

DEVELOPING BALANCED SENSITIVITY

Practical Buddhist Exercises for Daily Life

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Preface to the First Edition

Buddha taught that life is difficult. Achieving emotional balance, for example, or maintaining healthy relationships is never easy. We make these challenges even more difficult than is necessary, however, for a variety of reasons. Among them are lacking sensitivity in certain situations and overreacting in others. Although Buddha taught many methods for overcoming hardships in life, traditional Indian and Tibetan Buddhist texts do not explicitly address the topic of sensitivity. This is because the Sanskrit and Tibetan languages lack equivalent terms for insensitivity and hypersen-

sitivity. This does not mean that people from these cultures do not suffer from these two problems: they merely do not organize the various manifestations of them under two general terms. In adapting Buddha's methods for self-improvement to the modern Western context, however, it is necessary to address these issues as formulated in a Western idiom. This book attempts to meet this challenge.

Some people object to learning from ancient sources. They feel that modern times call for new solutions. Nevertheless, the basic obstacles preventing balanced sensitivity are universal. Some modern factors may contribute to the proliferation of our lack of sensitivity, such as overexposure to violence on television and isolating the elderly in institutions. Others, such as dramatic background music in movies, highlight and glamorize overreacting. These factors, however, merely aggravate the deeper causes that have always been the case -- self-preoccupation, insecurity, fear, and confusion. Furthermore, throughout history, people living through the horrors of war, famine, or natural disasters have become immune to others' suffering. In many societies, only the strong and healthy survive and are visible. Moreover, people have always overreacted to gain attention, as with toddlers showing off when relatives visit. It is cultural self-centeredness to think that we and our times are unique and that we cannot learn from the past or other societies.

My main Buddhist teacher was Tsenzhab Serkong Rinpochey, the late Master Debate Partner and Assistant Tutor of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I had the privilege to serve for nine years as his interpreter and secretary. Whenever Serkong Rinpochey gave initiations into practices of the highest class of tantra, he explained that five types of deep awareness naturally endow our mind. He illustrated this point with everyday examples. For instance, we each have mirror-like awareness: our mind takes in all the visual information we see. Normally, however, we do not pay full attention to the details. Receiving an empowerment from a tantric master stimulates such forms of awareness to grow. As a result, we attain the five types of "Buddha-wisdom," such as the ability of a Buddha to be attentive to everything. During the years following Rinpochey's death, I reflected deeply on the significance of this point. Gradually, I realized that it suggested a profound guideline for developing balanced sensitivity.

Serkong Rinpochey displayed great flexibility in his teaching style, always adapting it to his audience. Inspired by his example, I set about developing a set of meditative exercises for recognizing and enhancing the five types of awareness as a method for improving sensitivity skills. To make these exercises more accessible to Western audiences, I borrowed

several approaches used in self-development workshops. These methods include having the participants sit in a circle looking at each other and having them work with a mirror more extensively than in traditional Buddhist practice. Normally, meditators use a mirror only to help gain an understanding of voidness and illusion. I began to teach these exercises in 1991 in various Buddhist centers around the world and refined the methods based on experience and feedback. A transcript of one of these courses was published in German as *Fünf Weisheiten: im Aryatara Institut e. V., München (1993)*. Munich: Aryatara Institut, 1994.

Many people found these deep awareness practices helpful and requested me to write a book on the topic. I originally planned to use as its basis a transcript of one of my courses. When I found the material too short for a book, I began expanding the topic and formulating additional exercises on other aspects of the issue. As my work progressed, it soon became apparent that these exercises could be organized in a logical progression to form a complete program for developing balanced sensitivity.

This workbook of exercises addresses primarily two audiences. The first consists of members of Buddhist centers of any denomination, either within or outside the Tibetan fold, who have reached a plateau in their practice and are looking for additional material to stimulate their progress. Often people reach a plateau when they are unable to apply their meditation to daily life. To meet this need, this program weaves together facets of diverse traditional practices into new exercises. They are directed not only at their customary focus -- people in our imagination -- but also at other members of a group and at ourselves. These exercises can thus supplement the standard meditation practices of such centers, especially when the centers lack a resident teacher.

The second audience is anyone seeking methods for overcoming sensitivity problems or even sensitivity disorders, but not persons so dysfunctional that they require professional help. People whose work requires sensitive interaction with the public, for example social workers, teachers, and medical personnel, may find the program particularly useful. With proper supervision, it may contribute to their continuing education.

Although the book provides the Buddhist sources for each exercise, undertaking the training at home or in a sensitivity workshop does not require understanding or even being aware of this background. Because this text is a workbook, however, reading it requires sufficient time to pause for reflection after each point or example. This follows the Buddhist pedagogic method. A tersely worded presentation stimulates a reader to work out the implications. With sincere effort, he or she soon experiences insight and

growth. As an aid for practice, a companion volume, *The Sensitivity Handbook: Training Materials for “Developing Balanced Sensitivity,”* presents the full program of exercises in a step-by-step outline form.

The structure of the workbook derives from a traditional approach to voidness meditation: the four-point analysis. First, we need to identify the problem. Next, we need to understand the method used to dispel the problem, so that we are convinced of its validity. Based on these first two points, we can then follow that method. The procedure is given with the last two points: eliminating two extreme positions.

In traditional voidness meditation, the two extremes are nihilism and eternalism; here they are insensitivity and hypersensitivity. With nihilism, we ignore or deny the reality of a situation or of cause and effect. Our naivety renders us insensitive. With eternalism, on the other hand, we believe that situations or the effects of our own or of other’s actions are permanent. Thus, we overreact with hypersensitivity. Balanced sensitivity is a “middle path” that avoids the two extremes.

The first draft of this book was completed in Dharamsala and New Delhi, India, during the spring and summer of 1997. During the autumn of that year, I taught different parts of this program in Buddhist centers in Germany, Holland, Mexico, Poland, Switzerland, and the Ukraine. Based on the responses, I modified the exercises and prepared the final draft during the winter of 1997/98 in Munich, Germany; Raglan, Wales; and Emst, Holland.

I wish to thank the organizers and participants of these courses, as well as Ven. Steve Carlier, Rajinder Kumar Dogra, Dr. Gary Goodnough, Aldemar Hegewald, Dr. Martin Kalff, Sylvie Kämmerer, Alan and Irene Turner, and my editor at Snow Lion, Christine Cox, for their invaluable suggestions. I especially thank Alnis Grants, Thirza Happé, Herman Horman, Burgel Norris, and Alan and Irene Turner for their kind support while providing the facilities for completing this book, and the students of the Aryatara Institute in Munich for being the patient audience for its final adjustments. Lastly, I deeply thank the Kapor Family Foundation for funding the project and the Nama Rupa Foundation for administering the grant.

Alexander Berzin
Munich, Germany
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Preface to the Second Edition

Based on my experience of conducting sensitivity workshops in England, Wales, Germany, Mexico, Venezuela, Chile, Canada, and extensively around the United States since the publication of the first edition of this book, I have modified the text for the second edition. The most significant changes include simplifying Exercises One and Three, expanding the procedural instructions in Chapter Two, restructuring Exercises Two, Five, and Six, and expanding Exercises Ten, Fourteen, and Nineteen. I have also replaced certain imprecise terms. These modifications appear first in the Italian, German, and Spanish translations of the book.

I have also divided the book into two levels of practice: basic and advanced. The advanced level comprises Exercises Sixteen, Seventeen, Eighteen, and Nineteen from the first edition. Chapters Fourteen, Fifteen, Sixteen, and Seventeen from the first edition, containing these four exercises, now form part of the companion volume, *The Sensitivity Handbook: Training Materials for "Developing Balanced Sensitivity."* This division appears first in the German edition.

I wish to thank Michael Ruh for helping to sponsor the German translation, Aryatara Institut for administering the grant, and Wendy Ridley and Hans-Harald Niemeyer for their valuable suggestions.

Alexander Berzin
Berlin, Germany
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PART I

Dealing Constructively with Sensitivity Issues

1 Identifying Sensitivity Imbalances

What Is Sensitivity?

Certain people seem naturally more sensitive than others. Sometimes this is an admirable quality. Partners are sensitive to each other's moods and do not make demands when the other has had a difficult day. Because of this type of sensitivity, our relations are healthier and our lives are happier. Let us call this ability "balanced sensitivity." In other cases, being sensitive is a disability. Insecure people are sensitive to the point that their feelings are hurt at the slightest remark. This syndrome is known as hypersensitivity. At the other end of the spectrum lies insensitivity. Self-centered persons are insensitive to the effect of their words on others and say whatever comes to their heads.

Sensitivity, then, is a variable that encompasses a wide spectrum. It ranges from insensitivity to hypersensitivity, with balanced sensitivity somewhere between. The degree and quality of our sensitivity, however, are not mathematical constants that remain fixed for a lifetime. Through education and training, we can change them if we wish. To do so, we need to look closely at what sensitivity means. This enables us to differentiate the factors that make it an advantage or a drawback. We can then explore various methods for developing or enhancing the positive variety and for reducing or eliminating the negative ones.

Sensitivity has both physical and mental forms. Physical sensitivity depends on the body's sensory apparatus or immune system. A surgeon, for instance, has sensitive fingers and a person with allergies is sensitive to dust. Here, we shall deal exclusively with the form of sensitivity that is a quality of the mind and heart. Such sensitivity may be to the environment, business, politics, wildlife, other persons, or ourselves. Here, we shall explore the last two forms.

Sensitivity is a function of two variables – attentiveness and responsiveness – each or both of which may be weak, out of proportion, or balanced. With attentiveness, we note the condition of someone, the consequences of our behavior toward him or her, or both. Responsiveness allows a spontaneous or considered reply to what we notice. We do not merely react physically or chemically to what happens around us or to us, like litmus paper reacting to acid. We respond with an emotion, a thought, words, actions, or some combination of the four.

A further dimension of balanced sensitivity is striking a balance between being sensitive to what others require, request, or demand of us, and being sensitive to our own needs. If we constantly cater to others without setting limits, we may strain our physical and emotional resources. Such a syndrome, particularly when accompanied with low self-esteem or a martyr

complex, is unhealthy for everyone involved. Similarly, if we only consider our own point of view in interpersonal relations, our narcissistic attitude may alienate us from others.

No one is totally insensitive or hypersensitive; no one caters exclusively to themselves or to others. Our behavior varies according to the situation, the people, and our mood. Moreover, imbalanced sensitivity frequently encompasses both poles of the problem. An overemotional response to someone is often insensitive to the effect that such behavior might have on the person. An impassive lack of attention or response may mask a hypersensitive fear of inadequacy or rejection. When we are hypersensitive to the needs of others, we may easily lose sight of what we require. When we pay excessive attention to our feelings or wishes, we may be insensitive to what others might feel or prefer. Developing balanced sensitivity requires a multidirectional approach.

EXERCISE 1

Identifying Sensitivity Imbalances

The eighth century Indian Buddhist master Shantideva explained that unless we can see a target clearly, we cannot shoot an arrow into its bull's-eye. Similarly, unless we can recognize the specific types of imbalanced sensitivity from which we suffer, we cannot effectively treat them. Therefore, the first step in our program is to consider various forms of hypersensitivity and insensitivity and then to check if we ever experience them. As both are multifaceted problems, we shall unfold their varieties by focusing on two main variables: attentiveness and responsiveness. Although the analysis is not exhaustive, it includes the more common forms of sensitivity imbalances.

The introspective process requested here is not for the sake of making self-judgments. No moral stigma accrues from being "sensitivity challenged" in certain areas. The purpose of the first exercise is merely to survey our personality, similar to surveying our consumer preferences. Mindfulness of our habits and tendencies provides a clearer idea of the facets of our profile that we need to address.

For practice in a workshop, the group facilitator may choose one example from each category in the schematic outlines. When practicing at home, we may do the same, choosing only personally pertinent examples. For advanced or thorough practice, we may consider all the cited examples.

Forms of Hypersensitivity

The first scheme presents four sets of alternative forms of behavior regarding others or ourselves. The alternatives are either a balanced way of acting or a hypersensitive one. Pausing after each pair of alternatives, we need to consider which of the cited examples is more typical of us. If neither example fits our pattern, we may try to find illustrations that are more relevant to our personal life.

(1) We may pay attention to a situation in either a balanced or an overintense manner. Regarding others, we may ask our sick child, for example, how he or she feels or we might pester our child with this question every five minutes. Concerning ourselves, we may watch our health or be a hypochondriac.

(2) Paying attention to the consequences of our actions may take either a balanced or an anxious form. Regarding others, we may consider their opinion when deciding something or we might be so frightened of disapproval that it disables us from doing what is best. Concerning ourselves, we may take care to do well at school or we might worry obsessively about failure.

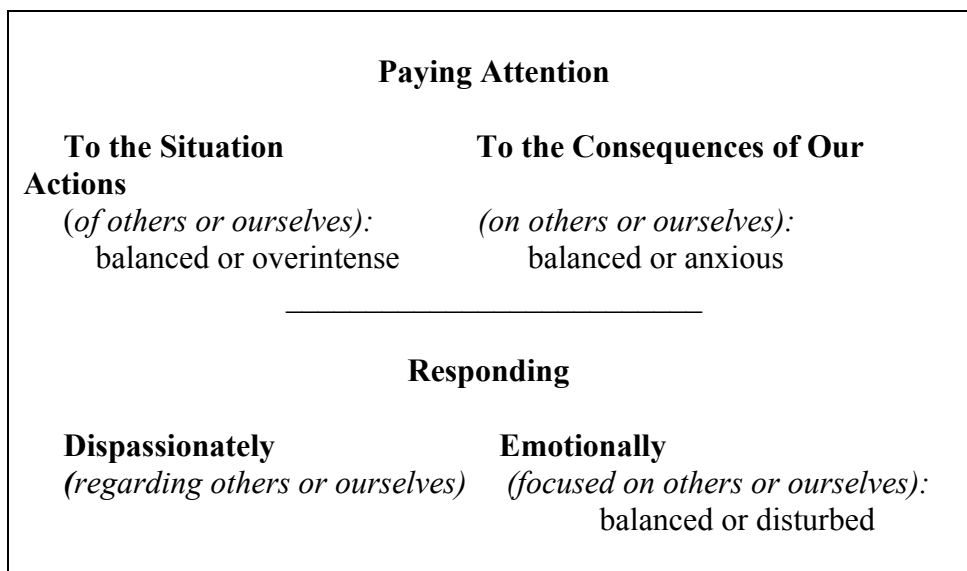


Figure 1: Balanced and hypersensitive alternatives

(3) We respond to what we notice in two ways – either dispassionately or emotionally. Regarding others, suppose we notice someone trying to pass us on the highway. We may respond soberly and shift lanes or we might become heated and think obscenities. Concerning ourselves, we may

respond calmly to misplacing our keys and search systematically or we might panic.

(4) Furthermore, an emotional response may be balanced or disturbing. Regarding others, we may notice that our partner is upset and respond with tender compassion. Alternatively, we might become upset ourselves. Focusing on ourselves when we suffer a loss, we may feel sad, but still maintain our dignity, or we may wallow in self-pity and depression.

Manifestations of Insensitivity

The second scheme presents five common manifestations of insensitivity, each of which may also regard others or ourselves. Continuing our introspection, we need to look for traces of the cited examples or of other illustrations we may find in ourselves.

(1) We may not notice or pay attention to a situation. Regarding others, we may not notice that a relative is upset. Concerning ourselves, we may not pay attention to the fact that our relationship with our partner is unhealthy.

(2) Similarly, we may not pay attention to the consequences of our actions. Regarding others, we may not notice that we have hurt someone's feelings. Concerning ourselves, we may not notice that overwork is causing us stress. In these first two forms of insensitivity, our inattention may go beyond not noticing something. We might also deny its existence.

Not Noticing

The Situation

(regarding others or ourselves)

The Consequences of Our Actions

(on others or ourselves)

Noticing, but Not Acting

(regarding others or ourselves)

Noticing and Acting, but with Imbalance

Without Perceived Feelings

Do *(regarding others or ourselves)*

With Unbalanced Judgment of What to

(regarding others or ourselves)

Figure 2: Forms of insensitivity

(3) Even if we notice and acknowledge either a situation or the consequences of our actions, we may still not do anything about it. Regarding others, we may notice an injured person lying alone in the street, but not stop to offer help. Regarding ourselves, we may notice that we feel tired while doing work that can wait. Yet, we ignore our feelings and do not stop working.

(4) Even when we notice something in others or ourselves and act in response, we may not have any perceived feelings. Concerning others, we may attentively care for a sick person, but without any feelings at all, like a nurse attending a patient in a cold, businesslike manner, simply as a job. When this happens, we may become insensitive both to the person and to ourselves. Concerning ourselves, we may follow a special regime when sick, but, unable to relate to our body or our illness, we may emotionally distance ourselves. Not feeling anything, however, is different from being dispassionate and calm. Calmness is a state of balance, not an absence of feelings.

(5) Suppose we notice something in others or ourselves, act in response, and feel something while acting. Still, our decision of what to do may be insensitive because our judgment is unbalanced. Regarding others, we may give them what we want, such as economic security, rather than what they need, such as more understanding and affection. Regarding ourselves, we may do what others want us to do, such as spend a great deal of time with them, rather than what we need to do, namely take more time for ourselves.

2 Quieting the Mind and Generating Care

Feasibility of Improvement

Having examined ourselves honestly, most of us have probably discovered that we have experienced many of the sensitivity problems outlined. This need not daunt us. Although the task of developing balanced sensitivity is complex and challenging, it aims for a feasible goal that we can achieve.

Everyone is capable of being sensitive. When we were a baby, for example, we noticed when our stomach was empty or our mother was

absent. We felt discomfort or loneliness and responded by crying. If we were totally insensitive, we could never have done that. We would have simply lain in our crib with indifference, feeling nothing and not responding.

Everyone is also capable of curbing hypersensitivity. As we grew up, for instance, we developed composure so that now we do not cry at the first pangs of hunger. If we were incapable of patient, calm action, we could not simply go to the refrigerator and take something to eat. This shows that we have a basis from which to improve.

Required Skills

The methods for developing balanced sensitivity focus on two major aspects. The first is becoming more attentive. The second is responding more constructively and healthily with appropriate feelings, emotions, words, and actions. To become more adept and natural at either aspect, we need to eliminate possible blocks.

Some obstacles equally prevent being properly attentive and fittingly responsive. For example, we may be preoccupied, unconcerned, lazy, or haunted with fears of inadequacy. These disturbing emotions imprison us in loneliness and alienation. We pay little attention to our external or internal situation and either fail to respond or overreact to projected inflation. Other obstacles are more specific, although not exclusive to one or the other aspect of sensitivity. When mental chatter fills our head -- whether judgments, worry, or just sheer nonsense -- we do not pay attention to anything else. When we fantasize the impossible, such as being unworthy of anyone's love, we do not respond to what we notice or we overreact.

Developing balanced sensitivity, then, requires cultivating confidence, concern, discipline, concentration, and a sober view of reality. In developing these positive qualities and skills necessary for any form of self-improvement, we overcome the obstacles preventing each. Confidence eliminates feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. Concern does the same with indifference, discipline with laziness, concentration with mental chatter and dullness, and discrimination of reality with belief in fantasy.

Two additional factors -- empathy and understanding -- contribute to balanced sensitivity, but need not be present for us to respond constructively. Suppose a relative suffers from terminal cancer. Although imagining his or her pain may be difficult, we can still nurse the person with sensitive care. Further, when we come home in a terrible mood, we may not understand what is bothering us. Nevertheless, we can still have enough sensitiv-

ity to go to sleep early. The more empathy and understanding we have, of course, the more able we are to respond appropriately.

Meditation

Meditation procedures suggest ways to develop the skills required for achieving balanced sensitivity. To meditate means to accustom oneself to some positive quality so that it eventually becomes a natural part of one's character. With repeated practice, we can train to kick a ball over a post. Similarly, through meditation, we can train to deal more sensitively or less overemotionally with life.

Meditation employs various means to generate a constructive attitude or feeling or to recognize one that is already present as an inborn quality. We may develop love, for example, by thinking of others' happiness or by contacting the natural warmth of our heart. The Gelug tradition of Tibetan Buddhism emphasizes the former method, while the Nyingma school teaches the latter in its *dzogchen* (great completeness) system. Western philosophical systems classify the two approaches as rational and intuitive.

Both rational and intuitive approaches require stilling the mind of extraneous thought and dullness. We cannot consider others' problems or tap our innate kindness when worry or fatigue overwhelms our mind. Concentration is essential to reach the desired feeling. Once achieved, we focus the feeling repeatedly on other persons or on ourselves, but without verbalization. Silently saying "I love you" may distance us from our feelings or may reinforce uncertainty about our concern. Directly experiencing love, through nonverbally focusing it on someone, builds it into a stable habit. This is the first step in meditation. The second step is to assimilate the new custom by concentrating fully on the warm heart we have nurtured. We feel it is now an integral part of our personality.

The Gelug tradition calls these two stages discerning and settling, or "analytical" and "formal" meditation. The difference between the stages is like the difference between actively seeing our newborn infant as our child and then basking in the feeling of now being a parent.

Basic Approach

This program for developing balanced sensitivity consists of a series of eighteen exercises based on the structure of meditation. People from any background, however, may comfortably follow its training. The only requirements are a sincere motivation and both knowledge and understanding of what to do.

Any self-development program that can be practiced on one's own offers potential danger for persons lacking a reasonable level of mental health. This axiom is true regarding this series of exercises. If, upon reading a few chapters of the book, anyone questions his or her ability to deal emotionally with the material, such a person should not attempt the training. Professional help may be more appropriate as a start. We do not need to wait, however, until we are perfectly balanced before undertaking the program. When we are sufficiently mature so that strong emotions do not destabilize us, we may try the methods.

Motivation is essential for undertaking sensitivity training. Without being dissatisfied with our present situation, we do nothing to improve it. We need to look honestly at the quality of our life. More specifically, we need to examine the quality of our relations with others and with ourselves. If we find these relationships deficient, we need to consider whether we want them to deteriorate further. Do we want future relations also to be unhealthy? Do we wish to disable ourselves from helping others because of our inability to form sensitive bonds? Deep reflection on each of these points is crucial for undertaking this program.

Moved to action, we need to search for the causes of our difficulties. Suppose we discover, through the first exercise, that our interactions often contain one or more forms of insensitivity or hypersensitivity. We need to contemplate how our relationships might improve if we were to reduce and eventually eliminate these imbalances. Once we have understood the causal relation between sensitivity problems and the quality of our life and we are sufficiently motivated, we are ready to look for remedies.

The first step is to learn about positive qualities that can help and the methods for developing and heightening them. The next step is to think them over and consider them carefully. If they make no sense or do not seem worthwhile, trying to cultivate them is pointless. Once we are convinced of their rationality and personal value, however, leaving them as intellectual knowledge is not sufficient. We need to integrate these qualities into our life through proper training.

Order of Practice

The cleansing of attitudes or "mind training" literature, known as *lojong* in Tibetan Buddhism, recommends generating positive feelings first for oneself and then slowly extending them to others. The assumption is that everyone likes him or herself. Westerners, however, seem to have a special problem with low self-esteem and alienation. Many find it difficult to relate to themselves at all, let alone relate sensitively and kindly. There-

fore, for most Westerners, developing some experience of balanced sensitivity toward others first and then directing it toward themselves seems a more appropriate order. Relating to others, even superficially, poses fewer problems to most people than does improving their attitude toward themselves.

Many people in the West also experience serious difficulties in their personal relationships. Since interactions with others in person can sometimes be too much to handle, following the lead of modern psychology may be better. Treatment often begins with private therapy before working in a group.

Most exercises in the program contain three phases of practice. Their order reflects the above considerations. The first phase involves looking at photographs of various people or simply thinking of them through a mental image, a feeling, their name, or some combination of the three. Traditional Buddhist meditation favors visualization. Nevertheless, if our powers of imagination are not vivid, focusing on a photo is more effective. In choosing a picture, one with a neutral expression affords the most open basis for developing sensitivity skills. Holding the photo at chest level helps to prevent the dullness that often comes from resting it on our legs. For many of the exercises, using a photo merely as a point of reference for thinking of someone may be more convenient than focusing directly on the person throughout the process.

According to the exercise, the persons we choose for this first phase of practice vary between someone we love, someone with whom we have a close but emotionally difficult relation, someone we dislike, a mere acquaintance, and a total stranger. People in the first four categories may be currently in our life or from the past. They may even be deceased. If we have previously had a difficult period with someone with whom we have a healthy relationship now, we may work with a photo or image of the person from that period. We may choose a photo of a stranger from a magazine. After several exercises, however, when we start to feel that the stranger has become a familiar face, we need to choose a picture of another person. Traditional lojong practice focuses positive feelings first on a friend or a relative, then on a stranger, and lastly on an enemy. In our exercise to quiet the mind, however, we reverse the order of stranger and friend since a stranger is less thought-evoking.

Some people may have had a traumatic experience with a parent or relative who abused them. Applying the exercises initially toward such persons is inadvisable. The emotions that arise may be too powerful. After some progress in the training, however, directing these methods at these

especially difficult people may be helpful, under proper supervision. The aim of the exercises is not to deny or to excuse their destructive actions, but to heal the damage inflicted. For peace of mind, we need to relate, without emotional upset, to our memories and feelings. We also need balance in relating to the person now if he or she is still part of our life.

The second phase entails working with others in person. During many of the exercises, we sit in a circle and focus in turn on each member of a group. We look gently at each other, without being intrusive or intense. The optimal number of people in a circle is between ten and twenty. If more persons are participating in a workshop, they may form two or more circles.

Frequently, we also or alternatively break into pairs and focus more intimately on one person at a time. In either case, the practices are more effective when repeated with a variety of people. Optimal is to include someone of each sex, someone older and younger than we are, and someone from a different ethnic or racial background. Practicing both with persons we know and with those less familiar is also helpful. When a group does not divide evenly, for instance into equal numbers of men and women, the participants may rotate partners until everyone has had a chance to sit opposite someone of the opposite gender. If the group includes no one from some of these categories, we may supplement this phase by focusing on magazine photos of people not represented.

In many societies, people are unaccustomed to making eye contact with strangers. They may find it rude, intrusive, or possibly dangerous. Even in conversation, they avoid prolonged eye contact. The block they experience may be due to shyness. Someone gazing into their eyes may make them feel self-conscious or vulnerable. If they lead lonely lives in an impersonal environment, having someone sensitively look into their eyes may be a unique experience that it is too much to bear. Alternatively, if they have low self-esteem and live in a highly competitive world, they may unconsciously feel that others will see through their façade and discover their inadequacies. Those in highly structured societies in which people frequently attempt to control each other may also feel the need to protect themselves from domineering manipulation.

If we are such a person, although we may find practicing with a group in a circle slightly awkward, we need not let this stymie us. The other participants are at a sufficient distance that allows us to take in an entire individual in a glance. Should we make eye contact, we may focus on the rest of the person's body instead. Further, when working with a partner, we need not force ourselves to gaze directly at the person. We may start by looking downward and focusing on him or her through the feeling that we

have of someone sitting opposite us. Occasionally, we may glance up for a moment and then look back down, until gradually we are able to maintain gentle eye contact. The quiet, caring space that we will establish with Exercise Two as the preliminary mental state for the training may help people feel safer to open up to each other.

The third phase focuses on ourselves. It involves first looking in a mirror and then reflecting quietly without a mirror. The mirror we choose needs to be sufficiently large to see our entire face comfortably. As in the case of working with photos, holding the mirror at chest level helps to prevent dullness. Some people have had particularly difficult periods in their life. They often feel especially negative toward themselves at those ages. They may also feel that they cannot relate to who they were at those times. Therefore, this phase concludes with looking at a series of photographs of ourselves taken over the span of our life. Such practice is useful for integrating life's experiences and developing a balanced, holistic attitude toward ourselves. If we do not have photos from a certain period, we may simply think of ourselves as we were then. Snapshots, however, are always preferable since memory rarely produces a clear or objective picture.

For optimal training, the three phases of each exercise need to lead trainees through progressively more challenging steps. In certain cultures, most people are outgoing. They find communicating with others, even superficially, emotionally easier than being alone. Symptomatic of this tendency, they chat easily with strangers. Whether at home or traveling, they need to have music or television playing continually so that they do not feel alone. The order of the three phases presented in the book best suits such persons.

In other societies, people tend to be more introverted. Spending most of their time alone, they feel more comfortable by themselves. In the company of others, they become emotionally stiff and reserved. They make friends much more slowly than do people in the previous group. For such cultures and individuals, practicing phase three of each exercise before phase two may be easier and more effective.

This program may be carried out either alone or, preferably, within the context of a workshop under proper guidance. A companion volume, *The Sensitivity Handbook: Training Materials for "Developing Balanced Sensitivity,"* provides a step-by-step outline for each exercise and four additional advanced exercises. Once we have learned the methods as part of a group, we may continue training at home, either by repeating the entire sequence of exercises or by focusing on merely those parts that we find

most helpful. If we have difficulty relating to any of the examples or images used in the exercises, we may substitute or add others that are culturally or personally more relevant.

As with traditional *sadhana* practice – multiscene mental dramas visualized for establishing a pure self-image – familiarity first with the complete training enables us afterwards to keep the context in mind when deepening our practice of any of its aspects. Occasional review of the entire program, by reading the Table of Contents, refreshes our awareness of this context. When training alone, we may substitute the partner phase of each exercise with focusing on pictures of diverse people taken from magazines or from our photo album.

Practicing the exercises in their proper sequence, with a maximum of one per session, brings optimal results. In many of the exercises, each of the three phases has several parts and each part has many steps. We need to spend at least three minutes on each step during a session and, for some steps, we may wish to focus for up to ten minutes. When practicing the exercises in a group for the first time, discussion after each step is useful for clarifying the procedure and affirming the experience. We may vary group exchange with conversation in pairs. Repeating the exercise immediately following the discussion adds depth to the process.

One phase or one part of an exercise may suffice for a session. This allows proper time to integrate and settle our experience. We may repeat each exercise or one of its phases, parts, or steps as frequently as is useful, both before and after proceeding to the next one in the sequence. If a session is slated to begin with working with a partner, starting with a short review of focusing on the members in a circle helps to prepare participants for the intensity of the one-to-one experience. As sensitivity training involves a delicate emotional process, gentleness coupled with perseverance is the realistic and sensitive way to bring about meaningful growth.

Rational and Intuitive Approaches

Some practices in the program take the rational approach, while others take an intuitive one. The rational approach to developing balanced sensitivity is to generate a positive feeling, such as love, in the same manner as when reaching a conclusion through Buddhist logic. We rely on a line of reasoning and an example. This approach is especially useful for persons with blocked feelings or emotions. Such people find difficulty in feeling something spontaneously. Reason provides them an easier access. When they understand why certain feelings are reasonable, they have fewer fears or objections to trying to experience them.

Some persons with blocked feelings, however, find that relying on a line of reasoning is insufficient for generating a constructive feeling. They know intellectually how they *should* feel, but either they still feel nothing or what they feel seems artificial and shallow. Sometimes, this leads to feeling guilty or inadequate. Such persons need to persevere. For example, swimming with a certain stroke may seem unnatural at first. Yet, with repeated practice, it becomes a perfectly normal action. The same is true with learning to feel something positive toward others or toward ourselves. Repeatedly generating a feeling through a line of reasoning leads to slowly beginning to feel something. This occurs as objections and blocks start to weaken. At first, that feeling may seem contrived. Yet, over time, it becomes so natural that relying on reason is no longer necessary to feel an emotion.

On the other hand, people who are emotional often find relying on reason quite alien. They consider feelings generated by logic to be insincere. For such persons, the intuitive approach may be more appropriate. It entails quieting down and working with feelings that naturally arise. The emphasis is on removing any disturbing elements that block or adulterate intuitive feelings.

No matter which type of person we are, looking down on either style is detrimental to progress. Dismissing the rational approach as too intellectual, or the intuitive one as completely irrational, deprives us of reaping the benefits of both. Training with a combination of the two is, in fact, the most effective method for developing balanced sensitivity.

Those who are rationally inclined find that once they begin to experience the feelings they are trying to generate, intuitively oriented exercises reinforce and enhance those feelings. Such exercises convince them that they have a natural source of positive emotions within themselves. This helps them to progress beyond the stage of experiencing their feelings as contrived.

Intuitively inclined persons find that once they quiet down and access their feelings, exercises that rely on reason add stability to their experience. Moreover, such exercises give them an alternative method for generating positive feelings when they are in a bad mood or when negative emotions overwhelm them. They also find the rational approach useful when the person toward whom they are trying to feel something positive is acting horribly.

Abbreviating the Training

Most people will wish to read the entire book before committing

themselves to any form of training. A workbook, however, is not designed for browsing or casual reading. As the style is purposely terse, a first reading requires sufficient time to pause and reflect after each point.

Some people may wish to do only an abbreviated practice. Others may find it useful to work through the sequence of exercises first in a short form before repeating them in full or joining a group. We may abbreviate the training by practicing only several of the exercises, by limiting the scope of each exercise, or by doing both. An introductory course, for example, might include Exercises Two, Three, Four, Ten, Eleven, and Sixteen. The topics would be creating a quiet, caring space, imagining ideal sensitivity, affirming and accessing our natural qualities, applying the five types of deep awareness, validating the appearances we perceive, and adjusting our innate mental factors. If time does not permit, we may omit the last two topics. A short seminar would comprise: creating a quiet, caring space and applying the five types of deep awareness. Simply creating a quiet, caring space suffices for a weekend workshop.

If we wish to limit our scope when practicing as part of a group, we may abbreviate by looking at a picture or thinking of only one person during the first phase of each exercise. During the second phase, we might work simply in a circle or facing only one person and, during the third, focus on ourselves only in a mirror or merely without one if mirror practice is normally skipped in the exercise. Those training alone may further abbreviate the program by omitting the second phase altogether.

Posture

Practicing these exercises does not require an acrobatic position or an exotic setting. Sitting comfortably in a quiet place with shoes off is sufficient. We may sit on a cushion placed either on the floor or on a firm bed, or we may choose a firm chair. In each case, we need to sit upright with our back straight, but not stiff, and our muscles relaxed. Maintaining good posture helps to keep the mind clear and alert. Those using a chair need to keep both feet flat on the floor. Those seated on a cushion need to choose a pillow of appropriate thickness and hardness so that their legs do not fall asleep and their back does not become strained. Those sitting cross-legged need to place the cushion beneath their buttocks so that their knees are lower than their behind.

Keeping the shoulders down and level, not raised as if working at a desk, is important. Holding the shoulders up at attention creates or accentuates tension in the neck. If we notice such tension, we may find it helpful to raise our shoulders and then to drop them forcefully to release the tension.

We also need to keep our mouth and teeth relaxed, not clenched. Resting the hands in the lap, with palms facing upwards and the right hand on top of the left, leaves the muscles in the arms fully relaxed. Moreover, keeping the tongue touching the upper palate just behind the front teeth reduces saliva production so that we are not distracted by a frequent need to swallow.

During the parts of the exercises practiced while sitting alone and thinking of someone or while focusing on ourselves without a mirror, we may keep our eyes either opened or closed, whichever feels more comfortable. In either case, bending our head slightly downward is best. Those leaving their eyes opened need to focus loosely on the floor and not pay attention to their field of vision. Keeping the eyes opened, however, obviously is essential during those parts of the exercises requiring looking at a picture, at other people in a circle, at an individual partner, or at a mirror. During such practice, we may blink normally, without staring.

Initial Procedures for Each Training Session

Beginning each session with a short breathing practice is helpful for turning our attention from previous activities. To do this, we breathe normally through the nose, not too quickly, not too slowly, not too deeply, and not too shallowly. The healthiest breathing cycle consists of three phases – exhalation, a quiet period of rest, and then inhalation. Pausing after breathing out causes the body naturally to breathe in more fully. While inhaling, we silently count the cycle as one. Without holding the breath before exhaling, we count the next cycle as two and continue until eleven. We then repeat the sequence a second time.

Next, we establish or reaffirm our motivation for practicing the exercise. This helps to prevent our training from becoming mechanical. We remind ourselves, for example, that we would like to achieve balanced sensitivity so that we can use our potentials for the benefit of everyone, including ourselves. In reaffirming our motivation, we try to feel our energy raised and directed toward our aim.

Then, we consciously decide to concentrate during the session. If our attention wanders, we intend to return it to its focus. If we become sleepy, we intend to wake ourselves up. To implement our decision, we may imagine adjusting the fine focus dial on the lens of our mind so that our mental state is now sharp and crisp. We also adjust our posture by sitting up with our back straight.

Lastly, we modulate our energy level. To refresh ourselves before the main practice, we may focus for a minute on the point between the eyebrows. While doing this, we need to keep our head level and look

upward. This lifts the low energy in the body. To calm ourselves if nervous or preoccupied, we need to settle and ground our energy. To accomplish this, we may next focus for a minute on our center of gravity, our navel, while keeping the head level, looking downward, and gently holding the breath.

Procedure for Each Part of an Exercise

To stabilize or regain focus, we need to begin each part of an exercise with settling the mind. We may do this by looking downward or closing the eyes and focusing on the sensation of the breath passing in and out our nostrils. Being mindful of the breath grounds us in the “here and now.” We then generate or access a certain attitude or feeling toward someone. Directing it at the person, we regard him or her in that way. Then, we let the experience settle by looking downward or closing our eyes once more and focusing on the feeling gained from the exercise. To regain our composure, we conclude each part of an exercise with focusing again on the sensation of the breath passing in and out our nostrils.

Most people find the exercises emotionally moving. The painful feelings that arise occasionally startle even the most mature persons. Some become frightened and do not know how to handle these feelings, especially if they have been blocking them before. If this problem occurs during an exercise, we need to try to relax and let the emotion flow through us and pass. As when receiving an injection, if our body and mind tighten at a painful experience, the discomfort intensifies and may become unbearable. To help relax while experiencing an unsettling emotion, we may focus mindfully on the sensation of our breath passing in and out our nose. We may then focus on our navel to ground us further.

When practicing with a partner, people often begin to laugh. This frequently happens because of nervousness or because of unfamiliarity with prolonged eye contact. People may also laugh uncontrollably as an unconscious mechanism to avoid personal contact. This syndrome often hides awkwardness or fear. Counting the breath once more and focusing on the navel before beginning the second phase of each exercise reduces the chances of laughter arising. To quiet the energies if laughter erupts, we may revert to counting the breath and focusing on the navel for as long as is necessary.

As an aid for keeping focus, during most of the exercises the group facilitator may occasionally repeat key phrases and the reminder “no mental stories.” He or she may do this one phrase at a time for each state of mind that we try to generate or, at minimum, repeat the entire sequence slowly

for the final integration at the end of each phase. In several exercises, we repeat a sequence of phrases after the facilitator – not mechanically, but only when we actually feel the emotions or generate the attitudes described by the words. Although we may repeat the phrases silently or aloud, we need to verbalize them audibly when working with a partner. When practicing alone, we may repeat the phrases to ourselves, mentally or voiced. Having a list before us as a visual aid may also be useful. When in a group, we may also repeat the phrase of the moment silently to ourselves if we notice that our focus has weakened.

Concluding Procedures for Each Training Session

Each session concludes with the wish that such reflection and practice contribute to our becoming a more balanced and sensitive person, for our own and others' sake. We also wish that everyone might achieve this state. Such concluding wishes are known as the “dedication.”

If a deep and meaningful conversation abruptly ends with the telephone ringing, the positive energy is immediately shattered and lost. If, however, the encounter ends with a mutual acknowledgment of how wonderful it was and with the wish that the communication deepen in the future, the result is different. The positive feeling created and the insights gained linger with each person. The same is true regarding the positive energy of the insights and experiences gained through these exercises. The energy becomes more stable and brings more benefit when we consciously add it to our network of positive experience and dedicate that network toward achieving our goals.

To reduce distraction from disorder or noise, we train at first only in the controlled atmosphere of a clean, quiet room. Many of these exercises may elicit strong emotions. Therefore, practicing them in the protected space of privacy, alone or among sympathetic friends, reduces tension. Gradually, we broaden our endeavor and practice generating constructive feelings in “live” situations. Using the same methods as when training alone or as part of a workshop, we try to direct these feelings to the people we see in the supermarket, on the bus, or anywhere we happen to be. Such practice helps us to become more sensitive to people's actual situations and not to overreact based on preconceptions.

Over time, the qualities we try to cultivate through these exercises become a natural part of ourselves. Our personality is no more fixed than our athletic skills. With motivation, proper methods, and a realistic attitude, we can develop either.

Nonlinear Progress

People who try to control everything in their lives often seek a straightforward, almost mechanical technique for handling emotional problems. They feel that if they simply know how to apply the technique, they will experience immediate results, like taking a pill. In this way, they hope to maintain control in face of anything that might happen. Moreover, they often try to find a bargain: they want a technique that will cost them the minimal amount of time and effort. They rarely succeed, however, in their high-tension quest. This is because life is an organic process, not a mechanical one. Thus, to improve life's quality requires an organic approach. Mechanical techniques for alleviating emotional problems, like cheap gimmicks, rarely go to the root and bring lasting results.

Developing balanced sensitivity, then, as with any form of self-development, including meditation, is a nonlinear process. This means that overcoming a sensitivity problem is different from fixing a leaky faucet. We cannot simply take steps A, B, and C, one after the next, and expect the results to follow instantly. Thus, practicing a sensitivity exercise and even completing an entire course of sensitivity training cannot produce a linear result. We may notice a slight improvement immediately afterwards, yet in moments of stress, we revert to our previous ways. This is normal and to be expected. Sometimes things go better and sometimes they get worse. In the short term, our development may seem chaotic, but over a longer period, a pattern of progress gradually emerges. If we understand this nonlinear mode of progress and discard any "fix-it" mentality that we may have, we avoid frustration with our development.

EXERCISE 2

Creating a Quiet, Caring Space

Traditional sadhana practice for deconstructing one's negative self-image and creating a more positive one begins with quieting the mind of preconceptions and establishing a "circle of protection." The latter practice may consist of an elaborate visualization of forceful figures posted in all directions to ward off interference. Alternatively, as in the Drugpa Kagyü practice of *ladrub* (actualizing through the spiritual teacher), we may generate a protective field of care and loving compassion both within ourselves and surrounding us. Love is the wish for someone to be happy and to have the causes for happiness. Compassion is the wish for someone to be free from suffering and from the causes for pain. A modern therapist follows equivalent procedures to establish a warm atmosphere of acceptance and trust within which both he or she and the client may feel emo-

tionally safe.

Sensitivity training also requires a safe internal and external space within which we and our group, if we are participating in a workshop, can open more easily to feelings and emotions. The Drugpa Kagyü approach suggests that the mental space most conducive for the process is a quiet and caring one. A quiet mind and a caring attitude are, in fact, indispensable for being attentive and responsive to others and to ourselves.

If we are practicing in a workshop, we may begin to create a safe and friendly space by starting the first session of the course with each participant telling the group his or her name and background. Once we have gained some proficiency in the meditation methods for creating a quiet and caring space, we may simply recall that space to reestablish the proper atmosphere before each part of the subsequent exercises in the program. We do this while initially settling our mind through focusing on the sensation of the breath passing in and out our nostrils.

Creating a Quiet Mental Space

First, we need to quiet our mind of mental chatter, stories, complaints, worries, songs, dullness, excessive emotion, or anything else that might interfere with being attentive and open. Three methods are helpful: “letting go,” “writing on water,” and “swell on the ocean.”

The first method, “letting go,” is a breathing exercise suggested by the analogy of thoughts as fleeting clouds. The Gelug/Kagyü tradition uses this image in its *mahamudra* (great seal) teachings to explain the nature of thoughts and the mind. Since quieting the mind requires special attention, we begin each part of the exercise with the conscious decision to rid ourselves of extraneous mental activity. Then, after settling down by focusing on the sensation of the breath passing through our nostrils, we turn our attention to a picture or a thought of someone and breathe normally. We use the three-part cycle of exhalation, rest, and inhalation, as described in the initial procedures for each session. While exhaling, we try to imagine that any verbal thought, mental image, upsetting feeling, or dazed state of mind we may have leaves us with our breath. We may visualize these mental objects as clouds temporarily obscuring the clear sky of our mind, or we may dispense with a graphic representation. We do not expel the mental items forcefully with gale-force breath as if they were invading forces, but just gently exhale them as if with a summer breeze. Once we have reached a quiet mental space, we continue breathing with the three-part cycle and gaze at the person with an objective and accepting mind. If paranoia arises about extraneous mental activity recurring, we release and exhale it as well.

Since many people have the deeply engrained habit of making up or repeating mental stories about everyone and everything, we start our training with people who conjure in us few associations. We then proceed gradually with persons about whom we find it progressively more compelling to think. Thus, we look first at magazine photos of an anonymous man, woman, boy, girl, and elderly couple and focus on one person at a time. When practicing as part of a group, the facilitator may mount these pictures on cardboard and display them in front of the room. Further, to help us keep mindfulness throughout the process, our group facilitator may occasionally say the key phrase “let go” or we may sometimes say it silently to ourselves. We do not repeat it continuously, however, like a mantra.

For especially compelling extraneous mental activity, we supplement the letting-go procedure with a dzogchen method. We try to feel our verbal thought process to be like writing on water. When we write on water, the letters arise and disappear simultaneously. There is nothing substantial about them. We may try an example by thinking slowly, one by one, each word of the thought “What time is it?” Without visualizing letters or the action of writing, we try to feel each word occurring as if through a process of writing on water. Most people find that the energy of the thought diminishes significantly and the thought loses its meaning. They often experience that it is difficult for the next word of the thought even to arise. Similarly, if we regard mental movies, disturbing emotions, and dullness appearing as if through a process of momentarily projecting a picture on water, the energy behind them also decreases and may stop altogether. Thus, after pausing briefly, we continue the exercise by focusing once more on the magazine photos, one at a time, and slowing down and applying the writing-on-water dissolution method to any irrelevant mental activity. As an aid for maintaining focus, we may use the key phrase “writing on water.”

Some people find that when they quiet their mind of mental stories and release some of their tension, even if for only a short time, certain emotional blocks seem to open. Repressed feelings such as sadness, anxiety, insecurity, or fear may suddenly arise. If this should happen, we may use a third approach suggested by the Karma Kagyü mahamudra analogy of the mind as an ocean and thoughts and emotions as waves. We try to feel the sudden wave of emotion pass like a swell on the ocean and then feel it is gone. As with the letting-go and writing-on-water methods, we do not concern ourselves where “I” am during this process. Otherwise, we may begin to feel seasick. If the repressed emotion becomes overwhelming and the ocean-swell approach proves ineffective, we may try to concentrate on

the sensation of the breath passing in and out our nostrils and then focus on our navel.

Since not everyone experiences repressed feelings arising, we do not practice this method as a separate step. Instead, we conclude the sequence, after a pause, with looking once more at the magazine photos, one at a time, and applying any of the three methods that seems appropriate. First, we try the letting-go approach to release any extraneous mental objects that arise. For more persistent problems, especially verbal thoughts, we use the writing on water method, while for sudden waves of emotion, we try to experience them as passing swells. We maintain focus with the key phrases: “let go,” “writing on water,” and “swell on the ocean.”

We apply the threefold approach while looking next at pictures of some people we know or while simply thinking about them. Starting with a mere acquaintance, we proceed to someone with whom we are or have had a warm and loving relationship involving few regrets. We conclude by focusing on a loud, overbearing relative who perhaps pries too strongly into our life, but who has not actually hurt us. Without letting go of positive feelings we may have toward each person, we release any agenda or upsetting emotions that might cloud a balanced and sensitive interaction.

