

“Eight Verses of Thought Transformation”

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Verse 1: Seeing All Beings as Precious and Holding Them Dear

With the thought of attaining enlightenment
For the welfare of all beings,
Who are more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel,
I will constantly practice holding them dear.

Recognize that you’ve received incalculable benefit and help from others throughout your lifetime:

1. Contemplate the help you’ve received from friends and relatives: education, care when you were young or sick, encouragement and support, constructive criticism, etc.
2. Contemplate the help received from strangers: the buildings we use, clothes we wear, food we eat, roads we drive on were all made by people we don’t know. Without their efforts in society, we wouldn’t be able to survive.
3. Contemplate the benefit received from people we don’t get along with or who don’t do what we want them to do: they show us what we need to work on and point out our weaknesses so that we can improve. They give us the opportunity to develop patience, tolerance and compassion.
4. *“I will constantly practice holding them dear.”* Instead of being jealous because others are better than us, instead of competing with them because we want to be better than them, instead of being arrogant because we’re better than them, instead of being attached to them and drawing them into all of our trips, instead of being angry at them and causing them a lot of problems, instead of being spiteful and criticizing them behind their backs, instead of being rebellious and uncooperative, we’re going to practice holding them all dear. Everyone!

Conclusion: Recognizing all you’ve received from others, open your heart to feel gratitude to them. With an attitude that holds others dear, wish to benefit them in return.

Verse 2: Counteracting Arrogance and Developing Respect

Whenever I am with others
I will practice seeing myself as the lowest of all,
And from the very depth of my heart
I will respectfully hold others as supreme.

Seeing ourselves as the lowest of all doesn’t mean having low self-esteem. Rather, on the basis of valid self-confidence, we can be humble and thus be open to learn from others.

1. Think of the many different kinds of people you’ve met. Consider what you could learn from each of them and how much better off you’d be if you let yourself learn rather than boast about what you know. Let go of pride-- the attitude, which craves to be noticed and praised.
2. Think of the real nature of the person and have an attitude of genuine respect for these people. Imagine how you could act to show this.
3. Instead of thinking, “Here I am. Everyone should learn from me! Everyone should do things my way because my way is the best way. Everyone should follow my orders. They should follow my instructions because I have the best plan, the best idea.” It just means dropping all of that self-centeredness! That’s what “seeing ourselves as the lowest of all” involves. We don’t have to be acknowledged. We don’t have to be respected. We don’t have to be approved of. This doesn’t mean we put ourselves in a position to be stomped on. It just means that we drop our self-preoccupation and the ego-based needs to be loved, respected, acknowledged, and appreciated, the ego-propelled wishes to win, to have our way. We’re dropping all this. It’s so liberating. We can breath a sigh of relief and finally relax when we let go of the unhealthy focus on “I” and “me.”

Verse 3: Examining The Mind To Become A Doctor To Our Own Mind

In all actions I will examine my mind
And the moment a disturbing attitude arises,
Endangering myself and others,
I will firmly confront and avert it.

1. Which is your strongest disturbing attitude—attachment/desire/craving, cynicism, pessimism, sadness, frustration, impatience, discouragement, all-or-nothing thinking, judgmental attitudes, anger, wrath, grudge holding, spite, jealousy, miserliness, agitation, lack of faith, pretension, lack of integrity, inconsideration for others, pride and lack of humility? What situations is it likely to arise in? Knowing this will help you to be more mindful especially in circumstances in which your buttons are likely to get pushed.
2. What are the disadvantages of this disturbing attitude? Understanding this will give you energy to confront it.
3. How else could you look at the situation so that this disturbing attitude doesn't arise? Knowing this will help avert it.
4. I will be aware of what's going on in my mind – what I'm thinking and feeling – and by extension, I'll be aware of what I'm saying and doing and notice my habitual attitudes and behaviors. For example:
 - a. Every time a negative emotion arises, instead of saying, "Anger. Welcome! You're my friend. You're going to stick up for me so that other people don't take advantage of me," we're going to say, "Anger, you're a thief. You steal my happiness. You steal my peace of mind! Get out of here!"
 - b. It's similar with attachment. Attachment comes into the mind and instead of saying "Oh, attachment, you're going to make me happy," we recognize, "Attachment, you're setting me up for suffering. I'm not going to listen to your story!" These negative emotions endanger us because they make us create negative karma (habits of mind), leading to future suffering. They endanger others because when we speak and act under their influence, we harm others.
 - c. When doubt comes into the mind, we often welcome it, "Doubt, come in. I'm so bored. Go ahead and amuse me. Let's doubt this and let's doubt that. Let's challenge this. Let's be suspicious of that." Instead of welcoming doubt, we recognize it. "Doubt, you just play around and make my mind a mess! You make my mind race with all sorts of useless thoughts that tangle me up about things that aren't important. So, get out of here!"

