two-pronged approach. Managing unwholesome emotions and stopping actions motivated by them are important components, but don't resolve all problems. We need to also cultivate positive emotions. Although initially we may not be able to call upon these positive emotions in the heat of the moment, gradually and diligently cultivating them in our meditation practice affects our temperament and influences our emotional patterns. The more familiar we are with these beneficial emotions, the less susceptible we are to harmful emotions. Developing constructive emotions is similar to bolstering our immune system. Cultivating love and patience strengthens our emotional immunity to anger. Developing compassion prevents cruelty, joy opposes jealousy and equanimity averts bias due to attachment, anger and apathy.

To see the advantages of certain practices, we can ask ourselves, "What is disrupting my inner contentment?" We then see negative emotions as the culprits and want to oppose them. To do that, we will seek methods to counteract those disturbing emotions and diligently practice these methods.

REFLECTION

1. How can you differentiate a destructive emotion from a constructive one?
2. What are the benefits of subduing disturbing emotions and cultivating wholesome ones?
3. Review the methods to subdue each disturbing emotion and cultivate each wholesome one.

## Cultivating Love and Compassion

To generate beneficial emotions such as lovingkindness and compassion for all sentient beings, we must correctly understanding of those emotions. The love and compassion we cultivate in our spiritual practice is not the same as ordinary love and compassion we feel for our dear ones, which is usually grounded in self-referential considerations. It is tainted with attachment because it is partial toward those who please us and biased against those who displease us. As we have seen, once we are attached to someone, the stage is set to later be angry at them when they fail to meet our expectations, fulfil our needs or do what we want.

In Dharma practice, the love and compassion we seek to cultivate is based on having an equal-hearted sense of concern for all beings simply because they exist and they want happiness and not suffering, just as we do.

Everything becomes easier with familiarity and positive emotions are no exception. When we have confidence that it is possible to develop positive emotions, we make the effort to do so. Our meditations to cultivate equanimity and to see others as kind leads to our actual cultivation of love and compassion. Meditation on equanimity (calmness and composure—especially in difficult situations) enables us to go beyond the limitations of our judgmental attitude that classifies people as friends, enemies and strangers and leads to the emotions of attachment, animosity and apathy toward them. By seeing that everyone is just like us in wanting happi-

ness and not suffering, equanimity leads to our cultivating love and compassion for all beings, no matter what they believe or how they treat us.

By remembering people's kindness to us, ie the kindness of all those who do various jobs in society that enable us to have what we need, we cultivate the sense that others are loveable. We also reflect on the kindness of those whose disruptive actions challenge us to develop forgiveness, patience and fortitude.

We next turn our attention to the expansive love we seek to develop in our spiritual practice. This love is the simple wish for others to have happiness and its causes. Visualising a variety of people, extend this wish to them and imagine them having happiness and its causes. Then, cultivate compassion wishing them to be free of suffering and its causes. Do this with a few individuals to begin with and then generalise it to groups of people and finally to all living beings.

Initially the feelings of impartial love or compassion that arise in the depth of our hearts will last only a short while. At first, they are still contrived because we have to make effort to experience them. However, repetition makes habit, and eventually, seeing even a small insect, or people who have been 'difficult' or done 'horrible things', feelings of love and compassion arise spontaneously and effortlessly.

Scientists and Buddhists agree that habituation is necessary for long-lasting change in our thoughts, emotions and behaviours to occur. When we practice something repeatedly, it becomes part of our temperament. Buddhists describe this as a process of habituating ourselves with new emotional responses.

In developing love & compassion for all beings, we must not neglect ourselves.

REFLECTION

1. Follow the steps for cultivating love and compassion explained above. Make your contemplation personal.
2. Enjoy the expansive feeling in your heart as you release anger and judgment and allow unbiased affection to arise.

## A Good State of Mind

The calmer our mind, the easier it will be to deal with problems. Rather than wait for a crisis and then search for a way to handle it, we should practice open-mindedness and kindness on a daily basis. Then when problems or even traumatic events occur, their impact will be less severe and we'll be able to return to a balanced state of mind more quickly. On the other hand, if we indulge our bad moods, we'll feel overwhelmed when even small, unpleasant events occur.

Tibetans have a motto, "Hope for the best and prepare for the worst." The main preparation is to let go of the self-centred attitude that magnifies our own problems and to cultivate compassion for ourselves and others. When difficulties arise, looking at them from a broad perspective is useful. Recollecting that everyone faces difficulties puts mine in perspective.

