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Tonight we are going to begin talking about the fourth far-reaching attitude which has a couple of translations; one is 'joyous effort' and another translation is 'enthusiastic perseverance'. These terms refer to the enthusiastic mind that takes delight in doing what is constructive. This is the joyful mind that has the necessary effort and ability to persevere. It is not going to poop out in the middle, sludge along at the beginning and fizzle at the end; it is going to have some life and buoyancy to it so that our whole practice is done with joy and not with "shoulds," "oughts," "supposed-tos," obligation, guilt and all those other 'wonderful' things that we bring along with us.

This, instead, is a joyous attitude and it is very important to cultivate because this is the attitude that makes us want to practice the Dharma. If we do not have much joyous effort then there is no real aspiration, no delight in the practice and pretty soon everything just goes the way of all the other projects that we have started and never finished. Our practice becomes like all those half-done macramé kits from the 70's in your basement. Without joyous effort the Dharma will be on a shelf in the basement with all the other half-done things. [Laughter] To avoid that happening, to really be able to complete our spiritual path and progress, you need this factor of joyous effort.

[In response to audience:] There's a clarity of motivation and a real strength of the mind, so that it is free of the "shoulds," "oughts" and "supposed tos". It arises from really seeing the advantages of the practice, the advantages of following the path. It takes delight in doing what is positive or constructive. When we have this it is because we have seen the advantages of the bodhisattva path and therefore have delight in practicing what is virtuous, what is constructive. As a result of this joyous effort all the realizations come. It is a direct cause for actualizing the entire path and it gives whatever we do some kind of strength, purpose and liveliness.

Why are Lamas happy?

People sometimes say, "These Tibetan lamas are such happy people. Why is that?" If you think that you are busy, just look at His Holiness the Dalai Lama's schedule. His Holiness is jetting from here to there, through all these different time zones with different languages and strange food and all these people going, "Oh bless me, your Holiness." What is it that gives him the kind of strength and joy to sit down with thousands of people week after week and teach and do all these different things? It is this far-reaching attitude, because for him there is a delight and a joy in doing the path. You immediately sense it when you are around somebody like him.

Or look at Lama Zopa, he meditates day and night. We joke that he carries his cave with him. He does not need to move to one; it just comes with him to New York, Chicago or Tokyo, wherever he is. Nobody has ever seen him lie down and go to sleep. It is not that he stays awake all night doing some kind of ascetic trip saying, "Oh I've got to force myself to stay awake because all these sentient beings are suffering and I had better help them." It is not that kind of attitude at all, instead it is an attitude of joyous effort and a delight in wanting to work for the benefit of others, wanting to create the cause for enlightenment and wanting to do the practice. So, therefore, it becomes real easy for him to stay up all night and meditate, whereas for us eight o'clock at night is too late to start a session. [Laughter]

Once we have this delight the practice becomes much easier and that is why at the beginning of our practice sometimes things are so difficult. We cannot get ourselves to the cushion. We open up a Dharma book and think, "Well, I really have to answer these letters and read the junk mail because there might be an important sale I am missing." [Laughter] We think of all these other things that we have to do instead. We are so easily distracted, whereas joyous effort keeps us really in line and the mind wants to practice. So Monday or Wednesday night comes along and we think, "Oh good I get to go to class" instead of, "Oh I have to sit there with this cat again." [Laughter] With joyous effort the mind wants to come to class.

Perhaps there is Nyung Nay and with joyous effort we think, "Oh I want to go and do this," or there are other retreats, or the alarm clock goes off at five o'clock in the morning and it is time to do your meditation and with joyous effort you actually want to get up and do it. Joyous effort gives us a real reversal in the attitude. At the beginning of the practice we do not have much joyous effort and that is why often the practice is quite difficult. But as we begin to practice, we see the results, we see the benefits of it, then automatically the mind takes more interest, becomes more joyful and one wants to engage in practice. That is why at the beginning of the practice sometimes it takes a little bit of effort, not joyous effort, but just plain old effort to keep ourselves going and to get ourselves going. After we begin to have some taste of the practice and what it brings, it really produces some good results.

