

**The 10 Destructive Actions – Part 4 of 6** (lightly edited transcript)  
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**The Broader Implications of the Ten Destructive Actions**

When we talked last time about the ten destructive actions, we discussed the four parts: the basis, the complete intention, the action, and the completion of the action. This is very useful because it gives us some kind of tool with which to look back at our own actions, to see what we've done that's really serious, that needs to be purified, and what we've done that does not have all four branches complete. It also helps us look ahead to the future to be able to keep our ethics straight, to try not to create destructive actions with all four branches complete.

However, we shouldn't get locked into a very legalistic view of ethics. We shouldn't get into this whole thing of, "OK, I stole something but I only had three of the branches complete, so phew! That's OK." [laughter] "I started to lie but the other guy didn't believe me, so it wasn't so bad." Or, conversely, "Oh, I killed that grasshopper, all four branches complete. Woe is me!" And we get into a legalistic, technical way of understanding ethics.

As I said, the legalism and technicality is going to be quite beneficial, but we should take it the right way. We shouldn't get locked into it and just see ethics as a legal system, because it's not a legal system. Ethics are guidelines the Buddha set out that we can use as mirrors to look at our own life. And we can take those guidelines and expand them much wider than just the legalistic version with the four parts.

So, for example, killing can be expanded to how do we interact with living beings? Do we honor other people's physical integrity, or do we sometimes impinge upon that? Do we hit other people? Do we slap people? Do we kick dogs? Do we throw things at cats? How do we relate to other people's bodies? Do we really honor life, or do we strike out when our buttons get pushed? And similarly, do we really honor our own life? Do we take care of our own body properly? Not in a selfish way, but in a way of recognizing that we have a precious human life and it's something to honor and to protect. Do we treat our own body properly? Or do we beat up on ourselves? Do we eat improperly? Are we really hard on our own body? So that one thing about killing can have a wider implication. And I think it's good to reflect on this. It'll give us a lot of information about ourselves.

Similarly, we can expand on stealing. How do we relate to other people's material possessions? Do we respect other people's things? Or do we abuse them without caring? When we borrow things from other people, even if we return them, do we return them nicely, or do we return them in worse shape than when we borrowed them? When things aren't ours, do we not treat them as nicely? When we're in a hotel or somebody else's home, or in a public place, and we spill something, do we just let it be, "That's their rug; they'll clean it up," or do we take care of other people's property?

Also, how do we care for our own property? And again, I'm not talking about caring for our own property with this self-centered grasping, but do we use our resources in a wise way, or do we fritter them away? Do we use our food wisely? Do we use our house wisely? Do we use our money wisely? Do we use our car wisely? How do we relate to things like that? What about recycling, and how we use our possessions? Do we do that? Do we take care with that? Do we drive only when we have to? Do we get

in the car and drive when we don't have to?

So, this can be expanded to much broader things. And I think this is good. When you go home, take an inventory. You might even write some things down, about the things that you do take care of, and the things that may need some improvement. And then do the same thing in another six months, and see how you've changed. It can be quite useful.

If we go on to unwise sexual behavior, that can be expanded to just basically, how do we relate to other people sexually? When we meet somebody, are we automatically tuned in, "Oh, that's a good-looking person." What's going on? In other words, do we always relate to people in terms of sexuality? Are we always doing little flirting games with people? Are we moving our body in certain ways or using our speech in certain ways to communicate all these subtle sexual things, or are we completely direct with other people? And how do we feel about our own sexuality? Is it something we're peaceful with? Or is it something that causes us a lot of anxiety?

If we go on to lying, if we expand that, how do we use our speech? Basically, do we speak things that are true? Do we exaggerate? Do we build up stories and make them look the way we want them to look so that it suits our own purposes? Or are we honest in the way we speak? Are we honest to ourselves? Do we overlook faults that we have and rationalize them, which is dishonesty? Or do we blame ourselves for things that aren't our responsibility, which is also lying? Do we feel guilty about things that we have no responsibility for? That's self-deception as well. So doing some inventory along this line is useful.