This is *confronting* the negative emotion or disturbing attitude. Then we must also *avert it*, that is, to apply the *antidote* (like for a poison). For attachment, we meditate on impermanence and the ugly aspect of whatever we're attached to. For anger, we meditate on patience, perspective, acceptance and love. For jealousy, we meditate on rejoicing over other people's successes. For doubt, we meditate on the breath and to calm our mind. Verse three means, "I'm going to be a doctor to my own mind!"

Verse 4: Opening To People You Find Offensive.

Whenever I meet a person of bad nature
Who is overwhelmed by negative energy and intense suffering,
I will hold such a rare one dear,
As if I had found a precious treasure.

1. Think of someone whom you consider to have a bad nature, negative energy or intense suffering. It could be someone who is mean, an alcoholic/drug or sexual addict/compulsive overeater, murderer or thief.
2. Recall that compassion—the wish for others to be free of suffering and its causes—is generated by observing others' pain. There is no other way to develop compassion besides turning into others' plight. Others are a precious treasure in that they are the basis upon which we develop the noble quality of compassion.

3. Imagine being that person. What does it feel like to think and feel like them? In the same way that you spontaneously want yourself to be free from suffering, let compassion arise for that person.
4. People with intense suffering could be those who are injured, deformed, or very ill. For example, we don't like going into hospitals. Seeing people who are sick reminds us of our own mortality. When we encounter people who are disfigured, who are very ugly, or who have severe emotional problems, we shirk away. People with negative energy, intense suffering, or a bad nature can be relatives, strangers, or enemies. The last thing we want to do is to hold them dear as if they were precious treasures. But, this is the thing we really need to do. With thought transformation, we cease blocking them out as if they didn't have feelings. Instead we see their humanity. We recognize that they want to be happy and avoid suffering just like we do. We are exactly the same. We open our hearts and recognize that this person is a product of causes and conditions.

Also, we can meditate on emptiness (knowing that all things are constantly changing and transforming) and see that there's no solidly existing repulsive person there. What we're seeing is just a karmic bubble appearing due to causes and conditions. That's it. How can we hate a karmic bubble? How can we be disturbed by someone who doesn't really exist in the way he/she appears to us?

Verse 5: Accepting Defeat and Offering the Victory to Others

When others, out of jealousy, (or other attitudes or reasons)
Mistreat me with abuse, slander and so on,
I will practice accepting defeat
And offering the victory to them.

Accepting defeat doesn't mean blaming yourself for things that aren't your responsibility, losing your self-dignity or making yourself a doormat. It means letting go of having to be right, of having to have the last word.

1. Think of a situation when someone insulted, slandered, disappointed, or verbally abused you. Think of the state that person's mind (or their life overwhelmed) must have been in that made them act that way. Were they happy? Let yourself forgive them and feel compassion for everyone in the situation.
2. What would happen in you accepted that you were wronged and let go of the resentment, without retaliating or having the last word? When we accept defeat, we don't have to have the last word. We don't have to prove our case. We don't have to make sure that everybody understands that we are right and the other person is wrong. It means letting go of our ego's need to prove itself and be the conqueror.
3. Imagine accepting their harsh words with a calm mind, without fighting back. Would you lose anything? Could it help the situation? What would happen if instead of sowing bitterness **you sowed forgiveness**?
4. "Accepting defeat" can also mean what when we work on a project together with someone, and when the time comes for someone to get the credit for it, we should try to make sure that the other person receives it. When we divide something up and the portions are of unequal size, we give the larger one away and take the smaller for ourselves. If we are sharing things and one of them is defective or slightly worn out while the others are new, we take the old one.