If we see difficult circumstances as a challenge to rise to our potential and as an opportunity to call forth our compassion, we'll be more effective in managing a stressful situation and contributing something useful to it. In this way, our life will be worthwhile and our mind relaxed and open.

## Working with Fear, Developing Courage

Above we briefly considered two types of fear, one based on wisdom and another that succumbs to panic. The first type stems from reason and is healthy.

Wisdom-based fear is important in daily life and on the path. Examples, correctly analyse the cause of cyclic existence; our handling and using fire.

Panicked fear is due to our imagination; it is mentally created. Getting accurate information and changing our view of the situation can counteract it. Eg, when we feel insecure, fearful and lonely, we can meditate on the kindness we've received from others so a sense of connection and gratitude arises in our hearts—we know we have support. If we are skeptical and suspicious of someone, it is helpful to consider him as another human being, just like us. Then, our attitude will be more receptive and we can assess the situation with greater clarity and wisdom.

Some people look at the political, economic, social and environmental situation of the world and develop a wisdom-fear that inspires them to work to prevent harm to the planet and its living beings.

Courage comes from the way we regard situations. A single practice or method alone cannot develop courage; it requires contemplation of several topics over a period of time. These topics include the preciousness of our human life; the potential of ourselves and all others to become fully awakened buddhas; the compassionate, awakening activities of the buddhas and bodhisattvas; the life stories of great masters; the kindness we have received from all sentient beings; and love, compassion and taking others' suffering and giving them our happiness. These uplift and balance the mind so we can view situations from a broad perspective.

In addition to courage, we need confidence. To develop this, I keep in mind some basic beliefs: Human nature is gentle and compassionate. Each and every one of us does not want suffering and we have a right to overcome it. All beings have the potential to become wise, altruistic buddhas. Contemplating these gives me inner strength and determination. A compassionate motivation and a clear, beneficial goal give me self-confidence and destroy doubts. Ie, confidence arises from engaging in projects with a wise and kind motivation, not from success.

Human beings have remarkable intelligence, which if applied correctly, can solve problems and conflicts. Fatalistic attitudes are useless. We have the capacity to prevent hardships and improve what is good; we must do our best to use our abilities in constructive ways.

## Hope, Desire and Acceptance

Just as fear has two aspects (one to abandon and one to cultivate) so do hope, desire and acceptance. For example, when we **hope** for good things for ourselves—a new house, a good job, a wonderful family, money and material possessions—we become distracted from our spiritual concerns and entrenched in attachment. Dharma texts that speak of abandoning all hopes are referring to hopes for worldly gain that inevitably let us down.

The second kind of hope. We must hope for a better future so that we will work to create the causes for it. Here the future we hope for is not a self-centred one based on worldly desires but one that takes others into consideration and wants happiness for many. This type of hope will motivate us to practice the Dharma and to engage in projects that directly benefit others.

No matter what situation we are in, we should not lose hope. Losing hope and sinking into a defeatist attitude are real causes of failure. We should be calm and wisely investigate various alternatives rather than giving up in despair, which can make the problem worse.

**Negative desire** is related to attachment and keeps us bound in cyclic existence. Desire can also refer to a positive aspiration, such as the desire to meditate on equanimity or the desire to become a buddha. Such desires are not based on self-grasping or self-preoccupation. They have positive goals and increase our joyous effort to attain what is worthwhile.

**Acceptance**, too, has two sides. The disempowering kind of acceptance is acquiescence—accepting something unpleasant with a downcast heart. Such acceptance leads to despondency and destroys our enthusiasm for life and Dharma practice. The good kind of acceptance acknowledges and accepts our own and others' faults and failures and wants to improve in the future.

There is no use fighting the reality of the present moment, but we know we can change and improve in the future. We accept the present suffering, because the causes for it were created and are already ripening. Future suffering, however, can still be prevented, so our mind remains optimistic. By **accepting the present situation**, our time and energy is not consumed in anger or grief and we can direct ourselves instead to purify any causes for future suffering, avoid creation of more such causes and create causes for future happiness.

## Comparing Ourselves with Others and Self-Worth

Although all sentient beings are equal in wanting happiness and not wanting suffering, each of us has different talents and weaknesses. We can acknowledge that others are better than us in terms of education, health, physical appearance, social standing, wealth etc, and that need not lead to jealousy. It is a simple acknowledgement of what is.

Everybody has different strengths; pooling these benefit us all. Rejoice in the good qualities of others and rejoice in our own too.