Next, we look at our group facilitator, if we are part of a workshop, and use the threefold approach to release any mental stories and so forth that might arise. The facilitator first sits still and then gets up and walks around. Encounters with live persons have a higher level of energy than recollections of someone, and thus can more strongly evoke extraneous mental activity. At this stage in the training, focusing on other members of the group is premature. Others may find it uncomfortable if we look at them with a mind that is merely quiet, but not yet caring. If we are practicing alone, we may dispense with an equivalent for this step.

The person most people find the most compelling topic for mental stories is themselves. Therefore, next we practice the threefold quieting method while looking at our hands before us, and then at our face in a mirror. Finally, we repeat the procedure while looking at two pictures of ourselves from different periods in the past, one at a time.

Creating a Caring Space

Quieting our mind of stories, upsetting emotions, and other irrelevant matter creates merely one dimension of the mental space required for balanced sensitivity. After all, with a silent mind, we may be unconcerned about anything. We may fall into a daze and become inattentive to what is happening around or within us. Even if we notice something, we may not

respond. Therefore, we need to couple mental quiet with a caring attitude, but one that is calm and not anxious. Quieting the mind before generating this attitude helps us to avoid being worried, tense, or overemotional.

Caring is considering what we notice as personally relevant and important. It matters to us. To generate this feeling, we shall use the rational method of relying on a line of reasoning. Buddhist logic requires an example to illustrate and substantiate the truth of each statement in a line of reasoning. Here, the use of ourselves as an example for statements concerning other people also helps to balance our sensitivity toward them and us.

After settling down as before, we begin by focusing once again on a photo or on a thought of the person with whom we have or have had a warm and loving relationship. Using the threefold approach, we create a quite mental space. Then we listen as our group facilitator repeats aloud, one clause at a time, the following logical argument or we read it to ourselves if we are practicing alone. Pausing after each clause, we try to regard the person in light of the statement. We then sit back, figuratively speaking, and try to focus on the feeling evoked by the line. This enables us to affirm and digest the validity of each point.

The line of reasoning is:

You are a human being and have feelings,
Just as I do.
The mood you are in will affect our interaction,
Just as my mood will affect it.
How I treat you and what I say will further affect your feelings.
Therefore, just as I hope that you care about me and about my
feelings in our interaction,
I care about you.
I care about your feelings.

We conclude by actively looking at the person with a caring attitude. To maintain focus and to deepen our sentiment, we repeat after the group facilitator, or say aloud by ourselves, the four key sentences: “I am not going to make up stories about you.” “You are a human being and have feelings.” “I care about you.” “I care about your feelings.” With eyes closed or looking downward, we then let our feeling of care sink in.

To complete the first phase of the exercise, we repeat the entire procedure while looking at a photo or while simply thinking of a mere acquaintance, and then while looking at the anonymous magazine pictures. The strangers in the magazine photos may not be as important to us as our

friends and acquaintances are. Nevertheless, if a stranger approached us for directions, we would need enough care to take the person seriously and to take the time to help. Lastly, we follow the same steps while focusing once more on our loud, overbearing relative.

During the second phase, we sit in a circle with a group and repeat the procedure. After each line in the argument, we look at each person in turn and apply the statement to him or her. After this, we pair off and repeat the procedure with a series of partners, at minimum practicing first with someone of our same sex and then with someone of the opposite gender.

Practice with each partner is in four steps. First, we repeat the entire procedure, with both persons generating a feeling of acceptance and concern toward each other. Establishing a quiet and caring space with each other enables us to feel sufficiently safe to work on any imbalances felt from low self-esteem. For example, insensitive to others' concern, we may have difficulty acknowledging that anyone cares about us or about our feelings. Alternatively, we may overreact and reject someone's caring attitude if we feel undeserving. Low self-worth may also cause us to feel that no one could possibly accept our sincere concern.

To address these problems, first one partner and then the other repeats after the facilitator the four key sentences several times: "I am not going to make up stories about you." "You are a human being and have feelings." "I care about you." "I care about your feelings." The speaker focuses first on caring about the listener and then on feeling someone accepting his or her sincere concern. The listener focuses on feeling the other person's acceptance and care. While receiving open and warm attention, we need also to let go of our internal barriers, especially physical tension in our heart and our gut. After all, the feeling of being accepted and of being cared about is a gut feeling, not an intellectual one. If strong self-hatred makes accepting nonjudgmental, caring regard from others too difficult at first, we may focus on the breath passing in and out our nostrils. Awareness of our breathing process grounds us in a feeling of being alive and of being a human like everyone else. To ground ourselves further, we may also focus on our navel. As a final step, the partners alternate repeating each of the four sentences while focusing on the mutual generation and acceptance of caring concern.

The third phase begins with looking at ourselves in a mirror and repeating the procedure, but using a slight variation of the previous line of reasoning:

I am a human being and have feelings,

Just as everyone else does.
How I regard and treat myself affects my feelings,
Just as how others regard and treat me affects how I feel.
Therefore, just as I hope that others care about me and about my
feelings in our interactions,
I care about myself.
I care about my feelings.
I care about my feelings toward myself.
I care about how I treat myself.

When a caring feeling arises, we direct it at our image and maintain focus by repeating after the facilitator, or saying aloud by ourselves, five key sentences: “I am not going to make up stories about myself.” “I care about myself.” “I care about my feelings.” “I care about my feelings toward myself.” “I care about how I treat myself.” Trying to feel accepted and cared about by ourselves, we repeat the key sentences several times more. Putting down the mirror, we repeat again the key sentences twice. During the first repetition, we aim our positive feelings directly at ourselves. During the second, we try directly to feel accepted and cared about by ourselves.

We conclude by looking at two photographs of ourselves from different periods in the past. Focusing first on just one of the photos, we try to generate a feeling of caring concern toward the person whom we see, by using the same procedure, but thinking:

I was a human being then and had feelings,
Just as I have now.
How others regarded me then affected those feelings.
Therefore, just as I hoped that others cared about me and about
my feelings then,
I care now about myself then.
I care about my feelings then.
I care about my feelings now about me then.

We then direct our feeling of caring concern toward ourselves in the picture while repeating after the facilitator, or saying aloud by ourselves, the four key sentences: “I am not going to make up stories about myself as I was then.” “I care about myself then.” “I care about my feelings then.” “I care about my feelings now about me then.”

At the conclusion of the sequence, we imagine the person in the

photo thanks us for not thinking badly about or being ashamed of him or her. We then repeat the procedure while focusing on the other photo of ourselves.

3 Imagining Ideal Sensitivity

Developing balanced sensitivity requires a clear idea of the goal we wish to achieve so that we can focus our efforts in that direction. A Buddha is a paramount example of someone fully sensitive in the positive sense and totally free of all negative aspects. The descriptions of a Buddha's qualities, therefore, suggest the features we need to achieve.

Qualities Suggested by the Enlightening Networks

A Buddha is, literally, someone totally awake – someone who has overcome all shortcomings and realized all potentials for being of maximum help to others. The qualities of a Buddha sort into several enlightening networks (Buddha-bodies) that are fully operational with such a person at all times. An enlightening network is made of a vast array of components, not necessarily physical, which inspire and help lead others to enlightenment. Because the constituents work together as an integrated system, they do not constitute a mere collection.

Each Buddha has an all-encompassing network (*dharmakaya*) and a network of enlightening forms (*rupakaya*). The former is the network of qualities that comprise a fully wise, all-loving mind. The latter is the network of infinitely varied physical forms in which a Buddha manifests to help others.

If we wish to be fully sensitive in the positive sense, we need qualities similar to both enlightening networks. As if we possessed an active system of fully wise, all-loving awareness, we need deep concern about everything and everyone and attention to all details. Understanding each situation and person enables us to know how to help. We also need complete flexibility to respond appropriately, as suggested by a Buddha helping others through a network of enlightening forms. Moreover, we need to have all aspects functioning harmoniously together as coordinated systems, as in the case of those who are totally awake.

Forms of Sensitive Response

A network of enlightening forms includes two systems: a network of

fully operational forms (*sambhogakaya*) and a network of emanations (*nirmanakaya*). The former is a network of subtle forms making full use of Buddha's teachings on altruism. The latter is a network of grosser forms emanated from the former network. The *tantra* literature -- texts of advanced methods for self-transformation -- explains a fully operational network as an integrated system of all forms of enlightening speech. An emanation network comprises an integrated system of all visible enlightening forms, no matter the level of subtlety.

Perfect sensitivity similarly requires full use of our body and communicative skills. We need sensitivity in how we speak to others and in how we act. For example, we need to refrain from saying or doing anything that would hurt others or ourselves. Moreover, sensitive physical responses need to span several levels. On a subtle level, we need to show sympathy with our facial expression and body language. On a grosser level, we need to give, for example, a comforting hug or to help with the dishes.

A network of forms is not like a collection of suits in a wardrobe. To fit an occasion, a Buddha does not choose a particular coarse or subtle form from a fixed repertoire. Instead, a Buddha spontaneously appears in whatever form helping others requires. Similarly, when we are properly sensitive to others, we do not respond with a fixed routine chosen from among a certain number we have learned. Reacting to others with a set response makes us stiff and unnatural. It causes others to feel we are insincere. We need to be flexible and respond spontaneously with heartfelt words and actions.

Qualities of Mind and Heart

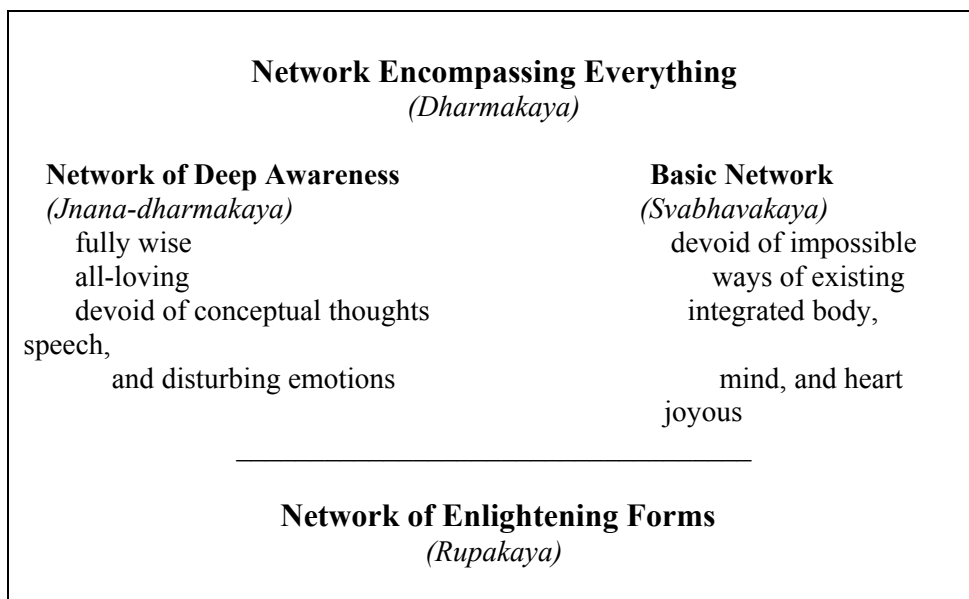
An all-encompassing network also comprises two systems: a network of deep awareness (*jnana-dharmakaya*) and a basic network [[framework of reality]] (*svabhavakaya*). The Tibetan traditions offer several explanations. The Gelug lineage and some Sakya authors assert the former to be the fully wise, all-loving mind of a Buddha, with deep awareness of everything. The latter is the "self-devoid" nature or "self-voidness" of such a mind. The self-voidness of something is its total absence of existing in a fantasized, impossible way. As the basic network or framework of everything, an absence of the impossible accounts for the existence and functioning of all a Buddha's enlightening networks.

The Kagyü and Nyingma schools and several Sakya authors explain an enlightening network of deep awareness as the "other-devoid" nature or "other-voidness" of a fully wise, all-loving mind. Other-voidness is the absence from the subtlest level of the mind of all grosser levels, such as

conceptual thoughts or disturbing emotions. Other-voidness also implies the endowment of this level of mind with all enlightening qualities. These include compassion, understanding, and the ability to benefit others through restraining from inappropriate actions and through engaging in fitting deeds. According to this position, the basic network of a Buddha is the inseparability of the individual enlightening systems functioning together as a “metanetwork.” The *Kalachakra* (cycles of time) literature offers another variation. The deep joy that characterizes fully wise, all-loving awareness constitutes the basic network or framework of everything.

Each of the all-encompassing networks suggests factors needed for developing balanced sensitivity. Proper sensitivity depends not only on love and understanding. It also relies on the fact that we, our heart, and our mind do not exist in fantasized ways. No one is the center of the universe, nor is anyone totally cut off from others or from themselves. Moreover, no one is incapable of being sensitive. This is because everyone’s mind is fully endowed with all abilities, such as the capacity to love, the competence to understand, and the capability to restrain from what is inappropriate.

Furthermore, when we are properly sensitive, our mind remains free of disturbing thoughts, upsetting emotions, and unsettling attitudes. Our feelings, speech, and conduct are integrated and consistent. Free of the insecurity out of which we project fears and fantasies, our mind is also naturally joyous.



Network of Fully Operational Forms <i>(Sambhogakaya)</i> subtle forms of physical expression verbal communication	Network of Emanations <i>(Nirmanakaya)</i> behavioral expression
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Figure 3: The enlightening networks

EXERCISE 3

Imagining Ideal Sensitivity

The following three-part exercise takes a more intuitive approach than the previous one. It is suggested by the basic procedure of tantric visualization practice. In tantra, we imagine that we already have a Buddha’s enlightening qualities. We picture acting with them toward everyone around us. Here, we shall use the qualities suggested by the characteristics of the enlightening networks. Like a rehearsal for a performance, such practice familiarizes us with the ways in which we would like to act in the future. This serves as a cause for actualizing these skills more quickly. At the end, we strengthen our resolve by adopting the structure of meditation on the four “immeasurable attitudes”: love, compassion, joy, and equanimity.

The first phase of the exercise focuses on a photo or on a thought of someone with whom we have or have had a positive emotional relationship. We begin by creating a quiet, caring space, as in Exercise Two. An abbreviated procedure is sufficient. With the threefold method of letting go, writing on water, and the ocean swell, we quiet the mind while focusing on the person. When we have achieved a modicum of mental silence, we think: “You are a human being and have feelings.” “I care about you.” “I care about your feelings.”

Next, we use the breath and the image of writing on water to try to still our mind further of preconceptions and nonverbal judgments. We then try to release our feeling of self-importance by reminding ourselves that we are not the center of the universe. The other person also exists. We honor the conventional boundaries of propriety. For example, we do not pry intrusively into his or her private affairs. Yet, we try to feel that no solid walls stand between us, preventing heartfelt communication. The nonexistence of walls does not leave us exposed, frightened, and insecure. On the contrary, with no barriers obstructing love and understanding between us, we try to relax our defenses and feel no fear.

Experiencing joy at the possibilities of our encounter, we now focus attentively on the person. Trying to look at him or her with warmth and understanding, we also express our caring concern with appropriate facial expression and body language. If we were to listen to someone's problems with a blank expression, he or she might feel we did not care. On the other hand, if we were to wear an idiotic grin on our face, the person might feel we were not taking him or her seriously. Moreover, if we sit with arms folded, the person might feel we were distant and judgmental.

Exercising self-control to refrain from saying or doing anything that would hurt others or ourselves, we imagine responding with kind words and thoughtful actions. If we are listening to someone on the telephone, for example, unless we occasionally say at least "uh huh," the person suspects we are not even listening. On the other hand, if we say too much, he or she might feel we just want to hear ourselves speak. Moreover, listening with a sympathetic smile in our eyes and nodding our head are often not enough. We need to take more demonstrative steps with appropriate actions. For instance, we might put our arm around someone's shoulders, if this would be of comfort, or offer to help with the person's tasks.

Lastly, we need to familiarize ourselves with these factors. Our group leader or we may repeat slowly, one by one, the following fourteen key phrases in sequence several times: "no mental stories," "caring concern," "no judgments," "no self-importance," "no solid walls," "no fears," "joy," "focus," "warmth," "understanding," "facial expression," "self-control," "kind words," and "thoughtful actions." With each phrase, we try to look at the person with the state of mind or feeling.

We conclude by slowly thinking the following three thoughts, one at a time, and by trying to feel their sentiment sincerely. "How wonderful it would be if I could become like this." "I wish I could become like this." "I shall definitely try to become like this." Then, we try to think of a shining example of balanced sensitivity – whether a Buddha, a spiritual leader, or someone from our personal life. Looking at a photo or simply picturing the person in our mind, we request inspiration. We try to imagine that warm yellow light radiates from the person and fills us with the inspiring strength to reach our goal. Imagining that the figure dissolves into our heart, we try to feel ourselves glowing with the light of inspiration.

Next, we repeat a shortened procedure twice while focusing on magazine pictures of anonymous people. Each time, we focus on a different person for the entire sequence up to and including the repetition of the key phrases. We omit the steps of the practice that followed this procedure. Lastly, we repeat the process while focusing on a photo or on a thought of a

loud, overbearing relative or of an obnoxious neighbor or fellow worker.

Feeling Balanced Sensitivity Toward Someone in Person and Toward Ourselves

During the second phase of the exercise, we sit in a circle with the other members of our workshop. At each step, we try to look at each person in turn with the same fourteen states of mind, attitudes, feelings, and intentions as when practicing with a photograph or with a thought of someone. To help us keep mindful, we may use the key phrases as before. Then, we repeat the procedure while facing a partner.

We begin the third phase by looking in a mirror. Again, we repeat the sequence of fourteen attitudes, directing them now at ourselves as follows. Stilling our mind of stories and uncaring feelings, we try also to release our fixed attitudes and to shed our self-judgments. To dispel our fantasies, we note that we are not the most important person in the world or the only one with problems. Moreover, we try to see that there are no walls preventing us from relating to ourselves. Any self-alienation we feel is based on sheer fiction. Unafraid, we try to feel relief and joy at the possibility of being open and relaxed with ourselves. We then focus with warm understanding and try to exercise self-control not to overreact with low self-esteem and not to be self-destructive. At ease and at peace with ourselves, we soften the expression on our face and try to look with at least a smile in our eyes. We resolve to speak to ourselves kindly, not to put ourselves down, and to treat ourselves in a thoughtful manner.

With the fourteen key phrases, we repeat the sequence several times slowly. We then put down the mirror and go through the sequence again, but now just feeling the sentiments directly. Lastly, we repeat the exercise twice, while directing our attention at a photograph of ourselves from a different period in the past each time. Especially helpful is working with periods we would rather forget or about which we feel self-hatred. For instance, we may focus on a time when we acted foolishly in an unhealthy relationship. In place of the phrases “kind words” and “thoughtful actions,” we substitute “kind thoughts of forgiveness.”

4 Affirming and Accessing Our Natural Abilities

The Necessity for a Pragmatic Means

Imagining what it would be like to be as perfectly balanced in our sensitivity as a Buddha gives us some idea of the goal we would like to

achieve. Comparing our present level of sensitivity with this ideal also helps motivate us to strive toward this aim. Nevertheless, we need more than the power of imagination to reach this goal. In addition, we need conviction in our ability to achieve it and a down-to-earth basis from which to grow.

The breathing method of letting go and use of the images of writing on water and a swell on the ocean can bring us a quiet mind, at least temporarily. We may reinforce this state by focusing on the sensation of the breath passing in and out our nostrils as we breathe normally. A calm state of mind serves as a platform for reaching deeper levels of inner peace and for seeing reality more clearly. However, it is difficult to generate and implement such qualities as joy, warmth, and tender understanding by merely conjuring them in our imagination. Relying purely on the rational approach of logic is also not so simple. The teachings on Buddha-nature suggest a more pragmatic means to access a working level of these qualities. Following these methods brings confidence that the goal is practicable.

Buddha-Nature

Buddha taught that everyone, despite gender, age, or race, could evolve to the state of maturity he had reached. This is because each individual possesses the natural factors that allow for attainment of the enlightening networks. He called these factors “Buddha-nature.” They fall into three basic groups. Let us present them in the context of how they pertain to the topic of sensitivity.

(1) The most fundamental features that allow us balance in our sensitivity are the mind’s other-void and self-void natures. No one’s mind is permanently cluttered with endless thoughts or haunting images. No one’s heart is eternally plagued with disturbing emotions or upsetting feelings. Moreover, no one’s mind exists as inherently flawed or incapable of balance. These other-void and self-void natures are abiding facts. We need merely to realize them.

(2) The basic qualities that allow for balanced sensitivity naturally endow our heart and mind. These qualities are a part of our innate networks of positive potential and deep awareness (*yeshey*) – our “collections of merit and wisdom.” Just as everyone’s body contains a stomach as part of its digestive system, everyone’s heart and mind have a potential for warmth and a capacity for understanding as components of their positive potential and awareness systems. These basic components have a certain level of strength in each person, as is the case with physical organs. For example, everyone has a certain level of potential for warmth, and everyone has a

certain amount of understanding. No matter what that level and amount may be, we need merely to remove the obstacles preventing these aspects from functioning fully and to build them up further – in strength, in breadth, and in depth.

(3) Our heart and mind can be stimulated to grow. Everyone can be inspired by something or someone to reach new heights. This point accounts for the fact that with favorable circumstances our talents can blossom. We need merely openness and receptivity.

Basis, Pathway, and Resultant Levels

Buddhist analysis differentiates basis, pathway, and resultant levels of certain phenomena. The factors comprising the positive potential and deep awareness networks are among them. Their basis level is their natural occurrence as features of our heart and mind. Various practices can enhance these qualities so that they function through a broad range of pathway levels. These levels act as a pathway for achieving the resultant level: the fully matured functioning of these features as part of the enlightening networks.

Since everyone has at least a basis level of qualities such as potential warmth and understanding, we can all recall an incident in which they were functioning to some degree. Memory of personal experience is usually more vivid than an imagined occurrence. Consequently, recollection of a certain feeling acts as a more effective springboard for generating it again. This is the method we shall employ in the next step of our training.

Acknowledging Our Network of Positive Potential

Positive potential to benefit others and ourselves results from constructive behavior and, when actualized, brings happiness and comfort. Constructive behavior refers primarily to two activities: (1) helping others and ourselves and (2) restraining from acting, speaking, or thinking under the influence of disturbing emotions. Such behavior results from loving concern and from self-control. Therefore, if we all possess some potential for warmth as part of our Buddha-nature, we must also have a basis level of happiness as its result and of loving concern and self-control as its causes. If we can recognize and access these three qualities, we can develop them further.

Happiness or comfort is defined as that feeling which, when experienced, we would like to have it continue or repeat. This does not imply necessarily being attached to the feeling. We may be content and happy watching our children at play, but not cling to that experience when it is

time for them to go to bed. Nor does this definition imply that a feeling we like must be intense to qualify as happiness. The mellow joy of relaxing after a day of work is not dramatic, but is pleasurable and something we would like to repeat.

No matter how dour or depressed we might usually be; we have all experienced moments that we would like to continue. Nearly everyone has savored the enjoyment of being in a park on a warm sunny day, or lying in a warm cozy bed in the morning. Comfortable, content, and happy to be there, we do not have the slightest wish to be elsewhere. If we remember the simple pleasures in life, we can use them as foundations for feeling comfortable, content, and happy not merely to be in a particular place, but also to be with a particular person, without wishing that we were alone or with someone else. Such a relaxed state of mind forms the basis for extending joy to the person.

Everyone also has a basis level of concern for others. Biologists call it the instinct for the survival of the species. We see clear evidence of inborn concern for others in small children. Almost all youngsters instinctively like to take care of a doll, to play house or doctor, or to defend their realm against invaders. Moreover, as an adult, we gain satisfaction and fulfillment when, without pressure or obligation, we can nurture, guide, or protect someone. This happens even if the person is not our child. When we recall the warm concern we naturally feel when petting a kitten or puppy in our lap, we have a basis for extending the same regard to anyone, including ourselves.

All of us can also exercise a certain amount of discipline and self-control not to hurt others or ourselves. For example, we naturally exercise care and control when removing a splinter from our own or someone else's finger. Recalling this ability, we can apply it to refrain from acting destructively or inappropriately.

Since we each have a basis level of happiness, regard for others, and self-control, we can conclude that we all have at least some potential to benefit others and ourselves. This means that everyone has acted constructively in the past, to varying degrees. In other words, no one is totally bad. Affirming this is important, particularly regarding ourselves if we suffer from low self-esteem.

Appreciating Our Network of Deep Awareness and Our Ability to Be Inspired

We all are born with a network not only of positive potentials, but also of various types of deep awareness. Our mind innately has the cogni-

tive features that allow us to gain knowledge, to discriminate between what is appropriate and what is not, and to know what to do. For example, when our shoe is untied, we can see the situation, discriminate that something is amiss, and understand what we need to do and how to do it. Moreover, all of us are also capable of focusing. While writing something down, we remain focused on the task. Acknowledging these abilities gives us the self-confidence to sense, understand, and respond sensibly, with focused attention, to others' or our own condition.

Lastly, everyone's heart and mind can be moved by something or someone – whether it be by music, the beauty of nature, a just cause, or an outstanding person. Recalling the uplifting feeling we gain from whatever moves us, we can harness that feeling for constructive purposes. We can use it to inspire ourselves to transcend the basis level of our remembered good qualities. This enables us slowly to bring these qualities to their resultant level of perfectly balanced sensitivity, which we can only begin to imagine now.

EXERCISE 4

Affirming and Accessing Our Natural Abilities

To gain a more vivid feeling for some qualities that we merely imagined in the previous exercise, here we try to remember our natural experience of various aspects of balanced sensitivity. We then turn our attention to others and to ourselves, while trying to continue to feel these mental factors. The exercise is not suggesting the contrived method of remembering a feeling from one occasion and then transferring it to another. Instead, we confirm that we naturally have the main components of balanced sensitivity and that we can feel them while focusing on others and on ourselves.

We begin the first phase by focusing on a photo or simply on a thought of someone with whom we have or have had a positive relationship. We regard the person with a quiet mind and a caring attitude. Then, looking downward or closing the eyes, we try to recall feeling comfortable, content, and happy while sitting or walking in a park on a warm sunny day. We have no wish to be elsewhere or to be doing anything else. Letting go of the image of the park, we imagine the feeling of ease fills our body and radiates from our pores, as if we were the sun. Without deliberate or forced effort, the feeling naturally embraces anyone who comes within its span. We then look at the photo or think of the person. Imagining that he or she has entered the field of our sunshine, we feel comfortable, content, and happy to

meet the person. We then look down or close the eyes, and let the experience settle.

We repeat the procedure with the following five remembered states of mind. Feeling comfortable, content, and happy to be with someone, we then need to pay attention to his or her situation and words. Remembering our ability to focus when writing something, we try to radiate a field of attention and then turn to the person.

Needing a warm caring attitude to respond to what we notice or hear, we recall the tender protectiveness we felt while petting a kitten in our lap. When we feel the warmth of tender affection, we also try to glow with it and then look at the photo or think of the individual.

Warm concern is not enough; we also need understanding in order to respond in an appropriate manner. Remembering the understanding we had when we tied our shoes, we try to radiate understanding and within the scope of its reach, focus on the person. Here, an understanding state of mind does not mean that we actually understand everything that might be troubling the person. Rather, it is a clear and lucid state of mind, capable of understanding, and keenly interested and willing to try to comprehend whatever it perceives.

In responding properly, we need care to avoid causing harm to the person or to ourselves. Bringing to mind the carefulness and self-control we exercised not to hurt ourselves when removing a splinter from our fingers, we extend a field of self-discipline not to cause harm and turn to the person.

Lastly, we need inspiration to lift our energies so that we may actively respond in a fresh and creative way, with our hearts fully engaged. Otherwise, as in the case of the fourth time we get up in the middle of the night to comfort our crying infant, we may be attentive, tender, and understanding, but our response may come from “automatic pilot.” The infant knows the difference between a mechanical and a heartfelt response, and so do others. Therefore, we recall the inspiration we felt while watching a beautiful sunset and try to shine with inspired, uplifted energy and then focus on the person.

Maintaining focus on the person, we regenerate the six feelings in sequence several times, by listening to our workshop leader slowly reciting the following six key phrases or cuing ourselves: “mellow comfort, as when in a park on a warm, sunny day,” “focus, as when writing something,” “tender protectiveness, as when petting a kitten in my lap,” “understanding, as when tying my shoes,” “self-control not to cause harm, as when removing a splinter from my finger,” and “inspiration, like when watching a beautiful sunset.” With each phrase, we regenerate the state of mind by

relying on the image of the park and so on for only a moment. Then, shining with the appropriate feeling, we imagine the radiance of that feeling embraces the person.

At first, we work with merely one state of mind at a time. Gradually, we use the same procedure to try to integrate all six into a network. A network consists of several elements, all of which interlink and reinforce one another, to form an integrated system that functions as a whole. Thus, when networking several feelings to form a balanced state of sensitivity, we need to focus attention primarily on the integrated system, rather than on the individual components. Only if we notice that one of the interlinked elements is weak or out of phase, do we adjust that factor.

Although the music playing on a radio is a blend rather than a network of elements such as treble, base, volume, and fine-tuning, we may use the image of the music to understand the method of practice here. The sound of the music is an integrated blend of constituent elements such as treble and base. When we listen to the music, we listen to the sound as a whole. Nevertheless, we can discern when the treble needs correction. Similarly, in interlinking several feelings to function as a network, we focus primarily on the resultant mental and emotional state. We only discern and adjust specific elements when we notice that they are not integrated well in the organic system.

Since certain feelings combine more easily, we modify the order of the six in constructing a network. For further ease of integrating the feelings into a multifaceted, yet single, state of mind, we change the images. Since we may not have experienced the compound image that we shall build in steps, we use a combination of memory and imagination.

To begin the process, we try to put together mellow comfort and tender protectiveness, by imagining sitting on a comfortable chair in a beautiful room and gently petting a puppy that is sleeping in our laps. Letting go of the image, and glowing with a feeling that combines being comfortable, content, and happy with being tenderly affectionate, we imagine the person enters the field of our feeling and is embraced by it.

We then add self-control not to cause harm, by imagining that while sitting in the easy chair petting the puppy sleeping in our laps, we are careful not to act in a reckless or inconsiderate manner that would wake the puppy. Increasing one at a time, we steadily enlarge our state of mind, by adding the focused attention we would pay to the sleeping puppy if we noticed it was shivering while sleeping in our laps, and the understanding we would use to realize that the puppy was cold and that we needed to hold it more closely. Lastly, to feel inspired and fresh in this situation, we

imagine also listening to beautiful music, until our state of mind includes all six factors at once, interconnecting and reinforcing each other. At each stage, we imagine our friend within the field of our attitude of balanced sensitivity.

To reinforce the integration of the feelings into functioning networks at each stage, we may use the appropriate number of key adjectives describing the state: “comfortable,” “tender,” “careful,” “attentive,” “understanding,” and “inspired.” If this method is insufficient, we may also use an appropriate number of key words and phrases reconstructing the image describing the state: “easy chair,” “sleeping puppy,” “don’t wake it,” “shivering,” “cold,” and “music.” When using the latter set of words and phrases, we flash back to the imagined scene with the puppy for only a moment and then return to radiating the mental and emotional state of balanced sensitivity.

Once we have become moderately adept at radiating a field of balanced sensitivity, if we notice a weak element in the system, we adjust it by repeating silently to ourselves only the relevant key adjective. If doing so fails to strengthen the element, we use the appropriate key word or phrase from the sequence of images.

We complete the first phase by repeating the procedure three times - twice while focusing each time on a magazine picture of a different person and once while focusing on a photo or on a thought of a loud, overbearing relative or of an obnoxious neighbor or fellow worker.

During the second phase of the exercise, we follow the same procedure while sitting in a circle with our group. At each step, we recall and radiate the appropriate feeling and then, extending the radius of its glow to include everyone in the circle, we focus on each person in turn. We then repeat the procedure while facing a partner.

During the third phase, we remember and try to radiate these feelings while focusing on ourselves. At each step, we first look in a mirror and then, putting down the mirror, we focus simply on ourselves with eyes looking downward. As a final step, we try to imagine that the range of the feelings embraces ourselves from the past, as we look at two photographs of ourselves from different past periods, one at a time for the entire sequence.

5 Refraining from Destructive Behavior

The Need for Ethics

Responding to others or to ourselves with balanced sensitivity entails refraining from destructive, harmful behavior and engaging in constructive, helpful acts. Restraint from destructive behavior sets the foundation. For example, if we have not established a consistent pattern of curbing ourselves from making cruel, sarcastic remarks, others will not trust us with their personal problems. This will happen even if we notice their moods and show concern. Similarly, using an artificial sweetener in our coffee is of little benefit if we continue to eat rich cakes. Therefore, we need to apply our natural ability for self-control to keeping ethical ground rules for our interactions.

Definition of Destructive Behavior

Each system of ethics, whether religious or civil, defines destructive behavior differently. Some systems have a set of laws established by heavenly authority or by legislature. Destructive behavior is to disobey the law. Others define destructive actions as those that harm others or harm oneself. Knowing what is harmful is difficult, however. The same action may be detrimental to some and helpful to others. Even when directed at the same person, it may be damaging in one situation and not in another. For instance, shouting harsh words to someone may either hurt his or her feelings or rouse the person from laziness.

Buddhist ethics emphasize the importance of motivation and frame of mind in determining whether an action is destructive. Besides causing harm and suffering, a destructive action must also be motivated by greed, anger, or naivety about its consequences. Underlying it are two further unhealthy attitudes: having no self-respect or self-dignity and not caring how one's actions reflect on one's family and background. By these criteria, yelling loudly at a waitress while dining with foreign guests in an elegant restaurant, without caring that we have lost our decorum or that our guests will think poorly about how people behave in our country, is destructive whether or not it hurts the waitress' feelings. At minimum, it is a self-damaging act, which brings us suffering. We may be upset for hours.

Ten Destructive Actions

Many physical, verbal, and mental actions are destructive. Buddhism delineates ten that are the most harmful. This is because they nearly always arise from disturbing emotions, shamelessness, and lack of embarrassment. The ten are (1) taking life, (2) taking what has not been given, (3) indulging in inappropriate sexual behavior, (4) lying, (5) speaking divi-

sively, (6) using harsh language, (7) speaking idle words, (8) thinking covetous thoughts, (9) thinking thoughts of malice, and (10) distorted, antagonistic thinking. Irrespective of one's religious background or belief, restraint from them is pertinent for anyone wishing to develop balanced sensitivity.

The ten destructive actions suggest ten categories of inconsiderate behavior we need to avoid when striving for balanced sensitivity with respect to others and ourselves. We do not need to kill to cause physical harm. Beating or treating people roughly is also destructive, as is ignoring to help someone do a physical task when the person needs help. Taking what has not been given includes not only stealing, but also keeping a borrowed item longer than needed or not returning it at all. Inappropriate sexual behavior is not only rape or adultery, but also sexual harassment, ignoring the needs of one's partner when making love, or showing too little or too much affection. When working on sensitivity, we need to think as broadly as possible about our behavior and its consequences.

Motivation for Ethical Training

In a Buddhist context, we motivate ourselves to exercise ethical self-control by thinking about the karmic consequences of the ten destructive actions, primarily in future lives. For example, we will compulsively repeat the pattern of behavior. Moreover, we will impulsively blunder into relationships in which people act toward us in the same insensitive, cruel manner as we have been acting toward others. Not wanting the unhappiness of frustrating, unfulfilling relationships characterized by a lack of kindness or consideration motivates us to avoid its causes in our behavior now.

To motivate ourselves to behave ethically, we need not think about future lives if we do not believe in them. Consideration of this lifetime alone can accomplish the same effect. We may recall incidents in which others have acted in these destructive manners toward us and remember how hurt we felt. We may then recall occasions when we have acted similarly and imagine how others must have felt in response. Noting that our destructive patterns repeat and feeling horrified at the prospect of future unhealthy relationships, we would determine to free ourselves from these painful syndromes. To do so, we would be willing to give up our negative ways. Our determination strengthens when our primary concern is to stop hurting others.

EXERCISE 5

Resolving to Refrain from Destructive Behavior

During each phase of this exercise, we consider the ten destructive actions one by one. The first phase has two steps. We begin by creating a quiet and caring mental space with respect to ourselves. We may use the two key sentences: “I am not going to make up stories about myself.” “I accept myself as I am.” Then, we try to recall specific incidents in which others have acted in these anguishing ways toward us. For example, we might have been ill and someone with us walked too quickly. We try to remember the distress we felt when we could not keep up. Alternatively, we might have stoically endured the person’s lack of consideration and repressed our feelings.

Recalling an incident in which we were similarly insensitive, perhaps when walking with an elderly relative, we look at a photograph or simply think of the person. Then, we consider how he or she must have felt. Acknowledging the mistake of our insensitive behavior, we regret our actions. Regret is different from guilt. Regret is merely the wish that we had not done something. We regret, for example, that we ate a meal that disagreed with us. Guilt, on the other hand, arises from a strong identification of what we have done as “bad” and of ourselves as therefore a “bad” person. With guilt, we hold on to these fixed judgments and do not let go. It is like keeping our garbage in the house and never throwing it out. To overcome feelings of guilt, we need to realize that our previous actions are in the past. We regret that they happened, but we cannot do anything to change the fact that they occurred. We need to get on with our life and no valid reason exists for having to repeat these mistakes.

The next step is to determine to rid ourselves of this destructive habit, for the sake of both our relative and others we may encounter. We must also eliminate it for our own development. Focusing on our older relative, we give our word that we shall try our best not to repeat our inconsiderate behavior either with the person or with anyone else. We do the same even if the person in our example has already passed away. To strengthen our resolve, we reaffirm the direction in which we are trying to go in our lives. We are trying to regard and treat everyone with balanced sensitivity. To clear any residual thoughts or emotions about the incident before considering another example of our destructive behavior, we reaffirm, “I am not going to make up stories about myself,” “I accept myself as I am.”

We repeat the procedure with the rest of the ten destructive actions. For stealing, we may recall, for example, someone using our telephone for

an expensive long distance call without asking our permission. For inappropriate sexual behavior, we may remember someone making an unwanted sexual advance on us. For lying, we may think of someone who deceived us about his or her feelings or intentions in our relationship.

For speaking divisively, we may remember a person who told us terrible things about our boyfriend or girlfriend to make us break the relationship. For using harsh language, we may recall someone who yelled at us cruelly or who insensitively said something that hurt us deeply. For speaking idle words, we may recall someone who betrayed our confidence and revealed our intimate secrets to others. We may also think of someone who frequently interrupted our work with meaningless chatter or who never let us finish what we were trying to say.

For thinking covetous thoughts, we may remember someone who became jealous when we spoke about our financial success or about how well our children were doing. When the person became lost in thought about how to accomplish what we had achieved, he or she stopped listening to us. For thinking with malice, we may recall someone who became angry at something we said and then plotted revenge. Lastly, for distorted, antagonistic thinking, we may remember someone to whom we spoke about something positive or ethically neutral. It might have been something that we were pursuing to help others or to improve ourselves, such as the study of medicine or basketball. The person responded by thinking we were stupid for being interested in such things.

At first, we may choose only a light example for each category of destructive behavior, especially if we are prone to guilt and low self-esteem. Gradually, we may choose more than one person for each destructive action. We may also recall more than one form of each act. The broader the scope of destructive behavior we consider, the more effective the exercise becomes for overcoming insensitivity to the emotional impact of our actions.

The second step of the first phase of the exercise is to focus on specific persons from our life. We begin by creating a quiet and caring mental space with respect to ourselves, as before. Then, we look at a photograph or just think about someone with whom we have or have had a close, warm relationship and create a quiet and caring mental space toward the person. We may use the key sentences: "I am not going to make up stories about you." "You are a human being and have feelings."

Surveying a broad spectrum of forms that each of the ten destructive actions may take, we check one by one if we have ever acted in these ways toward the person. If we have not acted like this toward him or her, we

rejoice in that fact. If we have acted destructively, we think of the pain we caused, both to the person and to ourselves in contributing to an unhealthy relationship. We acknowledge our mistake, regret our behavior, and determine to rid ourselves of the destructive habit. Not wishing ever to hurt the person, we give our assurance that we shall try our best never to act in this way and we reaffirm the positive direction we are trying to go in our lives. We wish to enjoy a healthy relationship with the person, based on balanced sensitivity. Then, we repeat the procedure with the next destructive action. If we are prone to low guilt and low self-esteem, we may clear any residual thoughts or emotions about our behavior, either after each of the destructive actions or after a few of them, by reaffirming the quiet and caring mental space toward ourselves, as before.

Giving an assurance aloud feels more committed than merely making one silently. Therefore, to fortify our intent, we conclude by repeating after our group facilitator, or by saying out loud by ourselves, key sentences regarding common examples of each of the ten destructive actions: "I shall not treat you in a rough physical manner." "I shall not use anything of yours without permission." "I shall not push myself sexually on you or your partner." "I shall not lie to you about my feelings or intentions." "I shall not try to part you from your friends by saying bad things about them." "I shall not verbally abuse you." "I shall not betray your confidence by revealing your private matters to others." "I shall not think jealously about what you have achieved." "I shall not think with malice about how to harm you if you say or do something I do not like." "If you are striving to improve yourself or to help others, I shall not think you are stupid, even if what you have chosen is not my own interest." For ease of practice, we may read these words from a text before us or from a poster displayed in our practice room.

Next, we repeat the entire procedure while focusing on a photo or on a thought of a mere acquaintance and then of someone with whom we have or have had a difficult relationship. Lastly, we focus on magazine pictures of anonymous people. During this round, however, we merely repeat aloud the key sentences as before and, after each line, look at the persons one at a time and promise not to act in this way toward him or her.

The second phase of the exercise begins with sitting in a circle if we are part of a workshop and creating a quiet and caring mental space toward ourselves and toward the members of the circle. We then follow the procedure used while focusing on the magazine photos.

During the second part of this phase, we sit facing a partner and begin once more with creating a quiet and caring mental space toward ourselves and then toward our partner. First, one of the pair and then the other

repeats all ten sentences aloud at a comfortable speed, pausing for some moments after each. The speaker focuses on the sincere wish to try never to harm the other person and on the person's accepting and believing the assurance and trusting him or her. Proceeding through the ten points, the speaker feels progressively more responsible for his or her behavior in the relationship. The listener focuses on feeling secure and safe with the speaker. Since many people have difficulty feeling trust in a relationship because of deep fear of being hurt, we let the experience settle by looking downward or closing the eyes and then focusing on the breath before switching roles of speaker and listener. As a final step, for each of the ten sentences, the partners alternate: first one gives the assurance and then the other repeats the same words, with both persons focusing on the mutual generation and acceptance of responsibility, security, and trust.

We begin the third phase by looking in a mirror, creating a quiet, caring space, and checking whether we have acted toward ourselves in any of the ten destructive manners. If we have not acted in that way, we rejoice in that fact. If we have acted self-destructively, we acknowledge the problems and pain this has brought and regret the foolish mistakes we have made. We then promise ourselves that we shall make all efforts to stop repeating our self-destructive behavior and reaffirm the positive direction we are trying to go in our lives. We wish to relate to ourselves in a healthy manner, based on balanced sensitivity.

Repeating after the facilitator, or reading aloud by ourselves, we pledge, for example, "I shall stop mistreating myself physically by overworking, by eating poorly, or by not getting enough sleep." "I shall stop wasting my money on trivial things or being stingy and niggardly when spending on myself." "I shall stop engaging in sexual acts that may endanger my health." "I shall stop deceiving myself about my feelings or motivation." "I shall stop speaking so obnoxiously that my friends become disgusted and leave me." "I shall stop verbally abusing myself." "I shall stop speaking indiscriminately about my private matters, doubts, or worries." "I shall stop thinking about how to outdo myself because of being a perfectionist." "I shall stop thinking in self-destructive, irrational ways that sabotage my relations with others or my position in life." "I shall stop thinking I am stupid for trying to improve myself or to help others." If necessary, we may conclude with reaffirming the quiet and caring mental space toward ourselves. We may also customize the examples in the sentences to suit our personal history.

Next, we repeat the pledges to ourselves after putting aside the mirror. Then, after creating a quiet and caring space toward ourselves now, we

look at a series of photos of us spanning our life, and create a quiet and caring space toward ourselves then. We may use the key sentences: “I am not going to make up stories about myself as I was then.” “I accept myself as I was then.”

We proceed by considering whether we have been thinking negatively of ourselves as we were then. If we have not thought like that, we rejoice in that fact. If we have thought negatively, we acknowledge the problems and pain we have caused. Admitting that our way of thinking has been self-destructive and feeling regret, we determine to resolve our emotional issues about those times. We cannot change the past, but we can change our attitude toward it and learn from our mistakes. Thus, we reaffirm the positive direction we are trying to go in our lives. We wish to relate to our past in a healthy manner, based on balanced sensitivity

We pledge aloud to try to stop thinking negatively of ourselves during those periods, by using three key sentences: “I shall stop thinking with dissatisfaction about how I was then, wishing that I had acted differently.” “I shall stop thinking with self-hatred about myself then.” “I shall stop thinking I was stupid then for what I did to try to improve my lot or to help others.” At the conclusion, if necessary, we reaffirm the quiet and caring mental space toward ourselves as we were then and as we are now.

We conclude the exercise by reaffirming the ethical foundation for our behavior toward others and toward ourselves, by repeating the key sentences: “I care about myself.” “I care about both the short-term and long-term effects of my actions on myself.” “I also care about being able to respect myself for how I act, speak, and think.” “I do not wish ever to lose my self-dignity.” “I care about others.” “I care about both the short-term and long-term effects of my actions on others.” “I also care about others being able to respect my family, my friends, my gender, my race, my religion, and my country for how I behave.” “I do not wish ever to bring them disgrace.” “Therefore, I shall try not to act, speak, or think out of attachment, greed, anger, arrogance, jealousy, or naivety.”

This exercise asks us to confront aspects of ourselves that many of us would rather forget. Consequently, it may make us feel uncomfortable or ashamed, especially while facing a partner. If this happens, we may try to feel the emotion pass like a swell on the ocean. We then need to reaffirm our positive qualities that we discovered in the previous exercise. With proper effort, we can use them to overcome our negative ways.

6 Combining Warmth with Understanding

The Necessity for Joint Development of Warmth and Understanding

Achieving enlightenment requires broadening and strengthening our innate networks of positive potential and deep awareness until they become networks of enlightening forms and of all-loving deep awareness encompassing everyone and everything. Just as the two resultant enlightening networks combine with each other to constitute a holistic enlightened being, similarly our innate networks of potential and awareness interconnect, reinforcing one another. Therefore, in harmony with this structure, we need to build up our two basis networks conjointly while developing ourselves on the pathway level. The frequent analogy is that coordinating and jointly engaging the twin basis networks is like employing the two wings required to fly.

Combining warmth and understanding is also necessary for achieving balanced sensitivity. Suppose we have merely warm loving feelings toward others, but lack understanding of their situation. We may be carried away by emotion and act unwisely. Often, we overreact when we are overemotional. On the other hand, if we merely understand the situation, but lack any warmth, we may respond to others insensitively.

Each of us has a basis level of both warmth and understanding. When we develop them jointly, we can be of more balanced, sensitive help to others and to ourselves. Let us examine five points that help to wed the two factors.

Taking Others Seriously

Others are real. The people we encounter are not fictitious characters in a movie or anonymous faces in a news report. We may be well informed about the troubles others are facing. Statistics, however, are of little help unless we take their plight seriously. We need to feel concern on a human level.

For example, suppose we were lying in a hospital bed, waiting for a major operation. Most of us would be frightened and worried that we might not survive. Suppose the nurse came to prepare us for surgery. Though we do not wish anyone's pity, we would certainly appreciate him or her showing some warmth and understanding. Knowing all the technical details to prepare us physically is not sufficient. We are real, our fear is overwhelming, and we want the nurse to take us seriously.