"Divisive words" can be expanded to, how do we relate to other people's friendships? Can we rejoice when other people are harmonious and when they're friends? Or do we always want a piece of the pie? Do we always want to be the center of attention and draw the attention to ourselves? Or can we accept when other people have happiness? Can we accept when other people do things better than we do? Or do we always relate to other people in the sense of competition, that we have to be better, and we're always subtly competing over every little thing in how we interact with them? Can we let go of the competition and rejoice in their talent and appreciate it, and let ourselves learn from other people's talents? Or do we try to split up people who are harmonious, cause people bad reputation, and disparage their talents so that other people won't like them?

Harsh words. Do we dump on other people? Especially the people we're closest to. I think those are the people that harsh words come out more directly towards. Because with people we're close to—our parents, our children, our partners, our very good friends—somehow we feel we can go beyond normal human manners. "I'm so close to this person, so I don't have to take care about how I speak to them. I can just sit and spew out all my anger or all my dissatisfaction. I can blame them for things, and then I can go back and apologize later, because anyway we're married; it doesn't matter." [laughter]

I think the people we're closest to, those are the ones to whom our harsh speech really goes wild. We don't restrain very much there. Do we dump on people unnecessarily? Or if we are feeling agitated and we need to talk, do we go explain that to somebody, "I'm agitated. I'm angry. I need to dump, but I also am coming to you so that you can help give me some good perspective on this because I want to go beyond my anger."

Do we make sure that when we tell the people our problems, that that's the time and place to tell them? Because maybe they have something pressing on their mind, too, and we don't even let them say much more than "Hello" before all of a sudden we let out all of our complaints. Or we have a hard day at work and we come home and take it out on somebody. Or we had a hard time at home, and we go to work and take it out on our colleagues.

Also, do we do a lot of teasing and things like that, that are subtly picking on people? There's hostility, like we were talking before about humor with hostility in it, or teasing with hostility. That's a form of harsh words. Do we do that, or do we speak directly, honestly and pleasantly?

In terms of idle talk, are we aware of who we're talking to and what's going on and why we're talking? Or are we just babbling because we like to hear ourselves babble? Because we've all been on the other end of a conversation with somebody who can't stop talking. We all know what that's like. It's like you have to go to the bathroom real bad and you can't go because this person won't be quiet? Or you have

something to do the next day and you can't do it because this person is just going on and on about the sports, the weather, the neighbors, etc. Are we ever that person? Not us! [laughter] So do some inventory on that.

And then also when we do speak, do we speak earnestly? For example, do we make the effort to praise people? Do we use our speech in a proper way? Do we make an attempt to notice people's talents and good qualities, and praise them sincerely? Or when we say something good to someone or about someone, are we actually flattering them because we have some ulterior motive and we're trying to get them to like us so they will give us what we want?

Do we hint for things? This would come under both the stealing—how we relate to possessions—and also the idle talk. Do we ask for things directly? Or do we hint? It's basically manipulation, not being direct and honest with people, but it's having an ulterior motive and trying to come across in a certain way so that we hide our real motivations. Do we use our speech in that way, hinting instead of being direct? Or do we put on airs and pretend to be great this and that, so knowledgeable about this and that; people have to listen to us. When we're with a group of people, do we have to control the conversation? Or do we listen to others?

Do we use our speech to coerce people, to make people uncomfortable, to make them embarrassed? Or do we take the time and effort to use our speech to make people comfortable, so that if we see somebody in a group who looks like they feel uncomfortable, we use our speech to go over and welcome them and make them feel that they can join in. When people ask us directions, do we take the time to give them directions? Especially if they don't speak English very well. How we speak affects all sorts of areas of our life.