Verse 6: Accepting Hurt and Seeing the Person as a Teacher

When someone I have benefited
And in whom I have placed great trust
Hurts me very badly,
I will practice seeing that person as my supreme teacher.

1. This speaks about somebody we have benefited, who has been our best friend, whom we've trusted and told our secrets to. Then this person turns around and does exactly what we don't want them to do. We feel vulnerable and hurt.

2. When we are hurt, it's often because we've held unrealistic expectations of others (they are not going to change). Think of a situation in which you felt hurt. Did you have accurate expectations? How did they cause you to feel betrayed, disappointed or disillusioned?
3. When we are hurt, it's because our buttons have been pushed. Our buttons are our responsibility—as long as we have them, they will get pushed. That person becomes a great teacher by pointing out clearly what we need to work on, thus giving us the chance to resolve areas of internal conflict.
4. When people we've trusted: break or ruin things, don't keep commitments, steal our stuff, criticize us, break off the relationship, talk behind our back, stop loving us, or give us bad recommendations. We need to see them as our supreme teacher. What are they teaching us? Compassion. Abandoning expectations. Being flexible. Letting go of clinging to a solid image of somebody else. Patience that gives other people space to make mistakes. They are people just like we are.

Verse 7: Taking and Giving

In short, I will offer directly and indirectly
 Every benefit and happiness to all beings, my mothers.
 I will practice in secret taking upon myself
 All their harmful actions and sufferings.

1. We think of taking not only others' suffering, but the causes of their suffering, their disturbing attitudes, negative emotions, and negative karmic imprints. If somebody acts aggressively, we imagine taking on their aggressive mind. We take on their attachment, bitterness, grudges, loneliness, and guilt, and we give them happiness. We use their suffering and its causes, which is what they don't want, to crush our own self-grasping and self-centeredness, which is the cause of our own suffering. Then we give them happiness by sharing our body, possessions, and positive potential with them. Doing this opens our heart to others.
2. Take on the problems and confusion of others by inhaling it in the form of black smoke.
3. This turns into a thunderbolt or bomb, which completely obliterates the hard lump of selfishness and ignorance at your heart.
4. Feel the open space, the lack of all wrong conception about yourself and others.
5. In this space, at your heart, imagine a light that radiates to all beings and think that you are increasing and transforming your body, possessions and positive potential into whatever others need and giving them to others.
6. Imagine them being satisfied and happy and rejoice that you've been able to bring this about.

This meditation can be done together with the breath, taking on the suffering with compassion while inhaling, giving others what they need with love, while exhaling. I recommend that you read Geshe Jampa Tegchok's book, *Transforming the Heart* (pp. 189 – 206, *Courageous Compassion*), for an explanation of this meditation.

Verse 8: Becoming Wise About Emptiness And Dependent Arising

Without these practices being defiled by the stains of the eight worldly concerns,
 By perceiving all phenomena as illusory,
 I will practice without grasping to release all beings
 From the bondage of the disturbing unsubdued mind and karma.

The Eight Worldly Concerns

Examine how the four pairs of worldly concerns operate in your life:

- Make specific examples of each type of attachment and each type of aversion. Do they make you happy or confused: Do they help you to grow or do they keep you in prison?
- Reflect that the greater the attachment to something, the greater the aversion when we don't get it or are separated from it.
- Apply some of the antidotes to attachment and anger in the order to transform those attitudes.
 1. Attachment to receiving materials possessions, aversion to not receiving or being separated from them.
 2. Attachment to praise or approval, aversion to blame or disapproval.
 3. Attachment to a good reputation (having a good image, others thinking well of you), aversion to a bad one.
 4. Attachment to pleasures of the 5 senses, aversion to unpleasant experiences.

How to perceive all phenomena as Illusory

Being "empty" or illusory means empty of true existence or empty of existing from it's own side, that is, empty of existing without depending on causes, conditions, parts or a consciousness, which conceives and labels them. There is nothing that exists without depending on causes, conditions, or other factors. We can never find anything that exists in that way.

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