If this is true about us, it is also true about others. Everyone deserves to be taken seriously. Moreover, taking others seriously helps them to take themselves seriously. This strengthens their self-confidence, thus helping them to overcome low self-esteem.

Being Unafraid to Respond

Our actions do not determine the outcome of every event. Nor is the outcome predetermined. If it were, there would be no point in responding to anyone's needs, in offering our help, or in doing anything at all. Others' success or failure would already be fated. According to the Buddhist understanding, what happens arises dependently on many factors, following the laws of cause and effect.

The main factors affecting what happens to people are their karmic potentials. We can merely try to offer circumstances for their positive potentials to ripen and try to avoid providing conditions for their negative ones to surface. However, if others lack sufficient causes for happiness from their personal history, our best efforts cannot succeed. Similarly, if others lack the causes for tragedy, our worst mistakes cannot cause them a downfall. Still, we are accountable for our actions and need to act responsibly. In providing or withholding circumstances, we contribute to what occurs. Nevertheless, we are not the sole source even of circumstances.

Therefore, fear of responding to others' or our own needs is inappropriate. Even if we make a mistake, we have at least tried. We do not become dismayed or feel guilty when our help fails. Nor do we arrogantly take all the credit when others succeed through our assistance. We can only try to be helpful, with as much warmth and understanding as possible.

For example, suppose we have a baby daughter, or are visiting someone who has, and suppose we are trying to teach the baby to walk. The toddler inevitably falls down. If she stumbles and begins to cry, are we guilty? Is it our fault? Do we stop trying to teach her to walk? Obviously, the baby's success in learning to walk depends primarily on her development of strength, balance, and self-confidence. We merely provide the circumstances for these potentials to mature.

Thus, we would not be afraid to respond to the baby's faltering steps as we teach her to walk. We would naturally do this with joy, without shouldering sole responsibility for success or failure. Yet, we would also naturally act responsibly. Holding the baby's hand at first, we would remain nearby to catch or at least to comfort the toddler when she stumbles and falls.

Taking in All Information

Even if we have great concern, we need to take in complete information about a situation before responding. If we do this without making judgments or mental comments, we avoid overreacting or responding to something we have merely invented. For instance, suppose we hear our little boy screaming and, rushing outside, we see his arm badly bruised. Instead of responding with panic, thinking he has broken his arm, we need to remain calm and first comfort the child. Without jumping to conclusions, we need to ask and look carefully to see what is wrong.

Other situations in life require the same approach. For example, when listening on the telephone to a friend talking about his or her problems, we need to listen with a quiet mind and open heart. We need to let our friend finish telling his or her story before offering advice.

Acting Straightforwardly

Sitting back and coldly analyzing how to solve others' problems is not sufficient. Of course, we need to figure out what to do. Nevertheless, once we know, we need to act straightforwardly, sensitive to the urgency others feel. Suppose we see someone struggling with bundles and about to drop them. Commenting on how much he or she bought or asking which store the person shopped at are clearly absurd. We need to understand the situation and respond immediately, with consideration and kindness.

Refraining from Offering Unwanted or Unneeded Help

We may help others with warmth and kindness. Yet, if our hidden motivation is to gain a feeling of self-worth or of being needed, or to feel more secure by taking control of things, we are exploiting them. Understanding this point allows us the sensitivity to restrain ourselves when the most appropriate help is to let people handle situations by themselves. In this way, we avoid others' resentment or rejection because of our pushiness. It also helps us to avert the oversensitive responses of feeling unappreciated, unneeded, unwanted, or worthless when others decline our help.

For example, suppose we have a two-year-old daughter. Feeding her with a spoon made us feel good when she was younger. We felt needed and useful. At some point, however, we need to stop and let her feed herself. Insisting on treating her like a baby, even with an effusive show of affection, is exploitation. It helps neither our daughter nor us.

EXERCISE 6

Five Decisions for Combining Warmth with Understanding

Decisions are most effective when based on reason. Decisions made on a whim or by force are usually not sincerely felt. Consequently, they do not often last. Adopting a procedure from Buddhist logic for reaching a conclusion may be useful. Many meditations use it for equalizing and exchanging our attitudes about self and others. As with the rational approach taken in Exercise Two for generating caring concern, we reach a conclusion, or make a decision, by bringing to mind a reason and an example. Having consciously thought through a line of reasoning and having reached our conclusion, we reaffirm our intent by voicing our decision and then stop all verbal thought. We simply view the person while keeping the decision actively in mind. Remaining focused on the person, we let our decision sink in and concentrate on feeling combined warmth and understanding toward him or her.

We begin the first phase of the exercise by choosing a close family member toward whom we have positive feelings. If we do not have such a person in our family, we may choose a close friend. Looking at a photo or simply thinking of the person, we proceed as follows:

(1) We try to recall an incident in which someone else did not take us seriously. For example, our mother continued to push us to take a second helping when we told her we were full. On a more painful level, our partner did not even try to change his or her behavior when we said it was upsetting us. Trying to recall how we felt, we direct our attention toward the close relative we have chosen for the exercise. We consciously decide, "I shall take you seriously, because you, your words, and your feelings are real, as in my own case when I said I was full or upset." To affirm our decision, we repeat after the group facilitator, or say aloud by ourselves, "I shall take you seriously." Since this and subsequent lines we repeat may be difficult to remember, we may read them from a text before us or from a poster displayed in our practice room.

(2) We then try to remember an occasion when someone was afraid to respond to our needs. For instance, we were upset and our sibling or friend was afraid to comfort us. Though we did not expect him or her to solve all our problems, we would have appreciated some type of warm and sensitive response. Directing our attention at our relative, we consciously decide, "I shall not be afraid to respond to you if you need me. Although I may contribute to your success or failure, I am not the sole source affecting your situation, as with my sibling or friend whose comfort I needed." We repeat aloud, "I shall not be afraid to respond to you if you need me."

(3) Next, we try to bring to mind an incident in which someone did not take in all the information about our situation or feelings and jumped to

a false conclusion. For example, our mother asked us to pick up some groceries on our way home. We fully intended to do it, but we had to stay late at work to finish some urgent business. By the time we arrived at the store, it had already closed. Seeing us walk in the door with empty arms, she became furious and started to yell how irresponsible we are. We recall how tedious it was to calm our mother and reassure her that we had tried our best. The circumstances were out of our control. We then focus on the family member in our exercise and consciously decide, “I shall take in all the information about your situation, without jumping to conclusions. I shall do this because I wish to avoid overreacting or responding to something I have merely invented, like when my mother imagined I had forgotten the shopping.” We repeat aloud, “I shall take in all the information about your situation, without jumping to conclusions.”

An important variant especially concerns interactions with those closest to us. For example, we might remember criticizing something our partner said or did. Losing sight of all other facets of our history together, our partner immediately concluded that we do not love him or her any longer. He or she became either completely depressed or extremely hostile. Trying to recall the effort it took to reassure our partner of our love, we give our relative a further assurance. “I shall keep sight of the larger context of our relationship so as not to jump to a false conclusion over a tiny incident, like my partner did when I criticized his or her behavior.” We repeat aloud, “I shall keep sight of the larger context of our relationship so as not to jump to a false conclusion over a tiny incident.”

(4) Next, we try to recall a time when someone did not act straightforwardly when we needed his or her help. For instance, a family member had offered to drive us to the airport so that we would not need to leave our car there during our vacation. Yet, he or she arrived so late that we missed our plane. We turn to the relative in our exercise and conclude, “Once I have decided to do something for you, I shall act straightforwardly. I shall do this because you experience your problem as something urgent, as I did when I needed to catch my plane.” To confirm our decision, we repeat, “Once I have decided to do something for you, I shall act straightforwardly.”

(5) Lastly, we try to remember an occasion when someone offered his or her unwanted or unneeded help, opinion, or advice. For example, we were chopping vegetables and our mother corrected the way we were doing it. What was she trying to prove? We focus on our family member and consciously decide, “I shall refrain from offering my unneeded or unwanted help, opinion, or advice. I shall do this because I do not wish to exploit you

to gain a feeling of self-worth or of being needed, or to feel more secure by taking control of things, as with my mother who could not resist correcting how I chop vegetables.” We then repeat aloud, “I shall refrain from offering my unneeded or unwanted help, opinion, or advice.”

If we wish to practice more elaborately, we may expand as in the previous exercise on refraining from destructive behavior. After remembering an incident in which someone acted toward us in each of the five insensitive ways, we recall an occasion when we acted similarly toward someone else. Admitting that it was mistaken and feeling regret, we reaffirm our determination to be free of the syndrome. We then give our pledge to the person involved that we shall try our best not to repeat it.

Next, we make the same five decisions while looking at a magazine picture of someone we do not know. As the examples from the previous part of the exercise may be inappropriate for the anonymous person, we may use the more general examples from the earlier discussion. We decide, one by one, “I shall take you seriously, like when preparing a hospital patient for an operation.” “I shall not be afraid to respond to you if you need me, like when teaching a baby to walk.” “I shall take in all the information about you and not jump to conclusions, like when examining a child with a bruised arm.” “Once I have decided to do something for you, I shall act straightforwardly, like when seeing someone carrying a heavy bundle and about to drop it.” “I shall refrain from offering unwanted or unneeded help, as when insisting on feeding the two-year-old with a spoon.” With each decision, we repeat the same line as before, let the decision sink in, and then focus on feeling combined warmth and understanding toward the person. Lastly, we repeat the procedure used with the stranger while looking at a photo or simply thinking of someone with whom we have a difficult relationship.

The second phase of the practice begins with sitting in a circle with our group and directing the decisions, one at a time, toward each person in turn. Abbreviating the procedure, we merely repeat aloud the same key sentences as when focusing on the anonymous and the emotionally challenging persons, let the decision sink in, and then focus on feeling combined warmth and understanding toward the person.

Sitting next with a partner, first one of the pair repeats to himself or herself the four key sentences used in the circle, while focusing on the decision. The person then repeats the sentence aloud as an assurance to the other, while focusing on feeling combined warmth and understanding. The speaker then focuses on feeling that the person accepts and trusts the assurance. During the procedure, the listener focuses on feeling, accepting,

and trusting the speaker's warmth and understanding. The partners then switch roles. As a final step, for each of the four key sentences, the partners alternate: first one, then the other gives the assurance, with both persons focusing on the mutual generation and acceptance of combined warmth and understanding.

We begin the third phase by looking in a mirror and directing toward ourselves the five feelings of combined warmth and understanding. We follow the same procedure as with a partner, but substituting the key sentences: "I shall take myself seriously." "I shall not be afraid to respond to what I see or feel in myself, if needed." "I shall consider all the facts about my situation, without jumping to conclusions." "Once I have decided to do something about my situation, I shall act straightforwardly." "I shall refrain from pushing myself to do something unneeded." We then repeat the procedure, putting down the mirror.

As a final step, we look at the series of photographs of ourselves spanning our life. We try to see each picture as revealing a real person and to take each of them seriously. We try to feel no fear in dealing with our feelings about ourselves then. Without insisting on a fixed impression based on selective memory, we try to consider all the facts about that period. If our attitude about ourselves then is unhealthy and is causing us pain or blocked emotions, we resolve to act straightforwardly to change that attitude. Lastly, we try not to push the impossible by dwelling morbidly on our wish that we had acted differently. The past is over. We can do nothing to change what has already happened. All we can do now is to accept it with understanding, warmth, and forgiveness, and to learn from our mistakes.

To affirm our decisions, we repeat aloud the key sentences: "I shall take myself seriously as I was then." "I shall not be afraid of dealing with how I feel about myself then, if needed." "I shall consider all the facts about my situation then, without jumping to conclusions." "Once I have decided to do something, I shall act straightforwardly to deal with unresolved feelings." "I shall not push the impossible; I shall forgive." After letting each decision sink in, we focus on feeling warmth and understanding toward ourselves as we were then.

PART II

Uncovering the Talents of

Our Mind and Heart

7 Shifting Focus from Mind and from Ourselves to Mental Activity

The naturally occurring internal resources that allow for balanced sensitivity -- joy, focus, warmth, understanding, self-control, and a feeling of inspiration -- are all factors of mind and heart. To work effectively with these factors requires a powerful conceptual framework. It must be broad enough to include all relevant aspects of mind and heart and to make comprehensible the approaches used for treating each. The Buddhist presentation of mind provides such a framework.

Integrating Mind and Heart

Most Western systems of metaphysics sharply divide between mind and heart. The former deals with rational thinking, while the latter accounts for emotions and feelings. Buddhism, in contrast, groups these three facets under the rubric of one term and includes with them sense perception, imagination, dreaming, sleep, and unconsciousness. By default, Western languages translate the term as “mind.”

Viewing mind and heart as two facets of the same phenomenon brings fewer obstacles in integrating understanding and warmth. Any program for balancing sensitivity needs to take this point seriously. A dualistic view of mind and heart contributes significantly to alienation from logical processes or from emotions and feelings. This is especially true if we regard one of them as trustworthy or good and the other as suspicious or evil.

Mind Is Not Some Physical Entity in Our Head

Mind has no form. It is not a material organ found somewhere in the brain. Nor is it reducible to something physical, like the nervous system or the electrochemical processes that describe neurological functions. Mind is also not merely an abstract metaphysical entity that is the fancy of philosophers. From the Buddhist point of view, the phenomenon translated as “mind” is not an entity at all. Rather, the word “mind” refers to the mental activity – both conscious and unconscious -- that occurs based on an individual’s brain, nervous system, and the physiological processes of the

two.

Further, the term “mind” does not refer to the agent of mental activity. Nor does the word refer to a tool that we use to comprehend a sight, to think a thought, or to feel an emotion. The word “mind” denotes only mental activity itself, such as seeing, thinking, or feeling something. It even includes subtle mental activity while asleep.

When we regard our mind as a “thing” inside us, we often project a fixed identity onto it. We imagine, for example, that our mind is incapable of feeling anything or of handling the emotions that overwhelm it. Identifying with our mind, we judge ourselves as inadequate or we make excuses. We insist that others accept us because this is the way that we are. If, instead, we view our mind as mental activity, we are more open to the fact that, with a change of circumstances, our experiences change. As we recognize and enhance the positive factors that already accompany our mental activity, we naturally become more balanced in our sensitivity.

When we take this approach, we see that sensitivity does not depend on the competence or worthiness of ourselves as a person. Nor is it the activity of some fixed entity in our head. Therefore, blaming our mind or ourselves for being insensitive or hypersensitive is pointless. Without self-recrimination, we need simply to adjust the attentiveness and responsiveness that accompany our mental activity during any event.

Mind as the Ever-changing Experience of Things

Mental activity always involves an object. We do not just see. If we see, we see a sight. If we think, we think a thought. Moreover, the objects of our mental activity are always changing. One moment we are seeing the wall and the next we are seeing the sight of a loved one. Even if we stare at the wall, our focus constantly shifts very slightly. In any particular moment, the seeing and the sight do not exist independently of each other. Therefore, when we see something different, our experience of seeing a sight has also changed.

An experience, then, does not have merely emotional contents. We cannot experience a mood, for example, without perceiving some object at the same time. Thus, we cannot feel depressed without simultaneously seeing the wall or thinking about something either verbally or otherwise. Even if our depression is not about anything conscious and we shut our eyes and do not think any verbal thoughts, still we perceive darkness while being depressed. Intellectually, we can distinguish a mood from the objects perceived while in that mood, but we always experience the two together.

Furthermore, a mood is not a monolithic mental entity. It consists of

a cluster of factors, such as feelings, emotions, attention, interest, and so on. As the objects we experience change each moment, each of these mental factors also naturally changes – and not all at the same time or rate. Therefore, a mood never remains static.

Confusion about these points often makes us insensitive to the present moment. Before encountering someone, we might imagine that our state of mind would remain the same as it had been until then. Alternatively, we might expect our experience to repeat previous ones with the person. For example, suppose our interaction with colleagues at work was difficult this morning. We became upset at the slightest things they said. Concluding that we are having a bad day, we might assume that the rest of it would undoubtedly be the same.

This does not have to be the case. When we see our family in the evening, we are having a new experience, with fresh mental activity involving different objects. If we are mindful of this fact, we can let go of what we conceived as our previous mood and become calm, warm, and understanding.

Individuality of Experience

Minds are individual. My experience of seeing a sight is never the same as yours. This is because the sight of someone's face that we see depends on the angle and distance from which we look. What we see from the right side at two feet away is different from what someone thirty feet away simultaneously sees from the left. If we each took a picture at the same moment, the two photos would not be the same. Yet, each would be an accurate semblance of the face.

Comprehending this point convinces us that each person's experience makes sense within its own context. This is true regarding not only what people see or hear, but also how they interpret it. Appreciating this fact helps us to overcome the insensitivity of imagining that only what we see or think is correct. Such insight is the bedrock upon which to build a lasting form of conflict resolution.

Suppose, for example, we bought a complex entertainment system for the house. When our partner came home, we offered to go through the instruction book together. Our partner took the suggestion as an insult and furiously accused us of not trusting him or her. We, on the other hand, simply had wanted the intimacy and joy of sharing the experience. Taking our partner's hypersensitive response as a personal rejection, we concluded that he or she does not love us anymore.

To resolve this misunderstanding, both of us need to recall the ex-

ample of two people looking at the same face from different perspectives. Each sees something different and yet each sees something correct. We need to acknowledge the validity of each other's experience of the conversation and accept the background and reasons for the other's response. Once we dispel the arrogant belief that only our experience of the event is correct, we can regain our composure.

Mind as an Unbroken Continuum

Each person's mind, or mental activity, has unbroken continuity. One experience follows another, forming an orderly continuum obeying the laws of cause and effect. Reflecting on this fact, we realize that our lack of sensitivity in some situations and oversensitive outbursts in others have both immediate and continuing effects. Shock waves from them unsettle our own and others' minds. We are responsible for our attitudes and behavior. Denying that they matter does not prevent them from creating problems.

Buddhism explains that mental activity continues uninterruptedly not only in this lifetime, but without beginning or end. Whether or not we believe in past and future lives, we gain stronger motivation to balance our sensitivity when we consider an undeniable fact. The effects of our behavior carry on not only into old age, but also into future generations. If we do not respond sensitively to our children, for example, we affect their psychological makeup. This, in turn, plays an important role in how they will raise their future families. We need to think carefully about our emotional legacy. If we do not wish to burden future generations with psychological fallout from our behavior, we need to work on our problems now.

General Definition of Mind

Training in Tibetan Buddhist logic involves studying ways of knowing (*lorig*). The literature on this topic defines mind as "mere clarity and awareness." Just as mind is not an entity, however, neither is clarity or awareness. Characterizing each moment of our life's experience, they are facets of mental activity regarding an object.

"Clarity" refers to the mental activity of producing a mental object. Here, it has nothing to do with sharpness of focus. Describing this mental activity from a Western point of view, we would say that in each moment our mind creates a mental object. From a Buddhist point of view, we would simply say that each moment of our experience entails the arising or appearing of such an object. Mental objects include sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile or physical sensations, dreams, thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

To avoid misunderstanding, we must differentiate between someone's face and the sight of that face. What we see is a sight -- an image on our retina -- not actually the face itself. Our mind gives rise only to the sight of someone's face. It does this by relying on visual consciousness, that person's face, and the sensory cells of our eyes. Our mind does not produce the face itself. Sights exist only within the context of being seen by a mind, whereas objects, such as our face, exist whether or not anybody sees them. The pimple on our nose does not disappear when we cover it with cream or do not look in the mirror. The only thing that vanishes is our experience of seeing the sight of it.

"Awareness," the second word of the definition of mind, is the mental activity of engaging with a mental object in some way or another. Experiencing something necessarily entails either seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, physically feeling, dreaming, thinking, or emotionally feeling it. This is the case whether or not that mental engagement is conscious or with understanding. Moreover, producing a mental object and engaging with it are two facets of the same activity. They occur simultaneously, not consecutively. A thought does not arise before we think it.

The word "mere" in the definition implies that producing an appearance of something and engaging with it are all that are necessary for mental activity. Neither focus nor comprehension is required, although these and other mental factors may be present.

"Mere" also excludes not just the necessity, but the existence of a concrete, findable mind or agent "in here" that is making a sight arise or doing the seeing of it. "Mere," however, does not negate the fact that, conventionally speaking, our mind, not our nose, produces and engages with appearances. Moreover, we, not anybody else, see or think them. The mind and person involved, however, are neither concrete nor findable "things" in our head. If we imagine they are, we soon project onto them a fixed identity as, for example, inherently insensitive or overemotional. Consequently, we do not even try to change our personality. We feel that we and everyone else must learn to live with it.

Further, when we conceive of ourselves as a concrete "boss" inside our head who must always be in control, we may create other problems for ourselves. For instance, when we act insensitively or overreact, we may hurl allegations and insults at this chief. We may think that the boss should have been in control, but was not. Switching sides and identifying with the boss, we may then feel guilty. On the other hand, we may be afraid that if no boss were in control, the only alternative would be that our mental activity is out of control. This understanding is also mistaken. "Mere" does

not exclude the fact that mental factors of discrimination and self-control can always accompany our thoughts and our feelings.

Significance of the Definition of Mind for Sensitivity Issues

Understanding the definition of mind is crucial for balancing our sensitivity. It enables us to see that regulating the factors that accompany our mental activity changes our personality and experience of life. Consider what happens when we encounter somebody. The framework of our experience is the simultaneous arising of his or her image and the seeing of it. Certain mental factors always accompany each moment of experience, such as some level of attention and interest. If we wish to improve our sensitivity, we need to adjust them. Other factors are optional. We can see someone either with or without the filter of preconceptions and moral judgments. The choice is ours. Still other factors are totally absent, such as a concrete “me” that is looking out our eyes and around whom we crystallize self-consciousness, insecurity, or paranoia.

When we understand these points concerning our mental activity, we can apply them to handle difficult situations with emotional balance. Consider the misunderstanding with our partner over learning to use the sound equipment. He or she accused us unjustly. We can avoid overreacting if we experience hearing these words as the mere arising and engaging with a sound. Recognizing what we experience as merely the mental activity of the moment, we simply go on with the next moment of experience.

Thinking like this does not mean that we ignore our partner’s words, with either a blank expression on our face or an idiotic benevolent grin. We understand their meaning perfectly well. Nevertheless, by not identifying ourselves -- the one who hears the sounds -- as a concrete entity inside us, we avoid taking the words personally. Moreover, by not inflating the words out of proportion, we do not take what we hear as showing our partner’s true feelings toward us. Thus, we do not take offence or become defensive or aggressive. We remain sensitive to what is causing him or her upset and we respond in a calm, patient, and understanding manner. If we can do this when a four-year-old says, “I hate you,” after we have denied him or her candy before mealtime, we can do the same with our partner.

EXERCISE 7

Shifting Our Focus from Mind and Ourselves to Mental Activity

The Kagyü style of mahamudra meditation suggests the next exercise. We begin by relaxing our body and mind of any physical, mental, or emotional tension we may have. We do this through paying particular

attention to our posture, by using the breathing method of letting go, and by applying the images of worry and tension being like writing on water and swells on the ocean.

Keeping our eyes opened, we look slowly around the room and listen carefully to whatever noises there might be. We try to notice the mechanism that automatically occurs each moment of seeing and hearing. The baseline is the simultaneous arising of sights or sounds and engaging with them. Aimed at an object, such as the clock or its ticking, our mental activity simultaneously produces and perceives the mental objects that constitute what we directly experience. In other words, producing an appearance of something and perceiving it are two facets of the same activity. Once we have recognized what is happening whenever we see, hear, or think about something, we try to accompany our moment-to-moment mental activity with a clear understanding of the mechanism involved.

Verbalizing our understanding is not necessary. We are perfectly able to understand something without saying anything in our mind. Consider seeing a traffic light turn red, understanding the significance, and applying the brakes. We can easily do this without verbalizing that the light is red and we need to stop.

First, we try to look and listen while understanding that we are simultaneously producing and perceiving appearances of objects. Then, we try to look and listen while feeling that this process is happening. Lastly, we alternate realization and feeling, and then try to combine the two. To do this, we need to understand what feeling means in this context.

The English word “feeling” has many meanings. These include a physical sensation, an emotion, a level of happiness or sadness, a level of sensitivity, and an aesthetic sense. A feeling may also be an imagined experience, an urge to do something, an intuition, an impression, an opinion, or a sense of identity or reality. We may feel hungry, angry, happy, sensitive, or creative. We may try to feel what it is like to fly, or we may feel like eating. We may also feel that something wonderful will happen, that we are at an important point in our life, that something is not right, or that we are talented. Here, we are using the word “feeling” to mean a sense of reality.

We can appreciate the difference between understanding something and feeling that it is happening through the analogy of flying in an airplane. Often during a flight, we are unaware that we are flying. Nevertheless, we can experience the journey with an understanding that we are traveling through the air at high speed. We may also feel that we are speeding in a

plane. Here, we do not mean feeling the physical sensation of flying, but feeling the reality of what is happening. We can similarly feel, as we look and listen, that our mental activity is producing and engaging with the audiovisual impressions that we perceive.

Keeping our mental activity unself-conscious is crucial here. This means not conceiving of a concrete, findable “me” or mind inside our head that is the passive observer or active controller of our mental activity. Viewing our experience from the perspective of the removed observer can reinforce a habit of insensitivity. Alienated from our feelings, we may find difficulty responding to what we observe. On the other hand, if we view our mental activity as a controller or boss, we may strengthen our tendency to overreact. This occurs due to overintense involvement with what is happening and the anxious struggle to manipulate it, arising out of self-importance and insecurity.

Therefore, we try to experience each moment with an understanding that our mental activity is occurring without a concrete “me” or a concrete mind. Then, we try to look and listen without feeling self-conscious. Lastly, we try to combine both realization and a feeling of no concrete “me” with looking and listening.

In shifting our focus from mind to unself-conscious mental activity, we must also be careful not to deny the conventional existence of our mind or of ourselves. Otherwise, we may face the danger of no longer taking responsibility for what we think, feel, say, or do. We might act in this way because we feel that there is no one accountable or that our experience is out of control. To prevent this from happening, we now try to look and listen while understanding our reality. Although we do not exist as a concrete boss in our head, we are still accountable for what we experience and how we experience it. After trying to look and listen with this understanding for a few minutes, we try to look and listen while feeling accountable. Then, we try to combine both realization and a feeling of accountability with our mental activity as it continues.

Next, we try to notice and focus on the fact that each moment of our experience has different contents, which continually change, like a flowing stream. These contents consist not only of various sights, sounds, or thoughts, but also of diverse emotions and different levels of interest, attention, and so forth. First, we try to add this understanding to our ongoing mental activity of seeing and hearing. Then, we try to look and listen while feeling the flowing change. Lastly, we try to combine both realization and a feeling of continual change with our moment-to-moment experience.

We then try to observe that what we experience is particular to our-

selves alone. It depends on our physical and mental perspectives. If we are practicing in a group, for instance, and someone coughs, each of us experiences hearing the sound differently. Some hear it with annoyance as an interruption to their concentration, while others hear it with concern that someone might be sick. If our leg starts to hurt, we may similarly experience either irritation or gentle regard. First, we try to look and listen while understanding that our experience is particular to us. Then, as we look and listen, we try to feel the individuality of our experience, like feeling the uniqueness of ourselves as a person. In the end, we try to experience simultaneous realization and feeling of distinctness as our mental activity continues.

Next, we think how our mental activity forms a continuum and that what we perceive, think, and feel now will affect our future experiences. If we are insensitive to others or to ourselves, or if we overreact to inconvenience, we will continue to experience unhappiness. If we wish to avoid unpleasant experiences, we need to develop a better understanding of life. First, we try to supplement our seeing, hearing, and thinking with the understanding that we will experience the effects of our mental activity. Then, we try to accompany our looking and listening with a feeling for this, like the feeling of certainty we have that we will be happy when we come home and see our loved ones. Lastly, we try to combine joint realization and feeling of cause and effect with our ongoing mental activity.

The final step is to try to understand and feel all these points together as we look around the room and listen. To start the process, our workshop leader or we may repeat slowly, one by one, the eight key phrases: “producing and perceiving appearances,” “no observer,” “no controller,” “and yet accountable for what I experience,” “changing appearances,” “changing mental factors,” “particular to myself alone,” and “I experience the effects of my mental activity.” With each phrase, we try to look and listen with joint understanding and a feeling for reality.

We begin to integrate the points into our deep awareness network by alternating two phrases that condense three aspects, “producing and perceiving appearances” and “no self-consciousness.” Then, we add a third phrase, “accountable.” One by one, we add the condensed key phrases: “flowing change,” “particular to me,” and finally “I experience the effects.”

Repeating these phrases too often may distract our attention. It may also cause our practice to become more intellectual than experiential. Hearing or repeating the phrases should merely remind us of our understanding and feeling, and help us to maintain our focus. The main point is to remain fresh in the experience of each moment’s mental activity, with

mindfulness, alertness, and increasingly more understanding and feeling for the reality of what is happening.

During the second phase of the exercise, we sit in a circle with our group and focus on one or on several persons, whichever is more comfortable. To provide an obviously changing object of focus, each of us needs to move our head or to shift position from time to time and occasionally to change facial expression. We do this while following the previous procedure to try to add increasingly more understanding and feeling for reality to our mental activity of seeing one or more persons. Then we repeat the procedure while facing a partner.

During the third phase, we follow the same procedure while looking at ourselves in a mirror, occasionally moving our head and changing expression. From time to time, we also look away or close our eyes to add variety to the experience. Throughout the process, we focus not only on what we see, but also on our emotions, feelings, and any seeming lack of them that we might experience. Lastly, we repeat the procedure as we alternate looking at the series of photos of ourselves and closing our eyes.

8 Appreciating the Clear Light Nature of Mental Activity

Mental Activity as Clear Light

Many Buddhist texts describe the nature of mind -- in other words, the nature of mental activity -- as “clear light.” Clear light, however, is merely an analogy. It does not mean that we possess, literally, a light source deep inside, like a lightbulb in the recesses of our brain. Mind is neither a source nor an agent that shines a spotlight on objects, rendering them known. Nor is mind the spotlight itself. Rather, the term “clear light” implies that mental activity, by nature, is as clear as empty space. Like empty space, it allows for any mental object -- not only a sight, but also a sound or a thought -- to arise and be known, as if that object were something visible being illumined in the dark.

The term “clear,” then, refers to an absence. In other words, by nature, mental activity is clear of various “stains” which do not adulterate it. There are two types of stains: fleeting and natural. The former can exist; the latter are imaginary.

Fleeting stains may be present but, since they pass, they are not inherent flaws. Some fleeting stains prevent liberation from suffering and

obstruct the ability to help others. Examples are disturbing emotions and attitudes. Others, such as conceptual thoughts, do not create such problems. Some may even help to overcome them. Nevertheless, with the attainment of Buddhahood, mental activity continues without them.

Natural stains refer to concrete, findable features in mental activity that would cause it to exist in impossible ways. Such features include inherent flaws and omnipotence to change reality. When we deeply investigate the nature of mental activity, we can never find such features, despite our possible belief in them. Since natural stains are merely imaginary, mental activity is naturally without them.

Our mind operates on two levels. On the grosser level, our mental activity contains the fleeting stains of disturbing emotions and thoughts. On the subtler level, it is devoid of such stains. Both levels of mind, however, are naturally devoid of inherent flaws. This subtler level, also known as clear light or subtlest mind, underlies each moment of our experience. It provides the continuity of our mental activity.

Four Types of Clear Light Nature

Several aspects of mental activity are unadulterated by either fleeting or natural stains and are therefore as clear as empty space. Each of them accounts for the fact that mental objects can arise and be known. Consequently, mental activity has four types of clear light nature: (1) its defining characteristic -- merely producing mental objects and engaging with them, (2) its self-void nature -- its lack of existing in fantasized and impossible ways, (3) its subtlest level -- that which provides its continuity, and (4) its other-void nature -- its subtlest level being devoid of grosser levels of mental activity.

In other words, no matter how confused or preoccupied our mental activity may be, (1) it still produces mental objects and engages with them and (2) it still does not exist in impossible ways. Its subtlest level (3) still provides its unbroken continuity and (4) is undisturbed by the churning of its grosser levels. All these aspects of mind's clear light nature allow it to know its objects despite the stains that might temporarily taint it.

Nothing Can Affect Mind's Fourfold Clear Light Nature

Mental activity does not exist or occur in impossible ways. Self-voidness theories explain that this is a permanent fact that is always the case. Nothing can affect its truth. The other-voidness position agrees and asserts the same regarding mind's other three clear light natures. A level of mental activity (1) with a structure of producing appearances and engaging

with them, (2) which provides continuity from one moment to the next, and (3) which is devoid of grosser levels, is also permanent. It is permanent in that its presence and functioning are always the case. This is true no matter what appearance mind produces and engages, and no matter what mental factors accompany that activity. Thus, by nature, mind is unadulterated by stains.

In short, although mental objects and factors are constantly changing, mind's clear light natures remain forever the same. From one point of view, disturbing emotions and thoughts affect our experiences. As these factors change, so do our experiences. From another point of view, the structure of our experiences never alters. The subtlest level of our mind is unaffected by disturbing emotions and thoughts because it is devoid of these grosser levels. Our basic mental activity of producing mental objects and engaging with them is also unaffected, although emotions and thoughts are part of it. This latter fact is significant for our discussion.

Relevance of Clear Light to Issues of Sensitivity

When we successfully develop balanced sensitivity, our mental activity of producing appearances and engaging with them is free of all stains. It becomes like clear light. In the terminology of mahamudra, we reach our "naturally unadulterated state" that was always the case. Our clear light activity has never existed with inherent flaws. It was never true that we could not feel anything or that we were too sensitive to deal with difficult situations. Our fears and self-centered attitudes were just passing phases that were not inherent, permanent parts of our personality. The conceptual framework we used for balancing our emotions was very useful, but we no longer need it. We automatically are fully attentive of others and of ourselves. Moreover, we spontaneously respond in a balanced manner without any conscious, deliberate thought.

EXERCISE 8

Appreciating the Clear Light Nature of Mental Activity

We begin the first phase of this exercise by choosing someone with whom we presently have or have previously had a volatile relationship. For example, we may choose a relative or friend whom we miss when we are apart, but who frequently annoys us when we are together. We place a photograph of the person before us, making sure to select an image with a neutral expression, not a smile. As we shall be working with a variety of feelings and thoughts toward the person, we need to focus on an image that is more easily open to different emotional responses.

First, we try to experience the fact that mind's clear light nature of producing and engaging with mental objects is never blocked or stained. Focusing on the sight of the person's face in the photo, we try to remain aware of the mental activity that is happening while seeing the image. That activity is simply the simultaneous creation of the appearance we perceive and the seeing of it. Then, recalling an upsetting incident that we had with the person, we try to generate a feeling of annoyance. We stop and observe whether our disturbing emotion prevents the mental activity that produces the sight of the face and our seeing of it.

We then look away from the photo and think of the person, by using a mental image, a feeling, or simply a name to represent him or her. We may keep our eyes either opened or closed, whichever is more comfortable. Again, we try to recall the incident and feel annoyed. Does our annoyance block the person's name or an image of his or her face from arising in our mind and our thinking of it? In fact, we cannot be consciously annoyed with the person without somehow thinking of him or her.

Next, we recall an upsetting situation that had nothing to do with the person and generate a feeling of annoyance, for instance with our work. We look at the photo in this state of mind and examine whether our emotion prevents our mental activity of producing and seeing the sight. Still feeling annoyed with work, we then try to think of the person. Although this may be difficult if we are extremely upset, nevertheless we can at least think of the person's name. In the end, personal experience leads us to conclude that no matter how disturbed our mind may be, it does not affect our moment-to-moment mental activity of producing appearances and engaging with them. We can still see and we can still think. Therefore, no matter how emotionally distraught we may be, we can still be aware of others' situations. Being upset, we might not pay much attention to their situation, but disturbing emotions do not incapacitate us from being able to see or think of it. We try to digest this realization.

Looking once more at the photograph, we consciously think a verbal thought about the person, such as "This is a human being." We investigate whether the thought prevents our mental activity from producing the sight of the face and our seeing of it. We then do the same while merely thinking of the person nonverbally. How can we think this person is a human being without thinking of the person? Next, we think something that has nothing to do with the person, such as "It is time for lunch." Can we simultaneously think that thought and see the photo? Can we think that thought while also picturing the person's face in our mind? Experience leads us to conclude

that verbal thought also does not block our seeing or thinking of someone. We try to focus on this fact.

Again looking at the photo, we think, “I cannot relate to this person.” Even if we believe this is true, is there some inherent flaw in our mental activity that prevents us from seeing what we see? We repeat the thought while merely thinking of the person and ask the same question. Through this process, we discover another crucial fact that allows us balanced sensitivity. Natural stains also do not obscure or obstruct our mind’s clear light nature of merely producing appearances and perceiving them. No matter what we believe, we can be properly sensitive when we see or think of someone. Again, we try to let this realization sink in by focusing on the feeling and conviction that this is true.

Next, we try to experience that nothing can affect our mind’s clear light nature of self-voidness – the fact that it does not exist in impossible ways. One impossible way would be that our mind could alter reality – not just our subjective experience of reality, but objective reality itself. When we believe that our mind has this power, we imagine that whatever we think of someone is true, simply because we think it is so. Such a belief underlies feeling that our opinion of someone is always correct. Thinking this makes us insensitive to the person’s reality and often leads to overreaction based on belief in fantasy. In this exercise, let us examine this issue only on its most obvious level. We shall explore it in depth later.

First, we look at the photograph with fear and think, “This person is a monster.” Do our feelings or thoughts make the person a monster? No, they do not. Someone may act *like* a monster, or we may merely think that the person acts like a monster. However, no one actually *is* a monster, because actual monsters do not exist. Repeating the procedure while merely thinking of the person, we conclude and try to focus on the fact that our mind cannot change reality. Our mental activity does not exist with this impossible power.

Then, we try to experience the fact that a subtle clear light level of mind underlies each moment of our experience and, being other-void, it is devoid of all stains. To do this, we investigate what provides the continuity of our experience of looking at or thinking of the face in the picture. We try to regard the sight and then the thought of the face with annoyance, longing, and finally with jealousy. Since none of these disturbing emotions last and each can be replaced with the next, the level of mental activity that provides continuity must be a subtler one that underlies all emotions. We try the same experiment with a variety of verbal thoughts about the person and reach the same conclusion. The level that provides continuity must

underlie and be more fundamental than verbal thought too.

What remains of our mental activity now is merely seeing and thinking of an image of the face. We slowly alternate the two, closing our eyes when thinking of the person if we had not been doing this before. In both cases, there is an arising of an appearance and an engaging with it. The fundamental mental activity is the same. Thus, the common denominator underlying all our experiences and providing their continuity is the mental activity of merely producing appearances and engaging with them. We try to focus for some minutes on that realization.

Lastly, we try to incorporate these insights into our moment-to-moment experience, by looking at the photo and using the key phrases: “producing and perceiving appearances,” “unaffected by emotions or thoughts,” “not inherently flawed,” “incapable of changing reality,” and “always there.” First, we work with one realization at a time as we go through the sequence. Then, to expand our deep awareness network, we try to be aware of increasingly more points simultaneously, by working first with two phrases, then three, four, and finally all five. As with the previous exercise, we do not repeat the phrases more than once every few minutes. Otherwise, they become distracting. We then repeat the procedure while merely thinking of the person.

Next, we sit in a circle with a group and repeat the entire exercise two or three times. Each time, we alternate looking at a different person in the group and merely thinking of him or her for the entire sequence. With someone we know fairly well, we can generate disturbing emotions by trying to remember incidents in which we might have been impatient with the person, felt superior or inferior, and so on. With people we do not know well or whom we do not know at all, we may try to recall an emotional incident from our life also during the first step. When we meet someone new, we can often be upset about something that happened with somebody else.

During the second part of this phase of the exercise, we repeat the procedure while facing a partner, alternately looking at the person and merely thinking of him or her while closing our eyes. When generating various emotions during the first step, we may either do the same as when sitting in a circle or use the nervousness and shyness we might feel now if we do not know the person.

During the third phase, we alternate looking at ourselves in a mirror and merely picturing our image or thinking our name. We follow the same steps as before. To generate a disturbing emotion during the first step, we try to recall feeling low self-esteem, self-hatred, or self-importance, and

then try to feel these emotions again. Lastly, we repeat the procedure while looking at the series of photos of ourselves and then looking away and imagining ourselves at each of those periods in our life. When generating various emotions, we try to recall moments of feeling self-hatred or self-importance regarding ourselves as we were then.

9 Accessing the Natural Talents of Our Mind and Heart

In Exercise Two, we relied on a line of reasoning to generate one of the ingredients of balanced sensitivity. In Exercise Three, we imagined our mental activity containing all the necessary qualities. In Exercise Four, we accessed a basis level of some of these qualities through memories of experiencing a certain degree of each. Now, we are ready to work with another source for the elements of balanced sensitivity.

Exercises Seven and Eight have given us the background. The former accustomed us to the general features of mental activity, while the latter familiarized us with the qualities of its clear light nature. To gain the ingredients for balanced sensitivity, we can now tap the natural talents of our mind and heart.

Clear Light Talents

According to the explanation of other-voidness, clear light mind is naturally resplendent with all enlightening qualities. These include the two main ingredients of balanced sensitivity: attentiveness and responsiveness. The fact that each moment of our mental activity engages with its object means that some level of attention is always operating. Otherwise, mental engagement would be impossible. Paying attention to something means taking it as an object of focus, whether that be through seeing it, hearing it, thinking it, feeling it, and so on. Therefore, we have the first prerequisite for balanced sensitivity: attentiveness. This basic activity is the framework on which to hang other required factors such as interest and concentration.

Further, the fact that in each moment our mental activity produces an appearance of its object – whether that object be something visible, audible, thinkable, or “feelable” -- means that some level of responsiveness is part of that activity. In other words, part of the mental activity that naturally occurs in response to looking at someone’s face, for example, is

the production of the sight of it that we see. Since we are responding to our encounter at least in this reflex manner, we automatically have the second prerequisite for balanced sensitivity: responsiveness. We can add other essential qualities to it, such as warmth and understanding.

Natural Concern to Take Care of Someone

Other qualities that balanced sensitivity require also naturally endow our clear light mind. Noteworthy among them is concern to take care of someone. As a mental activity, it may not be functioning at its highest level now. Accompanied by selfishness and greed, our concern may be directed primarily at ourselves. Moreover, when low self-esteem also accompanies it, our concern for ourselves may not be particularly warm. Nevertheless, concern is present. Otherwise, we would do nothing to further our self-centered interests.

When we remove confusion from the basic mental activity of concern, we discover that naturally warm and caring feelings radiate to all. Selfish worry and altruistic concern are different forms of the same mental activity.

The Relation Between Concern and Appearances

From the point of view of biology, the instincts for self-preservation and survival of the species automatically lead to various activities to support life. The dzogchen system describes the same phenomenon when explaining that mind's natural concern automatically leads to the activity of producing appearances.

The appearances that arise due to concern for taking care of someone may be of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, physical or tactile sensations, thoughts, or emotional feelings. Specifically, these are appearances of ourselves engaging in various physical, verbal, and mental activities. Moreover, warm concern gives rise not merely to the sight, sound, or feeling of these activities, but also to the actions themselves.

These points relate to the development of balanced sensitivity. When we direct our concern primarily at ourselves and mix it with self-importance, it does not function at its highest level. When freed from selfishness, however, our concern naturally translates into the appearance of balanced and sensitive words and actions.

Natural Warmth and Joy

The Sakya system of other-voidness focuses on the “natural bliss” of the subtlest clear light mind and calls this joy the “youth of the mind.”

This is the bliss of that level being naturally free of conceptual thoughts and disturbing emotions. Specifically, it is the blissful joy of its being free of the work of these coarser levels. That work is to fabricate fanciful ideas and impossible roles that we feel compelled to fulfill. When our mental activity stops spinning webs of preconceptions, we experience relief and joy naturally filling our heart and mind.

Conceptual thoughts and disturbing emotions tie up our innermost energy, often manifesting in tension and nervousness. On the subtlest clear light level, this energy flows freely. When we reach this level, we regain, in a sense, the forgotten youth of our mind. The clarity, freshness, and joy that were always there naturally translate into sensitive attention and warm responsiveness.

Many Sakya adherents of self-voidness also speak of natural bliss as the source for the appearances we manifest. These masters focus, however, on the blissful joy that characterizes realization that clear light mind is naturally free of all absurd modes of existence.

This presentation of natural bliss is also relevant for gaining balanced sensitivity. Many people suffer from low self-esteem. Some even feel guilty if they are happy. Such self-deprecation blocks sensitivity to their own true qualities and prevents attentiveness to those of others. We do not exist, however, in the damning manner our confusion projects. Therefore, we have no reason to feel guilty about feeling comfortable and happy with ourselves. Happiness, in fact, is the natural state of the mind. When we comprehend this point, we automatically feel relief and joy. Feeling good about ourselves naturally leads to feeling comfortable with others, being sensitive to their situation, and being confident to help in whatever way needed.

EXERCISE 9

Accessing the Natural Talents of Our Mind and Heart

The first phase of this exercise begins with looking at a picture or simply thinking of someone with whom we have a close relationship. This may be a friend, a relative, or a colleague at work. Using the breathing method of letting go and the image of writing on water, we try to relax our muscular tension and quiet our mind of verbal thoughts and images.

We then try to become conscious of the preconceptions we have about the person, about our relationship, and about ourselves. We try to bring to mind any associated judgments we make, such as: “You are so lazy and inconsiderate,” “You are not relating to our relationship,” or “I am always right.” Realizing that no one remains forever the same – the con-

tents of experience are ever-changing – we try to drop these preconceptions and judgments. We imagine them slowly leaving us with our breath as we gently exhale. Alternatively, or in addition, we may picture them automatically dissolving like writing on water.

Next, we try to become conscious of the roles we feel that each of us must play toward the other. These may include: “You have to be the efficient secretary,” or “I have to be a perfect mother to you.” We also try to become aware of the expectations that we have, such as: “You must always be available for me,” or “I always have to clean up after you.” We then remind ourselves that living up to a fixed role is impossible. No one exists in terms of simply a role. Everyone is simply a human being. Realizing this, we try to release this person and ourselves from these projected roles and associated expectations. We do this again by trying either to breathe them out or to let them naturally dissolve like writing on water. During the process, we try to feel ever-deeper levels of physical, mental, and emotional tension releasing itself and ever-subtler levels of stress slowly lifting. We enter a state of profound and quiet relief.

Lastly, we try to notice how we naturally feel in this state that approximates one of clear light. If we have successfully brought to the surface and at least partially released our major preconceptions, we automatically feel warm, joyous, and open to the person. We are naturally attentive, concerned, and feel no hesitation or anxiety in responding with whatever words or actions seem appropriate. We try to bask for several minutes in this state. Tibetan masters call it the “resting place of the yogis.”

Next, we repeat the exercise while looking at a magazine picture of a stranger or while looking at a photo or thinking of someone we hardly know. We try to bring to consciousness and then to dismiss the public image we feel compelled to maintain, especially when meeting someone new. Trying also to drop our preconceptions about foreigners or strangers, we try to rest in the naturally balanced sensitivity toward the person that this relaxing process automatically brings. Then, we follow the same procedure while focusing on someone we dislike.

We practice the second phase of the exercise first while sitting in a circle with our group. Focusing on the persons who fill our field of vision, we try to release all concepts and tension we may have toward being with people in general. Then, we repeat the procedure while facing a succession of partners. We try to release the various preconceptions, judgments, roles, and expectations that are specific to the relationship we have with each. Practicing with as broad a spectrum of people as possible is particularly important here. Best is to work with persons of each sex from three genera-

tions: our own, a younger, and then an older one. For each category, we try to practice with someone from the same and then a different social background, nationality, or race than ourselves. Moreover, within each subcategory, we try to work first with someone we know and then with a stranger. We may even practice with a dog or a cat. We need to sweep ourselves thoroughly of all fixed ideas. If we lack such diversity in our group, we may use pictures from a magazine.