A student in India

I just got a letter from one of my students whom I met while in India. He came to some courses I was giving there at the end of 1990. I got a letter from him recently that said he did a retreat and he was just beginning now to get a taste of the thing that we call meditation. He said, "It's been three years now that I have been making myself meditate and attend teachings and do all these other retreats and practices. I felt like what I was doing had not been getting me anywhere." Then in this most recent retreat, he began to see that everything that he was doing before, where it was more just willpower that got him to do it, that it had actually helped to create the circumstance in building up the energy so that this last retreat he did was quite meaningful and deep for him.

So at the beginning you can see that it is just this will power that kept him going and now, it is very much delight in the practice. He wrote in the letter that before he could not even sit and meditate for forty-five minutes. It was impossible for him. But in this last retreat he was doing a couple of hours and wanted to do more each session.

The three types of joyous effort

1. Armor-like joyous effort

There are different kinds of enthusiastic perseverance, three different classifications. The most common one is an armor-like joyous effort, or enthusiastic perseverance. This is the mind that is like armor, it has this strength to it. It has this brilliance. It has a shine to it and it really takes on the challenge of the Dharma practice. It is a courageous, buoyant mind that is interested in working for the benefit of sentient beings.

Armor-like joyous effort gives strength to the mind so that we can say, "Even if I have to remain in cyclic existence for eons and eons for the sake of sentient beings, it is okay with me. Even if I have to give up all these good movies to go to Dharma class, I am very happy to do it." [Laughter]

It is the mind that has the kind of courage that is not weak, that has buoyancy and strength and vibrancy to it. That is armor-like joyous effort.

2. Joyous effort of acting constructively, or gathering virtues

The second kind of joyous effort is acting constructively. This is the joyous effort of throwing ourselves into the practice of doing constructive actions. With this kind of joyous effort, as we go through the day, we are really on the look-out for whatever we can do that is beneficial for others. We look for whatever we can do that creates the cause for enlightenment, that puts a good imprint on our mind, or on the mindstreams of others – this is the joyous effort of acting constructively.

3. Joyous effort of working for the benefit of others

The third joyous effort is the joyous effort of working for the benefit of sentient beings. You will notice

that this one of working for the benefit of sentient beings is one of the categories of ethics, one of the categories of patience and also one of the categories of joyous effort. It is going to come up in wisdom too. We have the ethics of working for sentient beings – being ethical while we are working for them. Also being patient while we are working for them and not getting angry when they do not appreciate everything that we do for them. And then there is the joyous effort of working for the benefit of others where the mind is light and lively, light-hearted, enthusiastic and wants to do things instead of being heavy, dragging, dull and unmotivated.

Laziness: the principal obstacle

The principal obstacle to generating joyous effort is laziness. There is this very nice technical definition of laziness and it reads, “Having grasped the object offering temporary happiness, either you don’t want to do anything virtuous or, although you wish to, you are weak-minded.” Does this ring any bells? [Laughter]

‘Having grasped the object of temporary or temporal happiness’ means that we have one foot in samsara looking for pleasure in objects of the senses, what we call samsaric perfections and temporary things, and we are grasping to that. Then having grasped onto that, we lose our interest in the path and lose our interest in acting constructively, because we think the benefits of this temporary happiness are so much greater than the benefits of the Dharma practice. We think that chocolate ice cream brings much more happiness than meditation, so we go for it. We lose all interest in what is wholesome and positive. We grasp onto the object offering temporary happiness.