Coveting. Again, how do we relate to things? Every time we go somewhere, are we looking at the environment in terms of "I want"? It's interesting. You may notice that when you go into someone's home, your mind is already in the frame of, "What do they have here that is enjoyable that I can get for myself too?" [laughter] Are we always involved in this mind of "I want more. I want better. I'm not satisfied with what I have," so that everything we see, we frame it in those terms?

Maliciousness. When we're alone, are we constantly with our inner dialogue about what this person did to me and that person did to me? "This is totally unacceptable and I have to put them in their place!" Are we all the time going on and on about how terrible everybody else treats us, and how we have to take some strong action to make sure this doesn't go on? Or do we have the capability to let go and to forgive other people when they make mistakes? Or does the idea of forgiving other people almost give us a heart attack? We feel so threatened. Forgiveness is not on the ten most popular words nowadays. [laughter] But how much do we try to develop that, or do we use our mental energy in the opposite way?

And when we have wrong views. Do we take time to clarify our doubts? Or do we just let ourselves stay stuck in doubts that may eventually lead us to wrong views? Or do we take very stubborn positions on things? Are we completely attached to an opinion that's ours, even though some very wise people may be trying to give us some other ways of looking at something? Or do we just shut down into, "This is what I believe. This is right and everybody's got to accept it."

When I was teaching at Kirkland, the subject of vegetarianism came up and I said that we don't need to become born-again vegetarians. So again, it's a thing of our views and also our speech. Do we take some kind of solid view, be it a right view or a wrong view, and get so entrenched that we can't see beyond it?

What I'm getting at here is that it's especially helpful in our life to sometimes look at the ten destructive actions very closely with the four component parts, and other times to look at them in a very broad way, to figure out our overall general purpose. And to do an inventory in our life from time to time, as I was saying, maybe even writing things down—what we do well, what needs to be improved—and then doing a similar inventory in another six months. Because it gives us a much clearer direction about the things to work on; it gives us the ability to check up in our life, to identify even the small things we do well and the small things that wouldn't take much to improve on. It's very, very helpful. So, the ten are not ten commandments ("Thou shall not"). Rather, they're guidelines for improvement.

Now, I will go on to the next topic, which is the factors that help make a particular action either a very heavy one karmically or a lighter one karmically. And, again, these factors give us a lot of material with which to examine our own mental processes.

### 1. Nature of the action

The first factor is the nature of the action. I talked about this a bit last time. Of the three destructive actions of the body, the most harmful one, by its nature, is killing; after that is stealing, and then unwise sexual conduct. Just by the general nature of the act, killing is much heavier karmically than having unwise sexual behavior.

Similarly, the four destructive actions of speech are in order, according to their heaviness. So if we lie, it's much heavier than idle talk. Or if we use divisive speech, it's heavier than harsh words.

The destructive actions of the mind are in reverse order. Wrong views is the most harmful one, then maliciousness, and then coveting.

In general, we say that wrong views is the heaviest because it can lead us to do all the other ten, especially if we negate cause and effect, and say, "There are no results to my actions, so let's just do what I want," then we mentally give ourselves permission to do what we want, and that becomes problematic.

### 2. Basis or object

The second factor that determines the karmic strength of an action is the basis or the object. This has to do with who the person is that we are doing the action with, or what the material substance is that we're doing it with.

The heaviest things to do something with—and this applies both positively and negatively—are our spiritual teacher and the Triple Gem. So, for example, you'll see it's included in the bodhisattva vows not to lie to one's spiritual teacher. Why is that worse than lying to your neighbor? Because teachers are the people who can help us on the path. Similarly, stealing things from the Triple Gem or stealing from a Sangha community, or using harsh words against any of them. All these things are very heavy. On the flip side, making offerings, praising, speaking well, offering service, generating any kind of positive attitude towards the spiritual teacher and the Triple Gem generate very strong positive karma.

