

Cultivating Bodhicitta through the Seven Points of Cause and Effect – Part 3 of 4

(lightly edited transcript)

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Contents (click on heading to view text)

- 4. Heart-Warming Love – Cont'd
 - *Different types of love*
 - *Eight benefits of meditating on love*
 - *Meditation on love according to the Theravada tradition*
- 5. Great Compassion
 - *Three kinds of suffering*
 - *How to meditate on compassion*
 - *Guarding against despair or anger*
 - *Having compassion for both oppressor and oppressed*
 - *Dealing with our fear of pain*
 - *Compassion isn't feeling sorry for other people*

We've been talking about the seven points of cause and effect for generating bodhicitta. The first four points are: (1) recognizing sentient beings as our mother, (2) remembering the kindness of the mother or whoever the caregiver was while we were a child. And then (3) having a spontaneous wish to give something in return to those who have been kind, and from that, naturally, comes (4) the heart-warming love, or the love that sees others as lovable. [The remaining 3 points are: (5) Great compassion, (6) Great determination and (7) Altruistic intention or bodhicitta.]

4. Heart-Warming Love – Cont'd

Different types of love

There are several kinds of love. There's the heart-warming love [point (4)] that sees others as lovable. This is the love that comes spontaneously from the first three causes [points (1) to (3) mentioned above], and acts as the propelling agent for the great compassion, which is the next step [point (5)].

In addition, there is the great love which wishes others to have happiness and the causes of happiness. You can meditate on this great love either before the great compassion, after the great compassion, or together with the great compassion.

Eight benefits of meditating on love

Nagarjuna's text, "Precious Garland," describes eight benefits of meditating on love. This is nice to think about as an encouraging factor. Although the fact that we all think of a heart that has love as something that is especially desirable, that we all want to have, somehow when it comes to meditating on it, we think, "I just don't have the energy. I'd rather watch the news, and get depressed, than meditate on love." Do you see what is going on in the mind then? You sit and watch the news. You are completely passive. You just let the TV run your mind. Meditating on love, we actually have to be active. We have to cultivate something within ourselves. Maybe we should meditate on love and then watch the news. And then meditate on compassion after the news.

a) and b) The first two benefits of meditating on love are that the gods (the celestial beings), and also human beings will be friendly to us. We can readily see that. People naturally gravitate towards those who are very kind, who have a loving heart. They don't need to do very much to have friends. Whereas people who aren't very loving, who are quite defensive and easily annoyed, then it's much more difficult for other people to be friendly to them. We can naturally see these first two benefits from our own direct experience. Not only human beings but also celestial beings and the gods, benefit from meditating on love. They say that there are different beings in the god realms. Some of them might even be coming to listen to teachings tonight. Actually, before His Holiness teaches, or before the lamas teach, they do a special prayer inviting the gods to come and listen, because some of them can practice Dharma too.

c) Even nonhumans will protect you. Here we're thinking about animals and also different spirits. Again, other beings willingly protect people who are kind. When people who aren't very nice get harmed, other people stand around and think, "Oh, good. I'm glad you got it. You deserve that." [laughter]

d) We'll have mental ease and our mind will be happy and relaxed. When we meditate on love, when we genuinely wish others well, our mind is happy and relaxed. When we wish others harm, when we cling onto hurt and pain, our minds aren't relaxed at all. Our minds are quite tight. We have to take Valium, or we have to call in a therapist, or do something, because the mind is unhappy and really tight.

e) We'll have much happiness meditating on love. Not only mental ease, but just generally, in the conditions of our life, there's much happiness. Our body will also be relaxed. You can see how the mind affects the body. When the mind's quite tight, then you get ulcers. The immune system goes down. When the mind is very loving and very relaxed, then the body also tends to be relaxed.

f) Poisons and weapons won't harm you. I dare say that if you meditate on love, you probably wouldn't be involved in too many wars and be around many weapons. Therefore it will be difficult for anyone to harm you. But I guess this benefit is referring to some kind of special ability that comes as a result of karma. For somebody who meditates regularly on love, even if weapons or poisons are directed towards them, they will not work because of the person's accumulation of good karma.

Actually, love itself has the power to subdue. There's the story of the Buddha's cousin, Devadatta, who was so jealous of his cousin (the Buddha) that he sent a wild elephant to charge at the Buddha. But when the elephant got in the presence of the Buddha, the elephant was so overwhelmed by the power of Buddha's love, that it bowed down to the Buddha.