Or we have one foot in samara and also have one toe in nirvana and half of the mind is saying, “Yeah it would be really nice to do some practice now, but...” We have the ‘yes, but’ mind. We think about how practice would be really good, but we have all these other things to do and are just too tired. We think, “She said I shouldn’t push myself, so I guess I shouldn’t push. I should take it easy and relax. I feel like I am getting a cold, so if I sit and meditate, that is too strenuous. I might get really sick.” [Laughter] Laziness is the mind that, although it wants to do something, is weak, lacks energy and is very easily distracted.

The three types of laziness which interrupt joyous effort

There are three specific kinds of laziness. I find this division of the three kinds of laziness incredibly interesting because it gives a whole different perspective to what the word ‘laziness’ means. When we say ‘laziness’ in English we think of lying around, being slothful, lethargic, sitting in front of the TV, spacing out, lying on the beach and getting suntanned, going to sleep and sleeping for twelve hours, getting up at noon – that is what we think of as lazy. Now, all that is included in the Buddhist definition of laziness, but there are also other kinds of laziness.

The first kind of laziness is the laziness of procrastination, or the laziness of sloth and indolence. That is the one that we usually call laziness.

The second kind of laziness is the attraction to being very busy and attachment to worldly activities. In worldly language we call this being enthusiastic, being intelligent, having a lot of energy, being a go-getter and being successful. But according to Buddhist interpretation, all that effort put into samsaric pleasure and success is a form of laziness because we have lost interest in the Dharma and our mind is weak when it comes to the Dharma. Isn’t that interesting? What we usually would associate with being very busy and with being a workaholic, becomes being lazy in Buddhism.

The third kind of laziness is the laziness of discouragement and of putting ourselves down. We don’t need to talk much about that one because we Americans have lots of confidence, we don’t ever put ourselves down. [Laughter]

I want to explain each of these a little bit more in depth and give you the antidotes to them. It becomes quite interesting when you start to think about this.

1. The laziness of procrastination

The laziness of procrastination, or of sloth, is the mind that is attached to having a life of ease. It is the mind that just wants to be comfortable, hang out, rest, sleep, get that suntan, have a week of Sundays, not exert ourselves, sleep a lot, sleep in the middle of the day, take naps and go on long vacations at the beach – sounds great, huh? The reason that this is a form of laziness is because by being attached to lying around and sleeping and just having a life of ease, we never have time or energy for the Dharma.

Antidote – Meditating on impermanence, death and the disadvantages of cyclic existence

So the antidote to this one is meditating on impermanence, doing the death meditations – either the nine-point death meditation or the death meditation. The nine-point death meditation is where we think about the fact that death is definite, the time of death is indefinite and that the only thing we take with us at the time of death is our habits, our karma and the attitudes we have developed – our body, our possessions, our relationships all stay here. The death meditation is where we imagine our death, imagine the scene of our death and think about what in our life has been valuable, what we rejoice in having done and what we regret having done.

So the antidotes to the laziness of procrastination are remembering impermanence and death, imagining our death, meditating on the disadvantages of cyclic existence and all the wonderful lists which include the eight disadvantages of cyclic existence, six unsatisfactory conditions and three sufferings. This allows us to really see what our situation is, come face-to-face with the nature of cyclic existence and recognize very clearly that all is not hunky dory and it is not going to get any better. It is only going to get worse. Really facing that instead of distracting ourselves with movies and the like.

Changing the *mañana* mentality

This laziness of procrastination is often what I call the *mañana* mentality. “I’ll meditate *mañana*. I’ll do this Dharma course later. I’ll go on a one-month retreat next year. I’ll still be alive then, I am sure. I’ll go do pilgrimage some other time. I’ll read this Dharma book later.” With this kind of procrastinating mind we never get anything done. I think what is so harmful about this mind is that when we do follow it, we then feel guilty because we follow it. So then we have two problems, we have the laziness of procrastination and then we cannot even enjoy being lazy because we also feel guilty about it.

Do you notice the mind that feels guilty a lot? We think, “I should be doing this” and we think the remedy is to get rid of the ‘should’ and keep doing what we want to do [laughter]. But maybe what we need to do is actually apply the antidote – this meditation on impermanence, on death and on the disadvantages of cyclic existence – so that we change the behavior.