Also, the karma we create with our parents is very strong. The karma regarding the Triple Gem and our teacher are strong because of their qualities and their ability to guide us. Our parents are strong objects with which we create karma because of their kindness to us. When we look at how much we bad-mouth our parents... I mean, who do we lie to most of all? Normally our parents. Who do we criticize a lot? Our parents. If we look closely, we see that we create a lot of incredible karma in terms of our parents. And sometimes society encourages it. If you talk with your friends and they are saying, "Oh, I went to this meeting and I'm a wounded inner child because my parents did this and this and this," then we feel like we also have to somehow criticize our parents so that we fit in with the conversation. I think it's quite damaging. We all did it. I can write you scripts because [laughter] I did it, too.

But we definitely should look at this because it involves an incredible change of attitude towards our family. Instead of looking at everything they didn't give us, we start looking at everything they did give us. And if we rejoice at that, the anger, the impatience, these kinds of things don't arise so strongly.

I'm not saying to wipe out or whitewash unpleasant things. What I'm talking about is this incredible blaming attitude we have toward our family. It's very clear. When we were a baby, if our mama didn't take care of us and feed us and bathe us and clothe us, we would have died. We were completely helpless. We couldn't do anything for ourselves. It's because of the kindness of the people who brought us up that we're still alive. So try to appreciate that.

By the way, giving mother's day and father's day presents with a good motivation is strong, because it's in relationship to our parents. Or helping them out, doing small things for our parents. If we can't help in any way, at least we can try not to harm them.

Another group of important people in terms of the creation of karma are the poor and the needy. If we steal from someone who is destitute, that is much worse than stealing from someone who is rich. It's clear, because the poor person has more need. If we help someone who is sick or poor or homeless, the action is much more powerful than helping someone who is healthy or already has material wealth.

I'm not saying don't help the middle class and the upper class. Those people have incredible psychological suffering. [laughter] It's amazing. You go to India, and the Tibetans think this country [U.S.] is so marvelous. I tell them about the psychological suffering people have here. Incredible. Amazing! So, helping people who are needy mentally, who are poor emotionally, is also important.

Also, killing an elephant is going to be more damaging than killing a mouse, because the elephant is a bigger animal, and especially if you inflict a lot of wounds on it, it's going to have much more suffering because it has a much bigger body. Stealing large and valuable things is much worse than stealing pencils. Stealing Dharma materials is also much worse than stealing a pencil. [laughter] And lying about meaningful things is worse than lying about trivial things. All of these things work on the flip side. In other words, if we take care of our relationship to these things, it puts a much more positive imprint on our mindstreams too.

### **3. Strength of the intention**

The third factor is the intention, the strength of our motivation. This is a very important factor, which has two parts. The first part is the motivation, and the second part is the strength of the motivation. An example is being really angry when we tell someone off versus being mildly irritated. Another example is our mind being completely greedy and stuck in possessing something when we take it versus having a passing interest in it.

That's why we make an effort at the beginning of our sessions here to create a good motivation. We try to have a good motivation rather than a bad one, and we make our motivation as strong as we can, because if we have the altruistic intention very strongly, again, it's much more weighty, it's much more constructive than if it's just kind of blah, blah, blah. So, take some time to create the good motivation. That's why I suggested when you first wake up in the morning, try to sit and cultivate a good motivation, because that kind of motivation influences everything else that happens the rest of the day. Then if you can renew that motivation throughout the day, it makes it stronger so that everything you do becomes more powerful.

### **4. How the action was done**

The actual action, in other words, how the action was done, the manner in which we did the action, this is the fourth factor. Here we mean, in terms of harming someone, how much they suffered while we were harming them. An example is killing or executing people versus torturing, maiming, or humiliating them, taking away their human dignity before they were murdered. I keep thinking of what we did when we were kids – did we just squash the spider or did we pull all of its legs off? Because the way we did something, the amount of harm inflicted in the process of doing it determines the karmic strength of our actions. So, in any of these actions, how did we do it? Did we do it in a way that made the other person suffer a lot? When we used harsh words, did we completely blow up and yell and scream and make a huge horrendous fuss, or did we just say what we had to say and be done with it? Did we make an attempt to bring up everything the person did wrong for the last five years, or did we just say what was bugging us at the moment? These are the kinds of things to look at.