## Counteracting Depression

HH said - The psychologists I have spoken with tell me that in large part depression is due to a lack of affection, love and compassion in the family and the community. I believe that we human beings are by nature social animals. Our basic nature is such that we appreciate the affection of others and when we receive insufficient affection or are deprived of it altogether, we become unhappy and listless.

We have experienced some form of love and compassion from many people since we were born. Just the fact that we are alive is due to the kindness we've received from so many other beings. We have received much kindness from others throughout our life. Sometimes we are blind to the kindness around us; other times we are dissatisfied with it and wish it were more or better. It is good to cultivate contentment with the affection and kindness we have received and to rejoice in it; see its positive effects on our life.

To counteract depression, Buddhists can think in two ways.

1. First we develop a sense of our own potential by reflecting on buddha nature. No matter how confused we may sometimes be on a superficial level, deep down our buddha nature is there. On the most basic level of having a mind, no difference exists between the Buddha and us. Each person has a buddha nature (emptiness of inherent existence of the mind) as well as the evolving buddha nature (factors that can be increased through to awakening). Everyone has the potential to become fully awakened.
2. Second, consider the nature of cyclic existence. At present we are under the control of afflictions and karma. As long as that situation exists, some kind of

problem will be present. For example, when our body is ill, we experience pain. We must expect that and accept it. Worrying about the pain is useless. If we do not want the pain, we must remove its cause; if we can. If it is not possible, no benefit comes from worrying.

We can think in a similar way about the nature of cyclic existence. Problems will arise as long as we have a body and mind that are under the influence of ignorance. This is reality. It is to be expected in cyclic existence and we must accept it. If we do not like these problems, we should try to eliminate their causes—afflictions and polluted karma—and attain liberation. This gives us enthusiasm to practice the Dharma and seek nirvāṇa.

## Disagreement and Conflict

Disagreements always arise among sentient beings. Differences in views and opinions are potentially positive and can be a source of progress. However, when we are attached to 'personal' ideas, possessions and status, disagreements may lead to violence or oppression.

HH says he disagrees with himself all the time - argues, researches to find a better solution and changes his mind. No confusion. If we see ourselves as one human community, one organism, then we can tolerate differing opinions and learn together. We should listen to others' ideas and investigate their reasons as well as share our experience and knowledge.

Each party in ethnic conflicts has reasons to support their actions. In the eyes of the rest of the world, their fighting is madness, it creates more suffering than was there before. We must avoid any form of violence. Just as ignorance is decreased through education, our human tendency toward violence can be reduced through education in nonviolence, mediation and conflict resolution. Learning to listen with an open mind and heart is helpful too; people's anger dies down when they feel that someone hears their concerns and understands them.

Sometimes we may think that a situation is unjust (which may be true) and want to strike out or rebel. But looking from a wider angle, we note that aggression will bring many complications and that other ways to deal with the difficulties exist. These other methods may take longer, but in the end they are more beneficial, so we adopt them and are patient. HH: I consider such patience and tolerance a sign of strength, not weakness.

Violence only creates new problems.

HH. One of my fundamental beliefs is that human nature is gentle. From the time we are born, we are unhappy when we see harsh (or unfair) treatment of one person by another. The educational system should teach the value of human life and the disadvantages of violence. We must instruct children in methods to control anger and manage conflict and most importantly as adults, we must model tolerance, empathy and good listening. At present, the educational systems in most countries emphasise the transmission of information and neglects creation of good human beings with a sense of responsibility for each other. This needs to change.

The Buddha lays out the root of disputes when addressing a group of monastics. These apply to any person, club, work situation, family, sports team, group:

> There are, O monastics, these six roots of disputes. What six? Here a monastic is:
> (1) angry and vengeful or
> (2) contemptuous and domineering or
> (3) envious and miserly or
> (4) deceitful and hypocritical or

(5) he has evil desires and wrong views or
(6) he adheres to his own views, holding to them tenaciously and relinquishing them with difficulty.

The Buddha outlines six ways in which our mind may be uncontrolled.

(1) We are **angry and vengeful**. We speak badly about other people behind their backs, retaliate for any and all perceived insults and make distorted and unjust accusations about others. The point here is not what others have or have not done; it is about our own behaviour and emotions. We must examine our angry outbursts and vengeful actions and seek their causes within ourselves. How were we viewing the situation? What are our emotional and behavioural patterns? Ie, before say anything, it is best to calm our minds and return them to a more balanced state. Contemplate when you have acted in these ways and consider other ways to look at the situation and methods to adjust your motivation so that it benefits, not harms, yourself and others.