Applying the antidote wakes us up. It gives us some energy, and it takes away the “shoulds” and the “have tos” and the “oughts” because when we clearly think about death and reflect on what the meaning and purpose of our life is, things become very clear. Our thinking changes from, “I should practice Dharma” to, “I am going to die sometime and this is the only thing that is valuable to take with me and this is what I want to do and nothing is going to stop me and get in my way.”

It is not a pushing mind. It is not a mind that forces effort, but rather it is a mind that through understanding, through wisdom, has a joyous effort and energy. One way we might help this mind along, besides doing these meditations, is to try and cultivate good sleeping habits. Do not get into the habit of sleeping really late in the morning and do not get into the habit of taking naps in the afternoon. Once we get into either of those two habits, they are very difficult to break and then we spend a lot of time just sleeping unnecessarily.

Avoiding extremes

On the other hand, do not go to the other extreme and do this big thing of, “I am going to meditate until two in the morning if it kills me!” This is really pushing the mind. We are not saying to go to that extreme either. This is another thing that we often do because we are very high achievers and come from a high achieving culture. We crammed all night in college. We are good at pushing ourselves. But joyous effort is not pushing. Joyous effort comes from understanding. It comes from cultivating good habits, not from cramming and pushing and feeling guilty. So really check your mind, check the texture of your mind and try to transform it into an attitude that wants to do the practice.

Now that we know the meditations to do to counteract this kind of laziness, we just have to get ourselves to sit down and do them! But again, once you get into the habit of doing the death meditation and you

really see the benefits of it and you see how peaceful and calm it makes your mind, meditating on death becomes quite nice to do. It helps us to see what is important and throw away what is not important.

2. Attraction to trivial matters and negative behavior

The second kind of laziness is the attachment to ordinary activities or frivolous activities. This is the attachment to keeping ourselves very busy with entertainment, doing business, with being perfectionists, with being go-getters.

We like activity

This laziness of attachment to worldly activities is caused by liking hustle and bustle. We love the vibrancy of the city with all the different kinds of people, all the different activities and so much going on. We love the media and all the excitement the media provides.

We like to talk

This kind of laziness is also caused by attachment to frivolous talk. We love to hang out and jibber-jabber. We talk about sports and politics and economics. We talk about what this person's doing, what that person's doing, what this one's wearing, what kind of car that one bought, what kind of house this one wants to get, how to get the best loan, where to invest your money, how to get more money, how to pretend you didn't lose all your money. [Laughter] We talk about everything and do ordinary work, ordinary jobs, just keeping ourselves real busy with things that do not have any meaning or any purpose. Look at your calendar and your diary, all the things that are marked in there that you *have* to do, all these incredible, crucial, important things that we *have* to do – how many of them do we really have to do? How many of them are meaningful?

Useless perfectionism

Also, we have the mind that always wants to do everything perfect. All of our samsaric things have to be perfect. We have to make the bed perfectly. We have to make everything perfectly. Then we just spend a lot of time in quite useless perfectionist tendencies, not taking care of the thing that is really going to make us perfect, that is really going to make us a Buddha.

Checking your motivation

Now, here is something that we have to be real clear about, because often it is not the activity itself that is meaningful or not meaningful, it is the motivation behind why we do what we do. So I am not saying that everybody's career is meaningless and you all have to quit your jobs tomorrow. Whether our profession, whether our job becomes something meaningful to others, whether it becomes a Dharma activity or not, depends not just on what kind of job we have, but also why we are doing it, our purpose for doing it and our motivation for doing it. We could be doing a job that is a social welfare job, but we are doing it because we want to make a lot of money.