### **5. Frequency**

The fifth factor that determines an action's strength is the frequency of the action. If we do something again and again, repeatedly, the karma is much heavier. We keep talking about habits. Habit of destructive actions. Habit of constructive actions. When we do something frequently, it becomes quite heavy, even if it normally were something light, like let's say, ridiculing somebody with hostility. It may not be that bad, but if we do it week after week after week, it becomes quite strong.

Similarly, if we offer things on our altar, it might be a small thing we're doing, but it becomes very strong when we do it day after day after day. Or if we get up in the morning and we cultivate a good motivation day after day. Or if we go out of our way in the office to help someone, and make it a habit, then it becomes more constructive. So, the frequency with which we do actions influences their karmic weight.

## 6. Whether an opponent was applied or not

The final factor is whether we've purified or not. Whether we've used some kind of opponent power to counteract the force of that karma. That influences whether it's heavy or light. So let's say we lie to our parents with a strong motivation. But then we make an effort to purify. We generate regret, and we take refuge and generate altruism, we make a determination to try not to do it again. We do some kind of counteractive behavior, some kind of practice or service, and we do this often; we purify it, and then that karma becomes much lighter. This is the importance of purification.

Similarly, if we've done something constructive and then get angry afterwards, we impede that constructive karma from ripening. Or if we generate very strong, stubborn wrong views afterwards, we mitigate the effect of that karma. That's something to be aware of, because that would make it much less potent, much less able to bring a positive result.

Before, I was talking about reading the newspaper as a lesson in Lamrim. This is interesting to do. Take out the front page. You see that the Serbs are bombing Sarajevo, so you make some examples. It's an action of killing with a strong motivation, or so it seems, because they aren't relenting and aren't paying much attention to calls for ceasefire. How is the action being done? It's causing people a lot of harm, a lot of fear. They went through a lot of psychological torture before they were killed. Are any of the people that are getting bombed holy people? Are people doing this repeatedly day after day, getting into the habit of being soldiers and killing? Are they going to have any kind of regret and do purification?

Just take something from the newspaper, and think about it in terms of karma. It gives you some idea what people are doing. You look at the karma that people are creating, and when you begin to understand, it becomes virtually impossible to be angry at those people. Because it's clear how they are creating the cause for their own pain and misery in the future.

When I went to Tibet, I remember going to Ganden Monastery. This is one of the three largest monasteries. It's on top of a hill and there's this incredible trail (there's a road now) that goes up there. At the time of the cultural revolution, I don't think there was a road. I don't think they drove vehicles up there because the trail wasn't too good, and I was thinking, how much effort the people must have made to climb that mountain to destroy the monastery! Because the monastery is virtually leveled. It had about four thousand monks in it before. You go in there and see that the monastery walls were made of enormous rocks, and the rocks were pushed over. It took a lot of effort. It's a powerful object. People were killed. People were harmed, prevented from doing their practice. It was done quite often. They had to put a lot of energy into doing it. It wasn't an easy thing. In fact, if I had as much energy for practicing Dharma as they had for destroying it, I probably would have some realizations by now. [laughter] Because it really took a lot of energy.

I was thinking about this as I was going to Ganden, and there was no possible way I could be angry, because when I thought about the karma the people created in doing this, it was so clear the kind of rebirth that they were going to have. How could I possibly wish any kind of sentient being to suffer that much?

Similarly, if we apply it to things we read in the newspaper, or people we know who are doing very negative things, instead of getting angry at them, and irritated, if we look at what they are doing in terms of the karma they are creating, and in terms of these factors that make it heavy or light, again we get a much better understanding about how things are, what effects things will have. And it helps a great deal to develop compassion for other people. So reading Newsweek is an excellent lesson on karma.