One time I was in Malaysia somebody was telling me that they were having problems with another person. They meditated on love so that the other person would stop bothering them. [laughter] I said, "Are you meditating on love because you really love the other person, or because you're thinking about your own benefit and you want them to stop bothering you? One way you're meditating on love, the other way you aren't."

g) Effortlessly we will attain our aims. Even in worldly things, if we have a kind heart, a loving heart, then things very easily get done. Having a nice demeanor, when we approach people kindly, the other people usually want to help us. Our worldly aims get accomplished easily. Our spiritual aims also get accomplished easily when the heart is very loving. Love is one of the causes for the bodhicitta or the altruistic intention, and then with that, the mind becomes very powerful, creates a lot of positive potential, has abundant energy to collect both the positive potential and the wisdom necessary to attain the realizations. Our spiritual aims also get accomplished quite easily when we meditate on love.

h) We will also be reborn in the world of Brahma. That's if you dedicate for that. Hopefully, we won't dedicate for that.

Brahma is one of the form realm gods. Form realm is one of the realms. It's considered more pleasurable than the human realm. You get born there by having deep states of concentration, and Brahma is the King of the form realm.

Actually, it's quite interesting. I'm just going to sidetrack for a minute about Brahma. There're some similarities between the Hindu view of Brahma and the Christian concept of God, because in Hindu society, Brahma is seen as the creator, and the different parts of the world are created from different parts of Brahma's body.

From the Buddhist viewpoint, in the evolution of the world, the higher realms get created first. So the form realm was created first, then the human realms and then all the other lower realms. In the evolution of this particular universe, Brahma came into existence first, and then humans and animals and everything else followed. By the time humans and animals came, Brahma was already there. They say, "Well, he created us." And so that's how Brahma got this status of the creator, from the Buddhist viewpoint, not from the Hindu viewpoint.

It's interesting when you think of the Christian concept of God, because there are some similarities, such as Brahma being seen as a creator, as a very powerful being. Who knows, maybe what the Christians worship is Brahma, but they call him God. Well, some Christians, not all. It's hard to say, because everybody's concept of God is quite different.

Anyway, the reason being born as Brahma is considered a benefit of meditating on love, is that for

worldly beings (there are many, many Brahmans, by the way), it's a position of status, fame, well-being and good things happening to you. From a Buddhist point of view, even being reborn in an upper realm like that is unsatisfactory, because after you used up that karma, then again you have to take another rebirth. You're still bound in the cycle of existence.

That's why it's important not to dedicate our positive potential to be born as Brahma, but as a Buddha. We want to become a Buddha. The meditation on love is referred to as the Brahma Vihara. Those of you who follow the Vipassana tradition, when you meditate on the four immeasurables, it's called the four Brahma-Viharas, the abode or place of Brahma. The reason it is called that is because every time you meditate on love, you will be reborn as a Brahma the same number of times as the number of beings you included in your meditation on love. Doing the meditation on love with single-pointed concentration leads to that particular kind of rebirth. But again, that's if you dedicate it that way. We're trying to dedicate the merit for something else.

[Audience:] If we don't want to dedicate our merit for a rebirth as a Brahma, why is it listed as an advantage?

This is similar to the advantages of bodhicitta. Maybe your level of mind isn't quite so high. First what might get you excited is the possibility of some immediate gain. They get you interested in that way, and then they say, "Nope [laughter]. Got to be a Buddha. Can't be contented with this kind of rebirth."

[Audience:] Is Buddha formless?

The Buddhas take a form. It is a manifestation of their wisdom. Take for example Shakyamuni Buddha or Avalokiteshvara; they are manifestations of their mind and their subtle energy coming out in that physical form. But the Buddha's mind is totally formless. We shouldn't think of Buddhas like some isolated person inside a body, nor do we need to think of a Buddha as just some kind of an amorphous blob (excuse me, Buddha!) [laughter]. When we think of the qualities of wisdom and compassion and the skill of the Buddha, those factors don't have form because they are mental qualities. They are things developed in your heart, in your mind. They don't have form. But in order to communicate with us, the Buddha appears in forms. That's the only way we can relate to them. We don't have the hotline for the Buddha's Dharmakaya mind.

Meditation on love according to the Theravada tradition

In the Theravada tradition, they have a way of meditating on love. I think it's quite nice, and I think it's good if we can incorporate that in our practice. And it can be used here, too.