We say that doctors have a very beneficial profession and that they help so many sentient beings, but I think most of them go to med school for the money. So it is not the work that you are doing, it is the motivation that counts. If the motivation is a worldly one, it becomes a worldly activity. Whereas if your motivation is to really provide service, then even if you are making widgets, you provide service because your motivation is to offer the benefits of widgets to the whole society and to help your colleagues create a harmonious workplace and that kind of thing.

This is a call to look at, not only the activities that we do, but also why we do them. We have to use discriminating awareness on both of these things and look at which activities we do are meaningful and which ones are not. What things are really necessary and what are not. Also, look at why we are doing the various activities and which things are done with a meaningful motivation and which things we do with just the motivation to have a good name, to make a lot of money, to be popular, to feel successful or to prove ourselves to somebody else.

Homework assignment

Really spend some time looking at this. It might be a good homework assignment to take a week on your calendar and really look at what you are doing. Look at it in terms of the benefit of the activity, then look at it in terms of the motivation and then really start making some choices about what is important and what is not.

Clear priorities

This kind of meditation is going to tremendously clarify our lives and instead of feeling that we have to do this or that because we have so many obligations, it gives us the ability to assess what is valuable and what is not. Then we can set clear priorities in our life and once we have clear priorities, allocating our time is not a problem.

But when our priorities are not clear, or when our priority is doing what everybody else wants us to do because we want their approval, then our life really becomes mush because we cannot make wise decisions. We just do things because we think other people expect us to; they want us to do them; we are supposed to do them; we need their approval. Our priorities get real, real confused and very often we get engaged in a lot of unethical behavior because we are looking for other people's approval.

Antidote – Meditating on impermanence, death and the disadvantages of cyclic existence

Again, to counteract this kind of attachment to worldly pleasures and worldly success, do the meditation on impermanence, the meditation on death and the meditation on the disadvantages of cyclic existence.

Nine-point death meditation

Especially in the nine-point death meditation look at the last three points – that at the time of death the only thing that comes with us is our karma, our habits and our tendencies that we have created in our life; our body does not come with us, our friends and relatives do not come with us, our reputation does not come with us, our possessions do not come with us. Take a good solid look at that and recognize that although we feel so alive, so vibrant right now, our death could happen suddenly at any time and in that light, what really is of value to us?

This nine-point meditation is thinking about, “Here I am. I am dying. My body stays here. All those aerobic classes, all those beauty shop appointments, all the time trying on different kinds of clothes to see what I look good in, all the jewelry and the make-up, all the athletic this and that – well, my body is staying here now and it's going to feed the worms. What did I really use my body for? Did I use my life and my body in a wise way while I had it? What about my material possessions? I spent my whole life trying to get more material possessions, making my house really nice, getting a comfortable car, good clothes, going on nice vacations, collecting all the different stuff that I like to collect, having the things that made me look important in other people's eyes. And yet, I am going on without any of my possessions and somebody else will have to clean up all of my clutter.”

Then we think about our friends and relatives, all the people we are so attached to, the people we went out to the movies with, not because we were trying to lead our friends and relatives on the path to enlightenment, but basically we just wanted some pleasure and some happiness that was nice and fun. We have good times. They approve of us. They back us up. They praise us. They give us presents. They tell us we are far out and make us feel good. With attachment we often act against our own ethical principles, or just waste lots and lots of time doing this and that and the other thing, and the time we have allotted to practice the Dharma is just gone. The time is spent in front of the television set with a bag of popcorn, or a gallon of ice cream, or low-fat yogurt if you are heath-minded, and it is all of a sudden all gone.

Cultivating healthy attitudes

I am not saying neglect the body, neglect our friends and relatives or neglect our possessions, because we need to deal with these things in life. We need to keep our body healthy. We need to have some possessions. We definitely need friends and relatives. We are going to have them whether we want them or not! But we need to learn how to cultivate healthy relationships with these people and with these things. I am not saying trash all of them, but look at the motivation of attachment that just keeps us so busy spinning around these things for no long-lasting or meaningful purpose.