Not only newspapers, but also the TV, and going to the movies. As I was saying before, we create karma when we rejoice at what other people do. So, if you're watching a movie, and it's about this couple and the woman goes off with somebody else and the man goes off with somebody else, and the kid is sitting at home, confused, and meanwhile, you're really identifying with one or the other of them and saying, "Oh, this is nice. This is wonderful." [laughter] We are creating karma just by what we're rejoicing in, even though there's no real person.

It would be much worse if real people were doing this and we were rejoicing, rather than just TV here, but still, rather than watching a video and letting all these afflictions arise, it'd be much better to watch it in terms of karma. What kind of karma are they creating? I haven't seen movies in a long time, so it's

hard for me to use examples [laughter], but just look at different movies. What kind of karma are the characters creating? If they were real people, what's going on here? And what things are heavy and what things are light? And what am I rejoicing at?

## Questions and Answers

### [Audience:] When we think we have the right intention, but we don't, is this a wrong view?

Well, wrong views is much more like disbelief in karma, or disbelief in the potential to become a Buddha, something like that. But if, let's say, I sit down and I have a good talk with you about the things you're doing, and I tell myself that I'm doing it for your own good, but actually if I were to step back for a minute and be a bit more aware of what's going on, there's some hostility and aggression in my mind, then psychologically, we would call that rationalization. Even though I was saying, "I'm doing this for this person's own good," it would be negative.

But it could also be a combination of things. Is this "I'm-doing-it-for-your-own-good" a complete rationalization, where it wouldn't take long to discover that underneath, we're pretty aggressive? Or are we, somewhere in our heart, really looking out for that person's good? And that in spite of trying to look out for that person's good, our own anger is also getting mixed in?

### [Audience: inaudible]

Killing in the name of religion. To me, that would be one of the worst kinds, because that's taking something sacred and completely bringing it into the mud. That was one thing I remembered from majoring in history. Because it struck me. It's one of the big things people fight about. And I think as soon as people do that, they totally miss the point of their religion. Completely miss the point of their religion.

### [Audience: inaudible]

So in the case where in a Buddhist country the people are getting massacred, to try and take up arms in order to preserve the religion—this is one of the things His Holiness would look at and say, "Difficult." [laughter] Real difficult! I thought about this kind of thing too. Now I'm giving you my personal thoughts about it. If you start killing to preserve the religion, then in one way, you lose the essence of the religion. Because the basic, fundamental thing of any religion is to abandon harming others. Killing is the most forceful way of harming others, and yet we're doing that in the name of religion. It seems like you might preserve the religious institution, but create an incredible amount of negative karma.

### [Teachings lost due to change of tape.]

### [Audience: inaudible]

But then the question is are you really preserving it for other sentient beings or not? I don't know. It's hard to say. I look at His Holiness's example. His Holiness, besides the fact that the Tibetans were completely outnumbered and it was just pragmatism also, I think on His Holiness's part, it wasn't just pragmatism, because there were a lot of Tibetans that were quite angry and upset and want to fight. They had a whole guerrilla movement going on and different things, and even some of the Tibetan young people nowadays are saying, "Look, if we were terrorists, we would get much more international attention than we are getting now. So we should do this." But His Holiness remains completely steadfast in the nonviolence. In my heart, I think that is where I would go too, because I feel that if you start transgressing your basic ethics, then you lose everything. You really lose everything.

Also, it's a thing of understanding karma. If societies are getting destroyed, we can't just say it's because of this political party or these external enemies that are doing this. It's also because we've created the cause as a group and as individuals to suffer this result, so it's something to look at karmically. It's something to look at: how the Buddhist institutions, as in Burma or Tibet, contributed to the weakness of the country so that it could be overrun and destroyed? Were the religious institutions being very blind, just preserving their own institution and not meeting the needs of the people, thus allowing another force to come in and take control?