The way you do it is you start off with yourself and wishing yourself to be well and happy. The idea being that if you don't love yourself, it's hard to love others. Here we come back to the old theme of self-esteem and wishing ourselves well, which sometimes is our biggest obstacle. To sit and start out, we can say, "May I be well and happy." Think of the different kinds of happiness, the different kinds of well being. Don't just wish to have hot fudge sundaes and banana splits, but truly wish yourself well in the sense of "May I also have all the conditions necessary to practice Dharma. May I also meet pure teachings and teachers. May I quickly gain the realizations and free myself from cyclic existence. May I have the happiness of liberation and enlightenment." Truly wish yourself well. That's caring for ourselves.

Wishing ourselves to have a nice house and a nice car isn't necessarily taking good care of ourselves. That might relieve some problems but cause other problems. Whereas if we really wish ourselves to have the realizations in a very kind way, we see that we can free our minds. We want to wish ourselves all the different kinds of happiness, both worldly happiness and spiritual happiness. Spend some time thinking about that – not sitting and thinking and increasing your mind of attachment, but developing a feeling inside the heart of real affection for ourselves in wanting ourselves to be well and happy, not just because I'm me, but because I'm also a living being needing compassion.

From there, start with people whom you are close to, whom you get along well with, whom you have a lot of affection for, and wish them to be well and happy. You can think of your good friends, or other people close to you, because spontaneously, it's easier to wish them to be well and happy. Again, think of the different kinds of happiness—may they have a good job, may they have security, may they have nice relationships, but also may they have the conditions to practice the Dharma. May they gain the realizations. May they be free of cyclic existence altogether. Spend some time cultivating this feeling, so

that your attitude changes; some feeling of warmth for them comes.

From there we share our loving kindness with strangers—the guy on the street, wishing him to be well and happy. Recognize that all these strangers are human beings just like us—we have the same wish for happiness and to avoid pain. The things that we wish for ourselves and people we are fond of, we wish to strangers. We work on the mind thinking about this until the mind has the same kind of intensity of love towards strangers.

Then move on to the people we don't get along with very well. This one is much harder, isn't it? But try to wish the people who harm us well, or the people we don't like well. And in some ways, if you switch your mind just a little bit, it actually becomes easy to meditate on love for them. If you see that somebody has a very tormented life and carries around a lot of guilt or hostility because of things that happened in their life, and that's why they harmed you, or that's why they do the things you find so disagreeable, you can think, "May that person free themselves from that tight mind. May they free themselves from that neurotic clinging. May they free themselves from that kind of pain." For the people we find disagreeable, we can imagine that their whole personality is transformed. They can be happy. It's quite interesting, as soon as we can imagine them to be happy, then we cease finding them so disagreeable.

And then, after we have generated love toward the people we don't get along with, we generate it towards all sentient beings.

We start out loving ourselves, then we proceed to loving our friends, then strangers, people we don't get along with, and then all sentient beings. There's a reason for doing it in this sequence. If we start with "May all sentient beings be well and happy. May all sentient beings have everything good," that's very easy, because "all sentient beings" is a safe, abstract concept that's quite separate from Achala (the cat) when he scratches you, and the other guy when he rams into your car or somebody else who criticizes you. We don't want to start out with that. It's real important when we're meditating on love and compassion, to think about real individual instances, which forces our mind to change and not just get stuck in abstractions.

[Audience: inaudible]

You don't see the person as inherently evil. All of a sudden you can see what compelled them do their action. You start being able to separate the person from the actions. You see the actions as disagreeable and harmful, but the person as not inherently evil.

[Audience:] This is very difficult. I don't think I can do it.

Slowly, slowly, work on it. Develop the mind. The mind can change.

[Audience: inaudible]

Who knows what his psychological factors and his way of thinking are. But he had his reasons, and from his viewpoint, what he did seemed like the best thing. From his viewpoint, he meant well. From other people's viewpoint, what he did seemed atrocious. But you can see that he as a person isn't inherently evil. He made those decisions and did those things due to certain mental factors, due to the conditions of his life, due to his habits and ways of thinking. But who he is, isn't some kind of solid, permanent personality who's always going to be like this. Just because he has some bad qualities now, it doesn't mean that he's always going to have them or that he's always going to be evil. Everyone's personality is just a combination of different mental factors that arise in the mind and go away, arise and go away.

5. Great Compassion

From thinking about heart-warming love, having some experience of it, then we move on to meditate on compassion. Compassion is the wish for others to be free from suffering and the causes of suffering. Again, suffering doesn't mean just "Ouch, that hurts!"