During the third phase, we aim the practice at ourselves, first while looking in a mirror and then after putting the mirror aside. Trying to bring to the surface the preconceptions and expectations we have of ourselves and the roles and games we play in our life is crucial here. We need to release them all. We conclude by focusing on the series of photos of ourselves. When we let go of our judgments, we find that we are naturally more warm, open, and sensitive toward ourselves as we were in the past, as we are right now, and as we shall be in the future.

10 Applying the Five Types of Deep Awareness

Basic Description of the Five Types of Awareness

An additional asset of subtlest clear light mind is that five types of deep awareness naturally endow it as part of our innate network of deep awareness. These five are a topic discussed primarily in the highest class of tantra, *anuttarayoga*. The Nyingma and Kagyü traditions correlate them with Buddha-nature and provide the most detail. As crucial ingredients for balanced sensitivity, the five comprise what we have so far been calling “understanding.” They are (1) mirror-like awareness, (2) awareness of equalities, (3) awareness of individualities, (4) accomplishing awareness, and (5) awareness of reality (*dharmadhatu*).

Like mind, the five are mental activities directed at an object. More specifically, each is a manner of engaging with an object. Thus, more fully, the five are (1) perceiving the details of an object in the way that a mirror does, (2) perceiving how the object is equal to others in various regards, (3) perceiving the object as something individual and unique, (4) perceiving how to accomplish some purpose concerning the object, and (5) perceiving the object’s reality.

Like other natural talents of our clear light mind, the five types of awareness have basis, pathway, and resultant levels. To develop balanced sensitivity, we need to recognize within our experience their basis level and

then cultivate pathway levels to achieve at least an approximation of their resultant state.

Mirror-like Awareness

Everyone has a basis level of mirror-like awareness. This is because everyone's sensory or mental consciousness takes in all the details of the object at which it aims. The word "mirror" in this technical term does not imply that this type of awareness is limited to the visual sphere. Mirror-like awareness also functions with our senses of hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling physical sensations, as well as with our "mental sense" of feeling emotions.

The term "mirror" also does not imply that our sensory or mental consciousness reflects information. It merely takes in information, like a video camera or a microphone. Thus, whenever we focus on a particular item in a sensory or mental field, we not only perceive that item, we also take in all its details. When we look at people's faces, for example, we also see their eyes and nose. Moreover, this mental activity does not require verbalization. We see all these features without needing to say, either aloud or silently, "eyes" or "nose."

Although we take in all the information of our sensory and mental fields, our mirror-like awareness does not currently produce the fullest results that it can. This is because the supportive mental factors accompanying it, such as attention and concern, also do not currently work at their optimal level. This, in turn, is due to little interest or weak concentration. Our attention, for example, may be divided because of self-absorbed thoughts or emotion. Further, our interest and concern may be merely curious or academic. The frequent result of these deficiencies is that we are insensitive to what we see, hear, or feel. We neither respond to it nor even remember what we have perceived.

To benefit others and ourselves more fully, we need to notice, with loving interest and caring concern, all the information that our senses and mind naturally take in with mirror-like awareness. Noticing means to understand the presence of a particular feature or detail of something. It is a mental factor -- or mental activity -- that may accompany seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or physically or emotionally feeling that feature.

Seeing people and noticing the presence of various aspects is an important component of balanced sensitivity and leads to further understanding. For example, we can tell a lot about people when we notice their facial expression, the lines on their face, how they hold their body, how calm or fidgety they are, and whether or not they look at us during a conversation.

We can also learn a lot about them by noticing how healthy or unhealthy they look, how fresh or tired they seem, how clean or dirty they are, how they dress, how they keep their hair, and how much makeup and jewelry they wear. Whenever we look at people, we see all these details. We need merely to pay attention and notice them.

Similarly, when we listen to people speaking, we can tell much about them not only by hearing the words that they say, but also by noticing the emotional tone in their voice and the volume, speed, and clarity of expression. The person's grammar, style, and accent also reveal information. Moreover, we can learn much about ourselves by trying to notice the complex emotions and feelings that comprise our moods.

On a pathway level, we can work with our mirror-like awareness to derive the most benefit from it. We do this through extending the scope of this awareness and through enhancing our interest and concentration. Consequently, we notice increasingly more information about whatever we see, hear, or feel. On the resultant level, a Buddha notices, with all-loving concern, every detail of information that his or her mirror-like awareness naturally takes in. We aim for this ideal.

Awareness of Equalities

When we perceive something, we not only take in information, we naturally organize that information into patterns so that we can process, comprehend, and respond to it. Organizing information into patterns is the function of awareness of equalities, or equalizing awareness. We all have this awareness on its basis level. For example, when we look at people, our mirror-like awareness takes in the shape of their body. When we are aware of this physical feature, we compare it with previous knowledge and understand that this shape is similar to others we have seen. Consequently, we see people with the understanding that they fall in the common category of being thin or fat. We do not need to verbalize this fact to see people with this understanding.

Equalizing awareness functions similarly whether we focus on one person or on several people at a time and whether we look at, listen to, or think about them. However, when more than one person is involved, we are also aware that they are equal to each other in sharing some feature. We may also be aware of them and ourselves as equal in some regard. Furthermore, awareness of equalities may concern obvious physical facts, such as weight, or less obvious ones like being on a diet.

Awareness of equalities does not operate at peak level when its scope is limited. Its scope varies according to how much detail we notice

and how many facts we know about someone or something. It also depends on the range of persons or objects we consider as sharing these features. For example, suppose we are standing in line at a checkout counter behind several people. When we look at them, we see that each of them is equally waiting his or her turn, just as we are. If, however, we do not note that each of us probably also has other things to do, we might think that we are the only one in a hurry. Thus, we become impatient and annoyed. Awareness of equalities allows us to see what we have in common with others so that we can relate more sensitively.

Other facts about people are more basic than their being in a hurry, and they apply to everyone. Ordinarily, we do not see everyone as equal regarding his or her wish to be happy and not to suffer. Nor do most of us see everyone as equal in having the same right to be happy and not to suffer. Consequently, we do not regard everyone with equal concern, attention, love, or respect. A Buddha sees everyone as equal in that everyone shares the same wishes and rights, everyone has the same potentials for growth, and everyone exists in the same manner. If we wish to achieve perfectly balanced sensitivity, we need deep awareness of all beings, including ourselves, as equal in these profound and extensive ways.

We also need to direct our awareness of equalities to seeing patterns in our own and others' destructive behavior. If we cannot recognize the patterns of disturbing attitudes that fuel our recurring emotional turmoil, we cannot begin to respond sensitively with appropriate steps to becoming more balanced.

Awareness of Individualities

When we perceive people or objects, we not only are naturally aware of how they are equal to others in certain regards, we are also aware of their individuality. For example, we can see a class of undisciplined teenagers as all being rowdy. Simultaneously, however, we can also see each person in the class as an individual: John, Mary, or Fred. We do not need to verbalize or even know their names to see them as individuals.

Awareness of individualities, or individualizing awareness, is essential for balanced sensitivity. Standing in a crowded subway, for example, we often lose sight of this awareness and become insensitive to others. People, however, do not exist as just another face in the crowd or as just another member of an ethnic minority whom we need to fear. Everyone on the subway is an individual. Each has a family, a private life, a business life, and a personal history. Seeing each with this understanding allows us to respect them all as individuals. This, in turn, allows a more balanced and

sensitive response to each. As a Buddha, we would see all people in this way, everywhere and always.

When we are aware of the patterns in others' and our own neurotic behavior, we need also to see the individuality of each manifestation. Otherwise, we may respond with a stock reply that does not fit the particular occasion. Though two events may share a pattern, they are never identical. Different situations call for distinct responses.

Accomplishing Awareness

The fourth type of awareness is of what to do to accomplish something and of how to do it. We all have a basis level of this awareness. When we are hungry and see food on our plate, for example, we automatically know what to do and how to do it. We do not need to verbalize this knowledge to accomplish our goal.

With this type of awareness, we also know how to relate to various persons and situations. When we take care of a baby, for instance, we know how to act and speak. We also know how to comport ourselves when with adults. Not relating identically to babies and to adults, we are naturally flexible. We respond differently according to what is appropriate.

Now, however, this awareness is not working at its highest level. We may sometimes treat our grownup child as if he or she were twelve years old. At other times, we may be at a loss how to connect with someone at all. As a Buddha, we would know how to relate perfectly to everyone.

Accomplishing awareness becomes more proficient the more we enhance the scope of the previous three types of awareness. For example, when we meet a friend and notice, with mirror-like awareness, that he or she has a troubled expression, we would see the pattern of emotional upset with awareness of equalities. With individualizing awareness, we would respect this as an event in its own right and take it seriously. We would not regard it as yet another scene. Based on this and on loving concern, we would respond fittingly with accomplishing awareness, for instance by comforting and calming the person.

Awareness of Reality

Every phenomenon has two facts, or natures, that constitute its reality. These are usually called the "two truths." They are the conventional fact of what a phenomenon is and the deepest fact of how it exists. On a basis level, awareness of the reality of something or someone is awareness of what or of who it is. For example, when we see our little boy acting disruptively, mirror-like awareness and awareness of equalities provide informa-

tion and patterns. These allow for the fifth awareness, namely that he is a boy, that he is a child, and that he is being naughty. Depending on how much information we notice, we may also be aware of his reality as someone who is overtired. Despite his horrible behavior, he wants love, not scolding, just as we do. Our awareness of his individuality and of how to accomplish something meaningful may allow us to relate fittingly and put our son to bed. However, to be of continuing help we need also to be aware of the deepest sphere of his reality.

As we learn more about reality, we see that the lad does not have a fixed identity as a naughty child. The situation is open. He may act differently tomorrow and, after all, he will not always be a child and need supervision. Such awareness allows flexibility to relate to the boy creatively as he grows up, without the constrictions of preconceptions or outdated modes of response. If we aim for balanced sensitivity, we need to expand the scope of our awareness of reality. As a Buddha, we would know every fact about the boy, on all levels, and remain conscious of each of them, simultaneously and at all times.

The Five Types of Deep Awareness as an Integrated Network

Anuttarayoga tantra explains that the five types of fully functional deep awareness form a network that comprises each moment of a Buddha's experience. This suggests that balanced sensitivity also requires the five functioning together harmoniously as an integrated network. A network is a nonlinear system: each component operates simultaneously, connecting with and supporting each other. The exact manner in which such a system operates, however, is difficult to fathom. Therefore, to appreciate the necessity for all its parts and the way in which they supplement each other, let us simplify the system into a linear model. When training to enhance our innate five types of awareness, we shall likewise work first with one form at a time and then try to fuse them into a network.

Consider the example of working to overcome a depression. When we are depressed, we need to take in, like a mirror for emotions, all the details of what we feel. Using awareness of equalities, we would compare this information with what we have previously experienced to see the pattern. With awareness of reality, we would identify the pattern and know that we are upset about something.

Not discounting the scene as yet another time that we are upset and depressed, we would respect its uniqueness with individualizing awareness. To identify the unique features would again entail awareness of reality. This would allow us to respond appropriately. With accomplishing awareness,

we would regard our mood as something with which we wish to relate and deal. Our energy would rise to the occasion and we would rely once more on awareness of reality to identify specifically what to do. Lastly, with awareness of deepest reality, we would know that although we may be depressed now, this is not our inherent, lasting identity. Understanding this, we are nonjudgmental in trying to change our mood.

EXERCISE 10

Applying the Five Types of Deep Awareness

As it is difficult to direct mirror-like awareness at thoughts of someone, we practice the first phase of this exercise only while looking at photographs. We begin by focusing on a family photo or on a picture of a group of our friends. As in the previous exercises, we try to quiet our mind of mental stories, preconceptions, and nonverbal judgments. Being in a subtler, quieter state, we may automatically feel a certain amount of warm concern. We need to enhance that feeling. It forms the context for applying the five types of awareness. Best is to repeat, in an abbreviated form, the second part of Exercise Two and to try to generate caring concern through the line of reasoning:

Each of you is a human being and has feelings, just as I do.
The mood you are in will affect our interaction, just as mine will affect it.
How I treat you and what I say will further affect your feelings, just as how you treat me and what you say will further affect mine.
Therefore, just as I hope that you care about me and about my feelings in our interaction, I care about you and about your feelings.

Once we sincerely feel caring concern for these people, we try to focus on each with mirror-like awareness. Like a video camera, we try to take in all the information that we see, without commenting or making up stories in our mind. Following this, we try to look at several of them together, in different combinations, with equalizing awareness. Specifically, with joint equalizing and reality awareness, we try to see them all as equally wanting to be happy and never to suffer. Based on this caring regard, we try to feel equal love, compassion, and concern for them all. Next, we try to look at each with awareness of his or her individuality. We try to accom-

pany this with respect for each as an individual, without voicing even his or her name.

Then, we try to focus with accomplishing awareness. Specifically, with joint accomplishing and reality awareness, we try to look with the understanding of how to relate to each. For example, we may imagine being at a dinner table with the entire group. We would have no difficulty turning from one to the next and knowing how to talk to each according to his or her age, interests, and personality. Next, we try to apply awareness of deepest reality. We try to see each not only as our sister, parent, child, or friend, but also as open to being many things. Although the person may now be a child with certain interests, he or she will grow and change over the years ahead. We try to see the child as open to all possibilities.

Lastly, we try to familiarize ourselves with these states of mind and types of awareness, by using the seven key phrases: “no stories,” “caring concern,” “camera,” “equal,” “individual,” “relate,” and “open.” First, we work with one state of mind or one type of awareness at a time, as we repeat the sequence several times. Then, we try to combine an increasingly larger number of these states, by using first two phrases, then three and so on, until we can establish an integrated network of all seven mental states.

Next, we place beside the photo of our loved ones a magazine picture of a stranger and repeat the exercise. Although we do not know the stranger personally, yet based on our mirror-like awareness of his or her appearance, we have some idea of how to relate with joint accomplishing and reality awareness. In any case, we know how to relate to strangers in general. As a final step for this first phase, we place next to these two photos a picture of someone we dislike and again repeat the procedure.

During the second phase of the exercise, we sit with our group in a circle. At each step, we try to look at each person in turn with a quiet mind, caring concern, and one of the five types of awareness, by using the seven key phrases as before. Here, repeating the key phrase also for the initial generation of each type of awareness, and occasionally alternating it with “no stories” and “caring concern,” is especially helpful. In group practice, looking at each person first with caring concern helps to prevent being the object of someone’s mirror-like awareness from feeling like being the object of a voyeur’s stare.

For equalizing awareness, we look at two or three persons at once and merely see them with equal regard. We leave it at that, without supplementing this awareness with awareness of reality. In other words, we need not identify the ways in which the persons are equal, nor think about the ways in which they differ. Similarly, for individualizing awareness, we

simply regard each person as an individual, without identifying the factors that define his or her individuality. Further, for accomplishing awareness, we merely extend our energy to each person with the deep wish to relate. We are willing to go more than halfway to meet the person. Here, we do not need to identify the way in which we can best connect. With awareness of reality, we focus not only on the fact that each person is open to change, but also on our own flexibility and openness to him or her.

When we try to combine the seven states of mind, we no longer look around the circle. Instead, we focus on a particular set of two or three people for the entire round. When we repeat this step for integration, we may choose another set of persons.

We begin the third phase by sitting with several people before a large mirror. Seeing our image in a group and realizing that we are equal to the others can be a powerful and valuable experience. We go through the steps of the exercise as in the second phase.

Next, we sit alone without a mirror. After trying to generate mental silence and a warm, gentle feeling of caring concern toward ourselves, we direct mirror-like awareness at the feelings and emotions we are currently experiencing. We try to become aware of the complex factors that comprise the moment, but without mentally commenting. This part of the exercise is more effective when practiced at the start of a new session when the feelings of the day still color our mood. We need to include as part of what we notice any judgmental feelings we might currently have toward ourselves. We also need to include feeling nothing, if that is our present state.

With equalizing awareness, we see our present feelings as equal to any others we have experienced – they are only a feeling, no more and no less. This allows us to face them with equanimity free from fear. Coupling equalizing awareness with awareness of reality, we try to see and identify the patterns in our feelings and emotions. Nevertheless, with individualizing awareness, we acknowledge the uniqueness of what we are experiencing now. With accomplishing awareness coupled with awareness of reality, we try to see how to relate to what we are feeling. Perhaps we need to be kinder to ourselves, or perhaps we need to be more firm and lift ourselves out of depression. Lastly, with awareness of deepest reality, we try not to identify solidly with our mood of the moment. We see that our moods and ourselves are open to change. We use the seven key phrases to assimilate and form an integrated network out of these states of mind and kinds of awareness.

Next, we arrange before us the series of photographs of ourselves spanning our life. First, we direct mirror-like awareness at the feelings and

emotions that each elicits. Then, we repeat the procedure we used for focusing on our mood of the moment, working through the other four types of awareness. We conclude by trying to direct equalizing awareness to regard ourselves with equal warmth throughout our life.

The Karma Kagyü approach to the five types of awareness in its specific and deep awareness (*namshey yeshey*) system suggests a final step focused on ourselves. We may practice it while sitting quietly without any props. First, with mirror-like awareness, we open to the entire scope of our personality, in the sense that we quiet down and mirror its foundation -- our clear light mind. As the clear light mind is free of conceptual thoughts, we maintain deepest reality awareness by facing our character without making judgments or stories. As we bring our personality into focus, we apply equalizing awareness to have equal regard for all its aspects. In this way, we maintain equanimity.

Next, with individualizing awareness, we focus on a specific aspect of our character. With accomplishing awareness, we extend our energy to deal with it. Lastly, with joint accomplishing and reality awareness, we see how to relate to this aspect and how to bring it into daily life in a practical way. Recognizing its assets and its shortcomings, we try to identify methods to enhance the former and to eliminate or at least to minimize the latter. We may repeat this part of the exercise by directing our attention toward other facets of our personality.

PART III
**Dispelling Confusion
About Appearances**

11 Validating the Appearances We Perceive

Statement of the Problem

The most basic mental activity during each moment of our experience is to produce mental objects and simultaneously to engage with them. If, however, the actual object we perceive with mirror-like awareness is merely an appearance our mind creates, this raises a serious question. How do we know that the interpretation our awareness of reality makes of what we see or hear is true?

For example, suppose we notice an expression on our friend's face and our mind makes it appear as though he or she is upset with us. How do we know that what we perceive is accurate so that we can properly respond with accomplishing awareness? After all, paranoia may make someone appear disapproving of us when he or she simply has an upset stomach. This can easily cause us to make a fool of ourselves.

Confirming the Conventional Validity of What We Sense

The sixth century Indian Buddhist master Chandrakirti explained three criteria to validate any perception. First, what we perceive needs to be well known in the world. For example, when people are upset and disapprove of someone, they may knit their brows and twist their mouth askew. This convention, however, is not universal. In some societies, people show disapproval by raising their eyebrows and making the sound "tsk." Dogs, on the other hand, growl. With awareness of equalities, we need to correlate what we see or hear with the appropriate social convention. We need also to apply awareness of equalities to compare what we see with the individual's personal pattern of behavior. This tells us if our friend usually expresses being upset this way.

Second, what we perceive must not be contradicted by a mind that validly sees the conventional facts of reality: what things are. Therefore, even before applying the first criterion, we might need to come nearer or to put on our glasses. We need to make sure that what we see is not a distortion due to distance or poor eyesight. If nothing is

wrong with our mirror-like awareness and what we perceive fits the right pattern, we then need to corroborate our conclusion with other evidence. We may rely on further observation and on conversation with our friend and those close to him or her.

Anger arises from a broad array of causes and circumstances. These include someone's emotional makeup, his or her personal, family, and societal backgrounds, and an incident that sparks the anger to arise. Anything that arises from causes and circumstances produces effects. Therefore, if our friend is upset with us, he or she is likely to do this or that and respond to us in this or that manner. This will happen whether or not our friend is conscious of his or her anger and whether or not our friend is willing to discuss it. We need to look for further evidence with mirror-like awareness and to identify the patterns with awareness of equalities.

In short, the ability to produce an effect distinguishes whether or not what we conventionally perceive is a total figment of our imagination. By these first two criteria, then, we discriminate between accurate and distorted appearances and between correct and distorted understandings of what accurate appearances conventionally signify. This, however, is still not enough.

Suppose the appearance we perceive of our friend's knitted brow is accurate, not a distortion of weak vision or insufficient lighting. Suppose also that the person is from a society that shares the custom of showing this expression when upset. Moreover, following this convention is our friend's normal behavior when in such a mood. Furthermore, suppose that we have checked other evidence. Our friend glared at us when we arrived and remained silent when we said hello. Thus, our understanding and labeling of the significance of the sight are correct. Our friend actually is annoyed with us and does not merely have an upset stomach. Still, our friend may appear to us as a truly ridiculous person who is always becoming upset and angry. Consequently, we may overreact and we too become annoyed. To confirm the validity of this appearance, we need a third criterion. The appearance our mind produces must not be contradicted by a mind that validly perceives the deepest fact of reality: how things exist.

Validating the Deepest Fact of Reality According to the Self-Voidness Position

According to the self-voidness position, as explained by the Gelug tradition, the deepest fact of reality is that everything exists

devoid of fantasized, impossible ways. Unless we are an enlightened being, however, our mind automatically creates a deceptive appearance of how our friend exists. It then mixes an appearance of a mode of existence that does not correspond with reality with one that does. In other words, our mind fabricates an appearance of an impossible mode of existence -- as a truly ridiculous person. It then projects it onto the appearance of our friend existing as he or she actually does -- as simply a person who is presently annoyed with us due to causes and circumstances. When we believe that our projected fantasy refers to something real and that our friend actually exists in the way our mind makes him or her deceptively appear, we may overreact. Therefore, we need to employ the third criterion to validate the mode of existence that we perceive.

Let us examine this point more closely. The confusing appearance our mind produces when we see the sight of our friend's frowning face is that he or she is *really* an angry and ridiculous person. Our friend appears to be someone who *always* becomes furious at the most trivial things and who is hopeless and will *never* change. It does not appear as though we are simply correctly labeling the expression we see as signifying that our friend is now upset. Nor does it simply appear that our friend as presently upset is merely what this label signifies based on the various aspects of his or her facial expression and on various causes and circumstances. Instead, it appears as though we can point to some inherent feature in our friend that is giving him or her the seemingly concrete identity of a "*really* angry and ridiculous person," for example a permanent character flaw.

Suppose our friend actually existed with some inherent findable feature that rendered him or her a *really* angry person. It would make our friend upset continuously, forever, despite what might happen or what we might do. This is preposterous. No matter how angry or upset someone might presently be, no one exists inherently like that.

Therefore, if our confused mind produces an appearance of our friend as inherently immature -- which provokes our seeing him or her with disapproval, impatience, and anger -- what we perceive is invalidated by a mind that correctly sees self-voidness. Such an appearance does not refer to anything real. Though our friend may be upset with us now and may be acting immaturely, no one exists as an inherently and incorrigibly oversensitive person. No one exists with some permanent flaw making him or her, when upset with anger, always hold an eternal grudge. People's upset and immature behavior arises dependently on causes and circumstances. When we change the variables affecting the

situation, the person's behavior also changes.

Validating the Conventional and Deepest Facts of Reality According to the Other-Voidness Point of View

According to the other-voidness explanation given in the Karma Kagyü tradition, the subtlest clear light mind gives rise to our experiences. The contents of each moment of experience consist of two inseparable aspects: perceiving something and something being perceived. When instincts of confusion accompany our experiences, our mind produces "dualistic appearances." "Dualistic appearance-making" causes the perceiving aspect of an experience and the perceived object at which it is directed to appear as if they were two totally separate, unrelated phenomena. It seems as if our mind is somewhere "in here" looking out and the sight or appearance we see is sitting "out there," waiting for us to see it. Such a mind and mental object are totally imaginary phenomena. A mind that validly perceives the conventional facts of reality contradicts such a confusing appearance.

Dualistic appearances are also contradicted by a mind that validly perceives the deepest fact of reality, namely a mind that realizes other-voidness. Other-voidness is the subtlest level of clear light activity. Such activity is devoid of all grosser levels, such as those that produce these dualistic appearances and those that believe in them. The deepest fact of reality is that the pure activity of this subtlest level is merely to produce nondualistic experiences. Such mental activity contradicts all appearances of dualism.

Let us consider our previous example. When we meet our friend, our clear light mind gives rise to an appearance of the sight of his or her face and to the seeing of it. Under the influence of the instincts of confusion, a slightly grosser level of mental activity then produces a dualistic appearance. The object and mind in the experience seem split into two opposing forces. The upset face seems to be some truly annoying thing "out there," which we, the innocent bystander "in here," have had the misfortune to see. We identify the appearing object as a concrete "you" and the mind perceiving it as a concrete "me," confronting each other. Believing this appearance to correspond to reality, we feel we cannot relate to our friend. We think that he or she is a truly hopeless person who is always angry and upset. We also feel sorry for ourselves as a truly innocent victim who is forever unjustly tormented by this ridiculous person. Totally disgusted with these confrontations, we decide never to see our friend again.

If we check this appearance of two solidly opposing factions, one “in here” and the other “out there,” we realize that it does not conform to reality. All that has occurred in the incident was the arising of an experience -- the seeing of a sight -- and this sight appearing as that of our friend’s upset face. Of course, this sight has arisen dependently on our friend, our mind, and our eyes. Nevertheless, if we are to respond in a balanced and sensitive manner, we need to understand that experience is not composed of some tragic hero facing the onslaught of overwhelming forces sent by the gods. Such a view of experience is a total fantasy.

Accepting the Conventional Facts of Reality That We Validly Experience

Let us consider the implications of the above points for developing balanced sensitivity. Suppose, for example, we look at our face in the mirror first thing in the morning and we see ourselves as fat and old, with a pimple on our nose. We feel disgusted with our appearance. What options do we have?

We need to validate the accuracy of what we see. Is it totally imaginary? We check the image and our evaluation of it with several criteria. Putting on the light, we look closer at the mirror. Is it just poor lighting that is making us look fat? Have we included a shadow as part of our face? We touch our nose. If a pimple is there, it should produce the effect of giving a certain physical sensation that we can feel with our finger. Further, we consider whether in our society the appearance of white hair definitely signifies that we are old, even if someone begins to gray in his or her thirties. We may be old compared with a child, but are we old compared with our grandmother?

Suppose we discover that what we see in the mirror is accurate and not just a figment of our imagination. We have no choice but to accept its reality. Denying what we see, never looking at ourselves in the mirror again, or cleverly applying makeup and dyeing our hair cannot change the fact that we have experienced now an accurate appearance. Our face is fat, old, and has a pimple on its nose. Does the appearance we see of our face after we apply cosmetics change what we saw when we looked at our face in the mirror when we first woke up?

After we have determined that what we see is not a total fantasy, we are left with only one reasonable option. Whether we like it or not, we need to accept what we see. Our mind has given rise to a conventionally valid appearance of a fat, old face with a pimple on its nose and to the experience of accurately seeing it. That is all. Only based on calm

acceptance of an actual situation can we deal with it sensitively and respond with balance.

Rejecting the Appearances That Contradict the Deepest Facts of Reality

Normally, our mind does not give rise to the appearance of our face as merely fat and old. It superimposes an image of us as *really* fat and *really* old. Seeing our appearance like that in the mirror and believing it to be true, we overreact. We become depressed and disgusted with ourselves. The sight of the face we see does not appear to be “me” and we want to deny it.

If, however, the person we see reflected in the mirror is not us, who is it? It is certainly not someone else. Nor is it nobody. We have no alternative but to accept the fact that based on the appearance we see of this fat and old-looking face, we have to admit this is “me.” However, when we project onto the mere appearance an inflation of its way of existing and think, “This is a *really* fat, *really* old person, how disgusting!” and when we identify “me” with someone having the shape of a sexy young movie star, we have plunged into the realm of fantasy. We identify with the person looking in the mirror and commenting in our head. We regard this horrified person as solidly “me” -- the one about whom we are vain and worried about being really fat and old. In addition, we identify the horrifying figure we see in the mirror as something that is certainly not “me” and we reject it completely.

It feels as if there were two concrete people present: (1) an outraged person sitting in our head looking out our eyes and concretely existing as “me” and (2) some old, fat, horrible thing looking back from the mirror and concretely existing as someone having nothing whatever to do with “me.” This dualistic feeling does not refer to anything real. We do not exist as Beauty looking at the Beast, despite what we might think or feel.

This does not mean that we need to be the martyr and resign ourselves to being the Beast. That would only cause us either to feel sorry for ourselves or to repress our emotions. Just as we do not identify with Beauty, we also do not identify with the Beast. Beauty and the Beast are characters of fiction. No one could possibly exist as either of the two. A correct understanding of self-voidness corroborates that fact. When we comprehend this point, we reject the appearances and feelings we perceive as utter nonsense. Our insight pops the balloon of our fantasies. Consequently, we avoid or stop overreacting. This happens even if our

family or society has taught us to regard ourselves as a Beauty or as a Beast, and even if others have treated us as such. Our conviction in reality dispels our belief in their shallow opinion.

A mind that correctly focuses on other-voidness also invalidates the dualistic appearance of Beauty and the Beast. Our clear light mind is merely producing the experience of seeing a sight. When we focus on that pure mental activity, we can reject the dualistic appearance of the seeing and the sight being Beauty and the Beast. The imagined dualism here is like the two covers of an opened book of fantasies. Our insight closes the book, ends the fairy tale, and returns us to reality. Thus, we also avoid or stop overreacting.

We can understand the process of rejecting fantasy by considering the example of seeing someone dressed as Santa Claus. When we realize that Santa Claus is just a myth, we can easily dispel our belief that the person exists as who he or she appears to be. By focusing on the absence of a real Santa Claus, we can see the person beneath the costume as who he or she actually is. Consequently, we can relax and have fun during an encounter. Dismissing a delusion, however, requires kindness, understanding, and forgiveness. Otherwise, we inflict serious self-damage by thinking of ourselves as having been an idiot and by then feeling guilty about how we felt or behaved.

EXERCISE 11

Validating the Appearances We Perceive

We begin the first phase of this exercise by imagining that after dinner we see our sink full of something. It seems like a pile of dirty dishes, but we wish it were something else. We picture using various criteria to validate what we see. For example, we turn on the light and check whether the sink is actually full of dirty dishes or full of packages of frozen food that are defrosting. After confirming that they are in fact dirty dishes, we have no choice but to accept as accurate what we see. We imagine looking at the dishes with calm acceptance, trying to see them for what they are -- simply dirty dishes in the sink, no more and no less.

Next, we recall seeing such a sight and try to remember how the dishes looked and how we felt. They might have seemed like a disgusting mess and, in our reticence to wash them, we might have felt like a prima donna, too good to get our hands dirty. Thinking of such a scene now, we try to revive that feeling. We then reflect that we are inflating the situation. They are merely dirty dishes in the sink and we are merely a responsible

adult who needs to wash them. Dirty dishes are not inherently disgusting; we are no prima donna; and washing the dishes is no big deal.

Realizing the absurdity of our melodramatic view, we reject it by imagining the sharpness of our insight bursting the balloon of our fantasy. Then, we try to focus on the absence of anything findable inside. An inherently disgusting mess and an immaculate prima donna cannot be found, simply because they are not real.

We need to be sure that when we reject our fantasy, we do not dismiss it like switching to a different station on the television. If we regard our fantasy like this, we may shortly return to the same program. Dismissing it, instead, with the image of a balloon bursting helps us to stop reinflating our fantasy. We need to feel that the story is over forever.

Moreover, if we conceive of the fantasy of a concrete “me” being vanquished by an even stronger concrete “me” wielding an even more powerful concrete “insight,” we have merely switched to another level of dualistic appearance and fantasy. The balloon bursting is a form of mental activity and, as such, it occurs without a concrete agent in our head making it happen.

We reinforce our rejection of fantasy by noting that basically we merely saw a sight. Our imagination has inflated this event by creating and projecting onto it the dualistic appearance of a seemingly concrete “me” and seemingly concrete dishes. This appearance is a fantasy. Realizing this, we imagine that the covers of our storybook abruptly shut. The fairy tale “The Prima Donna Faces the Disgusting Mess” is over. Picturing the storybook dissolving into our mind, we try to focus on the fact that the dualistic drama was merely a production of our imagination. After rejecting our fantasy in this way, we try to imagine calmly washing the dishes, without identifying ourselves as a martyr or as a servant.

Next, we look at a picture or simply think of someone we live with who might often leave dirty dishes in the sink overnight. If we live alone, we may focus on someone we know who is like this and imagine that we live together. First, we imagine seeing the sink filled with dishes in the morning. Before jumping to conclusions, we picture checking whose turn it was to wash up last night. If it was this person’s responsibility, we try to imagine calmly accepting the fact that he or she did not wash them. That is all that happened, nothing more.

We then examine how the person appears to us and how we feel. Most of us can recall such an experience and remember the other person appearing as a “lazy slob” and us self-righteously feeling like an overtaxed victim who can no longer put up with this nonsense. We remind ourselves

that no one exists as a lazy slob who is incapable of ever washing up, or as a victim who must always clean up after others. Realizing the exaggeration of our fantasy, we reject it by picturing the balloon bursting. We try to focus on the absence of these fictional characters inside.

We reinforce the dismissal of our fantasy by trying to realize that we are overreacting to a dualistic appearance. Picturing the storybook of “The Lazy Slob and the Self-righteous Victim” shutting and dissolving into our mind, we focus on the fact that the fairy tale came from our imagination. All that occurred was that we saw the person and that he or she left the dishes overnight.

After clearing away our fantasy, we can now deal rationally with the reality of the situation. For example, we try to picture remaining quiet and patiently waiting for the person to wash up after breakfast, if that is his or her habit. Alternatively, if we need to remind the person or to redistribute the housework, we try to imagine doing so calmly, without making accusations.

Next, we turn to other disturbing scenes from our personal life -- in the home, in the office, or in our personal relationships. We follow the same procedure for validating and accepting the accuracy of what we have seen or heard. Once we have accepted what actually happened, we examine, recognize, and try to relinquish the inflated, dualistic appearances that our judgmental mind might have projected. We do this by reminding ourselves that our fantasies about oppressors, victims, and so forth, are simply nonsense that comes from our imagination. Picturing the balloons of these fantasies bursting and the storybook shutting and dissolving into our mind, we try to return to seeing the situation as it actually is.

The second phase of the exercise begins with sitting in a circle with a group and focusing on each person in turn. We look carefully in order to confirm the conventional appearance that we see of the person -- for example, as someone who colors his or her hair, as someone who wears one earring, and so on. Without mental comments, we try to accept as accurate what we see. We then try to notice how the person appears to us and how we feel. For example, the person may look like someone totally vain, or like an absolute fool who mindlessly follows fashion, or like the most enticing or threatening thing in the world. Moreover, we may feel like the self-appointed judge or like the shipwrecked survivor on a desert island desperate for company. We try to dismiss these images and feelings by picturing the balloon bursting and the storybook shutting and dissolving into our mind. Then, we try to look

at the person acceptingly, without feeling guilty or foolish for what we felt.

Next, we repeat the procedure while sitting facing a partner and working with his or her appearance. Then, going deeper, we note any feelings of nervousness or fear we might have. Specifically, we try to notice and dismiss any feeling we might have of ourselves as a seemingly concrete “me” in our head confronting a seemingly concrete “you” sitting behind this person’s eyes. Using the images of the balloon popping and the storybook shutting and dissolving into our mind, we note the deep feeling of relief and the natural warmth and openness that this rejection of fantasy brings.

The third phase of the exercise begins with looking at ourselves in the mirror. Checking the accuracy of what we see, we try to accept it without making judgments. We try to relinquish any feelings we might have of Beauty and the Beast, again by bursting the balloon of fantasy and by shutting and dissolving the book of fairy tales. If we are practicing at home and have the facilities, we may repeat the exercise while listening to our voice on a tape recorder and then while watching a video of ourselves.

During the second part of this phase, we sit quietly and try to notice what we are feeling. Then, we check the accuracy of our assessment. Is what we sense simply what we have decided beforehand that we are feeling or is it how we actually feel just now? If we really are feeling lonely or content, or even if we really are feeling nothing, we try to accept what we feel without making judgments. If we accurately sense that, in addition, we are feeling sorry for ourselves, feeling guilty about what we are feeling, or feeling totally incapable of feeling anything, we try to accept the presence of these impressions too. Otherwise, we may feel guilty for feeling guilty. We try to recognize, however, that we may be inflating and making too much of our feelings. Realizing this, we reject the inflated impression we have of our feelings. We burst the balloon, shut and dissolve the storybook, and notice how much more comfortable we feel. We are able to deal with our feelings now with more balance.

Lastly, we look at the series of previous photos of ourselves and repeat the exercise. Directing our analysis toward the appearances that we see and the feelings they elicit, we try to accept ourselves as we actually were then. If we are inflating the feelings we remember from those periods or the feelings we still have regarding those times, we burst the balloon, close the storybook, and dissolve the book into our mind.

We then continue calmly looking at the pictures.

12 Deconstructing Deceptive Appearances

The Need for Deconstruction Methods

Sometimes, we discover that we are overreacting to what we see, hear, or feel because we are mistaken about what we perceived. We thought, for example, that our friend was angry with us because he or she did not call for days. In fact, our friend had no time because of extra work at the office. A telephone call easily clears up such misunderstandings.

When we discover, on the other hand, that our overreaction is due to belief in an inflated dualistic appearance, it is not so simple. Suppose, for example, that whenever we think about our friend it feels as though we cannot live without hearing from him or her each day. We believe that this person is the key to true happiness. Even if we know intellectually that this is sheer nonsense, such strong emotions are involved that we find it difficult to dismiss the feeling when it arises.

Using the images of the balloon bursting and of the storybook shutting and dissolving helps us to reject invalid appearances. Yet, the haunting feelings still return. We need additional means to handle such situations. Let us look at three methods to deconstruct the deceptive appearances and feelings that arise out of habit. Each uses a visualization to enhance our awareness of reality.

Focusing on Life's Changes

Many people are frightened, for example, to visit the hospital wards of nursing homes, even if a relative suffers from Alzheimer's disease and lives there. Convinced that they are too sensitive to handle the visit, such persons are, in fact, rationalizing their insensitivity. Remembering impermanence and visualizing life's changes may help to deconstruct their fear. The traditional meditation to overcome infatuation by picturing someone young and attractive as withered and old suggests this method.

First in imagination and then during actual encounters, we need to take a deep and compassionate look, for example at our senile, emaciated mother. Her present appearance slumped in the wheelchair is not a distortion. She looks like this now. However, when we inflate this

appearance into something dreadful, it gives the impression that she has always been like that. This is a deceptive appearance. Though our mind makes her look awful and it upsets us enormously to see her this way, we know that she did not always look like this. We can easily remember what she looked like when she was younger and healthier. We can use this ability to deconstruct her present, upsetting appearance.

The practice is to see her not as if gazing at a static portrait, but as if flipping quickly through a stack of photos spanning her life. We need to keep in mind, however, that our mother is not a photograph, but the person to whom that picture refers. When we see her present appearance as merely another snapshot in the sequence – admittedly, a sad and unfortunate last one -- we stop inflating it out of proportion. Consequently, we stop cementing her into an identity based solely on the horrifying sight of her as a terminal Alzheimer's patient.

According to the Gelug presentation of the *prasangika* (absurd conclusion) teachings concerning self-voidness, things exist as what they are in relation to the names or labels used validly to refer to them. For instance, based on the assembled and functioning parts of a vehicle, we label something a “car.” The car is the object that the label “car” refers to based on all its parts. Moreover, we do not use the label “car” to refer to this object based on its parts only at the moment they are first assembled. We validly label the object as a car from its manufacture to its demolition. The same process is true of our mother.

Spreading before us an extensive basis for using the label “mother,” we understand her reality more clearly. Although she became our mother only when she conceived us, yet when we look at a photo of her taken as a child, we conventionally say that this is our mother as a child. Thus, “mother” refers to her throughout her life, not just to her as she appears now. This realization helps us to continue treating her sensitively and lovingly. Imagining additional photos of her in the future, extending to her death, enables us to respect her dignity until she dies.

Seeing our mother throughout her life's changes also helps to eliminate and prevent another form of insensitivity. We may see the decrepit figure in the wheelchair and deny that this is really our mother. Identifying her exclusively with how she was in her “better days,” we want to remember her only like that. The fault is attaching the label “mother” to merely part of the valid basis for her labeling. Just as “mother” does not refer to her simply as she looks now, it also does not refer to her simply as she looked five years ago. Viewing our mother in light of a stack of photos spanning her life brings us back to our senses.

It enables us to deal sensitively with the person before us. Although she may have no idea who we are, she is still our mother.

When discussing awareness of reality, we noted conventional and deeper facts concerning everything and everyone. These facts are inseparable from each other. They are not like different levels of reality, with some that we can dismiss as less real than others are. Therefore, our mother's conventional appearance as she is now and the composite of scenes spanning her life are equally valid bases for labeling her "mother." When deconstructing our mother's horrifying appearance, then, we need to take care not to ignore her as she is now. Correct deconstruction leaves both her objective appearance and the deeper fact of her life's changes. Seeing the two as equally valid is imperative for relating to her sensitively in her present condition.

Past and Future Lives

An advanced level of seeing life's changes is to view people not only in light of a series of portraits spanning this lifetime. We try to see them also in the context of past and future lives. In doing so, however, we need to be careful not to fall to one of two extremes – either giving people eternal concrete identities or depersonalizing them completely.

From the Buddhist point of view, everyone – including animals and insects -- has assumed all possible forms of animate life at one time or another. Although each stream of continuity of lives is individual, none has the seemingly concrete, lasting identity of any one particular lifetime. In other words, this view does not regard a particular animal or Neanderthal man as a previous incarnation of someone with the concrete, lasting identity as our mother. It sees all three as constituent lifetimes in a particular stream of continuity of lives. It calls each stream a "mind-stream." Mind-streams, however, are not anonymous. They do not lack any identity at all. Particular mind-streams serve as the basis for labeling individual beings.

This view does not contradict the fact that conventionally this is our mother that we see in the wheelchair. Our mother does not exist as an impersonal mind-stream. She is, after all, our mother in this lifetime and, at the moment, happens to be old and decrepit. Again, we need to keep in mind both facts about her – her conventional identity as our mother now and her deeper identity as an individual taking different forms in myriad lifetimes.

This understanding enables us, for example, not to be squeamish to give our mother an injection if we are a nurse. We can relate to her not

only as our mother, but also as an individual who happens to be a patient in our ward. It also enables us to treat other patients with as much compassionate sensitivity as we show our mother. We do not see them merely as people unknown to us earlier in this lifetime. Since they might have been our mother in some previous life, we can also relate to them as “mother.” This realization forms the foundation for many of the Mahayana meditations on universal love and compassion.

Raising Awareness of Parts and Causes

The Gelug approach to self-voidness explains that everything is devoid of existing in fantasized, impossible ways. This does not mean that things do not exist at all. They exist in ways that are not preposterous. One such way is that everything exists as what it is depending on its parts and causes and depending on its correct names and their meaning. This mode of existence is called “dependent arising.”

The view of dependent arising suggests a second way to deconstruct deceptive appearances. Often, situations or people deceptively appear to exist with a seemingly concrete identity established without depending on anything but their own nature. A person may appear, for example, as someone inherently impossible to cope with. He or she may in fact be difficult to deal with right now, but this situation has arisen from innumerable factors. When we dissect the situation into its components and visualize them in an exposed form, it becomes less daunting.

Consider the example of being kept up at night by the loud music the teenage boy is playing next door. Our mind makes the sound seem to be a solid, piercing, horrible noise that shatters both our sleep and our nerves. It also makes the teenager appear as “that rotten kid next door who should be shot.” We become so angry that even after he shuts off the music we still cannot sleep. To stop this hypersensitive response and prevent recurrences, we need to dissect our experience.

The teenager is playing music loudly. Our experience of hearing its sound is the result of a vast assortment of parts and causes. This experience arose from a complex interaction between a compact disc player, a compact disc, an amplifier, and speakers. It also depended on the vibration of air between the speakers and our ears, the sympathetic vibration of our inner ear, our nervous system translating those vibrations into electrochemical messages and transmitting them to our brain, and so forth. Further, the teenager turned on the player, requiring the use of his hand, which consists of a collection of atoms -- as do his sound system, our ears, and our brain. Moreover, a variety of physical, psycho-

logical, and social reasons may have combined to make him play his music loudly. He may be hard of hearing, high on drugs, or depressed. He may have friends visiting whom he wishes to impress with his fancy equipment. Past life causes and simply his youthful age may also contribute to his lack of consideration. Actually, his playing music loudly has arisen dependently upon a huge conglomeration of factors.

To dispel our hypersensitive response, we need to deconstruct the deceptive appearance of the situation as an ordeal. Dissecting the teenager, his music, and our hearing of it into their component factors accomplishes this. We imagine the event opening into a network of interwoven physical parts and psychological, social, and karmic causes. We do this by visualizing the seemingly solid event becoming like a threadbare sock with holes between its weave. We see behind it a collage of parts and causes. Although we do not deny that the teenager is a person or that the music is loud, we look at him and his playing music on a different level. After all, when we look at a blood sample under a powerful microscope, we do not deny that it is still blood, despite its unusual appearance.

The relevance, here, of applying microscopic vision is that when we depersonalize the sound of the music and the hand of its player, we also divest the noise and the teenager of being demons. This helps us to deal nonaccusingly with our lying awake. Remaining calm, we can put in earplugs and, if necessary, call the police. We may still be unable to sleep until he shuts off the music, but at least we do not become upset.

Using the Image of Waves on the Ocean

Suppose we have prepared dinner for a mutually agreed time and, an hour past it, our guest has still not arrived. We call and hear that our friend met someone a short while ago who invited him or her for a meal. They are now in a restaurant. We feel extremely hurt and become furious.

The Karma Kagyü approach to other-voidness suggests another method for calming our hypersensitive response. First, we need to examine what has happened. The original experience was that we heard our friend's voice on the telephone saying that he or she was not coming for dinner. Had we left the experience at that and accepted its contents, we would have simply eaten our meal and put his or her portion in the refrigerator. We might have felt sad that we missed having dinner with our friend, but we would not have felt personally hurt or angry. However, we did not do that. Our mind tore the experience into two alienated

parts. It created an appearance or feeling of an “inconsiderate scoundrel” out of the words we heard and one of an affronted, victimized “me” out of the hearing of them. Believing in this deceptive, dualistic appearance, we became upset for hours, unable to get thoughts of the insult out of our mind.

We need to deconstruct this deceptive appearance and return to the experience of merely hearing our friend’s words. Remembering that experience, we need to focus on the clear light activity that produced it. In doing so, we do not divest the experience of all emotion, feelings, or meaning. However, what happened need not disturb us. Experiences are like waves on the ocean of the mind – not in the sense of a wave breaking on the shore, but in the sense of a swell that arises in the middle of the sea. Visualizing the event of hearing these words as a wave of clear light activity, we picture that wave naturally settling without ever disturbing the depths of the ocean. This helps us to calm down.

To avoid extremes, we need to experience the wave nondualistically from the viewpoint of the entire ocean, from its depths to the surface. In so doing, we neither avoid the wave, like a submarine hiding from the enemy, nor do we let it batter us like a ship on the surface. A wave is merely a movement of water. It does not constitute the entire ocean.

Three Forms of Compassion

Chandrakirti explained three types of compassion: compassion aimed at suffering, aimed at phenomena, and “unaimed.” With the first, we look at animate beings in light of their suffering and develop the wish for them to be free from both that suffering and its causes. One source of their suffering is their unawareness that they even have any problems, let alone their not knowing the causes of their problems. For example, our friend becomes upset at the slightest thing that goes wrong and sees this as normal. He or she does not understand that hypersensitivity is to blame and that something can be done to remedy this. When we see this sad situation, our compassion for our friend becomes even stronger.