So there are a lot of complicated things to look at here. And I somehow feel, too, that if people are genuine practitioners, even if they die in this life because of persecution, they will definitely be born in another place where they can contact the teachings and teachers. Why? Because the karmic cause is there. Whereas if you completely get involved in anger and aggression and killing and harming, you may preserve something, but you've destroyed your own karma to again meet the teachings in future lives.

So it's a complicated thing. It's not simple. It's one of these things where there's no one perfect answer like we wish there were, that would solve all the problems and eliminate all doubt. It's one of those situations that's just really, really difficult. Each person is going to look at it individually according to how they feel they can handle it, according to their own abilities, their own understanding. Some people will have broader views and see things over a longer period of time, and some people will have narrower views.

### [Audience: inaudible]

So situations where, for example, you lie in order to protect someone, again, it's going to depend a lot on the reason you lied. In other words, if you lie out of love and compassion for that person—impartial love and compassion, not just favoritism or something like that—then it's not a complete negative action. There might still be some trace of negative karma, but it's not going to ripen very strongly.

When the Buddha was a bodhisattva in a previous life, he killed someone who was going to kill 499 others. He did it out of compassion for this person and to save the other 499 people, and he was willing to take the negative karma of killing upon himself. It was said that he actually went very far ahead on the path by the power of that compassion.

Different people have different views about this. Lama Zopa says there's no negative karma in what the Buddha did at all. Serkong Rinpoche says the action of killing is by nature negative, so there was a tinge of negativity, but the compassion motivating it was so overwhelming that there was no comparison. In other words, if the lie or action that looks harmful was done but it was done out of compassion for everyone in the situation, not just for one party or the other, then it doesn't really become a negative action. It becomes part of the bodhisattva practice, if your motivation is clear.

On the other hand, if your motivation isn't clear, and you lie out of partiality to protect someone, then things get a bit more complicated. "I'm lying to protect someone's life, and that's good because I don't want this person to get killed, but I don't want this person to get killed because they mean a lot to me, and I don't care at all about the guy who's threatening them. In fact, I wish someone would shoot him as quickly as possible." [laughter] If you have that kind of attitude and you're lying to protect someone, it's going to be very different. So I think it depends a lot upon the nuances, the tone of the mind, what are all the different factors going on in the motivation.

And some things become mixed because you start off with a good motivation, but by the time you get into it, it's not so good anymore. It gets very muddy. Like one thing people do is say, "I'm going to take a job that earns a little bit more money, and I'm going to give the extra money to charity." That is really their motivation when they start out. That's a very good motivation. But then when they get the job, and they get the bigger pay checks, all of a sudden, the motivation changes, and the money doesn't go to charity. It goes into one's own holiday, or speedboat, or something like that.

Or we start out with a very good motivation to do charity work, "I want to help these people," but midway through, we become very conscious of, "Have these people told me 'thank you,' and have they written me down on the list of donors? Am I getting some recognition from the group for having been so generous?" The causal motivation was one of genuine generosity, but because the person wasn't mindful, the motivation degenerated at the time of giving and became a different one, so it becomes something that's rather mixed.

Or some actions we do have a bit of constructive motivation and a bit of destructive motivation. And so there will be a mixed result.

### [Audience: inaudible]

Again, this has to do with the strength of the motivation. If we're very clear that something is a destructive action and yet we do it, we've had to generate some extra, added boost to our motivation to get over the hurdle of that part of our mind saying, "Now, really." [laughter].

But on the other hand, having heard all of this, it gives us the possibility of mitigating our actions when we're in the process of doing them, because we know the different factors. So if we're catching ourselves in the middle of doing something, we can say, "I'd better change my motivation. I'd better make my motivation less intense," or, "I'd better purify afterwards." Or "This is something I do very habitually, very frequently. Maybe I should consider not doing that."