(2) Being **contemptuous and domineering**. A person seeks to lead a group whether or not she has the skills or been given the authority. If others lead, she is disdainful and uncooperative, only participating if things go her way. Leaders and followers must cooperate; both have specific duties that require different talents and abilities and neither can function well without the other.

(3) **Envy and miserliness**. An insecure, person is jealous and does not like it when others are more successful than he is. He is stingy with information, time and effort and doesn't help others on the team.

(4) Being **deceitful and hypocritica**l. People who lie and are dishonest are difficult to trust and therefore difficult to work or live with. They say one thing but mean another; their speech is for their own benefit, without consideration of the situations or feelings of others.

(5) Having **evil desires and wrong views**. Holding bad intentions and wrong views, a person propounds a fallacious doctrine and leads others astray. This is especially harmful because it can inhibit your own and others' ability to encounter the Buddha's teachings for many lives to come.

(6) Someone **adheres to his own views, holding on to them tenaciously and relinquishing them with difficulty**. Such a person is stubborn and argumentative. He jumps to conclusions and stubbornly defends his ideas. Even if he does think about an issue, once he forms an opinion, his mind is closed to any new information or other perspectives.

The Buddha continues: Such person lacks respect for the Three Jewels and is unable to practice sincerely or attain the benefits of practice, generating disharmony in the family, workplace, factory, school, club or group. This disharmony harms himself, disrupts relationships, thwarts activities, diverts energy and upsets people. When we notice a root of dispute within ourselves, it is important to reflect on its disadvantages so we are motivated to change that mental habit or behaviour.

How can we deal with situations when we find any or all of these roots of dispute within ourselves? The Buddha continues: When we notice a 'root of dispute' within ourselves, we should first restrain our body and speech from acting it out. Then we should work with our mind, applying the antidote to that afflictive emotion. When we notice a 'root of dispute' in another person, we can remind ourselves, "That is what I am like when afflictions overpower my mind. That is the kind of behaviour that my afflictions lead me to impose on others. Because these are not emotions and behaviours that I respect or find beneficial, I must take great

care not to let them arise." Ie, we take the other person's actions as a warning and make a strong determination not to act in that way.

Make sure to treat others well and to be mindful ourselves so that these do not erupt. Express our gratitude to our colleagues, family members, friends, associates or others in the group, tell them how much we appreciate their kind actions and reasonable behaviour. People often express their feelings and thoughts only when they are unhappy. Look for opportunities to express appreciation for others.

## Survival of the Most Cooperative

Replace "survival of the fittest" with "survival of the most cooperative" as the axiom for human progress and prosperity. The way bees and ants cooperate and support each other enables the entire hive or hill to stay alive and flourish.

When use the model of survival of the fittest and try to procure more and better resources for ourselves individually or for just our own group, we sabotage our personal happiness and endanger the existence of human beings on this planet.

Self-centred concern harms others and also harms ourselves. We are dependent beings: our existence is dependence on a multiplicity factors, mostly due to the efforts of others. Our exaggerated sense of self-sufficiency is illusory and should be replaced by the wise acceptance of mutual interdependence.

Love and compassion are based on understanding interdependence. Bodhisattvas, who aspire for full awakening, meditate on interdependence to increase understanding of the nature of reality as well as their altruism.They cultivate vibrant self-confidence that they can make a positive contribution to the welfare of others.

The more genuine our self-confidence, the less fear and anger torments our minds. Compassion and altruism sustain us, especially when we are in difficulties.

Self-centredness and ignorance can lead to great damage, while altruism spreads great good. When we cultivate care and concern for others coupled with wisdom that can clearly analyse situations, we are more peaceful inside and our actions to benefit others are more effective. If we adhere to the self-preoccupied philosophy of 'survival of the fittest', it may result in the survival of no one. An attitude of 'survival of the most cooperative' brings more individual well-being as well as the survival of our species.

REFLECTION

1. Imagine understanding the perspective of someone who has harmed or threatened you or whom you consider an enemy.
2. Imagine having compassion—not pity—for the mental and physical difficulties that person has undergone and will undergo in life.
3. Look at the situation with the eyes of wanting that person to be free from their suffering and to have happiness. After all, if they were happy, they wouldn't be doing the things you find distressful.
4. Imagine speaking to that person with kindness, clarity and balance.