Three kinds of suffering

There are three kinds of suffering:

a) Suffering of suffering, which means the gross physical pain and mental pain, things that people in the world recognize as painful. Or you could say undesirable experiences are suffering. There are different ways of describing it.

b) Suffering of change. This includes worldly happiness. Things that we normally consider nice are actually the undesirable experience of change. Things start out great, but they will not last and will go downhill from there. This kind of worldly happiness is considered undesirable experience because it doesn't last. It doesn't satisfy. It doesn't do it all. And after we enjoy ourselves, we go back where we started again. When Amchog Rinpoche was here, he used this great expression: Struggling for pleasure. That's kind of what it is. This undesirable experience of change leads us to struggle for pleasure. We always have to exert so much effort to get one good thing. That's nice, but then it ends, or it changes, and then we have to go search for another source of pleasure, and that changes, and the process keeps repeating.

c) Pervading compounded unsatisfactoriness. Our bodies and mind are under the influence of ignorance, anger, and attachment. The whole situation is under the influence of ignorance, anger, and attachment. Even if someone is born in one of these form realms or formless realms, or nice, delightful places, still, eventually, they will come crashing down, simply because that's the nature of cyclic existence.

How to meditate on compassion

When we meditate on compassion, we want sentient beings to be free from these three kinds of unsatisfactory or undesirable experiences. Usually it's very easy for us to think, "May they be free of the undesirable experience of suffering (the first kind of unsatisfactory experience)." We start with that, and then expand it, thinking, "May they be free from the undesirable experience of change." In other words, getting so attached to worldly happiness that they're always on the roller-coaster of "Wow, this is great!," crashes down, "Wow, this is great!," crashes down.

The next time you go to the cinema to watch movies, see that this is the theme of the things that you see in the movies. You can very clearly see these three kinds of unsatisfactory or undesirable experiences. Usually this is what makes up the plot of the movie. When you watch a movie, when you look at someone's life, when you read the newspaper, you can see these three at work, and then you start to begin to wish everybody to be free of their suffering, not just the basic suffering, but also the suffering of change and the pervading compounded unsatisfactoriness. In this way compassion gets much, much greater for them.

We usually think of great compassion in this way, "OK, I'm going to open a soup kitchen and set up a shelter," and things like that. This is all very good. I'm not putting this down in any way. It's tremendously good. We should do more of it. But what Lama Zopa is also very quick to point out is that if people don't learn anything about karma, about their actions, and still continue to create negative actions and not do positive actions, even if you give them food, even if you give them a place to live, again later on, they're going to be hungry and they're going to be homeless. Maybe not in this life, maybe in the future life, but still, because the gross physical and mental suffering are created by our karma, as long as the mind is under the influence of the three poisons, these unsatisfactory experiences are going to continue to come.

When we cultivate compassion, it's important to want them to be free from all three types of unsatisfactory experiences. You may start out wanting them to have food and clothing and shelter. Then you also want them to be free from the unsatisfactoriness of change. And then you want them to be free of the pervasive compounded unsatisfactoriness, because this would keep the first two forms of suffering from re-occurring again and again. Make your compassion very expansive when you're meditating on this. We need to expand our minds.

Another way to meditate on compassion is to start out with gross physical suffering, such as an animal being slaughtered. Or you can think of torture in a prison camp. Or you can think of gang shootings. Or you can think of Bosnia. Or Somalia. Try to think of what it would be like to be those beings in that situation, and all the different things that they experience, not only the gross physical and mental suffering, but how the mind gets involved in the fear of future suffering. I think in many of the painful situations, the suffering is mental. Maybe you're living in Bosnia and you have to stay in your house because of the fear of the shelling going on. Your body is okay, it hasn't been hurt, but the fear of living

in that situation and what it does to you can be devastating. Or the fear of disease. Or the fear of torture.

One way of meditating on compassion is to take very obvious examples like this and think what it must be like to be that person. Again, this is the kind of thing you can do when you're watching the news, when you're reading books, or when you're watching TV. Everything can become a kind of Dharma practice in this way.

Guarding against despair or anger

I find that people in the West, when they think about the gross physical suffering, often they either get so depressed and despondent about the state of the world that they just give up, or they get angry and self-righteous. What we want to do when we're thinking about these things is not fall in either of these pitfalls. We don't need to meditate to create these states. We need to meditate to transcend them.

The despair doesn't have much compassion, does it? That despair is much more a feeling of helplessness. What we're trying to generate here is a strong mind of compassion that really wants to help and sees that things don't always have to be this way. With despair, it just seems that this is all inevitable and we just say, "I give up! Everything is screwed."