### Killing out of self-defense

[In response to audience:] There can be different motivations for self-defense. It can be done out of fear. It can also be done out of a calm mind. If you take the self-defense that is done out of fear, it's very much based on attachment to one's own body, isn't it? It's attachment. Attachment to our body. Attachment to our life. This gets real sticky. People don't always like to hear this part. But it is true. If you look at it, we're very attached to our bodies. Attachment to our bodies can motivate us to do a lot of harmful things.

That doesn't mean that we become dissociated from our bodies to overcome the attachment. It doesn't mean we just dissociate – I'm up here and my body is doing something else. It doesn't mean we start to hate our body either. I think the kind of attitude we want to cultivate is an attitude that would be very beneficial at the time we die, which is, "Well, it's nice while I have it, but if I'm not going to have it anymore, that's okay, too." And if we can cultivate that kind of attitude toward our body, then when it comes time to die, we're going to be able to go. No problem. No fear. No misery. But if we have this kind of clinging to our body during our life, we create a lot of negativity at the time of death, then death becomes a very traumatic, tortuous, painful thing.

So what we're trying to do is to have a more balanced view of the body. We take care of it because it's the vehicle for our Dharma practice. We can defend it. Nothing wrong with protecting our life and defending our body, but if our instant reaction is doing it out of fear, which is based on attachment, we can try, if we're a little bit mindful, to expand that and say, "I'm not going to just cling to my own body. I recognize that this person is creating negative karma trying to harm me, so for his benefit also, I'm going to try to intervene and stop him so that he doesn't get the negative karma." So it is also important to think about the other parties involved.

And then if we do defend ourselves, we use the minimal amount of force inflicting damage to the other person. If we're really terrified, we're likely to just kill them. Maybe the person didn't have the intention to kill us. They were just going to mug us and take our money. But out of so much fear and attachment, you kill the person. Maybe that wasn't even necessary. Maybe it would have been good enough to scream or kick them, or something else. But see, if we have a lot of the attachment and fear, we don't think clearly. If we can slowly, over a period of time, develop a healthy relationship with our body, then when those things come up, we'll have some mental space to be able to better assess the situation and do something more effective. Does that make some sense?

### Domestic Violence

[In response to audience:] Yes. Why stay in a situation where you're getting beat up?

### [Audience:] A lot of people do.

A lot of people do. And most of them do it, again, out of attachment. Because they are getting something from that situation. But I think if it's possible to detach themselves from what they are getting from it, they can leave. And they may be able to take action beforehand.

I was talking with one woman who works with battered women and domestic violence. They run a support group. One woman in the group had incredible violence in her home. Members of the group asked her, "Well, what is your safety plan?" And she said, "I don't need one." She was not dealing with

the situation, completely denying the danger that was there.

So, I think that in many of these domestic violence situations, people can look clearly and see the danger that is there and then take effective steps beforehand to create safe situations or create alternative plans if somebody does come home drunk and violent.

If we have clarity in our minds and if we stop and think a bit, we can develop more clarity. But so often people just react and don't have the tools like the Dharma, or don't have the time, or don't have the interest to sit and look a bit closer and see some other things that could be done for their own benefit.

### Purification

[In response to audience:] If we don't take the time to purify (our negative actions), it does build up. It stays with us. There's this whole movement now to be kind to ourselves. One way to be kind to ourselves is to be able to acknowledge our mistakes and then purify. Because if we go to the other extreme of "It's always somebody else's fault. I don't make mistakes," then we never purify and there's always this residual, underlying something eating away at us. When you do prostrations and you're there on the floor, we can say, "OK, I'm going to stop making excuses. I'm going to stop lying to myself. I'm just going to clean this thing up."

Let's sit quietly.

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This teaching is based on the *Lamrim* or *The Gradual Path to Enlightenment*. Please refer to the following web-page for its outline and other transcripts or to listen to the audio recording of these talks: <http://www.thubtenchodron.org/GradualPathToEnlightenment/outline.html>