The pain of regret at time of dying

When I think of it, I think one of the most painful things of dying would be to look back at our life and have a lot of regret. This is why the meditation of imagining our death is really effective because we imagine, “Okay. I am dying tonight and I look back on my life. How do I feel about the things that I did during my life? From the point of view of death, how does the way I spent my life appear? How does the way I spent my time and the activities I engaged in appear now that I am dying?”

This helps us to make things so clear. Your mind gets really clear and your priorities get very clear. Your

mind becomes really firm so that you know how to say 'yes' and you know how to say 'no'. This meditation on death is extremely effective. We may wind up seeing that we have a whole lot more time than we thought we had, because we realize that a lot of the things that kept us so busy were not very important or necessary at all.

Collecting merit

[In response to audience:] In Asia there is a big tendency to think of future life insurance, of wanting to do virtuous actions because it is good insurance for future lives and you want to collect merit because it is like spiritual money. So then you do all these activities that are virtuous, but you do them to collect merit in order to have a good rebirth. Many people say that this is not a real good motivation because you are being very self-oriented and that you are not really doing the positive actions out of genuine concern for the people. You are doing them because you are caring about your own rebirth.

The thing is, for some people, the only thing that is going to motivate them to do something that is positive is that kind of outlook. So let them think like that. But if that kind of outlook does not work for you and it seems selfish to you, then I think that is good because it means that you are ready to go on to a more expanded motivation and think about doing positive actions for the benefit of others, not just for our own future rebirth.

I think in reaction to that some would then say, "Don't think about your next rebirth, don't think about death. Just think about how to make your life useful now." What we have to do in all these things is have a very big mind that can look at the situation from many different perspectives and see that there is truth and validity in all the different ways of looking at it. If you do not think about death and future life and you only think about how to make your life meaningful now, you are not going to really generate a good motivation either. If we do not think of the consequences of our actions in future lives and we just think of the consequences now, then often we cannot discriminate between constructive actions and destructive actions.

I think it's important to realize that all these different explanations are said to different kinds of people who are at different points in their practice. What we want to do is have a big mind that can look at the situation from all the viewpoints so that we really understand what the teachings are getting at.

Awareness of death – good at the beginning, in the middle and at the end

[In response to audience:] They say that meditating on death is good at the beginning of your practice, in the middle of your practice, and at the end of the practice. And they say that if you do not meditate on death, it is very difficult to do anything constructive at the beginning, middle, or end. When we are beginners and meditate on death, it makes us look at what we are doing in our lives and makes us shift priorities and get ourselves on the right track.

But once we do that, what is it that keeps us on the right track? What keeps us from just slipping back, becoming complacent, smug and thinking that we are doing a lot of virtuous activity and therefore our practice is completely okay? It is the meditation on death that prevents that complacency, smugness and self-satisfaction.

Also, towards the end of the practice, the meditation on death is what keeps the practitioners going, even the high level practitioners who have very strong bodhicitta (the altruistic intention to work for the benefit of others). They want to become Buddhas for the benefit of others and they recognize that they have a precious human life, that it is very temporary, easily lost and that they are not going to have it forever. So they really want to use their life now to attain enlightenment as quickly as possible. In this way the meditation on death helps even the high level bodhisattvas.

The meditation on impermanence and death was the first teaching that the Buddha gave when he turned the wheel of Dharma and taught the Four Noble Truths. Impermanence was the first thing he talked about and it was also his last teaching by the fact that he showed it himself by dying and leaving his body. It is an incredibly important meditation. Sometimes our minds have a lot of resistance to it. We get a little bit afraid, or nervous, or squeamish, or anxious about thinking of death and I think this is because we have never learned how to think about death in a healthy way, or how to think about it in a meaningful way.

[In response to audience:] I think the meaning of what the other traditions are teaching is contained in

the nine-point death meditation. They are going to reflect on the same kind of things. They may not have it organized in this numerical fashion, but the reflection is the same.