Compassion aimed at phenomena looks at beings in light of their moment-to-moment changes. With it, we wish others to be free of suffering and its causes based on the understanding that these both are impermanent. We also see that others are unaware of this fact and so, when depressed, for example, they make their sufferings worse by imagining that they will last forever. Realizing this further enhances compassion for them.

Unaimed compassion looks at beings in terms of their voidness. It has the same wish as the other two forms, but based on not identifying others concretely with their suffering. Seeing that others do not have this insight and that consequently they identify themselves with their problems intensifies our compassion for them even more.

The deconstruction methods we have outlined highlight the impermanence and voidness of the persons in focus and reveal the causes of his or her suffering. Practicing them provides the insight needed for developing the three types of compassion. Therefore, after gaining familiarity with the three exercises in the next chapter for deconstructing deceptive appearances, we complete the sequence with a practice for combining compassion with them. Balanced sensitivity always requires the joint development of wisdom and compassion.

Developing Compassion for Ourselves to Avoid Overreacting to Slow Progress

Deconstructing the deceptive appearances our mind creates does not instantly prevent our mind from ever fabricating and believing in them again. Both our instincts and these appearances are compelling, and can only be weakened by our development of a total familiarity with seeing reality. Familiarity, however, grows through stages, albeit in a nonlinear fashion. It does not become full-grown all at once. When we understand this, we gain more patience and compassion for ourselves as we mature in our development.

Suppose, for example, we are possessive of our computer. Despite knowing that our partner can competently use the machine, we instinctively lack confidence. Whenever he or she uses it, we hover nearby waiting for disaster to strike. Our mind makes our partner appear as though he or she will surely break it.

When we deconstruct this appearance and our response to it, we are able to exercise self-control. We do not stand over our partner and we do not yell even if he or she does something wrong. Yet, we still get angry if something happens. With familiarity, we do not become angry, but we still feel nervous. Only after a great deal of practice do we stop feeling nervous at the thought that something could go wrong. Until we completely rid ourselves of our habits of this syndrome, however, we might still automatically yell, “Don’t touch that,” if our partner makes a sudden move to the computer, catching us by surprise.

We pass through similar stages when working with our response to accusations from our partner that we do not trust him or her. First, we

do not yell back, although we feel angry and hurt. Then, we do not even become angry, but our energy becomes upset. Again, it requires a long time for our energy not to become disturbed when our partner yells at us. We need a longtime commitment to gain total balance.

13 Four Exercises for Deconstructing Deceptive Appearances

EXERCISE 12

Visualizing Life's Changes

The first exercise for deconstructing deceptive appearances helps us to dissolve faulty impressions we might have of situations or persons as permanent. We need to deconstruct our feelings that people's appearance, mode of behavior, or our response to them is fixed. We begin by looking at a photograph or by simply thinking of someone with whom we have a close daily relationship, for example a relative. We notice how the person appears to exist permanently as one age, either the present one or an outdated one, and how we treat the person insensitively because of this. For example, our parents may seem always to have been old and our children may seem always to be kids.

To deconstruct this deceptive appearance, we try to visualize portraits of our relative spanning each year of life from birth to death, projecting what he or she will look like in the future. Picturing these images in a vertical stack, like a deck of playing cards, we imagine those from infancy to the present standing on one side of the person. Those extending to old age and death stand on the other. Flipping through the stack, we try to see the present image as just one in a series.

Despite the truth of our deconstructed vision, we need to keep sight of our relative's present stage in life in order to relate meaningfully. Therefore, we try to alternate focusing on the person through two "lenses." Through the first, we see only his or her accurate current appearance. Through the other, we view his or her changing image spanning a lifetime. After switching back and forth between our restricted and expanded perspectives, we try to perceive the two simultaneously, like seeing Venetian blinds and the view of a busy street behind them. We may do this by looking at the photo while projecting life's changes onto it or by visualizing the two images superimposed. Lastly, we let the feeling sink in that our relative's appearance as concretely one

age does not represent his or her lasting identity. When advanced in this practice, we may repeat the procedure, extending the visualization to include images of hypothetical past and future lives, or at least a feeling for their existence.

The same method can help us to deconstruct the deceptive feeling of someone having a permanent, singular identity based on an upsetting incident. For example, when a relative yells at us in anger, we often regard the person for days exclusively in this light. We lose sight of our other interactions with the person. Here, however, we work only with our conception of our relative. We may use a photo as a reference point to help us return to the exercise if our mind wanders. However, a photograph often locks us into the scene in which it was taken and is not conducive for representing how we regard the person now.

First, we focus on our conception of our relative based on the incident and note how fixed it feels. Our conception may take the form of a mental image or a vaguer impression of the person yelling in anger, or it may take the form of a pejorative term for the person. In each case, we usually accompany our fixed conception with a strong emotion. Then, we recall other encounters in which the person acted differently. Often, he or she was affectionate, humorous, astute, and so on. Representing these scenes also with mental images or vague impressions, we imagine them and a variety of possible future scenes like stacked slides on either side of our fixed conception. We then follow the rest of the procedure as before.

In the end, we let the realization sink in that our relative's seemingly fixed appearance as an upsetting person is a limited and deceptive view. From the perspective of an entire life, any difficult emotional scene wanes in importance. Even if upsetting behavior is a recurrent pattern in the person's life, other modes of behavior also comprise it. Nevertheless, we need to deal appropriately with what has happened now.

To deconstruct our seemingly set feelings toward the relative who upset us, we may follow the same approach, by using a mental image or a vaguer impression of the person as a focal point for representing each feeling. As before, we may use a photo as a point of reference. When our feelings seem fixed, they may cause us to forget other emotions we have felt toward the person over our history together. They may also obscure the fact that we may feel differently in the future. We need to see what we presently feel in a larger context. Yet, at the same time, we need to respect what we feel and not repress it. When we deconstruct annoyance, for

example, it no longer seems like our only feeling toward someone. Still, we need to deal with it until even its residual traces are gone.

We practice the second phase of the exercise while sitting in a circle of men and women from as wide a variety of ages and backgrounds as possible. Looking at each in turn and following the procedure as before, we first deconstruct their deceptive appearance as people who have always been and will always be their current age or weight. Then, to deconstruct their appearance as having a seemingly permanent, singular identity, we look away and work with our impression of each. To help maintain our point of reference, we may occasionally look back at the person. Practicing while facing a partner is not conducive for deconstruction. The force of looking in each other's eyes is too compelling.

For persons we do not know, we try to work with the superficial impression we gain by merely looking at them. Either a positive or a negative one will do. Having a positive impression of someone, for example as a pleasant person having no problems, can render us as insensitive to his or her reality as having a negative one. When such a person tells us about some difficulties in his or her life, we often trivialize them or do not take them seriously. They do not fit in with our image of the person. If we learn of hidden dark sides of his or her behavior, especially if we believed the person to be spiritually advanced, we may overreact and lose all faith.

During this part of the exercise, we picture each person in the circle within a cluster of images of other known or hypothetical aspects of his or her personality and behavior. Traditional Buddhist meditations for gaining equanimity similarly enable us to see everyone potentially as a friend or an enemy. When properly practiced, such training does not lead to a loss of trust in everyone. It brings, instead, a realistic attitude and emotional balance. We conclude this phase of the exercise by similarly deconstructing any seemingly permanent feelings toward each person, including indifference, also while looking away and only glancing back for reference.

The third phase of the exercise follows the same procedure. We skip, however, working with the mirror for the same reason as not practicing while facing a partner. First, we focus on our current self-image. To deconstruct its deceptive appearance as our permanent, singular identity, we try to see it in the context of other aspects of our personality and behavior, both in the past and hypothetically in the future. Then, we repeat the procedure to deconstruct any seemingly fixed emotions we might feel toward ourselves as we are now.

Next, to deconstruct our identification with our present physical appearance or with how we looked at one stage in our life, we follow the

same procedure by working with a series of past and present photos of ourselves. We add to them projected images of how we might look in the future. Lastly, using the photos merely as a reference, we deconstruct any fixed conceptions and feelings we might have of ourselves at particularly difficult periods in our life. Since we base such conceptions and feelings on selective memories, we need to view ourselves then in the perspective of a wider range of recollections.

EXERCISE 13

Dissecting Experiences into Parts and Causes

The first phase begins with thinking of someone we know very well who recently upset us, for example the relative from the previous exercise who yelled at us in anger. We mentally picture the person acting like this. If we wish to use a photo of the person as a point of reference to help us visualize, we make sure to choose one with a neutral expression. Thinking of our yelling relative, we notice how concretely he or she seems to be an upsetting person. Our relative seems to have a solid identity as an upsetting person that is an inherent feature to his or her very being and which has come about independently of anything.

To deconstruct this deceptive appearance, we need to change our focus. We try to see the person and the incident as dependently arisen phenomena. When we are sensitive to the factors that contributed to the existence of our relative and the incident, we find the person and his or her behavior understandable. Consequently, they seem less threatening and less upsetting. This enables us to deal with our relative and our feelings with more balance.

First, we try to imagine the seemingly concrete image of our relative dissolving into a collection of atoms. After alternating between picturing his or her body as a whole and picturing it as a collection of atoms, we try to perceive the two simultaneously as in the previous exercise. After all, our relative is not merely a mass of atoms. He or she is also a person.

Next, we dissect our relative's upsetting behavior to appreciate the causal factors that led to what happened. We consider previous actions and experiences since early childhood, relevant persons with whom our relative has interacted, and social, economic, and historical factors that played a role. For example, our relative's parents or classmates might have treated him or her in a certain way and this occurred during wartime. Our analysis need not be exhaustive and our knowledge of these factors need not be specific. A few examples and a feeling or

appreciation for the rest will suffice.

Once we have made a brief analysis, we try to imagine the seemingly concrete image of our angry relative becoming threadbare like an old sock and then dissolving into a collage of these causal factors. Our conception of these factors may take the form of a mental picture of a few of them with a vague impression of the rest, or it may be merely a feeling for the existence of these factors. Again, we try to alternate and then combine picturing our relative yelling, simply as an accurate representation of what occurred, and picturing a collage of causal factors that led to this, or merely feeling the existence of these factors.

The next lens for further deconstructing our seemingly concrete impression provides a view of past generations. Following the same procedure, we now consider that our relative's parents treated him or her the way they did because they, in turn, were affected by their own parents, family, and acquaintances, their historical period, and so forth. The same is true for everyone else with whom our relative has interacted throughout his or her life and for everyone in each generation. Spending too much effort analyzing the details, however, is distracting. We limit our analysis to what we know about our relative's genealogy and try simply to have a feeling for the rest. The important point is to have an appreciation for how the person's behavior also arose dependently on these factors.

When advanced, we add a further deconstruction. We also consider the past lives of our relative and of everyone involved in the current and previous generations. We also try to take into account the karmic factors that have affected each of these people.

To begin integrating our appreciation of the many factors that have interdependently given rise to our relative's upsetting behavior, we repeat several times the sequence of views. We do this by focusing on our relative while alternating the key phrase "simply what the person did" with each of the phrases: "atoms," "past causes," "past generations," and "past lives." Lastly, we try to see the person with an increasingly larger number of views simultaneously, by alternating "simply what the person did" with two, then three, and lastly all four phrases. For initial practice, we may use merely a feeling for each of the four factors when trying to be aware of them simultaneously as an interdependent network. Alternatively, we may use a mental image of one example to represent each.

Defusing an upsetting incident or our memories of it requires working not only with the upsetting image of the other person involved, but also with the deceptive appearance of us and of our upsetting feeling.

We need to apply the same method to deconstruct our identification with our emotion and our resulting feeling of being someone who, by inherent nature, becomes upset when others yell at us. When we are sensitive to the myriad factors that have interdependently given rise to our becoming upset, our emotion feels less solid. Because we consequently do not hold on to the emotion or to our identification with it, our feeling of upset quickly passes.

First, we try to feel our sense of seeming solidity dissolving into the lightness of atoms. Looking next at our upbringing, our previous behavior, and our encounters with others, we try to focus on the various causes that led to our experiencing the upsetting incident and to our disturbing emotional response to it. Although analyzing possible causes makes this vision more meaningful, we need not spend much time on details. We can work on that separately. During the exercise, we try to recall scenes representing merely a few causal factors and then work primarily with a feeling for a network of causes.

Next, we try to add the contributing factors from previous generations and, lastly, the karmic factors from previous lives. Alternating each vision with an acknowledgment and feeling of ourselves as a person who became upset when our relative yelled – as an objective description of what happened -- is important. It helps us not to lose sight of the conventional existence of our emotion and ourselves. At the end, we try to combine the visions by using the five key phrases as before.

During the second phase of the exercise, we try to apply the same dissecting vision to the members of a group, while sitting in a circle. We look at each person briefly, then look away and work with our impression of the person, glancing back only for reference. Here, we try to deconstruct the deceptive appearance of each as having a seemingly inherent, concrete identity independently of anything. For strangers or persons we hardly know, we try to work, as before, with the superficial impression we gain by merely looking at them. Even if we have no idea of their past or family, we try to work with an abstract feeling for them. After all, everyone has a past and a family. With people we know, we can fill in more detail. We then repeat the procedure to deconstruct our deceptive feeling of being someone who, by inherent nature, experiences a certain emotional response toward each type of person, including indifference.

During the third phase, we turn our attention back to ourselves. Skipping the practice of looking in a mirror, we repeat the procedure as above. First, we use it to deconstruct the deceptive appearance of our current self-image as our seemingly inherent, concrete identity, independ-

ently of anything. Then, we apply it to deconstruct the deceptive feeling of being someone who, by inherent nature, feels a certain way about him or herself as we are now.

Next, we place before us the series of photos of ourselves. Using them merely as a point of reference, we repeat the procedure to deconstruct the deceptive appearance of the self-images we hold about our past as constituting our inherent identity then. Lastly, we similarly deconstruct the deceptive feeling of being someone who, by inherent nature, feels a certain way about him or herself as we were in the past.

EXERCISE 14

Seeing Experiences as Waves on the Ocean

The first phase of this exercise begins with thinking about someone close to us who recently upset us with his or her words. Let us continue with the example of the relative who yelled at us in anger. Suppose our response was to feel, “How dare *you* say that to *me*.” Even if we did not respond like that, we imagine feeling this now. We note the impression we have of ourselves standing concretely on one side as the victim or judge and of our relative standing concretely on the other as the offender.

Analyzing, we try to see that during the first moment of our experience we merely heard the sound of our relative’s words. Subsequently, we projected the dualistic appearance of victim and oppressor onto the contents of the experience. Believing in the truth of this appearance, we might have overreacted with disturbing emotions. Alternatively, we might have suppressed our feelings and said nothing.

To deconstruct this dualistic appearance, we recall our bare experience of the arising and hearing of a sound and try to imagine it like a wave on the ocean of our clear light activity. Without mentally picturing the wave as an object that we see below or before us in the middle of the ocean, we try to experience merely a mental feeling of a wave coming from our heart. As the experience evolved, the wave swelled, filling first with a dualistic feeling and then with a disturbing emotion.

Broadening our perspective, we try to experience a nondualistic feeling of the entire ocean from the floor to the surface. This means neither identifying concretely with the ocean nor imagining ourselves as a concrete entity separate from it, either in or out of the water. We try to feel simply like a vast and deep ocean, with waves on the surface. We recall that no matter how huge and terrifying a wave may seem to be, it is only water. It can never disturb the depths of the sea.

Without feeling like a concrete entity being battered by the wave, we now try to feel the wave naturally subsiding. As it gets smaller, the disturbing emotion and then the dualistic feeling quiet down. We return to the bare experience of merely hearing the words. In the end, this movement of mind also stills. We feel like the placid, yet vibrant sea.

In doing this, we do not deny the occurrence of the event, our original experience of it, or our experience now of remembering it. We do not become like a submarine and try to escape the storm by submerging into our clear light mind. We try to stop, however, tearing any of these experiences into two opposing forces and inflating them with seemingly concrete, lasting identities. No longer upset, we can better handle the situation by responding calmly and sensitively now.

Suppose that in our emotional turmoil we spoke cruelly in return. Regretting what we said, we might have felt guilty afterwards. In feeling guilty, our mind produces a dualistic appearance of a seemingly concrete idiotic “me” and the seemingly concrete stupid words we said. This occurs from tearing in half our clear light activity of producing words and perceiving their sound. We try to deconstruct this dualistic experience of guilt, by using the same means as before.

Next, we apply the method to hearing pleasant words from our relative. Dualistic experiences are not limited to unsavory events. When we hear someone say, “I love you,” for example, we may similarly tear the experience in half. On one side stands a seemingly concrete “me,” who perhaps we feel does not deserve to be loved. On the other, stand the seemingly concrete words as something unsettling that the person could not possibly mean. Alternatively, we may feel ourselves concretely the beloved and the other concretely the one who loves us. Consequently, we project unrealistic hopes and expectations onto the person and become lost in fantasy. This inevitably leads to disappointment. We deconstruct the event and our recollection of it by trying to imagine them also as waves on the ocean of mind.

Sometimes, a strong feeling or emotion may arise unexpectedly, either related or not to the situation or to the people around us. This frequently occurs, for instance, after suffering a loss or when passing through puberty, menstruation, a pregnancy, or menopause. Applying the image of a wave on the ocean may help overcome any dualistic feeling of alienation or turmoil that might accompany such experiences. The wave of emotion may be large or small and may last for either a long or short time, depending on the energies involved. Nevertheless, the wave is no more than a swell on the ocean of the clear light mind.

As a final step in the first phase of the exercise, then, we recall experiencing an unsettling emotion that suddenly arose. If our recollection causes us to feel something now, we apply the wave method as above. It is important to remember that we are not trying to wipe out all emotions. Feeling grief at the loss of a loved one, for example, is a healthy component of the natural healing process. Turmoil, however, is never helpful. If we are unable to feel something now, we may apply the method to any anxiety or emptiness we may experience dualistically at feeling nothing.

Dispelling Nervous Self-Consciousness with Others

We practice the next phase of the exercise first while sitting in a circle with a group and then while facing a partner. During it, we work with our experience of seeing someone dualistically, with a seemingly concrete “me” over here and a seemingly concrete “you” over there. Disturbing emotions such as hostility or longing desire may or may not accompany our experience. A sure sign of a dualistic feeling, however, is nervous self-consciousness. We may be worried, particularly with strangers, that the person might not like us. Hypersensitive, we may even be worried about how our hair looks. Further, we may be uncertain of ourselves and of how we should act or of what we should say. Emotional blocks and fear may even cause us to experience the other person as an inanimate object without any feelings. Consequently, we respond insensitively. In an unexpected encounter, for example, we may be overwhelmed with thoughts of how to escape.

To deconstruct dualistic feelings of nervous self-consciousness at looking around the circle or at a partner, we apply the wave analogy as before. Our unsettling experience is due to the feeling of a confrontation between what seem like concretely nervous and concretely unnerving beings facing each other from opposite sides of a fence. To calm ourselves, we try to regard our experience of discomfort as a wave of mental activity. As it settles down, the experience of merely seeing the sight of the person remains. We try to experience this process of settling from the perspective of the entire ocean, from the depths to the surface.

While experiencing an encounter nonjudgmentally and unself-consciously, we still relate to the other person. Nondual does not mean that you are me or I am you. In the previous deconstruction exercises, we tried to keep in mind both the conventional and deeper appearances of someone by using the image of simultaneously seeing Venetian blinds and the view out the window. We were working, however, primarily

with feelings rather than images. Here, we also try to keep two things in mind. While viewing the conventional appearance that this is a person before us, we simultaneously try to feel that there are no solid barriers between us. Our deconstruction removes nervous self-consciousness. It does not eliminate positive feelings.

Becoming More Relaxed With Ourselves

During the final phase of the exercise, we focus on ourselves, first while looking in a mirror and then after putting it aside. Now, we try to deconstruct any feelings of discomfort we might have with ourselves. Such feelings arise from the dualistic impression of what seems like two “me”s: a “me” who is not comfortable with “myself.” Self-consciousness, judgments, and general nervousness usually accompany the disturbing feeling. We may intellectually dismiss two “me”s as preposterous, but to become more relaxed with ourselves, we need to deconstruct what we feel.

To deconstruct our nervousness, we try to view our deceptive feeling as a wave on the sea and let it settle. Remaining beneath is the calm oceanic experience of focusing on ourselves with warm understanding. In other words, we discover that nervous self-consciousness is merely a confused distortion of self-concern and self-awareness. Ridding ourselves of self-worry does not eliminate warm feelings for our welfare. It allows them to function without obstruction.

Lastly, we focus on the past photos of ourselves and observe any unsettling judgmental feelings that this elicits. Discomfort with ourselves as we were then also arises from a dualistic appearance. We try to deconstruct this feeling by focusing once more on the ocean from the floor to the surface. Realizing that our deceptive experience is just made of water, we do not get caught in it. We try to let it naturally subside like a wave. This allows us to make peace with those times.

EXERCISE 15

Combining Compassion with Deconstruction

We begin the first phase of this exercise by thinking of someone who recently upset us, for instance the relative used in the last three exercises. First, we picture our relative acting upsettingly. Then, we try to imagine his or her changing physical appearance, from infancy to old age, as in Exercise Twelve. We make sure to include past and future lives, at least in the form of a feeling for their existence. Following this with trying to imagine a collage of our relative acting in a variety of

other ways, we return to the image of him or her acting upsettingly.

We think how sad it is that our relative does not understand impermanence. Our relative believes in the deceptive appearance his or her mind creates of every situation as permanent. Consequently, he or she suffers greatly by imagining that difficult situations will last forever. Keeping impermanence in mind and focusing on our mental picture or now on a photograph of our relative, we try to generate compassion. We sincerely wish for him or her to be free from suffering and from this cause of suffering. The more rid we are of fixed impressions of our relative, the more deeply felt our compassion becomes.

Putting down the photo, if using one, we focus once more merely on the mental picture of our relative acting upsettingly. As in Exercise Thirteen, we try to view the person sequentially in terms of atoms, causes for his or her behavior from this lifetime, from past generations, and from past lives, and then his or her appearance now, acting upsettingly. Then we supplement these vistas with a feeling for the explosion of repercussions that his or her behavior will have on the future. We try to view these in three progressive levels: the consequences on the rest of our relative's present life, the repercussions for future generations, and the impact on his or her future lives and on the future lives of everyone involved. After focusing on these levels one at a time, representing each with a collage of images or with a feeling for its existence, we return to his or her present appearance.

Our relative is unaware of the dependently arising nature of his or her behavior and has no idea of the future consequences it will have. Realizing this, we try to generate compassion. Again, we direct our feeling toward our relative through either our mental image or a photograph.

Lastly, putting down the photo, we recall the bare experience of the arising and hearing of the sound of our relative's upsetting words. We try to imagine that experience like an ocean wave of our clear light activity. As the wave of experience swelled, it filled first with the dualistic feeling of a seemingly concrete "me" as the victim and a seemingly concrete "you" as the oppressor, and then with a feeling of emotional upset. Imagining now the wave subsiding, we try to picture first the disturbing emotion, then the feeling of dualism, and finally the arising and hearing of the sound settling back into the ocean of our mind.

Returning to our mental picture of our relative acting upsettingly, we reflect on how he or she does not see this. Our relative still is caught in a recurring syndrome of projecting and believing in dualistic appearances.

Consequently, he or she suffers greatly and will continue to experience anguish. Trying to generate compassion that our relative be free of this suffering and this cause of suffering, we direct this feeling at him or her while focusing on our mental picture or a photograph.

During the second phase of the exercise, we repeat the procedure while sitting in a circle with a group and focusing on each person in turn for each of the three deconstruction sequences. If we have never encountered the person acting upsettingly, we may work with an imagined scene of him or her behaving that way. We look at each person only briefly to gain a point of reference, look away while imagining the collage of his or her life's changes and so forth, and then look back while directing compassion. Although the other members in our group are also doing the same exercise, we pretend that they are not.

We focus the third phase on ourselves, first with a mirror and then without one, by following the same procedure used while sitting in a circle, but recalling an incident in which we acted destructively. Lastly, we repeat the practice while working with the series of past photographs of ourselves. When generating compassion, we wish that we could have had these insights then.

PART IV

Responding with Balanced Sensitivity

14 Adjusting Our Innate Mental Factors

Balanced sensitivity requires deconstructing the deceptive, dualistic appearances our mind creates and harnessing our underlying deep awareness and natural talents. We also need to work with other mental factors that structure our mental activity, but do not form part of our Buddha-nature. The abhidharma literature provides a clear picture of the relevant factors.

Ten Mental Factors That Accompany Each Moment of Experience

All abhidharma systems accept five ever-functioning mental factors. These are urges, distinguishing, attention, contacting awareness, and feeling some level of happiness. Certain systems include five more factors by defining them in their broadest sense: mindfulness, interest, concentration, discrimination, and intention. We shall follow their lead.

(1) *Urges* cause our mind to go in the direction of a particular experience. In some systems, this factor corresponds to *karma* -- the factor, based on previous behavior and habits, that brings us to experience what we do in life. Other systems correlate urges with motivation.

(2) *Distinguishing* is the mental factor that differentiates specific objects within a sense field from their background and specific mental or emotional states from within an experience. This factor is usually translated as “recognition.” Recognition, however, is a misleading term. This mental factor neither compares what it differentiates with prior experience nor ascribes a name to it.

(3) *Attention* directs us to a specific object within a sense field or to a specific mental or emotional state within an experience. It causes us to focus on or to consider an object in a certain way. We may pay attention to something carefully or we may pay attention to it as valuable.

(4) *Contacting awareness* is the awareness that establishes pleasant, neutral, or unpleasant contact with specific objects or with specific mental or emotional states. These are the objects and states that we simultaneously distinguish and pay attention to as pleasant, neutral, or unpleasant.

(5) *Feeling* refers exclusively to feeling some level of happiness – in other words, happy, neutral, or unhappy. It is always in harmony with the tone of the contacting awareness that also accompanies the experience it characterizes.

(6) With *interest*, our mind does not wish to leave what it is holding. It is not the same as attachment, which inflates the good qualities of a mental object. Here, we differentiate interest from motivation. A motivation brings us only to the initial perception of an object or of a mental or emotional state. Once we perceive the object, it may hold our interest.

(7) *Mindfulness* is the mental activity of keeping hold of an object or of a mental or emotional state once attention focuses on it. The same term also means “to remember something” and “to be conscious of something.” Here, remembering something does not refer to the mental act of storing an impression. Nor does it refer to the mental act that

establishes the focus on an impression. It only implies maintaining attention on a mental object after establishing a focus.

(8) *Concentration* is the mental activity of remaining placed on an object or on a mental or emotional state. It is directly proportionate to our mindfulness of the object. Some texts describe mindfulness and concentration as the active and passive aspects of the same mental function.

(9) *Discrimination* adds certainty about what we distinguish. It also decides between alternatives. The frequent translation of this term as “wisdom” is misleading. We may be completely certain about something incorrect.

(10) *Intention* leads to doing something in response to what we discriminate.

To understand these ten, let us take an example from everyday life. Suppose we have a young daughter and we have put her to bed for the night. An urge causes us later to look in her room. When we do so, we distinguish a form on the bed from the shape and color of the bed itself. We then focus on the form with attention. Moreover, we pay attention to the form as the sight of our child and as a pleasant sight to behold. We contact this sight with pleasant awareness and, on that basis, experience seeing it with a feeling of happiness.

Because of interest, we do not wish to look away from the sight of our sleeping child. Therefore, mindfulness holds our attention on the sight and we remain fixed on it with concentration. Discrimination brings certainty that our daughter has thrown back her covers. We also discriminate between how they are and how they should be for her not to catch a chill. Our intention is to enter the room and tuck her in. All ten mental factors are intimately involved in the mechanism for being properly sensitive to our sleeping child.

The Spectrum These Innate Mental Factors Encompass

Each of these mental factors spans a complete spectrum. (1) Urges arise for constructive, neutral, or destructive actions, each of which may entail either doing something or avoiding doing it. We may have an urge to look in on our child during the night or an urge to ignore her. Depending on what we see, on the routines we have established, and on our psychological makeup, we may have the urge to scold her for still having the light on, the urge to speak to her gently that it is time to go to sleep, or the urge not to say anything.

(2) We distinguish many things when we look into our daughter’s

room – for example, our daughter being uncovered or the toys strewn on the floor. Moreover, we distinguish in different degrees of fineness. Looking at the floor, we may distinguish just toys in general or a particular item among them.

(3) We pay varying degrees of attention to what we distinguish, from full attention to little or none. We may be very attentive of the covers, but pay little heed to the toys, although we see and distinguish them from the rug. Further, we pay attention to what we distinguish in a variety of ways, some accurate and some not. Attentive of the toys on the floor, we may consider them a permanent mess or just temporary disorder. Also, we are attentive to various objects as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. We may pay attention to the sight of our sleeping daughter as something pleasant, the strewn toys as something unpleasant, and the rug as something neutral.

(4) Contacting awareness of a mental object spans the spectrum from pleasant through neutral to unpleasant and is in keeping with how we consider or pay attention to that object. We contact the sight of our sleeping daughter, which we consider pleasing, with pleasant awareness, the sight of the toys with unpleasant awareness, and the sight of the rug with neutral awareness.

(5) Our feelings toward an object also span a spectrum from happy through neutral to unhappy, and accord with the tone of our contacting awareness with it. We feel happy seeing the sight of our daughter, unhappy at the sight of the toys, and neutral when seeing the rug.

(6) Interest is from strong through weak to no interest at all. We may see our sleeping child with great interest, not wanting to look elsewhere. On the other hand, we may have no interest in continuing to look at the rug when we see it. Our eyes immediately shift to the bed.

(7) Mindfulness encompasses the entire spectrum of strength and quality of mental hold on an object, from overly tight and tense to strong and stable, through medium to weak and loose, and lastly to almost no hold at all. We may hold our attention tightly on the sight of our daughter so that our mind does not wander or become dull. On the other hand, we may hold it only loosely on the sight of the rug so that we quickly look away.

(8) Concentration is also from strong through weak to none at all. Our attention may remain fixed on our daughter and not on the rug.

(9) Discrimination is about a wide assortment of variables and spans the entire spectrum of certainty concerning what it discovers about

its object. We may discriminate how the covers are arranged and that our daughter may catch a chill, although we may not be completely sure of this. We may also discriminate what needs to be done. Our discrimination may or may not be correct. Sometimes, we discriminate something completely incorrectly and are even certain of it, although it is wrong. We might swear that we see the cat sleeping on top of our daughter's covers, when in fact it is her crumpled sweater.

(10) Lastly, we have all sorts of intentions concerning what we perceive, some of which are helpful and others not. We may intend to pull the covers up snugly or to shoo away the imagined cat that is not there. Sometimes, we may intend to do nothing.

How These Factors Function During Moments of Insensitivity

To heighten our sensitivity if it is weak, we need to realize that these ten mental factors are always functioning, even when they appear not to be. Although they may be operating at the bottom end of their spectrum, none are ever missing unless we are in a deep meditation trance. To become more properly sensitive to others or to ourselves, we need merely to strengthen or to change the operating level of certain mental factors that are already present. Seeing this makes the task less daunting.

Consider the case of sitting across from a relative at the dinner table and being insensitive to the fact that he or she is upset. Let us analyze the situation to recognize the ten mental factors involved. During the meal, we look mostly at our plate, lost in thought about ourselves. Occasionally, however, the urge arises to look up. At such times, we see the sight of our relative's face with knitted brow and twisted mouth. We distinguish it from the wall behind. We pay minimal attention to it, however, so that we hardly notice the expression. In fact, we consider his or her expression to be unimportant and we find the sight of our relative's face a neutral experience. Our contacting awareness of the sight is similarly neutral and we feel neither happy nor sad.

The interest with which we see our relative's face is minimal. We are preoccupied with ourselves. Thus, we hold on to the sight of him or her with hardly any mindfulness. We are soon lost again in our own thoughts. Our concentration on seeing his or her face is extremely weak and so we quickly look back at our plate. We discriminate something about our relative -- that nothing is wrong -- but this is incorrect. Our intention is to ignore him or her and watch television as soon as we finish eating.

The major source of our insensitive behavior here is self-preoccupation. To overcome that, we need discrimination of voidness and compassion for our relative. Deconstruction techniques help us to develop the two. Equipped with this pair of indispensable factors, we find that our urges, attention, interest, mindfulness, concentration, further discriminations, and intentions automatically change. We naturally become a more sensitive person, both noticing and responding kindly to whatever we experience.

EXERCISE 16

Adjusting Our Innate Mental Factors

The first phase of this exercise entails recognizing the ten innate mental factors and realizing that we can adjust them. We need to be careful, however, not to conceive of this adjustment process as done by a boss in our head, turning the dials on a complex control panel. Any alterations that occur are the result of motivation, urge, and willpower -- mental factors that also accompany our experience. Moreover, although we shall work with each of the ten factors individually, we need to remember that all ten function simultaneously and interweave inextricably with one another as an integrated network.

As an aid for this phase of the exercise, we may place a sweater or another item of clothing on the floor before us if we are practicing alone or in a small group. If the group is large, we may hang the sweater on something high enough in front of the room so that everyone has an unobstructed view of it.

(1) We begin by sitting quietly and trying to observe what we experience. An urge may arise to look at the sweater, or to the side, or to scratch our head. As a result, we may either act it out or restrain ourselves. Although most urges arise unconsciously, we can also purposely generate an urge to do something through a conscious motivation. To practice doing this, we imagine being cold. Because of our concern to get warm, we decide to look for something to put on. This causes an urge to arise to look around the room for a sweater and we now do so. We confirm that we can similarly generate an urge to look at how someone is doing when we are motivated by caring concern.

(2) Next, we examine the mental factor of distinguishing. Looking around the room in which we are sitting, we naturally distinguish many things about what we see. Without thinking to do so, we automatically distinguish, for example, a chair from the wall, the leg of the chair from its other parts, and a scratch on the leg from the rest of its surface.

We can also direct what we distinguish, including the expression on someone's face. This depends on our interest. To practice distinguishing, we look at the sweater and purposely try to distinguish the whole garment from the floor and the neck from the sleeves, with interest to know if it is V-necked.

(3) Attention is also a variable affecting our experience. We look again around the room and try to notice that certain things automatically catch our attention, while others do not. When motivated, we can also choose to pay more attention to something when we see it, for instance the expression on someone's face. We practice increasing our attention by turning to the sweater and deciding to look closely for any cat hairs on it, because we are allergic. We then try to give our full, painstaking attention to the sweater as we look at it carefully.

Another aspect of attention is *how* we pay attention to what we sense -- how we regard or consider it. This is intimately connected with the type of awareness we have of (4) mental contact with the object and (5) the level of happiness or unhappiness we feel at that contact. For example, when we pay attention to an item as something we like, such as an attractive garment on a rack, we have pleasant awareness of contact with it and experience happiness. On the other hand, when we pay attention to an object as something we do not care for, such as a fly buzzing loudly, we experience unpleasant contacting awareness of it and are unhappy. We look again around the room and try to notice that we naturally pay attention to what we like, for instance a certain picture, quite differently than what we dislike, such as the scratch on the leg of the chair.

We can also consciously pay attention to things in a certain way, when we have a reason to do so. For instance, if we are short of money, we can choose to pay more attention than usual to the prices on the menu in a restaurant. Contacting awareness of an inexpensive but delicious item is pleasant and delights us. The opposite occurs when we see something we like but cannot afford. Similarly, we can choose to look at the expression on someone's face as something important, when we are concerned. If we see that the person is happy, we have pleasant awareness of contact with the sight, and feel happy ourselves. If we see that he or she is upset, we have unpleasant contact and are sad. Suppose, however, that we do not consider the person's mood important. Even if we notice his or her expression, our awareness of the contact is neutral. We feel neither happy nor sad.

To see the relationship between these mental factors, we try con-

sciously looking at the sweater as our favorite item of clothing that a loved one has knitted. In doing so, we have pleasant awareness of contact with its sight and experience a feeling of happiness. We then try paying attention to it as a nuisance that leaves fuzz on our shirt. Our contacting awareness is unpleasant and seeing the sweater makes us unhappy.

(6) The next mental factor is interest, which strongly affects (7) mindfulness and (8) concentration. Certain things naturally interest us when we see them, for example a sports event on the television. When we watch it, our attention effortlessly holds on to the contents with mindfulness and remains fixed with concentration. We now look around the room and try to note that some things we see naturally interest us more than others do.

We can also affect our interest in continuing to look at or to listen to something. One way is through remembering the necessity to do so, such as when seeing the help-wanted section in the newspaper when we are out of work. Another way is to remind ourselves of the good points of something, for instance of an award-winning movie when the opening scene bores us. When we change the way in which we regard an object or person, we decide to take more interest.

We can do this with respect to increasing our interest, mindfulness, and concentration on someone's mood. When we reaffirm our caring concern for the person, we regard his or her mood as something important. Consciously deciding to take more interest in it, we naturally look at the person's expression with increased mindfulness and concentration. We practice now by trying to imagine that sweaters suddenly become the height of fashion. All our friends are wearing them. When we see the sweater, we now look at it with new interest. Our attention naturally holds on to the sight and remains fixed.

(9) The next mental factor is discrimination. We naturally discriminate between various possibilities concerning whatever we encounter. For example, when we look in the refrigerator, we discriminate and choose what we want to eat. Looking around the room once more, we try to note that we automatically discriminate between what is neatly arranged and what is haphazard. If we see certain items strewn around, we further discriminate between tidying them and leaving them alone.

When motivated, we can also consciously decide to discriminate something about an object or person. Before going to sleep, if we need to wake up early, we may decide to check the alarm clock to determine whether we have set it. We can similarly decide, when concerned, to

look at someone's expression with discrimination to determine whether the person is happy or upset and whether we need to say comforting words. We practice discrimination by imagining that we want to buy a sweater and by deciding to check the one before us to see if it might fit and whether we can afford it. We then try to look at it from that point of view.

(10) Lastly, we examine the mental factor of intention. We naturally accompany our perception of things with various intentions. We discriminate that something is boiling over on the stove and, without having to think about it, we naturally intend to turn down the heat. We now look once more around the room and try to observe the intentions that automatically arise. Depending on what we discriminate and on necessity and interest, we may intend to open the window or to buy some flowers.

We can also consciously generate an intention to do something, such as to go shopping for food today when we see that the refrigerator is empty. Similarly, when we discriminate that someone is upset, we can generate an intention to be more sensitive toward the person and to give him or her emotional support. We now consciously try to generate an intention by discriminating that the sweater fits us and that we can afford it, and then by looking at it with the intention to buy it.

Focusing These Factors on Others and on Ourselves

During the second part of the first phase of this exercise, we practice adjusting the ten mental factors that accompany our perception of people. For this, we work with photos first of someone we like, then of a stranger, and lastly of someone we dislike. We go through the entire sequence of steps with each person before proceeding to the next. Since mental images are usually not very vivid, merely imagining someone is not conducive for this practice. As we shall be focusing on the person's facial expression and body language, we need to choose a candid snapshot, not a posed portrait with a fixed smile. Moreover, we need to imagine that the photo is a live scene that we are encountering now. Using a video is best.

First, we consciously generate a motivated urge to look at the person. For example, we feel concern about the one we like or we need to speak to the stranger or to the person we dislike. Then, we try to distinguish various aspects of how the person looks and what he or she is doing. For example, the person may be tired or busy. Trying to pay attention to these points as meaningful for knowing how to approach the person, we experience pleasant contacting awareness and feel happy to

see him or her.

Reaffirming our concern or the necessity to relate to the person, we try to generate the interest to understand what he or she is feeling. Naturally, our mindfulness and concentration increase. With discrimination, we try to decide what mood the person is in and whether this is a good time to talk. Then, we consciously set the intention to approach or to delay the meeting accordingly. To help us maintain the sequence, our group facilitator or we ourselves may repeat the ten key phrases: “motivated urge,” “distinguishing,” “attention,” “contacting awareness,” “feeling,” “interest,” “mindfulness,” “concentration,” “discrimination,” and “intention.”

During the second phase of the exercise, we sit in a circle with a group and repeat the procedure two or three times, by using the ten key phrases and focusing each time on a different person for the entire sequence. We try to adjust our ten mental factors so that we can approach and relate to the person appropriately, with balanced sensitivity.

During the third phase, we focus on ourselves. First we look in the mirror. Normally, we use these factors to shave or to put on lipstick. Now, we try to apply them to seeing whether we look sick or haggard, for example, and, if we do, to setting an intention to do something about it, such as to take a rest. We use the ten phrases as before. We must be careful, however, not to view what we see dualistically, as if the person we look at were alien from the one who is doing the looking.

Putting down the mirror, we try next to adjust our ten mental factors so that we regard ourselves with balanced sensitivity throughout the day. We begin by trying to generate the urge to examine ourselves. We do this by reminding ourselves that if we are not in touch with our feelings, we may unconsciously cause others and ourselves problems today. Trying to distinguish our emotional state and level of happiness, we then try to pay close attention to them as important. In doing this, we try to avoid inflating our feelings into something so earth-shattering that we feel compelled to announce them narcissistically to everyone -- as if others were interested or cared what we felt. We also try to avoid exaggerating them into something so overwhelming that we compulsively complain. Since we have pleasant awareness of contact with our feelings, we naturally experience happiness at bringing them to conscious awareness.

We may uncover deeply rooted loneliness, sadness, or insecurity. Nevertheless, if we consider our feelings relevant to our quality of life and as something we can change, we are happy, not frightened, to

discover them. With such an attitude, we naturally take keen interest and hold our attention mindfully on our feelings with firm concentration. We try to discriminate between one feeling and another, and between detrimental and constructive ones. We then set our intention on trying to do something to improve our mood.

As a final step, we look at a photo or think of first someone we like, then a stranger, and lastly someone we dislike. We try to apply the ten mental factors to our feelings about each. We then do the same regarding the series of self-portraits from different periods in our life, using the ten key phrases.

The point of this practice with our feelings and emotions is not to become more self-conscious, but more self-aware. Self-consciousness, with which we view ourselves with either low or excessively high self-esteem, disables us from acting naturally. We make ourselves and others feel uncomfortable. With self-awareness, however, or self-understanding, we avoid compulsively saying or doing foolish things that we later regret.

Gaining a Balanced View of Others and of Ourselves

The classical Mahayana techniques for gaining equanimity suggest an additional area in which adjusting the ten factors is helpful. Sometimes, because of hatred or anger, we lose sight of someone's positive qualities. When we are infatuated with the person, we do the same regarding his or her weak points. In each case, our naivety and insensitivity cause an unhealthy relationship. Adjusting our mental factors returns us to reality and brings emotional balance.

First, we imagine or look at a photo of someone toward whom we normally have only negative feelings. Reminding ourselves of the inner turmoil our hypersensitive attitude brings and the emotional blocks in other relationships that it causes, we try to motivate ourselves to overcome these feelings. With this motivation, we generate a conscious urge to focus on the person's good points. Following this urge, we try to distinguish these points and to pay close attention to them as valid and important. If our motivation is sincere, we naturally experience pleasant contact with this knowledge and feel happy discovering it.

Delight with this experience helps us to develop the interest to resolve our problems with the person. This leads us to focus on him or her with mindfulness and concentration. We try to discriminate a more balanced way of interacting. Lastly, we set our intentions on carrying out this approach in our encounters. If the person we have chosen has passed

away, we try to develop the intention to remind ourselves of his or her positive qualities whenever negative feelings arise.

We repeat the process, choosing someone who infatuates us. We try to motivate ourselves to discover and acknowledge the person's negative points so that we may stop being insensitive to our needs and behaving self-destructively. For example, we may not take care of our other affairs because we want to spend as much time with the person as possible. Contacting awareness with the person's negative aspects is naturally unpleasant and may make us temporarily feel sad. We need not worry when that happens. Sobering the relationship does not mean a loss in warmth, love, or concern. In fact, balance enhances these aspects. Adjusting the rest of our mental factors, we then try to set our intentions on relating more realistically.

As a final step, we work with the ten mental factors to balance our feelings about ourselves. To deal with present feelings, we focus directly on them, without using a mirror. To resolve our feelings about the past, we turn to the series of photos of ourselves. Looking at each of them in turn, we work with self-hatred by distinguishing our good points then. We consciously decide to bear them in mind when we feel negative toward ourselves as we were at those times. To sober conceit, we do the same with our weaker aspects.

15 Unblocking Our Feelings

Differentiating the Various Aspects of Feelings

Adjusting the ten mental factors is an effective means for increasing attentiveness to problems and for enhancing the intention to respond. Several factors, however, may still hamper this response. One of the more troublesome is not feeling anything. Here, we shall not limit the term "feeling" to its definition as one of the ten innate factors, but use it also to mean emotions.

Often we experience what seems to be a block in our feelings. We speak of being "out of touch" with our feelings -- in other words, alienated from them. We say we feel nothing. Sometimes, we are so confused that we do not even know what we feel. This is because our feelings are so complex that they can be bewildering. We can dispel our confusion about the feelings we experience by seeing their component elements. Two of the most relevant components when trying to gain

balanced sensitivity are feeling some level of happiness or sadness and feeling some level of sympathy. Let us examine each in turn and then the relation between the two.

Feeling Some Level of Happiness or Sadness

Though we may not have sympathy for someone, we always feel something on the spectrum between total happiness and complete sadness. This is because feeling some level of happiness or sadness is an integral part of how we experience each moment of life. Therefore, when we say we feel nothing when we encounter somebody, our impression is inaccurate. If we examine ourselves carefully, we discover that we are actually feeling a low level of either happiness or dissatisfaction. Rarely are our feelings exactly in the middle so that they are neither one nor the other. Moreover, feelings in the low intensity range on either side of neutral are not bland. Nor do they suggest that we care little about anything because nothing impassions us. Such feelings are simply another portion of the happiness/sadness spectrum, no more and no less.

We can appreciate this point by considering our feelings while looking at the wall. If we lack interest and want to look away, we are dissatisfied. This means that we are experiencing low-level unhappiness. If we keep our gaze on the wall, even out of laziness or boredom, we are content with what we see. Thus, we are experiencing low-level happiness. We consider the sight soothing or neutral.

We need to keep in mind the definitions of happiness and unhappiness and not confuse the mental factor of feeling with feeling as a physical sensation. Happiness is a pleasant feeling that we wish to continue experiencing and unhappiness is an unpleasant feeling that we wish to end. A physical feeling, on the other hand, is a sensation perceived through the faculty of touch. Under novocaine, for example, we do not experience a physical sensation when the dentist drills our tooth. Nevertheless, we may still feel unhappy at the experience.

Understanding this difference, we discover that when we see the expression on someone's face, we do feel something. This occurs whether or not we have sufficient interest and attention to notice if the person is upset. We know that we feel something because either we continue to look at the person or we avert our eyes. In other words, either we are comfortable at seeing him or her or we are ill at ease.

Ridding Ourselves of Upsetting Feelings That Block Sensitivity

Any feeling on the spectrum of happiness/sadness can be of two

types -- upsetting or not upsetting. The difference between the two depends on whether we mix the feeling with confusion. According to Gelug-style analysis, when we are confused about our feelings we inflate them into what seem like solid entities existing on their own. They seem as if they had a thick line around them like something in a coloring book. We then color them in with a seemingly concrete identity that our confusion projects. Believing our feelings to have these imaginary “true identities,” we regard them with attachment or fear.