With compassion, we see that whatever suffering someone is experiencing is a caused phenomena. It doesn't arise independently. It doesn't arise causelessly. Things arise due to causes and conditions. If we can change any of the causes and conditions, either with the external ones or the karmic internal ones, then we can change that situation. Compassion is quite different from despair and despondency.

Similarly, the other thing that we often get into—which is just the flip side, it's very inter-dependent with despair and despondency – is we just change ever so slightly and our feeling turns into outrage and anger. That's not a real healthy attitude either. When we're outraged and we're angry, it's like our energy is just going out into space and evaporating. Nothing very productive is coming from it. It's just getting scattered and we're being quite miserable.

Instead, we could take that same energy and channel it into something that is positively directed, like compassion. Compassion is very upbeat. Compassion knows that suffering doesn't have to exist. Suffering exists only because the causes and conditions for it exist. Within compassion, there's a lot of hope. That's why people say His Holiness is so optimistic. He always talks about having hope, not hope in the sense of preconceptions about the future, but hope in the sense that things can change and they can be improved. That's quite important. When we start out meditating on compassion thinking about things, please be careful that you know exactly how it's supposed to be practiced, and which way we want to steer our mind. We don't meditate incorrectly and then either get despondent or angry.

Another way that you can meditate on compassion is to think of the lower realms of existence. Think of what it's like to be in a life form of excruciating pain. Or in a life form of continuous dissatisfaction such as hunger and thirst. Or a life form of stupidity and the different sufferings that animals go through. Think of yourself as being born into one of those situations. If you can't think of the lower realms, because maybe that gives you some problems, then think of yourself as being born in a township in South Africa, or being born in Armenia. Or being born in Kashmir or some place like that. And think of what it's like, and then go from your experience to everybody's experience.

You are imagining what it's like, but actual people are living in those situations, and everybody, at one time or another throughout cyclic existence, has lived in a similar situation. Try recognizing that even though some people might be fed and happy now, as long as they are in cyclic existence, they will find themselves in suffering situations later.

Having compassion for both oppressor and oppressed

We need to be sure here that our compassion isn't just for the people who have gross physical suffering. This is another pitfall, and it is similar to the outraged anger one, which is having lots of compassion for the oppressed while having lots of anger for the fed and happy people. Buddha's compassion isn't like that. He recognizes that the fed and happy people had been the suffering ones, will be the fed and happy ones later, and then at some point becoming the suffering ones again. As long as the mind is under the influence of the three poisons, everybody will keep changing places again and again. Therefore we don't want to fall into partiality, caring about the oppressed but not caring about the oppressors.

If we had clairvoyance, we might find that the oppressed and the oppressor switch from life to life. The person who is the perpetuator of the harm, in the next life becomes the recipient of the harm. Everybody keeps changing places. Ideally we would not develop hatred or anger towards people who seem well, but recognize that we're all in the same boat; we're all on the same merry-go-round. It's just that some people's carriages are higher and others' are lower, but it could all change in five minutes.

Dealing with our fear of pain

One of the most difficult aspects of meditating on compassion is that we don't like to think about pain. We like to pretend it doesn't exist. Because of our dislike for pain, our society develops taboos against talking about death, against talking about sickness, against helping people who are old or letting them live in the society. The societal taboos that we don't like actually come from this same fear which, lo and behold, we find in our own mind! Isn't that interesting? The fear that doesn't like to look at pain.

It's very interesting to explore that fear when we find it blocking our mind, "Where's that fear coming from?" I think that often, we don't like to look at others' pain because at a gut level we are acutely aware that there is very little difference between us and them. Looking at somebody else's pain and letting it into our heart means opening up to the fact that we could be in their shoes. This is very scary. We don't like to think of ourselves in those shoes, or see ourselves in that situation, so we block it out.

That's why we find it difficult to visit Aunt Ethel in the hospital who's dying of cancer. We don't like to see that pain. We don't want to see cousin Sam who's dying of aids. Why? Because at some level, we recognize that it could be us in that situation. It is too frightening to look at. We push down our fear, and then we develop other distracting emotions or actions, like being despondent or outraged, or going on a crusade, or doing something else to distract ourselves from this very basic thing of looking at what cyclic existence is.

If we have the idea of past and future lives—this has been me, and this could be me in the future – then at some point we're going to have to change. When we can let ourselves acknowledge that, that's when the determination to be free enters the heart. Finally, we are actually acknowledging our own vulnerability. It isn't pleasant. But if we know that it doesn't have to exist, that it only exists because there is a cause, then we can develop the determination to free ourselves from it, and to attain enlightenment.