What does it mean to be aware of death? It means to be aware that death is definite, that nobody lives forever, that we are constantly approaching the time of death and that we can die without having practiced Dharma. Well, that is part of the nine-point death meditation. It is just that the Tibetans formalized it so that it is spelled out clearly. But other traditions would include the same kind of reflection in what they are doing.

The thing about meditating on death is that it makes you aware of death during other times. We have heard the teachings on death many times. How many of us are aware of death during our lives? We are not. We do not wake up in the morning and think that this could be the day we die. We have heard teachings on death so many times, but we never wake up in the morning and think about the teachings. Why not? Because we have not spent enough time deeply thinking about it. So the purpose of the meditation on death is to get ourselves to sit down and think deeply about it so that it becomes a very strong imprint on the mind.

A strong imprint on the mind is like when you have something important to do and it is the first thing you think about when you wake up in the morning. It haunts you the whole day and stays with you because there is a very deep imprint there. The purpose of doing the death meditation is to create that kind of deep awareness. Making an awareness is not just an intellectual thought of, "Oh yeah I could die today. What's for breakfast?" It is not our usual intellectual blah blah, but we are making it a presence that really guides our life.

What is and is not Dharma

This whole meditation on death is directed at the attachment to the happiness of this life. You keep hearing this phrase coming up again and again, "attachment to the happiness of this life." If you study with Lama Zopa long enough, you will start to even hear this in your dreams, because Rinpoche really emphasizes that this is the demarcation line between what is Dharma practice and what is not Dharma practice. If there is attachment to the happiness of this life then the action is not Dharma practice. If there is no attachment to the happiness of this life, it becomes Dharma practice. It's a very clear line.

We would rather draw the line somewhere else. We would rather draw the line so that we can have the attachment to the happiness of this life and also have nirvana at the same time. We would much rather do it that way, because that way then we can practice samsara and nirvana in tandem. [Laughter]

Mixed motivation

The mind of attachment to the happiness of this life is the sneakiest mind that you could ever possibly have. This is the mind that turns Dharma actions into worldly actions. This is the mind that says, "I think I'll go to the grocery store and buy something nice to offer to the Buddha so that afterwards I can eat it." There is lots of sneaky motivation that gets in there with the mind that is attached to the happiness of this life.

Often a lot of our motivations are very mixed. Why do we spend time at the beginning of our sessions developing the altruistic intention? Why, right after the breathing meditation and before I start the talk, do I say to remember our motivation? It is because at our level, or at least at my level (you may be more advanced), I need the impetus of consciously, with effort, generating a motivation that I know is positive, because if I do not do it that way, it is not going to happen.

Love and compassion for all limitless sentient beings does not arise spontaneously in my mind. What does arise spontaneously is that I want my happiness now as soon as possible, thank you very much. How we overcome that is by deliberately sitting and cultivating a good motivation. Even when we do that, sometimes there are still remnants of the old motivation there. It is sneaky because we have two motivations at the same time and if you have something with mixed motivation, then you get some positive result and also some negative result.

[In response to audience:] We work so hard to get those things. We think that it is so wonderful and we hang on to the memory of it. And yet it is totally gone. What really was meaningful about it? It was all like last night's dream, both the suffering and the happiness. What lasting effect did it have? I think that is the question we have to put to ourselves. I think putting that question helps the motivation become much

clearer and we will have less of this mixed motivation.

I don't think it's wrong to want to improve the quality of this life, if we want to just be a kinder person and a calmer person. But having a mixed motivation is more like when we seek fame, popularity, comfort and reputation from our practice. When we do the Dharma practice and get some result that influences this life then it gives us a little bit of encouragement, "Oh yeah it brings some result. It feels good. I feel different. I am going to keep on doing it." That is okay, but if we are just looking for that and that is the only reason we are practicing, then we are not going to be able to finish the practice, because we are going to get very easily discouraged.