For example, being happy may give us a greater capacity to be helpful to people in pain. Yet, if confusion makes our own happiness appear as the most wonderful and important thing in the world, we become attached and possessive when experiencing it. We do not want to meet or deal with anyone having problems, because it will ruin our good mood. Happiness experienced in this inflated way is an upsetting experience, despite it being pleasurable and even exhilarating. Because we are worried about being robbed of our pleasure, this type of happiness renders us insensitive to others and to ourselves. We often notice this syndrome in people who are under the influence of recreational drugs. Furthermore, if we do not have this seemingly wonderful, yet elusive happiness, we become fixated on attaining it. This also causes us to act insensitively toward others, for instance by being obsessed with our orgasm when having sex.

When we inflate sadness, our mind makes it appear monstrous and frightening. It seems capable of swallowing us in a pit of quicksand. Because of this, we want to avoid unpleasant situations so as not to become depressed. Consequently, we do not want to hear about others’ troubles or to visit them when they are sick.

When we inflate neutral or low-intensity feelings, our mind makes them appear to be an unfulfilling “nothing.” If we are not impassioned about an issue or a person, it feels as though we are not real. Thus, if we are hyperemotional, we find neutral feelings upsetting. Trying to avoid them, we go to extremes and overreact to what people say. For example, we feel outraged at any injustice they suffer or we break down and cry. Our self-indulgent display of emotion makes others feel threatened, embarrassed, or uncomfortable to speak to us about their problems. Instead of receiving comfort, they have to calm us down.

Balanced sensitivity requires happy, sad, and neutral feelings, but only those that are not upsetting. To have such feelings, we need to divest them of inflation. We can do this by seeing that our fantasies about how they exist do not refer to anything real. The happiness of

sharing life with a partner never matches what someone in a fairy tale experiences who lives “happily ever after” with a prince or a princess. The sadness of losing a loved one may last many years, but it never signals the end of our life. Similarly, neutral or low-level feelings do not exist as an empty nothing, incapable of making us feel alive. We are alive no matter what level of happiness, sadness, or between that we feel.

When the balloons of fantasy about our feelings burst, the sobering experience does not deprive us of feelings altogether. We do not become completely insensitive to others or to ourselves. Nonupsetting feelings are not equivalent to a total lack of feelings. We still feel pleasure when having sex. Enjoying it for what it is, while it lasts, we do not whine over its loss once it is over. Similarly, when we hear of someone’s misfortune, we still feel sad. Our sadness, however, does not upset us to the core. We also do not feel bored when experiencing neutral feelings. We are comfortable with them or with any level of happiness or sadness that we feel.

Overcoming Alienation from Feelings

Sometimes, we may find feelings so difficult to handle that we block them. Occasionally, this may be helpful. For example, when we have a serious accident or a loved one suddenly dies, we automatically go into shock as a survival mechanism. Our feelings are too intense and may overload us. At other times, we block our feelings for neurotic reasons. Our confusion makes feelings seem dangerous and so we consider them inherently upsetting for us. This causes us to be stiff and inwardly frightened.

The Kagyü approach to overcoming this problem is to see that our mind normally tears in half our experiences of levels of happiness. It makes them deceptively appear as two opposing elements, “me” and “them,” that is, the feelings appear as “other.” Conceiving of feelings as existing like that alienates us from them. It blocks us from responding to others and to ourselves with sensitive spontaneity. We may think, for example, that we will not allow ourselves to feel happy because we do not deserve it. In addition, we may not allow ourselves to feel sad because we are afraid we might lose control. Further, we may not allow ourselves to feel neutral because then we are not really responding to someone. Consequently, we force ourselves and fake feeling happy or sad at someone’s news, which does not fool anyone.

We act as if feelings of happiness or sadness were somewhere menacingly or alluringly “out there.” It then seems as if we were sitting

safely at home with the choice of whether to go out and feel them. This is absurd. We need to experience whatever feelings naturally arise, without making something monumental of them or of ourselves experiencing them.

Serenity and Equanimity as the Container for Balanced Feelings

According to the Sarvastivada and Mahayana traditions of abhidharma, a mental factor of serenity (*upeksha*) accompanies all constructive states of mind. The Teravada tradition similarly presents equanimity (*upekka*). Balanced sensitivity requires both factors. Neither of them suggests an insensitive lack of feelings or response.

Serenity is a mental state free from flightiness or dullness. With flightiness of mind, our attention flies off to appealing objects or to compelling thoughts. For example, although someone may be speaking to us, our focus strays to the television or to self-centered thoughts. With dullness, our mind is unclear. We listen, but do not really hear what the person is saying.

To be properly sensitive, we need to rid ourselves of these two major hindrances, flightiness and dullness. Being serene is not equivalent to being spaced-out and not feeling anything. With serenity, we are focused, alert, and do not fall to an extreme. We are not so intense and nervous that we make the other person uneasy. Nor are we so calm and relaxed that we give the impression that we do not care about anything.

Furthermore, a serene state of mind is a happy mind. Neutral feelings that are neither happy nor sad accompany only the serenity experienced as part of a deep meditation trance. The happiness felt in non-trance serenity, however, has a special quality. It resembles a feeling of freshness. If our mind is restless or sluggish, we are not using its potentials. We feel unfulfilled. When we are free of these disabilities, our mind is fresh and uplifted like after a summer shower. We naturally wish to maintain such a feeling and thus, by definition, we are happy.

Equanimity is a state of mind free from attraction, repulsion, and indifference. Suppose we are sitting next to someone on an airplane and the person starts to tell us his or her life history. If we feel sexually attracted, we are so preoccupied that we do not even hear what the person says. If we find our fellow passenger repulsive, we may interrupt and say something rude. On the other hand, if we are indifferent, we ignore the person and do not look up from our magazine. In all three cases, we are insensitive to this man or woman as a person. We feel uncomfortable in his or her presence and are unhappy.

Having equanimity is not equivalent to feeling nothing. Nor is it the same as polite resignation. We do not simply tolerate the person's words while considering them rubbish and inwardly wishing for the plane to land. If we have time, we pay attention with openness and interest. Our fellow passenger is a human being, like us, and could easily become a close friend. As we wish the encounter to continue, we experience it with happiness. If we are truly busy, equanimity allows us to tell that to the person, without losing our calm. We would love to listen, but unfortunately we have something important to finish before we land.

The happiness that comes with equanimity is a relaxed and mellow feeling of relief. We feel relief because we neither crave nor are frightened of anything. We are not pushing ourselves on anyone, nor are we so rushed that we have no time. This state of mind provides a protected space in which we are comfortable about responding warmly to others and to ourselves. Tantra practice acknowledges the need for a protected space by including the visualization of one before attempting self-transformation. Here, a feeling of emotional ease acts as a safe container for transforming ourselves into someone with balanced, nonupsetting feelings.

Components of Sympathy

Balanced sensitivity not only requires serenity, equanimity, and feeling a level of happiness or sadness that is not upsetting, but also requires sympathy. Sympathy is a complex of several emotions and attitudes, each of which spans a spectrum. The three major ones are empathy, compassion, and willingness to become involved. As with the happiness/sadness spectrum, some element of each factor accompanies our encounter with anyone.

The first component of sympathy is a degree of empathy. It ranges from empathizing fully with someone's situation to not empathizing at all. The variables that affect this component are the willingness and the ability to understand someone's situation by imagining ourselves in the same predicament. Suppose a friend suffers from cancer. We may be willing to try to appreciate his or her pain and be either able or unable to imagine it. Alternatively, for various reasons such as lack of interest or fear, we may be unwilling to imagine the pain. This may happen whether or not we can conceive of it.

The second component of sympathy is some point on the spectrum between compassion, indifference, and malevolence. We might wish that someone be free of torment, not care whether he or she suffers, or wish that

the person experience more pain. For example, even if we cannot imagine the physical and mental torture of terminal cancer, we may still wish our friend to be cured. On the other hand, we may know very well how much cancer hurts, but either not care about a malevolent dictator suffering from it or feel that such a person deserves the pain.

The third component is some element from the spectrum that runs from wishing to become involved to feeling antipathy toward any involvement. The variable that determines this factor is willingness to do something about someone's predicament. We may empathize with our friend, be concerned about his or her comfort, and wish him or her not to suffer pain. Yet, we may be unwilling to visit because of fear of the feelings that might arise. This is different from being unable to visit because of having to go out of town on business.

Feeling No Sympathy

When we say we do not feel anything, meaning we feel no sympathy for someone, we must analyze carefully which components of sympathy are deficient. From this, we can know which steps to take for remedying the situation. For example, if our lack of sympathy for our friend with cancer is due to being unwilling to empathize, we need to heighten the factor of interest that accompanies our meeting. We can do this by thinking how everyone is interrelated in our complex world. As Shantideva pointed out, how would it do for our hand to refuse to take interest in the welfare of our foot? Similarly, how would it for us to refuse to take interest in others who are part of our circle of friends or community?

On the other hand, if we feel nothing because our interest in our friend's problem is purely intellectual, we need to think how he or she is a human being like ourselves. Just as when we are in pain, it hurts, the same is true with our friend. As Shantideva also once said, pain needs to be removed not because it is my pain or yours, but simply because it hurts. Thinking like this helps us to take his or her situation seriously.

Suppose we take sincere interest in our friend's problem but cannot empathize because we are unable to relate to what he or she is feeling. We may recall something similar that we have experienced, like a severe stomachache. Although the pain of a stomachache does not approach that of cancer, still it can serve as an example to help us understand our friend's situation.

Perhaps we do take interest and do appreciate our friend's torment. In other words, we can fully empathize. Yet, because we are

presently angry with him or her, we feel no compassion. We do not care whether our friend suffers from cancer or we think that he or she deserves the pain. To overcome our insensitivity, we can imagine ourselves in the same predicament. No matter how many cruel things we might have said or done in our life, we would intensely wish our agony to end. Our friend feels the same. Unless we were a masochist, we would not ignore our misery or refuse ourselves a reasonable amount of painkillers because we felt that we deserved to suffer. Similarly, why should we be indifferent to our friend's situation or think that he or she should be tortured with pain? We are all human beings with the same wish for happiness and aversion for suffering.

We may understand our friend's intense discomfort and feel compassion that it may quickly end. Yet, we might lack sufficient sympathy to visit in the hospital. If our reason for staying away is that we are too busy, we can think how we would not appreciate someone making the same excuse to us. We must reevaluate the priorities for our time in human, rather than financial terms. Moreover, if we do visit, we need to remind ourselves of these priorities so that we avoid looking constantly at our watch.

If we shun the hospital because of fear of emotion overwhelming us, we can apply deconstruction techniques to overcome the self-preoccupation causing our fear. We may try to see through the dualistic appearance our mind creates of a frightened, oversensitive "me" meeting an emotionally unbearable "you." We may also try to focus on the absence of any real referent to our fantasy when we inflate the visit into an ordeal that we will be unable to handle or endure. Nothing exists in this impossible manner.

Overcoming Fear of Unhappiness When Feeling Sympathy

When someone is suffering, we need to feel both sympathy and a level of sadness that is not upsetting. Fear of becoming unhappy, however, may block one or more of the components of sympathy: empathy, compassion, or willingness to become involved. Overcoming this fear is essential for a balanced and sensitive response.

Tibetan masters explain the etymology of *karuna*, the Sanskrit word for compassion, as connoting that which destroys happiness. When we see someone suffering and feel compassion, we naturally also feel sad. When we mix our compassion with confusion about reality, however, we experience a sadness that upsets us completely. For example, thinking that life cannot continue after a loved one with terminal cancer

passes away, we may become totally depressed when we think of the person. It seems safer to feel nothing. Being afraid of an upsetting feeling of unhappiness is understandable. On the other hand, an uninflated feeling of sadness that rests on a stable foundation of serene equanimity is not upsetting. It offers nothing to fear.

When we rid ourselves of flightiness, dullness, attraction, repulsion, indifference, and confusion about reality, we achieve a stable peace of mind. Its hallmark is a deep, mature, and quiet feeling of joy. Ironically, we find that if we previously had emotional blocks that prevented us from crying, we now cry more easily. Yet, even when we feel sad about our own or others' suffering and are spontaneously moved to tears, we remain internally composed on an emotional level. We are not crying because of feeling hopeless, lost, or overwhelmed at the injustices of the world. We have no feelings of self-pity or outrage. Our basic happiness remains unchallenged and quickly returns. Although the sadness of compassionate sympathy briefly overrides our happiness, we are not afraid to experience it. Sadness is merely a wave that naturally arises on the ocean of the mind.

The Relation Between Love and Happiness

Love is the wish for someone to be happy. Such a wish naturally follows from compassionate sympathy. Though we feel sad at someone's pain and sorrow, feeling morose is difficult while actively wishing the person to be happy. When we stop thinking about ourselves and focus instead on someone's happiness, our heart naturally warms. This automatically brings us a quiet feeling of joy. Thus, when love is selfless and sincere, a gentle happiness accompanies it that is not upsetting. Just as a parent suffering from a headache forgets the pain while comforting his or her sick child, similarly the sadness we feel at someone's misfortune disappears while we radiate thoughts of love.

Training to Respond to Problems with Nonupsetting Feelings

Balanced sensitivity to someone's problems requires listening with sympathy and sadness and then responding warmly by trying to comfort and cheer the person. The traditional Mahayana method for training to do this with nonupsetting feelings is *tonglen* (taking and giving). As an advanced practice, it requires emotional stability, strength, and courage, gained, for example, through training with the previous sixteen exercises. We take on others' suffering and give them our happiness. With a feeling of compassion, we imagine others' pain,

sorrow, sickness, or injury as a black light that leaves them, freeing them from it. This light then enters us as we breathe in; we experience the suffering that it represents; and the light subsequently dissolves at our heart. We then generate a loving wish for them to be happy. As we exhale, we imagine this happiness leaving our heart as white light. This light fills them completely with health, well-being, and soothing joy.

Several points are crucial when attempting this practice. First, we need not only compassion, but also the other two components of sympathy: empathy and willingness to become involved. Second, we need to feel appropriate levels of sadness and happiness. Doing this requires having no fear of these feelings. We lose any fear we might have when we experience sadness and happiness nondualistically, based on serenity and equanimity. Feelings experienced in this way are not upsetting.

Furthermore, we must be careful not to mix our practice with the dualistic feeling that we are a saint or a martyr taking on the sufferings of some pitiful wretch. We must also be cautious not to inflate the others' suffering into a solid monster that we now hold inside so that it overwhelms us. Although feeling the person's pain is important, otherwise we may not take it seriously, nevertheless we must let it go. One method is to imagine the pain passing through us and ending. Another is to see it as a wave that does not disturb the depths of the mind. Understanding and wisdom must always accompany the practice of loving compassion.

Even in the saddest moments, such as at a funeral, this practice enables us to smile warmly, with sympathetic and understanding eyes, and to comfort other mourners with love. We feel sad at the loss and may even cry. Yet, our main concern is wishing happiness and well-being to both the deceased and those left behind. Our smile is not flippant, distasteful, nor disrespectful. Nor is it false. We do not force it before we have sufficiently mourned, nor do we scold ourselves for being silly and crying. Nevertheless, our tears quickly pass. We understand death, impermanence, and cause and effect. Anyone born must some day depart. With the wish that the other mourners might also understand this, we accept and imagine relieving their suffering and bringing them comfort.

EXERCISE 17

Accepting Suffering and Giving Happiness

During the first phase of this exercise, we look at a photo of a loved one or mentally picture the person. First, we try to settle into a state of serenity, free of flightiness and dullness. To quiet our mind of

tension, worry, or speediness, we may use the threefold method of letting go, writing on water, and an ocean swell. To uplift our energy if we are depressed or dull, we may imagine that we have just emerged from a refreshing shower. We then turn our attention to the person, without probing or intruding with insistent intensity, but also without feeling removed or distant. The more relaxed and fresher we are, the looser our intensity and the more sincere our concern.

Next, we try to compose ourselves further, with equanimity. We think how our loved one is a human being and, like us, does not like to be clung to, rejected, or ignored. The more relaxed and alert we are, the easier it becomes not to want anything from the person and not to feel repulsed or indifferent. Furthermore, when in need, the person does not appreciate someone who is overprotective, frightened, or too busy to spare any time. Releasing those attitudes as well -- with the breath or the image of writing on water -- we try simply to be open and attentive.

We now recall a problem in life our loved one may be facing and the pain and sorrow he or she might be experiencing. To develop full sympathy, we need to generate empathy, compassion, and the willingness to become involved. First, we think how the person and we are interrelated, like our hand and our foot. Ignoring his or her pain would be shortsighted. Then, we consider that this pain needs to be removed, not because it is our loved one's pain, but simply because it hurts. With these two thoughts, we develop the interest to try to empathize. Next, if we cannot imagine what his or her pain might be like, we recall something similar that we have experienced. The person's suffering is not so alien.

Once we can empathize with the physical or emotional pain, we reflect that if we were in the same predicament, we would want it to end. So does our loved one. With this line of thinking, we develop compassion: the wish for him or her to be free of the pain and its causes. To gain the willingness to become involved, we think that just as we would not appreciate someone's excuses, our loved one also would not welcome our hesitation.

If we are frightened of feeling his or her sorrow, we try to deflate our dualistic projections. To do this, we alternate tickling our palm, pinching it, and holding one hand in the other. We try to experience each as a wave of the mind without a dualistic impression of a seemingly concrete "me" and a seemingly concrete physical sensation. When we are successful, we naturally have no fear of these experiences. Just as feelings of physical pleasure or pain are not upsetting or frightening when experienced nondualistically, the same is true with feelings of

mental happiness or sadness.

Now, without tension or fear, we try to imagine the suffering and its causes leaving our loved one as black light, freeing the person from his or her pain. As we breathe in, we picture this light entering our heart. We accept and try to feel his or her anguish. Then, viewing the experience of pain from the perspective of the ocean of our clear light mind, we try to see it nondualistically like a wave. What our loved one and now we are experiencing is unpleasant and naturally evokes a feeling of sadness. We do not trivialize it in any way. This feeling, however, does not upset the calm, composed depths of the ocean. We try to let it naturally subside and pass.

From our clear light heart, a warm and loving concern for the person's welfare now naturally arises. With the wish for him or her to be happy, we try to picture our concern as this happiness and its causes, but in the form of white light. Reinforced by the natural joy of the mind, we try to feel deep happiness ourselves as we imagine the light entering the person and filling him or her with joy.

Next, we imagine supplementing our gift of happiness with an additional present of understanding and possible solutions for his or her problems. To do this, we try to tap the abilities of the five types of deep awareness that also endow our clear light mind. We picture our understanding and solutions leaving us also as white light and filling the person. Sometimes, experiencing frustration and displeasure is healthy for our loved one to grow, as with a child learning social skills. In such cases, we may imagine taking away simply the rough edges of the experience and giving him or her valuable insight.

We may also give other factors related to clear light mind. For example, if a loved one needs self-confidence, we may recall Buddha-nature and transform the self-confidence we feel in our natural abilities into belief in our loved one's innate talents. Radiating confidence to the person, we try to imagine our loved one filled with the white light of both self-confidence and our faith in him or her. When we repeat this process during actual encounters with the person, our confidence reinforces his or her self-esteem.

Since mind's natural qualities automatically translate into physical and verbal expression, we also try to imagine our loved one acting and speaking self-assuredly. Moreover, we try to imagine ourselves interacting with the person with faith in him or her. In real life encounters, similar words and actions will stimulate our loved one to speak and act self-confidently.

We may follow a similar procedure if a loved one feels his or her self-dignity threatened, for instance by the ravages of disease or old age. Tapping the self-pride we feel in view of our innate good qualities, we try to imagine self-dignity filling the person with white light. We reinforce it by also sending the person our respect for him or her. Then, we try to picture our loved one acting with strengthened self-esteem and ourselves interacting with sincere deep respect.

Repeating the procedures of giving and taking with a stranger or with someone we dislike is not recommended for initial practice. Our feelings may not be sincere. We may attempt it only when we have gained some experience with the method and are well advanced in our sensitivity training.

Helping Others and Ourselves to Overcome Insecurity

During the second phase of the exercise, we practice giving and taking while sitting in a circle with a group, by repeating the procedure two or three times and focusing each time on a different person. Doing this practice while facing a partner is too intense and, in real life encounters, may seem pretentious. The classical texts advise always to keep the practice of giving and taking private so that no one knows that we are doing it, not even the person who is the object of our focus.

Here, in the circle, we may not know the specific troubles that anyone is currently facing. Nevertheless, we may work with the general problems that afflict most people. Let us take the example of insecurity.

First, while focusing on someone, we need to settle our mind into a state of serene equanimity and sympathy as before. To help the process, we may use the key phrases: “no tension, worry, speediness, or dullness,” “relaxed and fresh,” “no clinging, aversion, or indifference,” “not overprotective, frightened, or too busy,” “open and concerned,” “interest,” “empathy,” “compassion,” “willingness to become involved,” and “no fear of feeling sad.” Then, we imagine relieving the person of the suffering of being insecure. We do this by picturing that suffering entering us as black light. Not frightened to feel the person’s pain, we try to view it from the perspective of the ocean of the mind and let it settle. Remaining in an oceanic clear light state free from the worries and tensions that feed insecurity, we try to experience the natural joy of our mind. With feelings of love, we then radiate this joy as white light, which we imagine fills the person.

Further, we try to understand that the person’s insecurity stems from not viewing his or her experiences from the perspective of life’s

changes, parts and causes, and waves on the ocean. We also emanate as white light our understanding of these points and the consequent security and sense of well-being that it gives us. Feeling secure in ourselves, we try to reinforce the person's own feeling of security. If we know the person, we may also practice giving and taking with his or her specific problems.

During the third phase, we focus on ourselves, first in a mirror and then after putting the mirror aside. We begin by trying to identify any personal problems we may be currently facing. To settle ourselves into a state of serene equanimity and sympathy, we may use the seven key phrases as before. Next, with compassion for ourselves, we imagine taking on our difficulties as black light either drawn from the mirror image or extracted from our entire body and brought to our heart. In other words, we accept working on our problems and try to feel free of worry about them. Without tension, fear, or feelings of dualism, we try to experience the pain they cause, from the point of view of the ocean, and let the experience pass. Trying to find possible solutions with the understanding of our deep awareness, we radiate these remedies lovingly and joyfully as white light. The light fills our image in the mirror or fills our body from within if we are practicing without a prop.

Using the same procedure as when working in a circle, we may also try to take on any manifest or residual feelings of insecurity we may have. We then send out to ourselves a sense of security.

Lastly, we practice giving and taking while viewing the series of photos of ourselves from particularly difficult times in our life. If we have any unresolved problems, blocked feelings, or emotional turmoil left from or still concerning those times, we try to bring them to the surface. Taking them on compassionately, we try to experience the pain they produce, and deal with them now. We try to send loving wishes of joy to ourselves at those times and possible solutions we can presently use to resolve these problems. If we do not have pictures of ourselves from those periods, we may think of those times and practice as we did without a mirror. We try to draw the pain from our entire body as black light. Then, we try to emanate the white light of joy from the center of our heart so that it permeates our body. Finally, we try to feel this light beaming from all the pores of our skin.

16 Making Sensitive Decisions

Feelings, Wishes, and Necessity

Even when we are attentive to a situation and we feel some level of happiness, interest, and compassion about it, and some level of willingness to become involved, we need to respond sensitively and appropriately. Frequently, we need to decide between three choices: doing what we feel like doing, what we want to do, and what we need to do. Decisions involving someone else add the further choices between what the person wants and what he or she needs. Some or all these choices may coincide. Often, however, they differ. Choosing either what we want or feel like doing over what is needed, or what the other person wants over what he or she needs, is a form of insensitivity. When we make such a choice, we frequently feel guilty. This overreaction happens because we experience what we need to do dualistically as what we *should* do. On one side stands a defiant “me” and on the other the unsavory action that we should do, but are not doing. Usually, a moralistic judgment accompanies the dualistic appearance.

Deconstructing the decision-making process, by using images such as a balloon bursting, resolves any tension over the issue of “should.” In place of what we should do, this process leaves what we need to do. Yet, we might not know what we need to do or what someone else needs. To find out, we may rely on the five types of deep awareness, knowledge, experience, intuition, discrimination, and trustworthy external sources of advice.

Even when we know what we need to do, we may neither want to do it, nor feel like doing it. We may still feel tension, even if the issue of “should” does not complicate the matter. Do we need to be insensitive to our wishes or feelings? Is it an overreaction to feel frustration and disappointment at needing to ignore either one or both of them?

The issue is complex. Four combinations may occur between what we want and what we feel like doing. Suppose, for example, we are overweight and we know that we need to diet. (1) We may want to keep our diet, but not feel like doing so when our favorite cake is served for dessert. (2) We may feel like sticking to our diet, but not want to do so when we have paid much money for a hotel room and a breakfast buffet is included. (3) We may both feel like keeping to our diet and want to do so when people tell us how fat we have become. (4) We may neither want to keep, nor feel like keeping our diet when we are aggravated

about something and want to drown our annoyance by eating cake. In each case, we may choose either to eat some cake or to exercise restraint. How do we make a sensitive decision that we do not later regret?

Reasons for Feeling Like Doing Something and Wanting to Do It

Understanding the mechanism behind feelings and wishes helps to alleviate tensions between the two and between either of them and necessity. When we understand why we feel like doing something and why we might want to do something different, we can evaluate these factors. Weighing them against the reasons for what we need to do, we can then come to a reasonable decision.

The abhidharma presentation of mental factors and karma suggests the following analysis. The deeper we probe, the more sensitive and honest we are to the myriad psychological factors involved in making difficult decisions in life. For easier comprehension, we shall use the relatively trivial example of eating to illustrate the complexity of the issue. Appreciating the depth that any analysis must go in order to be accurate helps us to be thorough in considering the choices available in more serious decisions, such as concerning an unhealthy relationship.

An urge is the mental factor that leads in the direction of a certain course of action. There are two types of urges: those that bring on the thought to do something and those that lead directly to doing it. Feeling like doing something and wanting to do it are examples of the former type of urge. Deciding to do it is an example of the latter. Feeling like doing something arises when we are unaware of the reason. When we consciously feel motivated, we want to do it. Let us explore this distinction in depth.

Feeling like doing something may arise from a habit and preference, a physical reason, or the involuntary motivation of an emotion or attitude. For example, we may feel like eating something because of the habit and preference to eat at a certain time, because of hunger, or because of attachment to food. These three major causes may act either in combination with each other or independently. If we are in the habit of taking lunch at noon, we may feel like eating at that hour whether or not we are actually hungry and whether or not we are attached to food. On the other hand, when we are hungry, we feel like eating regardless of the time or our attachments. Further, when we are attached to food, we feel like eating at all times, no matter whether our stomach is empty.

When an urge to eat arises and we are unaware of the time or do not think about being hungry, we merely feel like eating. We do not necessarily want to eat. The same thing happens when the urge arises simply from

attachment to food. Wanting to eat requires being conscious of a reason and feeling motivated by it.

We want to eat when we are mindful of what triggers our habit, of our preference, or of a physical reason for eating. For example, when we know it is noon or we think either about our preference for eating then or about being hungry, we want to eat. Similarly, we want to eat when we have a deliberated reason for doing so. For instance, we have no time later: if we are to eat at all, we must eat now. Awareness of feeling like doing something may also make us want to do it. Sometimes, we want to eat simply because we feel like eating. Although a psychological motivation for eating, such as attachment to food, is sufficient to make us feel like eating, it is insufficient to make us want to eat. We need another reason, such as it being lunchtime, and awareness of that reason. Attachment to food, however, may support our wish to eat.

Suppose an urge to eat arises from a habit, preference, or physical reason before we are mindful of that reason or it arises at the same time as we are mindful of a deliberated reason. In each case, we both feel and want to eat. For instance, we feel like eating because we are hungry. Subsequently, when we notice that it is noon or we realize that we have no time to eat later, we also want to eat. We may similarly experience both the feeling and the wish to eat when an involuntary psychological motivation supports a conscious, deliberated reason for eating. For example, we realize that we have no time to eat later and we are attached to food. We both want to eat and feel like eating despite it not being noon or our not being hungry.

Feeling like doing something

- because of a habit and preference
- because of a physical reason
- because of an emotion or attitude
- may be supported by circumstances or the influence of others

Wanting to do something

- because of a habit and mindfulness of what has triggered that habit
- because of a preference and mindfulness of that preference
- because of a physical need that we realize
- because of a deliberated reason
- because of feeling like doing it
- may be supported by an emotion or attitude
- may be supported by circumstances or the influence of others

Merely feeling like doing something without necessarily wanting to do it

when unaware of what is triggering the habit that causes the feeling
when not thinking about the physical reason that causes the feeling
when the feeling is motivated simply by an emotion or attitude

Both feeling like doing something and wanting to do it

when an urge arises from a habit, preference, or physical reason
--before being mindful of that reason
--at the same time as being mindful of a deliberated reason
when an emotion or attitude supports a conscious motivation

Wanting to do something but not feeling like doing it

when mindful of a reason for doing something and
--an urge to do it does not arise beforehand
--an urge to do it does not arise from an emotion or attitude

Figure 4: Feeling like doing something and wanting to do it

On the other hand, if we are mindful of a reason for eating and an urge to eat does not arise either beforehand or from a psychological motivation, we want to eat but do not feel like doing so. For instance, although we realize that we have no time later, it is not our usual time to eat. We are not hungry and we are unattached to food. In this case, we want to eat, but do not feel like it.

Circumstances or the influence of others may support the arising of an urge to do something, whether we experience the urge as a feeling or a wish to do it. Without other causes, however, neither supporting factor is a sufficient cause for the urge to occur. For example, when food is on the table or when our friends are ordering at the restaurant, we may also feel like eating something and want to eat. Yet, not everyone responds in the same way. Without it being lunchtime, or without being either hungry or attached to food, or without having a deliberated reason, we will not feel like eating or want to eat even under these circumstances or in this company. What we decide to do is another matter.

Choosing Between What We Want to Do and What We Feel Like Doing

Suppose we want to do one thing, but feel like doing the opposite. Let us leave aside for a moment the further complication of what we need to do. When we decide to do what we feel like doing rather than what we

want to do, our habit, preference, physical need, emotions, attitude, or some combination of these factors, may be stronger than the deliberated motivation behind our wish or the emotional force behind that motivation. Our mindfulness of our reason for doing something may also be too weak or the circumstances or influence of others may be too overwhelming. For example, though we may want to lose weight, we may feel like eating a piece of cake. We choose to take a piece when our habit, hunger, greed, preference for a particular type of cake, our host's insistence, or some combination of these factors outweighs our vanity or mindfulness of how fat we are. When, in the same situation, we choose to do what we want rather than what we feel like doing, the strengths of the factors supporting each choice are reversed.

When we both want to do and feel like doing something, we choose not to do so when an extraneous motivation overrides all other considerations. For example, when we know that our host has specially baked the cake for us and would be hurt if we did not take a piece, we may decide to eat it despite wanting to keep to our diet and feeling like doing so.

Lastly, a deliberated motivation may cause us to do something though we neither want to nor feel like doing it. For instance, when we neither want to keep nor feel like keeping to our diet, we may refrain from eating anyway if we meditate on the disadvantages of being a slave to our greed. Here, our deliberated motivation of wanting to avoid these drawbacks outweighs any reason for wanting to break our diet, such as aggravation about work.

Doing What We Need to Do

We need to do something because it will benefit us, others, or both, or because of physical necessity or circumstances. For example, we may need to diet because losing weight will improve our self-esteem, will enable us to play sports with our children without losing our breath, or will improve our performance at work. We may also need to diet for health reasons or because we are traveling in an area where the food does not suit us. We do what we need to do when we are aware of the reasons for doing it, are convinced of their validity, feel motivated by them, and remain mindful of these three factors.

Someone may also force us to do what we need to do even if we do not see the need. For example, a strong-willed nurse or relative may bully us into eating when we are sick, even if we do not consciously wish to get well. This usually occurs because of physical or psychologi-

cal weakness. We may be frightened of the person.

Unconscious motivations that derive from disturbing attitudes such as vanity may be behind our wanting to do something. They do not support, however, our needing to do it. They fuel, instead, our feeling that we *should* do it, such as vanity making us feel that we *should* go on a diet. On the other hand, certain attitudes, such as a sense of duty, family honor, or national pride, may make us feel either that we need to do something or that we should do it. This depends on whether we mix our outlook with confusion. Moreover, these attitudes are constructive, destructive, or neutral following from the ethical status of what we feel that we need or should do. Family honor may lead to helping the poor, vengeance killing, or living in a certain neighborhood.

At first, we may consciously have to motivate ourselves and exercise willpower to do what we need to do. Later, when we have built up new habits, we may spontaneously do what is needed and even feel like doing and want to do it.

Alienation from What We Want to Do or What We Feel Like Doing

Sometimes, we feel that we must suppress what we want to do or feel like doing and not “allow” ourselves to do it. We usually experience this as frustration. At other times, as a reward, we “allow” ourselves to do something that we both want to do and feel like doing, but in which we normally restrain ourselves from indulging. Then, when we actually do what we temporarily allow ourselves to do, we often feel irrational anxiety that someone will catch and punish us. We find it difficult to relax and enjoy what we are doing.

In addition, sometimes we feel that we have to force ourselves to do something that we know we *should* do, but that we neither want to do nor feel like doing. We often experience this with resentment. Moreover, often when we do what we feel like doing and not what we know we *should* do, we feel that we cannot control ourselves. Such experiences are often accompanied with feelings of guilt.

All such forms of alienation from our wishes, from our feelings, and from ourselves, stem from dualistic views. These are views of “me” and what I want to do, “me” and what I feel like doing, “me” and what I need to do, and “me” and what I actually do. In each case, the “me” and the choice of action seem to be concrete entities. Consequently, we experience the various seemingly concrete “me”s in conflict, fighting to control each other, with each and what it wants, needs, does, or feels like doing bearing a concrete identity. When we identify with one of these “me”s that we

imagine to be “bad,” we feel guilty as the “bad” person who wants to do, feels like, or is doing something naughty. When we identify with one of these “me”s as the “good” person who must always be in control, we experience tension at having to be the police officer. We are never at ease with ourselves. To overcome these emotionally disturbing syndromes, we need the wisdom of nonduality.

Decision-Making

Decisions occur as the result of a complex interaction of mental factors without some concrete “me” in our head making the decision. This is true although the voice in our head worrying about which decision to take makes it appear as though a findable speaker is doing the worrying and making the choice. When a decision occurs, for instance to eat a piece of cake, all that happens is merely the seeing of the cake accompanied by the mental factors of discrimination and intention. These two mental factors arise from the interaction and comparative weights of (1) the habits, preferences, physical needs, emotions, and attitudes behind what we feel like doing, (2) the conscious, deliberated, and nondeliberated motivations for what we want to do, (3) the reasons behind what we need to do and our conscious motivation for doing it, and (4) any extraneous or deliberated motivations that might draw us to do something different from these three. We experience our intention to eat, accompanied by the decisiveness of discrimination, as our will. Willpower then brings on the urge that directly leads us to act. We experience this urge as a decision.

Neurobiology similarly describes a decision from the physical viewpoint as the outcome of millions of brain cells firing. It agrees with Buddhism that no findable agent sits in our head making the decision. If we remain mindful of this common conclusion of both Buddhism and science, we stop viewing our decision-making dualistically. In this way, we avoid feelings of frustration, alienation, or guilt.

If we ask who made the decision to eat the cake, there is no denying that it was “me,” not someone else. This conventional person “me,” however, is not some findable agent in our head manipulating events. This “me” is like an illusion in that it seems concrete and findable, but in fact is not. Yet, it is not the same as an illusion. People make decisions; illusions do not.

Just because no concrete decision-maker sits in our head and our decisions arise dependently on causes and conditions, it does not follow that our choices are predetermined and inevitable. Predetermination

implies that an all-powerful agent other than ourselves has independently decided for us. Neither we nor anyone for us, however, can make choices independently of the affecting factors. Furthermore, when we decide between what we want to do, what we feel like doing, and what we need to do, we subjectively experience making a choice. This is conventionally and existentially true. We do not know beforehand which decision we shall take. Nevertheless, no matter which decision we choose, all decisions arise from causes and conditions. Nothing happens arbitrarily without any reason. Therefore, all decisions are understandable. Moreover, we are accountable for them.

To make a sensitive decision, then, we need to check (1) what we feel like doing and why, (2) what we want to do and why, and (3) what we need to do and why. We then weigh the strengths of each, without becoming either overemotional or devoid of all feelings, and decide what to do.

Decisions are not always clear cut. Often we need to compromise. The first fact of life or “noble truth” that Buddha taught, however, is that life is difficult. We may feel sad at having to compromise our feelings or wishes, but there is no need to feel frustrated, angry, or alienated. As in accepting any unfortunate situation, we need to view our experience of sadness like a wave on the ocean of the mind. In this way, we avoid being battered. Our sadness will pass, like everything else.

Not Identifying with What We Want to Do or Feel Like Doing

The realization that no concrete “me” exists as a basis upon which to project a fixed identity allows us balanced sensitivity not only toward decision-making, but also toward ourselves. If we do not identify with the feelings or wishes that arise to do this or that, we do not judge ourselves as “bad” and feel guilty when the feelings or wishes are to do something bizarre or destructive. We see that urges and wishes to do things arise as the result of habit, physical needs, various forms of motivation, and so forth. An intention to act them out does not need also to accompany them. This realization allows us more sympathy and tolerance toward ourselves as we work to eliminate the causes for destructive urges to arise at all.

Not Knowing What We Want to Do or Feel Like Doing

Sometimes, when faced with a decision, we do not know what we want to do or feel like doing. When we are uneasy about this, we experience the phenomenon as alienation. We imagine we are “out of touch

with ourselves.” On the other hand, when we make decisions based purely on necessity, without considering our wishes or feelings, we may experience life as cold and mechanical. To overcome these problems we need to examine the possible causes for not knowing our feelings or wishes.

Feeling like doing something derives from an urge, which comes from habits, preferences, physical needs, emotions, attitudes, and so forth. While we are not liberated from our compelling habits, involuntary urges to do things constantly arise. Not all these urges have the same strength of intensity. When we experience not knowing what we feel like doing, we may merely be inattentive to a low-energy urge that is arising in that particular moment. To overcome the uneasiness that often accompanies the experience of not knowing what we feel like doing, we need to increase our sensitivity. We accomplish this by quieting our mind and being more attentive to the low-intensity urges that arise. We can then consider these feelings when deciding our course of action. In so doing, we experience our decision-making as a kinder and fairer process.

Feelings and Intuition

Intuition takes three major forms, each of which can also help us to make a decision. We may have an intuition about someone, such as that a woman is pregnant. Based on that, we may decide to help her carry a bundle. We may also have an intuition that something will happen, such as the doorbell will ring. Consequently, we postpone taking a bath. These first two forms of intuition are stronger than a suspicion. They have a quality of certainty to them.

An intuition may also be to do something, for instance to tell someone something about his or her behavior. Because of this, we may decide to speak to the person. A quality of certainty also accompanies this type of intuition. We intuitively *know* what to do; we do not merely have an opinion.

The English word “feeling” can be used in the context of all three types of intuition. We may intuitively feel that a woman is pregnant or intuitively feel that the doorbell will ring. We may also intuitively feel that we need to say something to someone. In each case, we do not merely feel these things; we feel them with certainty. In other words, intuitions are more compelling than feelings since they seem to derive from “inner wisdom.” Moreover, intuitions often arise without an accompanying emotional tone. They may be intense or low-level, depending on our attention and mindfulness.

In deciding what to do, we also need to evaluate our intuitions. An intuition arises for unconscious reasons. Its source may be knowledge, innate deep awareness, or understanding built up from experience. However, what we take to be an intuitive feeling may also come from confusion or disturbing emotions. When we are paranoid, for example, our feeling that a journey will be dangerous may seem to us like an intuition of impending disaster. Intuition, then, may be a valid source of information or it may be incorrect. Although we need to consult intuition in coming to a decision, we also need care not to follow it blindly or impulsively.

Sometimes, we may feel like doing something, but intuition tells us something different. Here, too, we need care. One or the other may be correct, both may be partially correct, or both may be wrong. Intuition may be either an asset or a liability.

Compromising Our Preferences for Those of Others

When we are properly sensitive, we see what is troubling others and what they need. Their needs always take precedence over what they might say that they want. Sometimes, however, what they might want and need -- for example, a show of physical affection or the space and time to be alone -- is something that we find difficult to give. We may also not like giving it, not feel like giving it, or not want to give it. Moreover, because we do not like to receive the same ourselves, we may think that anyone who likes to receive it is immature or foolish.

Such a need or request from someone is different from asking for our time or money when we have none to spare. Although we may have certain psychological blocks, everyone is capable of giving someone a hug or of not bothering a person. To decide what to do, we need to evaluate our own and the other person's motivations and the possible outcome of any decision we might take. Although giving in to someone's needs or refusing them may make the person or us temporarily feel better, we need to do what is of long-term benefit for each of us.

Saying No

In deciding what to do, we need to be sensitive to our own needs as well as to those of others. Giving the person what he or she wants or needs -- for instance, more of our time than we have available -- may be damaging to our physical or emotional health. It may also restrict the time and energy we have for others. We need to say no sensitively, however, so that the person does not feel that a restriction is equivalent to a personal rejection. We also need to say no without guilt or fear of

rejection.

One way to handle the situation is to give someone, particularly a friend or a relative, a set time each week exclusively devoted to him or her, for example breakfast each Saturday. We also make it clear that we have a weekly appointment afterwards, so that our time together is not open-ended. Setting limitations is the only realistic and practical way of leading our life. We cannot give everyone who wants to be with us equal time.

Prioritizing is difficult, especially when people are involved. Although family responsibilities, loyalty, and duty cannot be neglected, the main criteria are the other person's receptivity to our help and our effectiveness in benefiting him or her in some significant way. We also need to consider how much we gain or are drained by the encounter. This affects our general sense of well-being and our ability to interact more effectively with others. The teachings on karma suggest that, although everyone is ultimately equal, prioritizing also requires considering the benefit the other person and we can realistically give to others, now or later in life. This guideline applies to deciding not only how much time to spend with each person, but also how much energy to devote to ourselves.

Again, we need to be aware how our mind produces deceptive appearances of a seemingly concrete "me" who is overwhelmed with unfair demands and a seemingly concrete "you" inconsiderately making those demands. When we believe in this dualistic appearance and label ourselves and others in this confused fashion, we become tense and defensive. We have to ward others off with cunning excuses and, unless we are completely shameless, we naturally feel guilty. Deconstructing this dualistic appearance and trying to relate unself-consciously allow us to prioritize our time without feeling guilty. Changing our mental labels to "someone trying to help" and "people in need" is also helpful so long as we do not concretize the two.

On another level, our mind may produce a dualistic appearance of a seemingly concrete "me" who needs to be useful to justify our existence and a seemingly concrete "you" who can provide that elusive security by allowing us to serve. Fooled by this appearance, we may feel that if we say no to our friends, we will be rejected ourselves and thus lose any hope of gaining concrete existence from always catering to their demands.

Even if a friend does reject us, we need to focus on how life goes on. We are sad to lose contact with this person, but his or her disap-

pointment, annoyance, or departure does not render us a worthless person. If Buddha himself was unable to please everyone, what do we expect of ourselves? Keeping these points in mind allows us to say no in a relaxed, sincere manner, without guilt or fear. It also allows us to understand and accept someone saying no to us, without feeling hurt.

EXERCISE 18

Making Sensitive Decisions

As a preliminary to making sensitive decisions, we need to divest decision-making from feelings of dualism. A convenient way to train is to work with an itch. We try to sit quietly without moving. When the inevitable itch arises, we try to notice how we both feel like scratching it and want to do so. Deciding not to scratch it, we try to observe how our mind automatically creates a dualistic appearance of a seemingly concrete tormented “me” and a seemingly concrete unbearable itch. Our mind tears the experience further apart by also creating the impression of a seemingly concrete controller “me” who will not give in to this annoying itch and of a seemingly concrete weak “me” who wants to surrender and needs to be controlled. If we identify with the seemingly concrete strong “me” and yet scratch the itch, we feel defeated by the weak “me.” When this happens, we may experience the defeat with self-recrimination and thoughts that we should have been stronger. If we succeed in controlling the seemingly concrete weak “me,” we may gloat with overbearing pride at how strong we are. In each case, the experience is disturbing.

We may deconstruct our experience by focusing now on the itch that we have decided not to scratch. It is merely a physical sensation that our tactile consciousness is producing and perceiving. Paying attention to it in this way, we try to notice that an intention accompanies our perception of the itch – namely, to endure the sensation and to resist ending it by scratching. This intention becomes more decisive when we pay attention to the itch as something impermanent that will eventually go away by itself. Analyzing in this way, we discover that no controller is directing the incident and restraining our hand from scratching. Refraining from scratching the itch, we try to focus on our experience as devoid of a seemingly concrete, solid “me.”

Next, we consciously change our mind and decide to scratch the itch. Examining what occurs as we slowly scratch, we try to notice that the only change is the intention that accompanies our awareness of the itch. The intention is now to scratch it. This intention, fueled by the

consciously motivated wish to stop experiencing this physical sensation, gives rise to an urge that immediately translates into the motion of our hand as we scratch. Again, no concrete boss stands behind the act, taking in information from the sensors in our skin and sending out orders to our hand. We try to focus for a minute on the fact that we are capable of making decisions without dualistic feelings.

An additional factor enabling us to make sensitive decisions is being relaxed with ourselves and accessing the natural talents of our mind and heart. Nervousness may make us indecisive and preconceptions may cloud our critical faculties. Therefore, as a further preliminary, we may repeat the practice without a mirror from the third phase of Exercise Nine. Relaxing our muscular tension, we use the “letting-go” and “writing-on-water” methods to quiet our mind of verbal thoughts, preconceptions, nonverbal judgments, projected roles, and expectations concerning ourselves and the decision we need to make. As in Exercise Fourteen, we then imagine any nervousness or emotional tension that might be left quieting down like a wave on the ocean when the wind has stopped. When we reach a calm, open state of mind and heart, free from tension, we rest for a minute or two with clarity.

Now we are ready to begin the main part of the exercise. We begin the first phase by focusing on a photo or on a thought of someone about whom we might have to make a difficult decision. Choosing, for example, someone with whom we are in an unhealthy or unsatisfactory relationship, we need to draw upon the various skills we have learned in the previous exercises.

First, we must decide whether something needs to be done. For this, we have to evaluate our impression of the situation. We begin by deconstructing any dualistic feelings we may still be unconsciously projecting. In other words, we try to stop seeing the relationship as a confrontation between a concrete “me” and a concrete “you.” Imagining the balloon of that fantasy popping, we objectively check the facts, taking into account the other person’s perspective and comments. Both sides undoubtedly have valid points. Placing the blame solely on one side is absurd. We may wish to consult an unbiased outside opinion. However, we need care not lose our critical faculties and let bad counsel sway us.

Once we are certain of the facts, we need to determine with introspection (1) what we feel like doing, (2) what our intuition says, (3) what we want to do, and (4) what we need to do. For example, we may feel like doing nothing. Yet, our intuitive feeling is that this will only make

things worse. Moreover, we want to say something and we know that we need to do that.

We then evaluate the reasons behind each of the four. Making a list is helpful. Doing so may seem removed and analytical. Nevertheless, without some structure, we may simply take the easiest course of action – which is to do nothing -- or torture ourselves with indecision.

(1) Feeling like doing something arises from habits, preferences, physical factors, and unconscious motivations. Circumstances and the influence of others may also contribute. Here, we may feel like doing nothing because of our habit of keeping quiet and our preference for avoiding confrontation. Examining ourselves deeper, we uncover fear of incurring the person's anger and also anxiety at the prospect of loneliness if he or she rejects us. Overwork and tiredness may also be contributing to our feeling of reticence.

(2) Intuition of what to do arises from knowledge, innate deep awareness, or understanding gained from experience. We intuitively know that keeping quiet will worsen the situation because we have seen this happen with others. Since what we take to be intuition may also come from a hidden attitude, we need to examine if this is the case. An unconscious drive to be in control may be reinforcing our intuition.