Compassion isn't feeling sorry for other people

Meditating on compassion isn't feeling sorry for other people, "Oh, those poor people. They have so many problems in their lives." Compassion is based on a fundamental honesty with ourselves about our own vulnerability to suffering, and recognizing that everybody is in the same situation. There is no difference between us. Our heart has to open some way. You can see that one of the blocks to helping people who are suffering is the fact that we don't like to look at our own pain. I'm sure Lee, who is a hospice nurse, has lots of experience with this. She could probably tell you incredible stories of how people who are very close to each other can't help but be afraid. They can't witness their loved one's pain because it touches their own pain. Fear actually prevents us from helping. Our own fear prevents us from reaching out to the people we care about so much.

[Audience: inaudible]

[Teachings lost due to change of tape.]

I think it's a way of avoiding looking at our own pain also. That doesn't mean that we then criticize those people. We shouldn't say, "Look, you can't face your own pain so you're not nice to Aunt Ethel who's dying of cancer!" It's not a thing of blaming ourselves or other people for our own inability, but it's important to just recognize what's going on. We're all very much alike, and this is a reason to have compassion.

[Audience: inaudible]

Many people believe that, "If I think about this, it might really happen." This is a very common belief in many cultures. When I lived in Singapore, you weren't supposed to talk about death because if you talk about death, it might happen. If you went to somebody's funeral, you might actually get influenced by death. I think what's happening at that point is we're giving too much credit to the power of the mind. Also remember that when you're thinking about this, you're not wishing it for others. You're just recognizing that this is a possible circumstance. Your motivation is not at all wishing.

[Audience:] When I think about other people's pain, it generates so much pain in me that I can't get out of my own pain to help them with theirs.

When you were talking, what popped into my mind is doing the taking and giving meditation. When you feel the pain so much that you feel overwhelmed by it, I think part of the feeling of being overwhelmed is the feeling of helplessness. If you do the taking and giving meditation, you're imagining, "OK, I'm taking this, and I'm accepting it, but I'm also using it to destroy my own selfishness and my own ignorance, then I'm going to give to others what they need and imagine them being well and happy." Instead of being stuck in that emotional feeling, you transform it.

[In response to audience:] Right. Exactly. Because then we're just stuck, "This is awful. This is terrible..." It's like we're the relative of the person who's dying, and we're outside the hospital room crying and crying because they're dying. We're not available to help them when they're dying because we're crying so much. When you're doing the taking and giving meditation, imagine you're not rejecting the suffering, you're taking and accepting it, and then you're using it to transform that hard "I." You do the meditation on emptiness like that and then imagine giving to them. Compassion and love have to go together.

[Audience:] How do I take on their suffering in the meditation?

You imagine the suffering of the person who's being tortured. You imagine the suffering of the person who's doing the torturing, and how afflicted their mental state is. You say, "May I take all that pain and this situation upon myself." Imagine that the suffering leaves them in the form of smoke. You inhale it, and it transforms into a thunderbolt which destroys your own lump of ignorance and self-centeredness, and then the light in your heart radiates out to them, wishing them to have temporal and ultimate happiness. Does this make sense?

[Audience:] Could you explain how to do this taking and giving meditation?

You imagine others around you with their suffering. You develop a feeling of, "May I take their suffering upon myself so they can be free of it." You imagine they are suffering, and their pain is leaving them in the form of smoke. You inhale it.

When you take in that smoke, it transforms into a thunderbolt, and it strikes at the lump of self-grasping fear, self-concerned immobilization at your own heart. You're taking what others don't want – their pain, and you're using it to destroy what you don't want—the cause of your own pain, that grasping mind—so that thunderbolt strikes and knocks at the lump of self-grasping and self-centeredness.

And then you sit in that open space. You remember emptiness. From within that open space in your heart, you imagine light, and you imagine transforming your body, your possessions, your positive potential and sending it out so it becomes all the worldly and trans-worldly happiness that other people need.

Remember your emptiness in this meditation. It's very important. I was just reading "Grace and Grit". It's Ken Wilber's story of his wife who is dying of cancer. She's doing this meditation, but when he wrote it up, he left this part out of the meditation. It's a very, very important part. It is very important that you use it to destroy that self-grasping, and that you recognize, "Oh, this is empty. My grasping, my fear isn't there anymore."

[Audience: inaudible]

Actually, if that happens and you start feeling physically sick, then you should say, "Oh good. It's working!" [laughter]

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>