Buddha's skilful means

[Audience:] They always say that if you do this practice, you will surely attain such and such a pure land, such and such a result, and even in this life, success will come to you and so on.

You are right. They do that because they know what we are like, because the Buddha knows what really motivates us. [Laughter.] I think Buddha is very skillful and Buddha just says all the results of something so that somewhere you will find in it a result that you like, and somehow by getting yourself motivated and doing the practice, hopefully your motivation will transform.

For example, they say one of the benefits of meditating on love is that you have more friends. "Well, that sounds great. I want to have more friends so I am going to meditate on love." But if I just meditate on love to have more friends, I am going to do it in a most crooked, twisted way and I am really not going to end up with more friends after all. But if I follow instructions and have a good teacher who slowly puts in the other [expanded] motivation of why we meditate on love, I might actually start meditating on it for the right motivation, or at least start balancing the two motivations, and then this mixed motivation might go more towards the positive side and I might actually get some good results from it.

Abandoning the wrong idea that suffering is holy and happiness is bad

[In response to audience:] Then the trick is if you have a good teacher, or if you have some wisdom inside yourself, then you can begin to go beyond that motivation to a higher level one. But when we think of giving up the happiness of this life, often what we think of is, "Are you saying I can't be happy? That I have to give up the happiness of this life? You mean I have to suffer this life? You mean suffering is what makes me holy?"

No, we are not saying that. We are not saying suffering is holy. We are not saying suffering is good. We are not saying that we should suffer. We are not saying that happiness is bad either. We are saying that there are different kinds of happiness. There is worldly happiness that comes and disappears and does not last long, and there is another kind of happiness that comes through spiritual development and transformation and that kind of happiness lasts a long time. It lasts because we really care about ourselves, we really respect ourselves, we have some love for ourselves and we want ourselves to be happy. If we have a choice between low-grade happiness and high-grade happiness, what are we going to choose? We are good consumers, we want the high-grade happiness. [Laughter]

What we are giving up is the clinging and the attachment to the low-grade happiness. What we are giving up is the mind that says, "Oh, if people criticize me I feel terrible. If nobody likes me it means I am a disaster. If I don't have these possessions it means that I am not successful in my life. If I don't go there on vacation I am never going to be happy. If I don't have this relationship I won't be able to live." This is the mind that is so attached to things, to temporary happiness. That mind creates a big problem.

It is not that we cannot have temporary happiness. We are saying the mind that is attached to temporary happiness creates the problem. His Holiness, for example, certainly has a lot of temporary happiness. He stays at nice hotels. He travels on planes. He eats good food. He has a nice set of robes. [Laughter] He has lots of happiness in this lifetime but the thing is, he is not attached to it. He is not clinging on to it saying, "Oh but I have to have this otherwise I will be miserable."

There is a story about this one practitioner, that when he was working for his own benefit, for the happiness of this life, he could never find enough food to put in his mouth. He was stealing, cheating people and doing all these devious things to get food and money. But he could never get enough of it to keep himself fat and happy. But later when he gave up that attachment to the happiness of this life and started practicing Dharma, he said, "Now I get so much food, the food can't find my mouth. There is so

much of it I have to give it away.” So you do get some worldly happiness as a result of Dharma practice, but that is not why you do it.

Having a courageous mind

Sometimes you do not get worldly happiness as a result of Dharma practice because we have so much negative karma that our negative karma starts ripening. So even though we are practicing very hard, we still have all this negative karma that keeps coming in and interfering. For example, many great practitioners in Tibet had to become refugees, live in concentration camps, suffer the heat and exile and things like that because of previous karma that came and ripened. That was not a result of the Dharma practice, but the result of negative karma. To practice the Dharma we have to have the courageous mind that can endure those temporary inconveniences and suffering because of our long-range goal and because we know where we are going.

Let us sit quietly for a few minutes.

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>