(3) A wish to do something arises from both conscious and unconscious motivations. Circumstances and the influence of others may also contribute. We want to say something because we can no longer tolerate the pain that the unhealthy relationship is causing us. Although we usually never acknowledge it, we may also feel oppressed. Moreover, several friends have been encouraging us to say something and the circumstances are right: we are spending the weekend together.

(4) Lastly, the need to do something comes from the benefits that both parties will derive. Even if the decision brings short-term pain, we need to aim for long-term benefits. Moreover, physical necessity and circumstances may also contribute to the need for action. Here, we know that we need to do something because the present situation is negatively affecting our work, our health, and our other relationships. Further, the relationship as it stands is unhealthy for the person too and for his or her relations with others. We love the person and wish him or her to be happy. Neither of us is happy now. Thus, our love and concern confirm the need. The person may feel hurt if we say something and we may feel sad afterwards. In the end, however, doing something now will benefit us both.

The first decision we need to take is whether to do anything at

all. Having brought to the surface all the factors involved, we need to evaluate the positive and negative reasons for each choice. The main constructive reasons for action are the long-term benefits both of us will gain, our love for the person, and our honest concern for the welfare of both of us. Although our feeling of oppression may be a hypersensitive response, our intolerance of our present emotional pain is reasonable. Experience tells us that unless we do something it will only get worse. Our other friends' counsel corroborates this choice. The only negative factor behind doing something is our unconscious drive to be in control. To keep that in check, we need to listen carefully to what the other person has to say.

The advantage of saying nothing is that we avoid a potentially explosive confrontation, the other person's anger, and our possible future loneliness. The negative reasons for keeping quiet are our fears and insecurity. Since long-term benefits always outweigh short-term disadvantages, our anxiety is clearly a hypersensitive response. It is not a valid reason for inaction. The fact that we are overworked and tired suggests that perhaps we need to wait a short while, but we must do something soon. Weighing all factors, we see that the reasons for changing the relationship are more valid than the ones for doing nothing. We resolve to act.

Once we make up our mind like this and our motivation of love is clear, we are ready to decide what to do. The choices are either to try to restructure the relationship or to leave the person. To reach a conclusion, we need to adjust our ten mental factors and apply the five types of deep awareness. With a motivated urge, we focus on the person. With mirror-like awareness, we distinguish and pay attention to various aspects of his or her behavior. Using awareness of equalities and individualities, we further distinguish the patterns and yet respect the individuality of each instance. Pleasant contacting awareness and a feeling of happiness at the prospect of resolving the problem enhance our interest, mindfulness, and concentration. These, in turn, lead us to discriminate a course of action. We do this with accomplishing awareness. We then evaluate the wisdom and effectiveness of this choice with awareness of reality. Lastly, if the choice seems to be the most reasonable one, we set our intention to suggest it to the other person as we begin our discussion.

The decision-making process requires gentleness, warmth, and understanding, not the zeal of planning a battle. We must make sure that whatever we choose to propose is ethically pure – neither destructive nor dishonest to the feelings of the people involved.

To avoid insensitivity toward ourselves, we need to be clear about our limits. Yet, within those limits, we need to be prepared to say either yes or no about specific points as the discussion develops. We also need to choose an appropriate moment to broach the matter, when both of us will be receptive. Acting rashly may bring disastrous results. Most importantly, we need to approach the encounter without preconceptions. Maintaining awareness of reality allows us to give the person the room to change his or her ways, while realizing that no one changes instantly. It also allows us to remain open to his or her viewpoint and suggestions. If we find it helpful, we may rehearse possible things we will say and the steps we are willing to take ourselves. Nevertheless, as in settling any dispute, we need the flexibility not to follow a fixed agenda.

We try to imagine doing all this calmly and gently. Even if the other person becomes angry, hurt, or upset, we must resolve the problem. This requires courage and strength. Ridding ourselves of self-consciousness gives us that courage. When we speak and act nondualistically, we are no longer frightened or insecure. The abhidharma literature lists indecisiveness among the six most disturbing states of mind. When we waver or hesitate in making a decision about an unhealthy relationship, we lose time and energy in immature, painful psychological games. This prevents us from making progress in life.

If we later realize that we made the wrong decision, we need to accept our limited ability to know what is best. After all, we are not omniscient. Moreover, our decision was not the sole factor that affected what happened to the person or to us. Learning from experience, we can only try to use compassion and wisdom to go on from there.

During the second phase of the exercise, we sit in a circle with a group and focus on one of the members with whom we need to decide something. If we know any of them and have a dispute, we may work with that. If we have no quarrels or do not know anyone, we may deal with such issues as improving our relationship or establishing one. Approaching the challenge nondualistically and with warm concern, we try to assess the situation objectively and to evaluate what we feel, intuit, want, and need to do. We then try to use our ten mental factors and five types of deep awareness to decide a course of action and to resolve to do it.

We practice the third phase by directing our focus at ourselves, first in a mirror and then without one. Choosing a difficult decision we need to make about ourselves, we apply the same techniques. Useful topics include what are we going to do with our life, what work shall we

do, where shall we live, whom shall we live with, shall we change jobs, when shall we retire and then what shall we do, and so forth. We need to apply the sensitivity skills we have gained through this program to help resolve the most difficult issues in life.

Epilogue

Developing balanced sensitivity is an organic process. Although the eighteen exercises add to the process one at a time, they build up an organic network in which each exercise interconnects with all others. As the network grows, it functions more maturely. The experiences and insights gained along the way reinforce one another as we assimilate them into our lives. The integration process further expands our innate networks of positive potential and deep awareness. Drawing upon these strengthened networks enables us to act with more balance in our lives.

Since the factors affecting any situation are nearly infinite, totally balanced sensitivity comes only with the attainment of a network of deep awareness encompassing everything. In other words, it comes only with the attainment of Buddhahood. This fact, however, need not daunt us. Although insensitive or overemotional moments inevitably continue to arise as we train, nevertheless, with sincere motivation and sustained effort, a pattern of progress begins to emerge. Our heart and mind are fully capable of balance in their sensitivity. Any progress made toward realizing their potential more than compensates the hard work involved. Not only do we benefit from our efforts; everyone whom we engage reaps the fruits.

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BACK COVER

Developing Balanced Sensitivity introduces a series of methods that can be practiced by people from all backgrounds to overcome insensitivity, hypersensitivity, and imbalances between concern for others and care for our own emotional needs. These methods, derived from traditional Buddhist sources, are presented in nontraditional forms suitable for both sensitivity workshops and practice at home.

The book presents exercises that deal with the difficult situations of everyday life. Topics include: dispelling nervousness and tension; accessing the natural talents of our mind and heart; deconstructing deceptive appearances; overcoming alienation from our feelings; and making difficult decisions.

“...a precise, thoughtful, and sophisticated book on the central question of human sensitivity. As one of Buddhism’s most knowledgeable Western teachers, he creatively combines analytical Buddhist psychology, trainings of the mind, intuitive heart practices, and dozens of practical techniques to nurture a life of sensitivity.” --- Jack Kornfield, Founder and Director, Insight Meditation West, author of *A Path with Heart*

“An interesting bridge between classical Buddhist teaching and modern psychotherapy...this book provides the reader with means to move from self-centered preoccupations to consideration for others.” --- Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy, M.D., Founder of Contextual Therapy, Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry and Chief of Family Therapy Section, Allegheny University of Health Sciences

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THE SENSITIVITY HANDBOOK:
Training Materials for
Developing Balanced Sensitivity
Alexander Berzin

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Preface

Many people suffer from imbalanced sensitivity. Either they are insensitive to themselves or to others, or they are hypersensitive and overreact. Moreover, in responding to others, they may lose sight of the effect on themselves. They may be out of touch with their feelings or overwhelmed by emotions. The fast pace and associated tensions of modern life aggravate their imbalance. Many people have difficulty coping.

In 1998, Snow Lion published my *Developing Balanced Sensitivity: Practical Buddhist Exercises for Daily Life*. This textbook presents a sensitivity training course to help treat these problems. Comprising twenty-two exercises, the course is suited for both guided workshops and practice at home. Designed for people from any background, the program is particularly useful for those in helping and teaching professions. It also addresses modern Buddhists who have reached a plateau in their practice. Such persons often appreciate fresh material to help them more fully integrate their meditation and study into daily life.

Having led sensitivity workshops around the world, I have seen the need for supplementary training materials. To help follow the exercises, particularly when practicing at home, people find it useful to have a printed step-by-step outline before them during training sessions. I have prepared this handbook to fulfill that need. To obtain maximum benefit, trainees need to familiarize themselves with the explanations and complete instructions found in the textbook before undertaking an exercise for the first time.

In addition, I have seen the usefulness of dividing the training program into two courses: basic and advanced. Therefore, I have extracted four exercises from the first edition of the textbook and appended them to the handbook for advanced practice.

I wish to thank the Kapor Family Foundation for funding the preparation of this work. I am also deeply grateful to Cate Hunter for her encouragement throughout the project.

Alexander Berzin
Berlin, Germany
July 14, 1999

PART I

Outline for the Basic Exercises

General Structure For Each Training Session

I. Initial procedures for each training session

- Turn the attention from previous activities
 - Breathe normally through the nose, not too quickly, not too slowly, not too deeply, not too shallowly, and without holding the breath
 - Count as one round the cycle of exhalation, a quiet period of rest, and inhalation
 - Count eleven rounds of breath twice
- Reaffirm your motivation
 - Wish to achieve balanced sensitivity to be able to use your potentials for the benefit of everyone, including yourself
 - Feel your energy raised and directed toward this aim
- Consciously decide to concentrate
 - If your attention wanders, you will bring it back
 - If you become dull or sleepy, you will wake yourself up
 - Imagine adjusting the fine focus dial on the lens of your mind so that your mental state is sharp and crisp
 - Adjust your posture by sitting up with your back straight
- Modulate your energy level
 - To raise your energy if you are feeling sleepy, focus between your eyebrows with eyes looking upward and head remaining level
 - To settle and ground your energy if you are feeling nervous or tense, focus on your navel with eyes looking downward, head remaining level, and gently holding your breath

II. Procedures for each part of an exercise

- Looking downward or closing your eyes, settle your mind by focusing on the sensation of the breath passing in and out your nostrils

- Generate or access a certain attitude or feeling toward someone
 - Direct it at the person and regard him or her in that way
 - Looking downward or closing your eyes once more, let the experience settle by focusing on the feeling gained from the exercise.
 - Regain your composure by focusing again on the sensation of the breath passing in and out your nostrils
- III. Concluding procedures for each training session
- Wish that the positive energy of any insight or experience you have gained adds to your network of positive experience.
 - Wish that this network expands and deepens so that you reach balanced sensitivity and thus are of more benefit to yourself and to others
 - Wish that everyone may gain balanced sensitivity

Exercise 1 *Identifying Sensitivity Imbalances*

Procedure

- In the case of balanced sensitivity versus hypersensitivity, pause after each pair of alternatives and consider which of the cited examples is more typical of you
- In the case of forms of insensitivity, look for traces of each example from your life
 - For practice in a workshop, choose one example from each category
 - When practicing at home, choose only personally relevant examples
 - For advanced or thorough practice, consider all the cited examples

Examples

1. Balanced sensitivity versus hypersensitivity

- Paying attention to a situation
 - Asking your sick child how he or she feels -- or pestering the child with this question every five minutes
 - Watching your health -- or being a hypochondriac

- Paying attention to the consequences of your actions
 - Considering others' opinion when deciding something -- or being so frightened of disapproval that it disables you
 - Taking care to do well at school -- or worrying obsessively about failure
- Responding in general
 - Soberly shifting lanes when someone tries to pass you -- or becoming heated and thinking obscenities
 - Calmly searching for your misplaced keys -- or panicking
- Responding emotionally
 - Feeling tender compassion when a loved one is upset -- or becoming upset yourself
 - Feeling sad, but maintaining your dignity, when suffering a loss -- or wallowing in self-pity and depression

2. Forms of insensitivity

- Not noticing a situation
 - Not noticing that a relative is upset
 - Not paying attention to the fact that your relationship with your partner is unhealthy
- Not noticing the consequences of your actions
 - Not noticing that you have hurt someone's feelings
 - Not noticing that overwork is causing you stress
- Noticing, but not acting
 - Seeing an injured person lying alone in the street, but not stopping to help
 - Noticing fatigue while doing work that can wait, but not taking a break
- Noticing and acting, but without feelings
 - Attentively caring for a sick person, but feeling nothing
 - Following a special regime while sick, but, unable to relate to your body or your illness, emotionally distancing yourself
- Noticing and acting, but with unbalanced judgment of what to do

- Giving others what you want, such as economic security, rather than what they need, such as more understanding and affection
- Doing what others want you to do, such as spend a great deal of time with them, rather than what you need to do, namely take more time for yourself

Exercise 2

Quieting the Mind and Generating Care

Creating A Quiet Mental Space

I. While focusing on someone not present

1. While looking at magazine photos first of an anonymous man, then of a woman, a boy, a girl, and an elderly couple
 - Consciously reaffirm the decision to quiet your mind
 - Breathe normally with a three-part cycle of exhalation, rest, and inhalation
 - Look at the photos, one at a time, and while exhaling, imagine that any verbal thoughts, mental stories, mental movies, upsetting emotions, or feelings of dullness that arise leave with your breath --- either by visualizing the mental object as a cloud temporarily obscuring the clear sky of your mind, or by dispensing with a graphic representation
 - Breathe out paranoia about extraneous mental activity recurring and the mental tension for thoughts, images, or disturbing feelings to arise at all
 - Maintain focus by listening to the group facilitator occasionally saying the key phrase “let go,” or by sometimes saying it silently to yourself
 - Pause briefly
 - Look once more at the photos, one at a time, and feel each word of any verbal thought or mental story that arises to be occurring as if through a process of writing on water -- arising and disappearing simultaneously
 - Feel any mental movie, upsetting emotion, or daze that arises to be appearing as if through a process of momentarily projecting a picture on water

- Maintain focus by using the key phrase “writing on water”
 - Pause briefly
 - Look again at the photos, one at a time, and apply first the letting-go procedure for releasing any extraneous mental objects that arise, and then the writing-on-water method for more persistent problems
 - If repressed emotions of sadness, anxiety, insecurity, or fear suddenly arise, feel the wave of emotion pass like a swell on the ocean and then feel it is gone
 - Maintain focus by using the key phrases
 - “let go”
 - “writing on water”
 - “swell on the ocean”
 - Once you have achieved a quiet mental space, breathe normally while gazing at the photos with an objective, accepting mind
2. Apply the combined method of letting go, writing on water, and an ocean swell, while focusing on a photo or on a thought of a mere acquaintance
 3. Repeat the procedure while focusing on a photo or on a thought of someone with whom you have or have had a warm and loving relationship involving few regrets
 4. Repeat the procedure while focusing on a photo or on a thought of a loud, overbearing relative who perhaps pries too strongly into your life, but who has not actually hurt you
- II. While focusing on someone in person
1. Repeat the procedure while focusing on the group facilitator, who first sits still and then gets up and walks around
- III While focusing on yourself
1. Repeat the procedure while looking at your hands
 2. Repeat the procedure while looking in a mirror
 3. Repeat the procedure while looking at two photographs of yourself from different periods in the past, one at a time

Creating a Caring Space

- I. While focusing on someone not present

1. While focusing on a photo or on a thought of someone with whom you have or have had a warm and loving relationship involving few regrets
 - Focus on the person and create a quiet mental space by using the threefold approach as before
 - Regard the person in light of the statements: “You are a human being and have feelings,”
 - “Just as I do.”
 - “The mood you are in will affect our interaction,”
 - “Just as my mood will affect it.”
 - “How I treat you and what I say will further affect your feelings.”
 - “Therefore, just as I hope that you care about me and about my feelings in our interaction,”
 - “I care about you.”
 - “I care about your feelings.”
 - Generate and direct toward the person a caring attitude, by repeating after the group facilitator, or by saying aloud by yourself, the key sentences
 - “I am not going to make up any stories about you.”
 - “You are a human being and have feelings.”
 - “I care about you.”
 - “I care about your feelings.”
 2. Repeat the procedure while focusing on a photo or on a thought of a mere acquaintance
 3. Repeat the procedure while focusing on the magazine pictures of anonymous people
 4. Repeat the procedure while focusing on a photo or on a thought of a loud, overbearing relative
- II. While focusing on someone in person
1. Repeat the procedure while sitting in a circle with a group and focusing on each person in turn at each step
 2. While facing a partner, first with someone of your same sex and then with someone of the opposite gender
 - Repeat the entire procedure
 - One partner repeats the four key sentences, while the other partner listens
 - The speaker focuses on caring about the listener

- The speaker then focuses on feeling someone accepting his or her sincere concern
 - The listener focuses on feeling the speaker's acceptance and care
 - Switch roles
 - The partners alternate repeating each of the key sentences, while focusing on being both the giver and recipient of each feeling
- III. While focusing on yourself
1. Repeat the procedure while looking in a mirror
 - Substitute, "I am a human being and have feelings,"
 - "Just as everyone else does."
 - "How I regard and treat myself affects my feelings,"
 - "Just as how others regard and treat me affects how I feel."
 - "Therefore, just as I hope that others care about me and about my feelings in our interactions,"
 - "I care about myself."
 - "I care about my feelings."
 - "I care about my feelings toward myself."
 - "I care about how I treat myself."
 - Substitute the key phrases
 - "I am not going to make up stories about myself."
 - "I care about myself."
 - "I care about my feelings."
 - "I care about my feelings toward myself."
 - "I care about how I treat myself."
 - Repeat the key sentences while directing a caring attitude toward yourself in the mirror
 - Repeat the key sentences while trying to feel accepted and cared about by yourself
 2. Repeat the key sentences without a mirror
 - Aim your caring attitude directly at yourself
 - Try directly to feel accepted and cared about by yourself
 3. Repeat twice the procedure used with pictures of other people, while looking at two photographs of yourself from different periods in the past, one for each round

- Substitute, “I was a human being then and had feelings,”
- “Just as I have now.”
- “How others regarded me then would have affected those feelings.”
- “Therefore, just as I hoped that others cared about me and about my feelings then,”
- “I care now about myself then”
- “I care about my feelings then.”
- “I care about my feelings now about me then.”
- Substitute the key phrases
 - “I am not going to make up stories about myself as I was then.”
 - “I care about myself then.”
 - “I care about my feelings then.”
 - “I care about my feelings now about me then.”
- Imagine the person in the photo accepts your care and thanks you for not thinking badly about or being ashamed of him or her

Exercise 3

Imagining Ideal Sensitivity

- I. While focusing on someone from your life
 1. While focusing on a photo or on a thought of someone toward whom you have or have had a positive relationship
 - Create a quiet, caring space through applying the three-fold quieting procedure while focusing on the person, and through thinking
 - “You are a human being and have feelings.”
 - “I care about you.”
 - “I care about your feelings.”
 - Quiet your mind of preconceptions and nonverbal judgments, by letting go of them with your exhaled breath

and by feeling their presence to be as if through a process of writing on water

- Similarly, release all feelings of self-importance
- Similarly, feel no solid walls exist between you preventing heartfelt communication
- Similarly, feel no fear
- Feel joy at the possibilities of the encounter
- Focus attentively on the person
- Be warm and understanding
- Show appropriate facial expression and body language
- Exercise self-control against destructive tendencies
- Imagine responding with kind words and thoughtful actions
- Repeat several times the sequence of directing each state of mind at the person, by using the key phrases
 - “no mental stories”
 - “caring concern”
 - “no judgments”
 - “no self-importance”
 - “no solid walls”
 - “no fears”
 - “joy”
 - “focus”
 - “warmth”
 - “understanding”
 - “facial expression”
 - “self-control”
 - “kind words”
 - “thoughtful actions”
- Feel
 - “How wonderful it would be if I could become like this.”
 - “I wish I could become like this.”
 - “I shall definitely try to become like this.”

- Look at a photograph of a shining example of balanced sensitivity or simply picture the person in your mind
 - Request inspiration
 - Imagine warm yellow light radiates from the figure and fills you with inspiration
 - Imagine the figure dissolves in your heart
 - Feel glowing with inspiration
2. Repeat the procedure twice, up to and including repetition of the key phrases, while focusing on a magazine picture of a different anonymous person each time
 3. Repeat the procedure while focusing on a photo or on a thought of a loud, overbearing relative or of an obnoxious neighbor or fellow worker
- II. While focusing on someone in person
1. Repeat the procedure while sitting in a circle with a group and focusing on each person in turn at each step
 2. Repeat the procedure while facing a partner
- III. While focusing on yourself
1. While looking in a mirror
 - Create a quiet, caring space
 - Release fixed attitudes and self-judgments
 - Dispel fantasies of self-importance
 - Feel no solid walls exist preventing you from relating to yourself
 - Feel no fear
 - Feel joy at the possibility of being open and relaxed with yourself
 - Focus attentively on yourself
 - Be warm and understanding
 - Soften your facial expression
 - Exercise self-control against self-destructive tendencies
 - Imagine speaking kindly to yourself and treating yourself thoughtfully
 - Repeat the key phrases as before
 2. Repeat the procedure without a mirror
 3. Repeat the procedure twice, while looking at a photograph of

yourself from a different period in the past each time

- For “imagine speaking kindly to yourself and treating yourself thoughtfully,” substitute “think kind thoughts of forgiveness”
- For the key phrases “kind words” and “thoughtful actions” substitute “kind thoughts of forgiveness”

Exercise 4

Affirming and Accessing Our Natural Abilities

- I. While focusing on someone from your life
 1. While focusing on a photo or on a thought of someone with whom you have or have had a positive relationship
 - Create a quiet and caring mental space
 - Looking downward or closing the eyes, remember sitting or walking in a park on a warm, sunny day, and the natural feeling you had of feeling comfortable, content, and happy
 - Letting go of the image, imagine the feeling fills your body and radiates from your pores, as if you were the sun
 - Focusing on the person, imagine that the sunlight of the feeling naturally embraces him or her, without deliberate or forced effort
 - Look down or close the eyes, and let the experience settle
 - Repeat the sequence, recalling the following situations and the feelings that they naturally elicited
 - While writing something, being focused
 - While petting a kitten in your lap, feeling tender protectiveness
 - While tying your shoes, having understanding

- While removing a splinter from your finger, being careful and self-controlled not to cause pain
- While watching a beautiful sunset, feeling inspired, energized, and fresh
- Maintaining focus on the person, regenerate the six feelings in sequence several times, by listening to your workshop leader slowly reciting the following six key phrases or cuing yourself, relying on the image for only a moment, and then imagining that the radiance of the feeling shines on the person
 - “mellow comfort, as when in a park on a warm, sunny day”
 - “focus, as when writing something”
 - “tender protectiveness, as when petting a kitten in my lap”
 - “understanding, as when tying my shoes”
 - “self-control not to cause harm, as when removing a splinter from my finger”
 - “inspiration, like when watching a beautiful sunset”
- Following the same procedure used for generating and radiating each feeling separately, imagine first two, then three, four, five, and finally all six of the following situations simultaneously and the naturally elicited states of increasingly complex networks of feelings that come from each combination
 - While sitting in a comfortable easy chair in a beautiful room and gently petting a puppy that is sleeping in your lap, feeling an integrated state of mellow comfort and tender protectiveness
 - While sitting in the easy chair with the sleeping puppy, and exercising care not to wake it, feeling an integrated state of mellow comfort, tender protectiveness, and self-control
 - While sitting in the easy chair with the puppy, being careful not to wake it, and noticing

that the puppy is shivering, feeling an integrated state of mellow comfort, tender protectiveness, self-control, and focus

- While sitting in the easy chair with the puppy, being careful not to wake it, noticing it shivering, and trying to understand what is wrong, feeling an integrated state of mellow comfort, tender protectiveness, self-control, focus, and understanding
- While sitting in the easy chair with the puppy, being careful not to wake it, noticing it shivering, understanding what is wrong, and listening to beautiful music, feeling an integrated state of mellow comfort, tender protectiveness, self-control, focus, understanding, and inspiration
- Reinforce the integration of the feelings into functioning networks at each stage, by using the appropriate number of key adjectives describing the state
 - “comfortable”
 - “tender”
 - “careful”
 - “focused”
 - “understanding”
 - “inspired”
- If this method is insufficient, use an appropriate number of key words and phrases reconstructing the image describing the state, flashing back to the imagined scene for only a moment and then returning to radiating the mental and emotional state of balanced sensitivity
 - “easy chair”
 - “sleeping puppy”
 - “don’t wake it”
 - “shivering”
 - “cold”
 - “music”

- Once moderately adept at radiating a field of balanced sensitivity, if you notice a weak element in the system, adjust it by repeating silently only the relevant key adjective
 - If doing so fails to strengthen the element, use the appropriate key word or phrase from the sequence of images
2. Repeat the procedure twice, while focusing on a magazine picture of a different anonymous person each time
 3. Repeat the procedure while focusing on a photo or on a thought of a loud, overbearing relative or of an obnoxious neighbor or fellow worker
- II. While focusing on someone in person
1. Repeat the procedure while sitting in a circle with a group, by focusing on each person in turn at each step
 2. Repeat the procedure while facing a partner
- III. While focusing on yourself
1. Repeat the procedure while looking first in a mirror at each step and then, putting down the mirror, focusing simply on yourself with eyes looking downward
 2. Repeat the procedure twice, while looking at a photograph of yourself from a different period in the past each time

Exercise 5

Resolving to Refrain from Destructive Behavior

The ten destructive actions

- causing physical harm
- taking what has not been given
- indulging in inappropriate sexual behavior
- lying
- speaking divisively
- using harsh language
- speaking idle words
- thinking covetous thoughts

- thinking thoughts of malice
 - distorted, antagonistic thinking
- I. While focusing on someone from your life
1. In relation to your general previous behavior
 - Create a quiet and caring mental space with respect to yourself, by using the key sentences
 - “I am not going to make up stories about myself.”
 - “I accept myself as I am.”
 - For each of the ten destructive actions, recall an incident in which someone acted in this way toward you
 - Remember how hurt you felt or how you repressed your feelings
 - Recall an incident in which you acted in the same way toward someone else, while looking at a photograph or simply thinking of the person
 - Think of the pain that he or she must have felt
 - Acknowledge your mistake
 - Regret your behavior
 - Determine to rid yourself of it
 - Promise the person to try not to repeat such behavior to him, her, or anyone else
 - Reaffirm the positive direction you are trying to go in your life: developing balanced sensitivity
 - Clear any residual thoughts or emotions about the incident, by reaffirming
 - “I am not going to make up stories about myself.”
 - “I accept myself as I am.”
 2. In relation to your behavior toward specific persons from your life
 - Create a quiet and caring mental space with respect to yourself, as in the previous step
 - Look at a photograph or simply think of someone with whom you have or have had a close, warm relationship

- Create a quiet and caring mental space with respect to the person, by using the key sentences
 - “I am not going to make up stories about you.”
 - “You are a human being and have feelings.”
- Check if you have ever acted in each of the ten destructive ways toward the person
 - If you have not acted like that toward the person, rejoice in that fact
- After each of the ten, if you have acted that way
 - Think of the pain you caused
 - Acknowledge your mistake
 - Regret your behavior
 - Determine to rid yourself of the destructive habit
 - Assure the person that you shall try not to act like that toward him or her in the future
 - Reaffirm the positive direction you are trying to go in your life: you wish to enjoy a healthy relationship with the person, based on balanced sensitivity.
 - If you are prone to low guilt and low self-esteem, clear any residual thoughts or emotions about your behavior, either after each of the destructive actions or after a few of them, by reaffirming the quiet and caring mental space toward yourself, as before
- Fortify your intent, by repeating after the group facilitator, or by saying out loud by yourself, key sentences with common examples of each destructive action
 - “I shall not treat you in a rough physical manner.”
 - “I shall not use anything of yours without permission.”
 - “I shall not push myself sexually on you or your partner.”

- “I shall not lie to you about my feelings or intentions.”
 - “I shall not try to part you from your friends by saying bad things about them.”
 - “I shall not verbally abuse you.”
 - “I shall not betray your confidence by revealing your private matters to others.”
 - “I shall not think jealously about what you have achieved.”
 - “I shall not think with malice about how to harm you if you say or do something I do not like.”
 - “If you are striving to improve yourself or to help others, I shall not think you are stupid, even if what you have chosen is not my own interest.”
 - Repeat the procedure while focusing on a photo or on a thought of a mere acquaintance
 - Repeat the procedure while focusing on a photo or on a thought of someone with whom you have or have had a difficult relationship
3. While focusing on magazine pictures of anonymous people, repeat aloud the key sentences and, after each line, look at the persons one at a time and promise not to act in this way toward him or her

II. While focusing on someone in person

1. While sitting in a circle with a group and focusing on each person in turn at each step
 - While looking downward, create a quiet and caring space with respect to yourself
 - While looking around the circle, create a quite and caring space with respect to each member
 - Repeat the procedure followed while focusing on the magazine pictures of anonymous people
2. While facing a partner
 - Repeating the procedure followed with the members of the circle, one partner repeats the ten key sentences aloud at a comfortable speed, pausing for some moments after each, while the other partner listens

- The speaker focuses on the sincere wish to try never to harm the other person and on the person's accepting and believing the assurance and trusting him or her
 - Proceeding through the ten points, the speaker feels progressively more responsible for his or her behavior in the relationship
 - The listener focuses on feeling secure and safe with the speaker
 - Let the experience settle by looking downward or closing the eyes and then focusing on the breath
 - Switch roles
 - For each of the ten sentences, the partners alternate: first one gives the assurance and then the other repeats the same words, with both persons focusing on the mutual generation and acceptance of responsibility, security, and trust
- III. While focusing on yourself
1. While looking in a mirror
 - Create a quiet and caring mental space toward yourself
 - Check whether you have acted in any of the ten destructive ways toward yourself
 - If you have not acted like that toward yourself, rejoice in that fact
 - After each of the ten, if you have acted that way
 - Acknowledge the problems and pain you caused yourself
 - Admit that your behavior was mistaken
 - Feel regret
 - Determine to rid yourself of the destructive habit
 - Reaffirm the positive direction you are trying to go in your life: you wish to relate to yourself in a healthy manner, based on balanced sensitivity
 - Promise yourself to try to stop being self-destructive, by repeating after the group facilitator, or by saying aloud by yourself, the key sentences

- “I shall stop mistreating myself physically by overworking, by eating poorly, or by not getting enough sleep.”
 - “I shall stop wasting my money on trivial things or being stingy and niggardly when spending on myself.”
 - “I shall stop engaging in sexual acts that may endanger my health.”
 - “I shall stop deceiving myself about my feelings or motivation.”
 - “I shall stop speaking so obnoxiously that my friends become disgusted and leave me.”
 - “I shall stop verbally abusing myself.”
 - “I shall stop speaking indiscriminately about my private matters, doubts, or worries.”
 - “I shall stop thinking about how to outdo myself because of being a perfectionist.”
 - “I shall stop thinking in self-destructive, irrational ways that sabotage my relations with others or my position in life.”
 - “I shall stop thinking I am stupid for trying to improve myself or to help others.”
 - If necessary, reaffirm the quiet and caring mental space toward yourself
2. Repeat the ten pledges without a mirror
 3. While looking at a series of photographs of yourself spanning your life
 - Create a quiet and caring mental space toward yourself as you are now
 - Look at the photos one at a time and create a quiet and caring space toward yourself as you were then, by repeating aloud the key sentences
 - “I am not going to make up stories about myself as I was then.”
 - “I accept myself as I was then.”
 - Check whether you have been thinking negatively about yourself as you were then

- If you have not thought like that, rejoice in that fact
 - If you have thought negatively about yourself as you were then
 - Acknowledge the problems and pain you have caused yourself
 - Admit that your way of thinking has been a mistake
 - Feel regret
 - Determine to resolve your emotional issues about your past
 - Reaffirm the positive direction you are trying to go in your life: you wish to relate to your past in a healthy manner, based on balanced sensitivity
 - Pledge to try to stop thinking negatively of yourself during those periods, by repeating aloud the key sentences
 - “I shall stop thinking with dissatisfaction about how I was then, wishing that I had acted differently.”
 - “I shall stop thinking with self-hatred about myself then.”
 - “I shall stop thinking I was stupid then for what I did to try to improve my lot or to help others.”
 - If necessary, reaffirm the quiet and caring mental space toward yourself as you were then
 - Look downward and, if necessary, reaffirm the quiet and caring mental space toward yourself as you are now
4. Reaffirm the ethical foundation for your behavior toward others and toward yourself, by repeating aloud the key sentences:
- “I care about myself.”
 - “I care about both the short-term and long-term effects of my actions on myself.”
 - “I also care about being able to respect myself for how I act, speak, and think.”
 - “I do not wish ever to lose my self-dignity.”
 - “I care about others.”

- “I care about both the short-term and long-term effects of my actions on others.”
- “I also care about others being able to respect my family, my friends, my gender, my race, my religion, and my country for how I behave.”
- “I do not wish ever to bring them disgrace.”
- “Therefore, I shall try not to act, speak, or think out of attachment, greed, anger, arrogance, jealousy, or naivety.”

Exercise 6

Five Decisions for Combining Warmth with Understanding

- I. While focusing on someone not present
 1. While focusing on a photo or on a thought of a close family member toward whom you have positive feelings or, if you have no such person in your family, while focusing on a photo or on a thought of a close friend
 - Recall your partner not taking you seriously when you said his or her behavior was upsetting you
 - Remembering how you felt, focus on your close relative and consciously decide, “I shall take you seriously, because you, your words, and your feelings are real, as in my own case when I said I was full or upset.”
 - Affirm your decision, by repeating after the group facilitator, or by saying aloud by yourself, “I shall take you seriously.”
 - Let the decision sink in and focus on feeling combined warmth and understanding toward the person
 - Recall a sibling or friend being afraid to comfort you when you were upset
 - Decide, “I shall not be afraid to respond to you if you need me. Although I may contribute to your success or failure, I am not the sole source affecting your situation, as with my sibling or friend whose comfort I needed.”

- Affirm your decision aloud, “I shall not be afraid to respond to you if you need me.”
- Let the decision sink in and focus on feeling combined warmth and understanding toward the person
- Recall your mother accusing you of irresponsibility when urgent business prevented you from doing the shopping before the store closed
- Decide, “I shall take in all the information about your situation, without jumping to conclusions. I shall do this because I wish to avoid overreacting or responding to something I have merely invented, like when my mother imagined I had forgotten the shopping.”
- Affirm your decision aloud, “I shall take in all the information about your situation, without jumping to conclusions.”
- Let the decision sink in and focus on feeling combined warmth and understanding toward the person
- Recall your partner accusing you of not loving him or her any longer when you criticized something he or she did
- Decide, “I shall keep sight of the larger context of our relationship so as not to jump to a false conclusion over a tiny incident, like my partner did when I criticized his or her behavior.”
- Affirm your decision aloud, “I shall keep sight of the larger context of our relationship so as not to jump to a false conclusion over a tiny incident.”
- Let the decision sink in and focus on feeling combined warmth and understanding toward the person
- Recall a relative offering to drive you to the airport and then coming so late that you missed the plane
- Decide, “Once I have decided to do something for you, I shall act straightforwardly. I shall do this because you experience your problem as something urgent, as I did when I needed to catch my plane.”
- Affirm your decision aloud, “Once I have decided to do something for you, I shall act straightforwardly.”

- Let the decision sink in and focus on feeling combined warmth and understanding toward the person
 - Recall your mother correcting the way you were chopping vegetables
 - Decide, “I shall refrain from offering my unneeded or unwanted help, opinion, or advice. I shall do this because I do not wish to exploit you to gain a feeling of self-worth or of being needed, or to feel more secure by taking control of things, as with my mother who could not resist correcting how I chop vegetables.”
 - Affirm your decision, “I shall refrain from offering my unneeded or unwanted help, opinion, or advice.”
 - Let the decision sink in and focus on feeling combined warmth and understanding toward the person
2. While focusing on a magazine picture of an anonymous person
- Decide, “I shall take you seriously, like when preparing a hospital patient for an operation.”
 - Affirm your decision aloud, “I shall take you seriously.”
 - Let the decision sink in and focus on feeling combined warmth and understanding toward the person
 - Decide, “I shall not be afraid to respond to you if you need me, like when teaching a baby to walk.”
 - Affirm your decision aloud, “I shall not be afraid to respond to you if you need me.”
 - Let the decision sink in and focus on feeling combined warmth and understanding toward the person
 - Decide, “I shall take in all the information about you and not jump to conclusions, like when examining a child with a bruised arm.”
 - Affirm your decision aloud, “I shall take in all the information about you and not jump to conclusions.”
 - Let the decision sink in and focus on feeling combined warmth and understanding toward the person
 - Decide, “Once I have decided to do something for you, I shall act straightforwardly, like when seeing someone carrying a heavy bundle and about to drop it.”

- Affirm your decision aloud, “Once I have decided to do something for you, I shall act straightforwardly.”
 - Let the decision sink in and focus on feeling combined warmth and understanding toward the person
 - Decide, “I shall refrain from offering unwanted or unneeded help, as when insisting on feeding the two-year-old with a spoon.”
 - Affirm your decision aloud, “I shall refrain from offering unwanted or unneeded help, opinion, or advice.”
 - Let the decision sink in and focus on feeling combined warmth and understanding toward the person
3. Repeat the procedure while focusing on a photo or on a thought of someone with whom you have a difficult relationship
- II. While focusing on someone in person
1. While sitting in a circle with a group
 - While focusing on each person in turn at each step and directing the appropriate feeling at him or her, repeat after the group facilitator, or say aloud by yourself, the key sentences
 - “I shall take you seriously.”
 - “I shall not be afraid to respond to you if you need me.”
 - “I shall take in all the information about you and not jump to conclusions.”
 - “Once I have decided to do something for you, I shall act straightforwardly.”
 - “I shall refrain from offering unwanted or unneeded help, opinion, or advice.”
 - With each person at each step, let the decision sink in and focus on feeling combined warmth and understanding
 2. Repeat the procedure while focusing on a partner
 - One of the pair repeats to himself or herself the four key sentences used in the circle, while focusing on the decision.

- The person repeats the sentence aloud as an assurance to the other, while focusing on feeling combined warmth and understanding
 - The speaker focuses on feeling that the person accepts and trusts the assurance
 - The listener focuses on feeling, accepting, and trusting the speaker's warmth and understanding
 - Switch roles
 - For each of the four key sentences, the partners alternate: first one, then the other gives the assurance, with both persons focusing on the mutual generation and acceptance of combined warmth and understanding
- III. While focusing on yourself
1. Repeat the procedure while looking in a mirror, by substituting the key sentences
 - "I shall take myself seriously."
 - "I shall not be afraid to respond to what I see or feel in myself, if needed."
 - "I shall consider all the facts about my situation, without jumping to conclusions."
 - "Once I have decided to do something about my situation, I shall act straightforwardly."
 - "I shall refrain from pushing myself to do something unneeded."
 2. Repeat the procedure without a mirror
 3. Repeat the procedure while looking at photographs of yourself spanning your life, by substituting the key sentences
 - "I shall take myself seriously as I was then."
 - "I shall not be afraid of dealing with how I feel about myself then, if needed."
 - "I shall consider all the facts about my situation then, without jumping to conclusions."
 - "Once I have decided to do something, I shall act straightforwardly to deal with unresolved feelings."
 - "I shall not push the impossible; I shall forgive."

Exercise 7

Shifting Our Focus from Mind and from Ourselves to Mental Activity

I. While looking around the room

- Relax physical tension by sitting with your back straight and your shoulders down
- Release mental and emotional stress by imagining them leaving with the breath, or simultaneously arising and disappearing like writing on water, or passing like swells on the ocean
- Look slowly around the room and listen to whatever noises there might be
- Recognize the mechanism of your mental activity: simultaneous production and perception of the sights, sounds, and thoughts of your experience
- Look and listen with an understanding of this mechanism, with a feeling for it, and then with joint realization and feeling
- Note that mental activity occurs without a concrete “me” or a concrete mind passively observing or actively controlling it
- Look and listen with an understanding of this absence, with a feeling of no self-consciousness, and then with both
- Note that although you do not exist as a concrete boss in your head, you are still accountable for what you experience.
- Look and listen with an understanding of your accountability, with a feeling of it, and then with both
- Note that the contents of your experience change each moment – both the appearances your mental activity produces and the mental factors that accompany your perception of them
- Look and listen with an understanding of flowing change, with a feeling of it, and then with both
- Note that what you experience is particular to yourself alone
- Look and listen with an understanding of the individuality of your experience, with a feeling of it, and then with both
- Note that your mental activity forms a continuum and that what you perceive, think, and feel now will affect your future experiences

- Look and listen with an understanding that you will experience the effects of your mental activity, with a feeling of this, and then with both
- Repeat several times the sequence of looking and listening with a joint understanding and feeling for each point, one at a time, by using the key phrases
 - “producing and perceiving appearances”
 - “no observer”
 - “no controller”
 - “and yet accountable for what I experience”
 - “changing appearances”
 - “changing mental factors”
 - “particular to myself alone”
 - “I experience the effects of my mental activity”
- Look and listen with a joint understanding and feeling for an increasingly larger number of these points simultaneously, by using first two, then three, four, five, and finally all six key phrases
 - “producing and perceiving appearances”
 - “no self-consciousness”
 - “accountable”
 - “flowing change”
 - “particular to me”
 - “I experience the effects”

II. While focusing on someone in person

1. Repeat the procedure while sitting in a circle with a group and focusing on one or on several persons, whichever is more comfortable, being sure that each person moves his or her head or shifts position from time to time and occasionally changes facial expression
2. Repeat the procedure while facing a partner

III. While focusing on yourself

1. Repeat the procedure while looking in a mirror, also being sure to move your head and change your expression from time to time, and then occasionally looking away or closing your eyes

2. Repeat the procedure, alternately looking at a series of photos of yourself and closing your eyes

Exercise 8

Appreciating the Clear Light Nature of Mental Activity

- I. While focusing on someone with whom you have a volatile relationship
 - Choose a photo of the person having a neutral expression and look at it while understanding the mental activity that is occurring: the simultaneous production and perception of the sight of the person's face
 - Recall an upsetting incident that you had with the person and generate a feeling of annoyance
 - Examine whether the disturbing emotion prevents the mental activity that produces the sight of the face and your seeing of it
 - Look away from the photo and think of the person, by using a mental image, a feeling, or simply a name to represent him or her
 - Again recall the incident, feel annoyed, and examine whether the emotion blocks the mere arising of a thought of the person and your thinking it
 - Repeat the procedure by recalling an upsetting incident that had nothing to do with the person, by generating a feeling of annoyance, and by looking at the photo and then merely thinking of the person's name while being annoyed
 - Conclude and focus on the fact that emotional upset does not affect your mental activity of producing appearances and perceiving them – no matter how distraught you are, you can still be aware of others' situations
 - Look at the photo and then merely think of the person nonverbally, while also thinking, "This person is a human being."
 - Examine whether the thought prevents the mere arising of the sight of the face and your seeing of it, or the mere arising of a thought of the person and thinking it

- Repeat the procedure while thinking something that has nothing to do with the person, such as “It is time for lunch.”
- Conclude and focus on the fact that thought also does not affect the basic mechanism of your mental activity – no matter how distracted you are, you can still be aware of others’ situations
- Look at the photo and then merely think of the person, while also thinking, “I cannot relate to this person.”
- Examine whether this thought creates an inherent flaw in your mental activity that prevents you from seeing or thinking of the person
- Conclude and focus on the fact that no matter what you think, your mental activity is not stained by natural flaws that prevent it from functioning – no matter what you believe, you can be properly sensitive
- Look at the photo and then merely think of the person, while feeling fear and also thinking, “This person is a monster.”
- Examine whether this projection makes the person into a monster
- Conclude and focus on the fact that neither your emotions nor your thoughts can change reality – your mental activity is devoid of existing with this impossible power
- Look at the photo and then merely think of the person, first with a variety of emotions, and then with a variety of thoughts
- Examine what provides the continuity of experience
- Conclude and focus on the fact that the level of mental activity that provides continuity is more subtle than and underlies emotion and verbal thought
- Alternate looking at the photo and, with eyes closed, thinking of the person
- Again, examine what provides the continuity of experience
- Conclude and focus on the fact that the level of mental activity that provides continuity is more subtle than and underlies seeing and thinking – the level of mental activity that merely produces appearances and perceives them is always there
- First while looking at the photo and then while merely thinking of the person, repeat the sequence of understanding each point about mental activity, one at a time, by using the key phrases

- “producing and perceiving appearances”
- “unaffected by emotions or thoughts”
- “not inherently flawed”
- “incapable of changing reality”
- “always there”
- First while looking at the photo and then while merely thinking of the person, add understanding of an increasingly larger number of these points simultaneously, by using first two, then three, four, and finally all five key phrases

II. While focusing on someone in person

1. Repeat the procedure two or three times while sitting in a circle with a group and focusing on a different person each time for the entire sequence, but without focusing on someone who is simultaneously focusing on you
 - When generating various emotions during the first step toward someone you do not know, recall an emotional incident involving someone from your life
2. Repeat the procedure while facing a partner
 - When generating various emotions during the first step toward someone you do not know, either do the same as when sitting in a circle or use the nervousness and shyness you might now be feeling
 - When merely thinking of the person, simply close your eyes

III. While focusing on yourself

1. Repeat the procedure while looking in a mirror and then merely thinking of yourself
 - When generating various emotions during the first step, recall moments of feeling low self-esteem, self-hatred, or self-importance
2. Repeat the procedure while looking at photos of yourself spanning your life and then merely thinking of yourself as you were then
 - When generating various emotions during the first step, recall moments of feeling self-hatred or self-importance regarding yourself at those periods

Exercise 9

Accessing the Natural Talents of Our Mind and Heart

- I. While focusing on a photo or on a thought of someone
 1. Choose someone with whom you have a close relationship
 - Relax your muscular tension
 - Quiet your mind of verbal thoughts and images, by picturing them leaving with your exhaled breath or automatically disappearing like writing on water
 - Release preconceptions and nonverbal judgments, using the same methods
 - Release the person and yourself of projected roles and associated expectations, using the same methods
 - Feel ever-deeper levels of physical, mental, and emotional tension releasing themselves and ever-subtler levels of stress slowly lifting
 - Enter a state of profound and quiet relief
 - Note how you naturally feel in this state
 - Warm, joyous, and open to the person
 - Naturally attentive and concerned
 - No hesitation or anxiety in responding with whatever words or actions seem appropriate
 - Bask for several minutes in this state
 2. Repeat the procedure, choosing a stranger or someone you hardly know, and making sure also to dismiss the public image you feel compelled to maintain when meeting someone new
 3. Repeat the procedure, choosing someone you dislike
- II. While focusing on someone in person
 1. Repeat the procedure while sitting in a circle with a group and focusing on the persons who fill your field of vision
 2. Repeat the procedure while facing a succession of partners
- III. While focusing on yourself
 1. Repeat the procedure while looking in a mirror
 2. Repeat the procedure without a mirror
 3. Repeat the procedure while looking at photographs of yourself spanning your life

Exercise 10
Applying the Five Types of Deep Awareness

- I. While focusing on a photo of a group of people
 1. Focusing on a family photo or on a picture of a group of friends
 - Quiet your mind of mental stories, preconceptions, and nonverbal judgments
 - Generate caring concern through a line of reasoning
 - “Each of you is a human being and has feelings, just as I do.”
 - “The mood you are in will affect our interaction, just as mine will affect it.”
 - “How I treat you and what I say will further affect your feelings, just as how you treat me and what you say will further affect mine.”
 - “Therefore, just as I hope that you care about me and about my feelings in our interaction, I care about you and about your feelings.”
 - Focus on each person in the photo, one at a time, with mirror-like awareness, taking in, like a video camera, all visible information
 - Focus on several of them together, in different combinations, with joint equalizing and reality awareness, seeing them all as equally wanting to be happy and never to suffer
 - Based on this caring regard, feel equal love, compassion, and concern for them all
 - Focus on each with awareness of his or her individuality and with respect for each as an individual
 - Focus on each with joint accomplishing and reality awareness, understanding how to relate to each
 - Focus with awareness of deepest reality, see each not only as who he or she presently is, but also as open to all possibilities in the future

- Repeat several times the sequence of directing each state of mind or type of awareness, one at a time, at the persons in the photo, by using the key phrases
 - “no stories”
 - “caring concern”
 - “camera”
 - “equal”
 - “individual”
 - “relate”
 - “open”
 - Direct at the persons in the photo an increasingly larger number of these states of mind and types of awareness, by using first two, then three, four, five, six, and finally all seven key phrases
2. Repeat the procedure, placing beside the photo of your loved ones a magazine picture of a stranger and focusing on the persons in both photos
 3. Repeat the procedure, placing beside both photos a picture of someone you dislike
- II. While focusing on someone in person
1. Repeat the procedure while sitting in a circle with a group and focusing on each person in turn at each step
 - Repeat the key phrase also for the initial generation of each type of awareness and alternate it with “no stories” and “caring concern”
 - For equalizing awareness, focus on two or three persons at once and merely see them with equal regard, without identifying the ways in which they are equal
 - For individualizing awareness, simply regard the person as an individual, without identifying the factors that define his or her individuality
 - For accomplishing awareness, merely extend your energy to each person with the deep wish to relate, without identifying the best way in which to connect
 - For reality awareness, focus not only on the fact that each person is open to change, but also on your own flexibility and openness to him or her

- When combining the seven states of mind, focus on a particular set of two or three persons for an entire round and then choose another set of persons for the next round

III. While focusing on yourself

1. While sitting in front of a mirror with a group of people, repeat the procedure used in the circle
2. While sitting alone without a mirror, preferably at the start of a new session
 - Quiet your mind and generate caring concern toward yourself
 - Direct mirror-like awareness at the feelings and emotions you are currently experiencing
 - With equalizing awareness, see your present feelings as equal to any others you have experienced and regard them with equanimity
 - With joint equalizing and reality awareness, see the patterns in your feelings and emotions
 - With individualizing awareness, acknowledge the uniqueness of what you are experiencing now
 - With accomplishing awareness, extend your energy with willingness to relate to your experience
 - With joint accomplishing and reality awareness, see how to relate to what you are presently feeling
 - With awareness of reality, try not to identify solidly with your mood of the moment, but see that your moods and yourself are open to change
 - Assimilate and combine these states of mind and kinds of awareness, by using the key phrases as before
3. While looking at a series of past photos of yourself laid out before you
 - Repeat the procedure as when sitting alone without a mirror, but directing mirror-like awareness at the feelings and emotions that each picture elicits
 - Conclude by directing equalizing awareness to regard yourself with equal warmth throughout your life
4. While sitting quietly without any props

- With mirror-like awareness, open to the entire scope of your personality, by quieting down and mirroring its foundation -- your clear light mind
- With deepest reality awareness, face your character without making judgments or stories
- Bring your personality into focus and apply equalizing awareness to have equal regard for all its aspects
- With individualizing awareness, focus on a specific aspect of your character
- With accomplishing awareness, extend your energy to deal with it
- With joint accomplishing and reality awareness, see how to relate to this aspect and how to bring it into daily life in a practical way
- Recognizing its assets and its shortcomings, try to identify methods to enhance the former and to eliminate or at least to minimize the latter
- Repeat the last four steps by directing your attention toward other facets of your personality

Exercise 11

Validating the Appearances We Perceive

I. While focusing on something from your life

1. While focusing on an upsetting incident

- *Imagine seeing your sink full of what seems like a pile of dirty dishes, but you wish it were something else*
- *Picture validating the appearance, by putting on the light and looking closer*
- *Having confirmed that the sink is full of dirty dishes, imagine viewing them with calm acceptance of what they are*
- *Recall seeing such a sight and how the dishes seemed like a disgusting mess and, in your reticence to wash*

them, how you felt like a prima donna, too good to get your hands dirty

- *Revive that feeling and then reflect that you are inflating the situation*
 - *They are merely dirty dishes in the sink, not an inherently disgusting mess*
 - *You are merely a responsible adult who needs to wash them, not an immaculate prima donna*
 - *Reject the fantasy by imagining the sharpness of your insight bursting it like a balloon and focus on the absence of anything findable inside*
 - *An inherently disgusting mess and an immaculate prima donna cannot be found, simply because they are not real*
 - *Note that you have been creating and reacting to an inflated dualistic appearance of the dishes and of yourself -- all that occurred was the seeing of a sight*
 - *Reject the fantasy by imagining the storybook “The Prima Donna Faces the Disgusting Mess” shutting and dissolving into your mind*
 - *Focus on the fact that the dualistic drama was merely a production of your imagination*
 - *Imagine calmly washing the dishes, without identifying yourself as either a martyr or as a servant*
2. While focusing on a photo or on a thought of someone you live with or know who might often leave dirty dishes in the sink overnight
- *Imagine seeing the sink filled with dishes in the morning and then seeing this person*
 - *Before jumping to conclusions, picture checking whose turn it was to wash up last night*
 - *If it was this person’s responsibility, imagine calmly accepting the fact that he or she did not wash them*
 - *Recall such an experience and how the person appeared to you as a “lazy slob” and how you self-righteously felt like the overtaxed victim*

- Remember that no one exists as a lazy slob who is incapable of ever washing up or as a victim who always must clean up after others
 - Reject the fantasy by picturing the balloon popping and focus on the absence of these fictional characters inside
 - Picture the storybook of “The Lazy Slob and the Self-righteous Victim” shutting and dissolving into your mind, and focus on the fact that the fairy tale came from your imagination
 - Imagine patiently waiting for the person to wash up after breakfast, if that is his or her habit, or calmly reminding the person
3. Repeat the procedure while focusing on other disturbing scenes from your personal life
- II. While focusing on someone in person
1. While sitting in a circle with a group and focusing on each person in turn for the entire sequence
 - Look carefully in order to confirm the conventional appearance that you see of the person – for example, as someone who colors his or her hair
 - Without mental comments, accept what you accurately see
 - Notice how the person appears to you and how you feel – for instance, the person might look like someone totally vain and you might feel like the self-appointed judge
 - Dismiss these images and feelings by picturing the balloon bursting and the storybook shutting and dissolving into your mind
 - Look at the person acceptingly, without feeling guilty or foolish for what you felt
 2. Repeat the procedure while sitting facing a partner
 - After repeating the procedure, note any feelings of nervousness or fear and, specifically, any feeling of yourself as a concrete “me” in your head confronting a concrete “you” sitting behind this person’s eyes
 - Picture the balloon of this fantasy popping and the storybook shutting and dissolving into your mind

- Note the deep feeling of relief and the natural warmth and openness that this release of fantasy brings
- III. While focusing on yourself
1. Repeat the procedure while looking in a mirror
 - Reject dualistic appearances and feelings, such as of Beauty and the Beast
 2. Repeat the procedure without a mirror, by validating what you think you are feeling at the moment and the impressions you have about these feelings
 3. Repeat the procedure while looking at photographs of yourself spanning your life, by validating the appearances you see and the feelings they elicit

Exercise 12

Visualizing Life's Changes

- I. While focusing on someone from your life
1. While focusing on a photo or on a thought of someone with whom you have a close daily relationship
 - Note how the person deceptively appears to exist permanently as one age, either the present one or an outdated one, and how you treat him or her insensitively because of this
 - To deconstruct this appearance, visualize portraits of the person spanning each year of life from birth to death standing in a vertical stack, like a deck of playing cards, with those from infancy to the present on one side of him or her and those extending to old age and death on the other
 - Flip through the stack and see the present image as just one in a series
 - Alternate focusing on the person's accurate current appearance and his or her changing image spanning a lifetime
 - Focus on the restricted and expanded perspectives simultaneously, like seeing Venetian blinds and the view of a busy street behind them

- Let the feeling sink in that the person's seemingly fixed appearance as one age is a deceptive view
 - When advanced in this practice, repeat the procedure, extending the visualization to include images of hypothetical past and future lives
2. While focusing on your conception of someone who recently upset you, by using a mental image or a vaguer impression to represent the person, and only looking at a photo occasionally as a point of reference
 - Note how fixed your conception based on this incident feels
 - To deconstruct this conception, recall other encounters in which the person acted differently and imagine a variety of possible future scenes
 - Represent these scenes with a mental image, a feeling, or both, and imagine them like stacked slides on either side of your fixed conception
 - Repeat the rest of the procedure as before
 3. Repeat the procedure while focusing on your seemingly set feelings toward the person who upset you, by using a mental image or vaguer impression of the person as a focal point for representing each feeling and only looking at a photo occasionally for reference

II. While focusing on someone in person

1. While sitting in a circle of men and women from as wide a variety of ages and backgrounds as possible
 - Repeat the procedure to deconstruct their deceptive appearances as people who have always been and will always be their current age or weight, by looking at each person in turn
 - Repeat the procedure to deconstruct their appearances as having a seemingly permanent, singular identity, by looking away, working with your impression of each within the context of a cluster of images of other known or hypothetical aspects of the person's personality and behavior, and glancing back at the person only for reference

- Repeat the procedure to deconstruct your seemingly permanent feelings toward each person, by looking away and only glancing back for reference
- III. While focusing on yourself
1. While focusing on yourself without a mirror
 - Repeat the procedure to deconstruct the deceptive appearance of your current self-image as your permanent, singular identity
 - Repeat the procedure to deconstruct any seemingly fixed emotions you might feel toward yourself as you are now
 2. While having before you a series of photos of yourself spanning your life
 - Repeat the procedure to deconstruct your identification with your present physical appearance or how you looked at one stage in your life, by working with the photos and adding to them projected images of how you might look in the future
 - Repeat the procedure to deconstruct any fixed conceptions you might have of yourself at difficult periods in your life, by recalling a wider range of memories and using the photos merely as a point of reference
 - Repeat the procedure to deconstruct any fixed feelings you might have toward yourself at difficult periods in your life, by using the photos only for reference

Exercise 13

Dissecting Experiences into Parts and Causes

- II. While focusing on a thought of someone from your life
 1. While focusing on a mental picture of someone you know very well who recently acted upsettingly toward you
 - Note how the person deceptively appears to exist concretely as an upsetting person
 - To deconstruct this appearance, imagine the seemingly concrete image dissolving into a collection of atoms

- Alternate picturing his or her body as a whole and picturing it as a collection of atoms
- Focus on the two perspectives simultaneously, like seeing Venetian blinds and the view of a busy street behind them
- Dissect the person's upsetting behavior into the causal factors that led to it, considering his or her previous actions and experiences since early childhood, relevant persons with whom he or she has interacted, and social, economic, and historical factors that played a role
- Imagine the seemingly concrete image of the upsetting person becoming threadbare like an old sock and then dissolving into a collage of these causal factors, by representing these factors with a mental picture of a few of them and with a vague impression of the rest, or with merely a feeling for their existence
- Alternate and then combine picturing the person acting upsettingly -- simply as an accurate representation of what occurred -- and picturing the collage of causal factors that led to this, or merely feeling the existence of these factors
- Follow the same procedure with factors from previous generations that led, over time, to the event
- When advanced, follow the same procedure with past lives of the person and of everyone who affected him or her in the current and previous generations
- Repeat several times the sequence of views by focusing on the person while alternating the key phrase "simply what the person did" with each of the phrases
 - "atoms"
 - "past causes"
 - "past generations"
 - "past lives"
- See the person with an increasingly larger number of views simultaneously, by alternating "simply what the person did" with two, then three, and lastly all four phrases, and by using merely a feeling for each of the

- four factors or a mental image of one example to represent each
2. Repeat the procedure to deconstruct your identification with your emotion and your resulting feeling of being someone who, by inherent nature, becomes upset when someone acts the way this person did, by working with
 - your feeling of yourself as a person who became upset, as an objective description of what happened
 - mental pictures, vague impressions, or merely a feeling for the existence of the factors that contributed to this happening
- II. While focusing on someone in person
1. While sitting in a circle with a group and focusing on each person in turn
 - Repeat the procedure to deconstruct the deceptive appearance of the person as having a seemingly inherent, concrete identity independently of anything, by looking at the person briefly, then looking away and working with your impression of him or her, glancing back only for reference
 - Repeat the procedure to deconstruct the deceptive feeling of being someone who, by inherent nature, experiences a certain emotional response toward this type of person
- III. While focusing on yourself
1. While focusing on yourself without a mirror
 - Repeat the procedure to deconstruct the deceptive appearance of your current self-image as your inherent, concrete identity, independent of anything
 - Repeat the procedure to deconstruct the deceptive feeling of being someone who, by inherent nature, feels a certain way about him or herself as you are now
 2. While having before you a series of photos of yourself spanning your life
 - Repeat the procedure to deconstruct the deceptive appearance of the self-images you hold about your past as constituting your inherent identity then, by using the photos merely as a point of reference

- Repeat the procedure to deconstruct the deceptive feeling of being someone who, by inherent nature, feels a certain way about him or herself as you were in the past

Exercise 14

Seeing Experiences as Waves on the Ocean

- I. While focusing on someone from your life
 1. While focusing on someone close to you who recently upset you with his or her words
 - Recall feeling, “How dare *you* say that to *me*.”
 - Note the dualistic impression of yourself standing concretely on one side as the victim or judge and of the person standing concretely on the other as the offender
 - To deconstruct this dualistic appearance, recall the bare experience of the arising and hearing of the sound of the person’s words
 - Imagine the bare experience like a wave on the ocean of your clear light activity, by experiencing merely a mental feeling of a wave coming from your heart
 - As the experience evolved, the wave swelled, filling first with a dualistic feeling and then with a disturbing emotion
 - Broadening your perspective, experience a nondualistic feeling of the entire ocean from the floor to the surface, without identifying concretely with the ocean and without imagining yourself as a concrete entity separate from it, either in or out of the water
 - Feeling simply like a vast and deep ocean, with waves on the surface, recall that no matter how huge and terrifying a wave may seem to be, it is only water -- it can never disturb the depths of the sea
 - Without feeling like a concrete entity being battered by the wave, feel the wave naturally subsiding
 - As the wave gets smaller, the disturbing emotion and then the dualistic feeling quiet down

- Return to the bare experience of merely hearing the words
 - As this movement of mind stills as well, feel like the placid, yet vibrant sea
 - No longer upset, imagine handling the situation by responding calmly and sensitively
2. While focusing on your response to the person who spoke to you upsettingly
 - Recall speaking cruelly in return and feeling guilty afterwards about what you said
 - Note that in feeling guilty, your mind produces a dualistic appearance of a seemingly concrete idiotic “me” and the seemingly concrete stupid words you said
 - Repeat the procedure to deconstruct this dualistic appearance, by recalling the bare experience of your clear light mind giving rise to your words and perceiving their sound
 3. Repeat the procedure to deconstruct dualistic feelings when hearing someone say loving words to you, such as the deceptive feeling of a seemingly concrete “me” who does not deserve love and of seemingly concrete unsettling words that the person could not possibly mean
 4. While recalling an unsettling emotion that suddenly arose without necessarily being related to the situation or to the people around you
 - Note the dualistic impression of a seemingly concrete innocent “me” and a seemingly concrete intrusive emotion that I do not wish to experience at the moment, which lies beneath your feeling of alienation or turmoil
 - Repeat the deconstruction procedure, by experiencing the emotion as a swell arising on the ocean of your clear light mind
 - If you are unable to feel something now, apply the deconstruction procedure to any anxiety or emptiness you may experience dualistically at feeling nothing
- II. While focusing on someone in person
1. Repeat the procedure, while sitting in a circle with a group and focusing on each person in turn, to deconstruct the self-

- conscious feeling of dualism of a seemingly concrete “me” over here who might not be liked by a seemingly concrete “you” over there
2. Repeat the procedure, while facing a partner, to deconstruct the self-conscious feeling of dualism of a seemingly concrete nervous “me” confronting a seemingly concrete unnerving “you”
- III. While focusing on yourself
1. Repeat the procedure, while looking in a mirror, to deconstruct the disturbing dualistic feeling of a seemingly concrete “me” who is not comfortable with a seemingly concrete “myself”
 2. Repeat the procedure without a mirror
 3. Repeat the procedure, while looking at a series of photographs of yourself spanning your life, to deconstruct the unsettling dualistic feeling of a seemingly concrete “me” of now judging a seemingly concrete “me” of then

Exercise 15

Combining Compassion with Deconstruction

- III. While focusing on someone close to you who recently upset you with his or her words
- Mentally picture the person acting upsettingly
 - Imagine his or her changing physical appearance, from infancy to old age, being sure to include past and future lives at least in the form of a feeling for their existence
 - Imagine a collage of the person acting in a variety of other ways
 - Return to the image of him or her acting upsettingly
 - Think how sad it is that the person does not understand impermanence and consequently suffers greatly by imagining that difficult situations will last forever
 - Focusing on your mental picture or on a photograph of the person, generate compassion by sincerely wishing for him or her to be free from suffering and from this cause of suffering
 - Put down the photo, if using one, and return to the mental image of the person acting upsettingly
 - Imagine the person as a collection of atoms

- Imagine a collage of causes for his or her behavior from this lifetime, or generate a feeling for their existence
- Imagine a collage of causes from the influence of past generations, or generate a feeling for their existence
- Imagine a collage of causes from the influence of past lives, or generate a feeling for their existence
- Return to the image of him or her acting upsettingly
- Imagine a collage of consequences of the person's behavior on the rest of his or her present life, or generate a feeling for their existence
- Imagine a collage of repercussions for future generations, or generate a feeling for their existence
- Imagine a collage of consequences on his or her future lives and on the future lives of everyone involved, or generate a feeling for their existence
- Return to the image of him or her acting upsettingly
- Think how sad it is that the person is unaware of the dependently arising nature of his or her behavior and has no idea of the future consequences it will have
- Focus on your mental picture or on a photograph of the person and generate compassion by sincerely wishing for him or her to be free from suffering and from this cause of suffering
- Put down the photo, if using one, and return to the mental image of the person acting upsettingly
- Recall the bare experience of the arising and hearing of the sound of the person's upsetting words
- Imagine that experience like an ocean wave of your clear light activity
- As the wave of experience swelled, it filled first with the dualistic feeling of a seemingly concrete "me" as the victim and a seemingly concrete "you" as the oppressor, and then with a feeling of emotional upset
- Imagine the wave subsiding, with first the disturbing emotion, then the feeling of dualism, and finally the hearing of the sound settling back into the ocean of mind
- Return to the image of the person acting and speaking upsettingly

- Think how sad it is that the person does realize that dualistic appearances are merely projections of his or her clear light mind onto waves of experience -- believing in these appearances, he or she suffers greatly
- Focus on your mental picture or on a photograph of the person and generate compassion by sincerely wishing for him or her to be free from suffering and from this cause of suffering

IV. While focusing on someone in person

1. Repeat the procedure while sitting in a circle with a group and focusing on each person in turn for each of the three deconstructions
 - Look at each person only briefly to gain a point of reference, look away while imagining the collage of his or her life's changes and so forth, and then look back while directing compassion
 - If you have never encountered the person acting upsettingly, work with an imagined scene of him or her behaving that way

V. While focusing on yourself

1. Using a mirror, repeat the procedure followed when focusing on others in a circle, but recalling an incident in which you acted destructively
2. Repeat the procedure without a mirror
3. Repeat the procedure while having before you a series of photos of yourself spanning your life
 - When directing compassion, wish that you could have had these insights then

Exercise 16 **Adjusting Our Innate Mental Factors**

IA. While focusing on a sweater on the floor before you

- Look around the room and note that urges naturally arise to focus on different things

- Purposely generate the urge to look at the sweater, through the conscious motivation of being cold and wanting to find something warm to put on
- Confirm that, when motivated by caring concern, you can similarly generate the urge to look at how someone is doing
- Look around the room and notice that you naturally distinguish many things about what you see
- Purposely distinguish the sweater from the floor and the neck from the sleeves, with interest to know if it is V-necked
- Confirm that, when interested, you can similarly choose to distinguish the expression on someone's face
- Look around the room and note that certain things automatically catch your attention, while others do not
- Turn to the sweater and purposely pay close attention to check for any cat hairs on it, because of being allergic
- Confirm that, when motivated, you can similarly choose to pay close attention to the expression on someone's face
- Look around the room and note that you naturally pay attention to something you like quite differently than to what you dislike, depending on how you consider the item -- when you pay attention to an item as something you like, you have pleasant awareness of contact with it and experience happiness, whereas when you pay attention to an object as something you do not care for, you experience unpleasant contacting awareness of it and are unhappy
- Consciously look at the sweater as your favorite item of clothing that a loved one has knitted, and note that in doing so, you have pleasant awareness of contact with its sight and experience a feeling of happiness
- Consciously pay attention to the sweater as a nuisance that leaves fuzz on your shirt, and note that in doing so, your contacting awareness is unpleasant and that seeing the sweater makes you unhappy
- Confirm that, when there is a reason, you can similarly choose to look at the expression on someone's face as something important -- when you do so, if you see that the person is happy, you have pleasant awareness of contact with the sight and feel

happy yourself, whereas if you see that he or she is upset, you have unpleasant contact and are sad

- Look around the room and note that some things you see naturally interest you more than others do – when you see something of interest, your attention effortlessly holds on to it with mindfulness and remains fixed with concentration
- Imagine that sweaters suddenly become the height of fashion and then look at the sweater – note that you regard it with great interest and that your attention naturally holds on to its sight with mindfulness and remains fixed with concentration
- Confirm that, by reaffirming your caring concern for someone and thus regarding the person’s mood as important, you can similarly develop interest in his or her mood when you notice it and that, consequently, your mindfulness and concentration on it naturally increase
- Look around the room and note that you automatically discriminate certain things about what you see -- for instance between what is neatly arranged and what is haphazard and between tidying the room and leaving things alone
- Imagine that you want to buy a sweater, decide to check the one before you to discriminate if it might fit and whether you can afford it, and then look at it from that point of view
- Confirm that, when motivated, you can similarly decide to look at someone’s expression with discrimination to determine whether the person is happy or upset and whether you need to say words of comfort
- Look around the room and note the intentions that automatically arise, depending on what you discriminate and on necessity and interest -- you may intend to open the window or to buy some flowers
- Look at the sweater, discriminate that it fits you and that you can afford it, and then regard it with the intention to buy it
- Confirm that, when you discriminate that someone is upset, you can generate an intention to be more sensitive toward the person and to give him or her emotional support

IB. While focusing on a candid photograph of someone from your life

1. Choose someone you like

- Consciously generate a motivated urge to look at the person, through feeling concern
 - Distinguish various aspects of how the person looks and what he or she is doing
 - Pay attention to these points as meaningful for knowing how to approach the person
 - Experience pleasant contacting awareness
 - Feel happy to see him or her
 - Generate the interest to understand what he or she is feeling, by reaffirming your concern to relate to the person
 - Note that naturally your mindfulness and concentration increase
 - With discrimination, try to decide what mood the person is in and whether this is a good time to talk
 - Consciously set the intention to approach or to delay the meeting accordingly
 - Repeat several times the sequence of directing each state of mind at the person, by using the key phrases
 - “motivated urge”
 - “distinguishing”
 - “attention”
 - “contacting awareness”
 - “feeling”
 - “interest”
 - “mindfulness”
 - “concentration”
 - “discrimination”
 - “intention”
2. Repeat the procedure, choosing a stranger and using as the motivation your need to speak to the person
 3. Repeat the procedure, choosing someone you dislike and using the same motivation as with a stranger
- II. While focusing on someone in person

1. Repeat the procedure two or three times while sitting in a circle with a group and focusing each time on a different person for the entire sequence
- III. While focusing on yourself
1. Repeat the procedure while looking in a mirror, to see whether you look sick or haggard, for example, and, if you do, to set an intention to do something about it
 2. Repeat the procedure without a mirror, to examine your feelings and mood, and, if something is wrong, to set an intention to try to correct it
 3. Repeat the procedure while looking at a photo or thinking of first someone you like, then a stranger, and lastly someone you dislike, to examine your feelings about each
 4. Repeat the procedure while looking at photographs of yourself spanning your life, to examine your feelings about yourself then
- IV. While focusing on others and then on yourself to gain a balanced view of the strong and weak points of each
1. While looking at a candid photograph of someone toward whom you normally have only negative feelings, repeat the procedure to discover the person's positive points and to balance your feelings, with the motivation to overcome the emotional blocks to your other relationships that your turmoil with the person brings
 2. Repeat the procedure with someone who infatuates you, to acknowledge the person's negative points and to make the relationship more realistic, with the motivation to stop being insensitive to your needs and behaving self-destructively
 3. Repeat the procedure while focusing on yourself without a mirror, to acknowledge your strong points if you suffer from self-hatred or to acknowledge your weaker aspects if you suffer from conceit
 4. Repeat the procedure while looking at photographs of yourself spanning your life, to resolve your feelings about the past

Exercise 17

Accepting Suffering and Giving Happiness

- I. While focusing on a photo or on a mental picture of a loved one who is troubled with a problem
- To settle into a state of serenity, silence flightiness of mind, by imagining tension, worry, and speediness leaving with your breath or simultaneously arising and disappearing like writing on water
 - Dispel dullness, by imagining just emerging from a refreshing shower
 - To compose yourself with equanimity, calm any feelings of attraction, repulsion, or indifference, by thinking how your loved one is a human being and, like you, does not like to be clung to, rejected, or ignored
 - Release overprotectiveness, fright, or feeling too busy, with your breath or the image of writing on water
 - Recall the problem your loved one is facing and the pain and sorrow he or she is experiencing
 - To develop interest, think how the person and you are interrelated, like your hand and your foot, and consider that this pain needs to be removed, not because it is your loved one's pain, but simply because it hurts
 - To empathize, recall something similar that you have experienced
 - To develop compassion, reflect that if you were in the same predicament, you would want it to end -- so does your loved one
 - Wish for him or her to be free of the pain and its causes
 - To gain the willingness to become involved, think that just as you would not appreciate someone's excuses, your loved one also would not welcome your hesitation
 - To dispel fear of feeling the person's sorrow, deflate dualistic projections, by alternately tickling your palm, pinching it, and holding one hand in the other, experiencing each as a wave of the mind without a dualistic impression of a seemingly concrete "me" and a seemingly concrete physical sensation
 - Reflect that just as feelings of physical pleasure or pain are not upsetting or frightening when experienced nondualistically, the same is true with feelings of mental happiness or sadness

- Without tension or fear, imagine the suffering and its causes leaving your loved one as black light, freeing the person from his or her pain
- Picture this light entering your heart as you breathe in
- Accept and feel the person's anguish
- View the experience of pain from the perspective of the ocean of your clear light mind and see it nondualistically like a wave
- Feel the sadness that what your loved one and now you are experiencing naturally evokes, without it upsetting the calm, composed depths of the ocean
- Let the feeling of sadness naturally subside and pass
- Feel a warm and loving concern for the person's welfare naturally arising from your clear light heart
- With the wish for your loved one to be happy, picture your concern as this happiness and its causes, but in the form of white light
- Reinforced by the natural joy of the mind, feel deep happiness while imagining the light entering the person and filling him or her with joy
- To gain understanding and possible solutions for your loved one's problems, tap the abilities of the five types of deep awareness and picture your understanding and solutions leaving you also as white light and filling the person

II. While focusing on someone in person

1. Repeat the procedure two or three times while sitting in a circle with a group and focusing on a different person each time, by working with general problems that afflict most people, such as insecurity, and by using the key phrases to settle into the preliminary state of mind
 - "no tension, worry, speediness, or dullness"
 - "relaxed and fresh"
 - "no clinging, aversion, or indifference"
 - "not overprotective, frightened, or too busy"
 - "open and concerned"
 - "interest"
 - "empathy"

- “compassion”
- “willingness to become involved”
- “no fear of feeling sad”

III. While focusing on yourself

1. Repeat the procedure while looking in a mirror
2. Repeat the procedure without a mirror, by extracting your problems as black light from your entire body and bringing them to your heart, and by filling your body with happiness as white light emitted from your heart
3. Repeat the procedure followed without a mirror while looking at photographs of yourself spanning your life, taking on any unresolved problems, blocked feelings, or emotional turmoil left from or still concerning those times

Exercise 18

Making Sensitive Decisions

Preliminaries

1. Divest decision-making from feelings of dualism
 - Sit quietly without moving and, when the inevitable itch arises, note how you both feel like scratching it and want to do so
 - Decide not to scratch it and observe how your mind automatically creates a dualistic appearance of a tormented “me” and an unbearable itch and then tears the experience further apart by also creating a controller “me” who will not give in to this annoying itch and a weak “me” who wants to surrender and needs to be controlled
 - Deconstruct the experience by focusing on the itch that you have decided not to scratch and by noting that it is merely a physical sensation that your tactile consciousness is producing and perceiving
 - Note that an intention accompanies your perception of the itch – namely, to endure the sensation and not to end it by scratching
 - Observe that no controller is directing the incident and restraining your hand from scratching

- Refraining from scratching the itch, focus on the experience as devoid of a solid “me”
 - Consciously change your mind and decide to scratch the itch
 - Examine what occurs as you slowly scratch and note that the only change is the intention that accompanies awareness of the itch
 - Focus on the fact that you are capable of making decisions without dualistic feelings
2. Relax to access the natural talents of your mind and heart
- Relax your muscular tension
 - Quiet your mind of verbal thoughts, preconceptions, nonverbal judgments, projected roles, and expectations concerning yourself and the decision you need to make, by using the “letting-go” and “writing-on-water” methods
 - Imagine any nervousness or emotional tension that might be left quieting down like a wave on the ocean when the wind has stopped
 - Rest for a minute or two with clarity in a calm, open state of mind and heart, free from tension

Actual exercise

- I. While focusing on a photo or on a thought of someone from your life about whom you need to make a difficult decision, such as someone with whom you have an unhealthy or unsatisfactory relationship
- Deconstruct any dualistic feelings you may be projecting onto the relationship as a confrontation between a concrete “me” and a concrete “you,” by imagining the balloon of this fantasy popping
 - Objectively check the facts, by taking into account your impression of the situation and the other person’s perspective and comments
 - Consult an unbiased outside opinion
 - With introspection, determine (a) what you feel like doing, (b) what your intuition says, (c) what you want to do, and (d) what you need to do
 - List, on paper, the reasons behind what you feel like doing, such as
 - Habits

- Preferences
- Physical factors
- Unconscious motivations
- Contributing circumstances
- Influence of others
- List the reasons behind what your intuition says
 - Knowledge
 - Innate deep awareness or common sense
 - Understanding gained from experience
 - Hidden attitudes reinforcing your intuition
- List the reasons behind what you want to do
 - Conscious motivations
 - Unconscious motivations
 - Contributing circumstances
 - Influence of others
- List the reasons behind what you need to do
 - Short-term benefits to each person
 - Long-term benefits to each person
 - Physical necessity
 - Contributing circumstances
- To determine whether to do anything at all, evaluate the positive and negative reasons for acting and for not acting, paying particular attention to the short-term and long-term advantages and drawbacks of each choice
- Weigh all the factors to determine which choice has more valid reasons backing it
- Resolve to follow that choice
- To decide what to do if the choice is to act, reaffirm your motivation, adjust your ten mental factors, and apply the five types of deep awareness
 - With a motivated urge, focus on the person
 - With mirror-like awareness, distinguish and pay attention to various aspects of his or her behavior

- With awareness of equalities and of individualities, distinguish the patterns and yet respect the individuality of each instance
 - With pleasant contacting awareness and a feeling of happiness at the prospect of resolving the problem, enhance your interest, mindfulness, and concentration
 - With accomplishing awareness, discriminate a course of action
 - With awareness of reality, evaluate the wisdom and effectiveness of this choice, making sure that it is ethically pure – neither destructive nor dishonest to the feelings of the people involved
 - If the choice seems to be the most reasonable one, set your intention to suggest it to the other person as you begin your discussion
 - To avoid insensitivity toward yourself, be clear about your limits, yet be prepared to say either yes or no as the discussion develops
 - Choose an appropriate moment to broach the matter, when both parties will be receptive
 - Imagine approaching the encounter calmly and gently, without preconceptions
 - Maintain awareness of reality throughout the discussion so as to give the person the room to change his or her ways, while realizing that no one changes instantly
 - Remain open to his or her viewpoint and suggestions
- II. While focusing on someone in person
1. Repeat the procedure while sitting in a circle with a group and focusing on one of the members with whom you need to decide something
 - If you know any of them and have a dispute, work with that
 - If you have no quarrels or do not know anyone, deal with such issues as improving your relationship or establishing one
- III. While focusing on yourself

1. Repeat the procedure while looking in a mirror, to make a difficult decision concerning your life
2. Repeat the procedure without a mirror

PART II

Advanced Exercises

1 Grasping at Mind's Natural Functions for Security

Statement of the Problem

Because of the deeply rooted habit of confusion about reality, our mental activity instinctively and constantly produces not only dualistic appearances, but also “triplistic” ones. According to *madhyamaka* (middle way) theory, it fabricates a deceptive appearance of a seemingly concrete agent, object, and action as the “three spheres” of any event. Our mental activity then projects this appearance onto every moment of our naturally nontriplistic experience of things as they are. The confusion that automatically accompanies this mental activity causes us to believe in the deceptive appearance. However, because the alienated “me” we create and identify with as the agent of the action is totally imaginary, we naturally feel insecure about its seemingly solid existence.

Hoping to gain a sense of concreteness and security, we feel compelled to establish or to prove the existence of the imaginary “me” in our mind. Alternatively, we feel driven to lose this “me” and to find security by becoming nonexistent. Often, we focus our futile efforts on the actions themselves. The Kalachakra literature explains how we do this specifically with assorted facets of clear light mind's natural activity.

The *abhidharma* (special topics of knowledge) analysis of poisonous attitudes suggests three ways in which we try to find security. Inflating actions into concrete entities, first we may hope that engaging in them will make us secure and more real. Second, we may fear and wish to avoid engaging in certain actions. They seem to threaten or compromise this supposedly concrete “me.” Third, we may hope to lose ourselves in certain actions. In all three cases, our attitude and consequent behavior make us both insensitive and hypersensitive to others and to ourselves.

Seven Natural Mental Functions That We Grasp for Security

According to the Kalachakra system, clear light mental activity naturally leads to four waves of experience. These are physical expression, subtler forms of expression, being quiet, and experiencing pleasure. Each of these waves consists of sensory or mental awareness, warm concern, and energy. This trio corresponds to the three invisible factors that produce experiences: mental activity, “creative drops” (*bindu, tigley*), and “winds” (*prana, lung*). The drops and winds are features of our energy system and have varying degrees of subtlety. Mental activity is like a painter of experience, creative drops are like a palette of colors, and winds are like a brush. Similarly, seeing, hearing, thinking, and so on create the images that we perceive. Different levels of warm concern color our experience of them, by using our energy as the brush.

When confusion and its instincts dominate our life, waves of clear light activity pass through one or another of four subtle creative drops. These subtle drops resemble floodgates into four domains of ordinary experience – physical activity and being awake, verbal activity and dreaming, rest and being asleep with no dreams, and experiencing peak moments of pleasure. At these drops, “winds of karma” agitate the waves to create the confusing triplistic appearances of these experiences. This confusion may concern the sensory or mental awareness, the warm concern, or the energy involved during any of the experiences. Belief in these confusing appearances then brings disturbing emotions and problems.

When unmixed with either confusion or its instincts, natural waves of clear light activity associate simply with the subtlest creative drop and the subtlest wind. Working together, they give rise directly to the four enlightening networks of a Buddha. The enlightening networks also encompass waves of physical expression, verbal expression, quiet experience, and joyous pleasure. They also consist of awareness, loving concern, and energy. As a Buddha, however, the network of these seven facets of clear light activity brings only benefit.

The scheme of four waves and three aspects of clear light activity producing either confusing experiences or enlightening networks suggests that balanced sensitivity comes from removing confusion from our innate network of seven facets of experience. These are (1) our physical activity, (2) our verbal expression, (3) our sensory and mental experience, (4) our expression of warm concern, (5) our expression of energy, (6) our rest, and (7) our expression of pleasure. Let us therefore focus on identifying and removing triplistic appearances specifically from these seven facets of experience.

A Linguistic Scheme for Identifying the Forms These Problems May Take

The Kalachakra system also describes the external, internal, and spiritual or alternative worlds as parallel in structure. An important aspect of our internal world is the structure of language. Kalachakra texts present this structure in terms of Sanskrit grammar. This suggests a powerful tool for analyzing and remedying problems associated with mind's natural functions.

Sanskrit verbs generate active and passive, simple and causative, indicative and subjunctive, and past, present, and future forms. They also occur in the affirmative and negative. For example, we speak to someone, are spoken to by someone, make someone speak to us, would speak to someone, spoke to someone, will speak to someone, or do not speak to someone. Since each of the seven natural facets of mental activity is a verbal noun, each facet may take some or all these verbal forms. Sensitivity problems arise from grasping at, fearing, or trying to lose ourselves in any of them.

EXERCISE 19

Identifying the Syndromes of Grasping at Mind's Natural Functions for Security

To help identify these disturbing syndromes, let us survey some common illustrations of each. As in Exercise One, we need to discover the problems that pertain to us. After creating a quiet and caring mental space, we first try to recall incidents in which either we or others have experienced these forms of behavior. Then, we need to think about how such behavior may arise because of grasping for security from one of mind's natural functions or because of fearing it as a threat. Reflecting on how this confusion causes insensitivity or hypersensitivity to ourselves or to others, we try to recognize and to acknowledge the problems that may result. When we begin to understand the psychological mechanism underlying our sensitivity problems, we have opened the door to leave them behind us.

In illustrating the assortment of problems that crystallize around each of the seven facets of mental activity, we shall restrict ourselves to four categories. The four derive from the further grammatical point that we may be either the agent or the object of various forms of action that derive from each facet. The problems regard (1) expressing an action, (2) receiving an expression of it from someone, (3) being afraid or uncomfortable to express an action, and (4) being afraid or uncomfortable to receive an

expression of it. If we keep in mind the linguistic scheme of variations, we may recognize various subcategories from our own or others' behavior.

For practice in a workshop, the group facilitator may choose one example for each of the four syndromes associated with mind's seven natural functions, or just one illustration for each function. When practicing at home, we may do the same or work only with personally pertinent syndromes. For advanced practice, or if we wish to be thorough, we may go through all the examples for each syndrome.

Grasping or Fearing Physical Activity

(1) Mental activity naturally leads to physical actions. Nevertheless, we may hope to gain security by being the concrete agent who makes these actions occur. For example, believing that being productive justifies our existence, we may become a "workaholic," unable to cope if we lose our job. Alternatively, we may try to lose ourselves in work so that we do not have to think about our personal problems. This renders us totally insensitive to ourselves.

Because of nervous insecurity, we may feel the need to keep our hands forever busy. Wanting to feel needed, we cannot let others do anything for themselves, like tidy their desk. Doing things for others to gain a feeling of self-worth, however, is merely a form of insensitive exploitation. This is especially true when others do not want our help. Moreover, immersing ourselves in trying to help others often becomes a way to avoid helping ourselves.

Sometimes, we may try to prove our existence by producing effects. For example, we may be unable to pass an electronic gadget without pressing the buttons, even if we have no idea how to use the machine. If someone tells us to leave it alone lest we break it, we take this as a threat to our competence and value as a person. We overreact with hostility.

A causative form of the syndrome is to grasp at giving others work to do. This is the classic "power trip." To assert our existence, we boss people around. In doing so, we are insensitive to the fact that no one appreciates being ordered to do something. Subjunctive forms include feeling that if only we could find the perfect job, we could cope with life. We might also feel that if only we could be in control of everything in life, we would feel secure. Lost in such dreams, we lose touch with reality.

Focusing on the past or on the future, we may hope to achieve security by resting on the laurels of our achievements, or to establish our worth by planning innumerable projects. Such thinking often renders us insensitive to the moment. Adding a subjunctive element to this form of the

syndrome, we may feel that we would now be secure if only we had accomplished something earlier in life. A negative form of the same is to think that we would now be secure if only we had not committed certain mistakes in our youth. We overreact by feeling sorry for ourselves.

We may also combine forms of this syndrome with grasping at other natural functions of the mind. For example, we may grasp for security by seeing others being active. Hoping to feel more alive or to lose ourselves by becoming anonymous, we may live in a bustling city. Similarly, we may need to go every day to the shopping mall to watch the people. Insensitive to our family's preferences, we may insist that they come with us.

Lastly, we may compulsively run from one activity to the next, because of fear of missing out on something. Making this causative, we may feel that our children should not miss out on anything either. Consequently, as an individual or as a society, we push them into a grueling schedule of sports and lessons after school. In doing this, we make our youngsters' lives as speedy and as full as those of adults working in a high-pressured office. Even the computer games that our children play are hyperactive.

(2) Grasping at being the recipient of others' actions may also take several forms. Hoping to gain a sense of self-worth from receiving others' service or to lose ourselves by not having to deal with a domestic scene, we may compulsively eat in restaurants. Our insensitivity to our partner's feelings may make the person feel that we do not think he or she can cook.

A causative form is feeling unsure of ourselves and always asking others what we should do. If the person tells us to use our judgment, we become even more insecure and nervous. Subjunctive forms include feeling that we would be better able to cope with life if we could find a partner to do everything for us. Such thinking makes us insensitive to feeling true love.

(3) Fear of being the agent of physical actions, fueled by low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence, may make us "technophobic." We may feel incompetent to handle the latest electronic equipment. Convinced that we are hopelessly clumsy, we may even feel insecure about changing a lightbulb. When faced with such tasks, we overreact with anxiety.

(4) We may also be uncomfortable with being the recipient of others' actions. For example, if someone drives the car instead of us, we may feel insecure because we want to be always in control. If someone does something for us or pays our bill at a restaurant, we may feel robbed of our dignity. Causative forms are being unable to bear someone telling us what to do or even asking us to do something, because we feel it threatens our independence.

Grasping or Fearing Verbal Expression

(1) Mental activity naturally creates waves of words to express itself. However, when we conceive of our mind as a concrete “me,” we may grasp at this natural occurrence in the hope of it establishing and proving our existence. For instance, we may talk compulsively. Unable to endure silence when with someone, we may nervously chatter even if we have nothing to say. We are insensitive to anyone’s need for quiet. Inflating the significance of our words, we may imagine that everyone is interested to know what we think. Consequently, we may always have to voice our opinion. Moreover, we may feel that we must always get in the last word. We have to be right. If someone says the shirt is blue, we automatically reply no, it is dark blue.

(2) When we grasp at receiving verbal expression, we may always need to hear others speaking. We may insensitively insist that someone talk to us, otherwise we feel ignored and nonexistent. Delighting in others’ conversations, we may also be addicted to listening to talk shows or to following chat groups on the Internet. These forms of escape may be symptomatic of insensitivity to our own life problems.

A variant form is hoping for more security if someone else conducts business or obtains information for us on the telephone. If the person makes a mistake, however, we inevitably overreact with accusations of his or her incompetence.

(3) When we fear verbal expression, we feel nervous to tell someone what is on our mind. Afraid that the person might reject us, we do not want to jeopardize our security by proving ourselves an idiot. For similar reasons, we might also feel nervous to speak before an audience.

(4) We may also feel discomfort at being the recipient of verbal expression. For example, we may be unable to accept criticism. Whenever someone points out our shortcomings, we may immediately throw it back to the person, accusing him or her of the same fault. We may also feel personally threatened when someone says something politically incorrect, such as “waitress” rather than “waitperson.” Similarly, we may feel our existence negated if someone tries to make a reservation for us over the telephone. Insensitive to the person’s feelings, we snatch the receiver from his or her hand. We may also be unable to bear someone typing for us, without hovering and waiting for the person to make a mistake.

Grasping or Fearing Sensory or Mental Experiences

(1) We may grasp for security by accumulating sensory or mental experiences. For instance, when we go abroad as a tourist, we may feel compelled to visit and photograph every site. Unconsciously, we think that this will somehow make the tour worthwhile and prove that we were there. Alternatively, we may try to lose ourselves in sightseeing in order to forget our problems at home. Our insecurity and frenetic pace drive our travel companions insane.

Regarding the other senses, we may need to have music or television playing from morning until night. Otherwise, we feel lost in a frightening vacuum of silence. We prefer deliberately losing ourselves in music instead. Or, insensitive to anyone else's comfort, we may insist on having all the windows open, even in subzero temperature. We feel that we must always smell fresh air in order to feel alive. Moreover, when we go to a buffet, we may compulsively need to taste every dish. Otherwise, we feel we were not really there. We take no account of what others might think at our display of greed.

Insensitive to other shoppers, we may mindlessly touch every item of clothing in the store as we walk past the rack, to ground us to reality. Needing frequent body contact to reassure our existence, we may give each person a hug when we enter or leave a room, even if this is inappropriate. Wanting to know all the latest news, we cannot bear to be uninformed about our family, our friends, or world affairs. Having information somehow makes us feel more real. Similarly, we never know when to stop asking questions. Not knowing what is happening, or where we are going when someone takes us out, makes us feel completely insecure.

Teenagers act under the influence of this syndrome when they play music at ear-shattering volume, enhance their senses with recreational drugs, and endure the pain of body-piercing. The more intense their sensory experiences are, the more they feel that somehow they exist despite the impersonal, deadening world around them. Alternatively, the more intense their experiences are, the more they hope they can lose themselves in them.

(2) We may also grasp for security by being the object of other people's experience. For instance, we may feel the need to be seen at the right parties and the right places, wearing the latest fashions. If someone else is wearing the same shirt or dress, we feel shattered. We may also need others to hear us singing at Karaoke bars to affirm our existence, even if we make a fool of ourselves. Feeling that our experiences become real only if others know about them, we indiscriminately tell our personal affairs to people sitting beside us on the plane. We are insensitive to the possibility that they may not be interested. Alternatively, we may constantly complain about our

problems to others as an unconscious mechanism to avoid dealing with them ourselves.

(3) We may also fear having sensory or mental experiences. We may be frightened to make eye contact during a conversation, despite the unsettling effect our looking at the floor may have on the other person. Looking away is often an unconscious way of trying to avoid someone seeing the real “me.” Being overly sensitive, we may feel threatened by the unfamiliar odors of a foreign market or be afraid to taste something new. They seem to challenge who we are. We may also be frightened to feel our emotions. Feeling nothing seems more secure. Similarly, we may be uncomfortable even to be in the same room with someone who is terminally ill, because of unconsciously feeling our own existence threatened. Therefore, we may insensitively treat such people as if they were no longer human beings with feelings.

(4) When we feel uncomfortable with being the object of other people’s sensory or mental experience, we may overreact if anyone sees us undress. We do not want them to see the real “me.” We may also feel self-conscious if someone records our voice during a speech, because of feeling that now what we say actually counts. If others’ bodies touch ours on a crowded subway, we may feel threatened. Physical contact with someone seems like a more real encounter than being one inch away. Obsessed with privacy, we may also be paranoid about giving information about ourselves to anyone.

Grasping or Fearing Expression of Warm Concern

People often grasp at mind’s natural warm concern for a sense of security, mostly in combination with grasping at one of the previous three qualities. The object of our concern may be a partner, a friend, a child, or a family member.

(1) When we grasp at warm concern for security, we may feel that life is not worthwhile or that we are unreal unless we are in an intimate relationship with someone. We may also long for a baby so that we will feel needed. We may do this even if we are not ready to be a responsible parent. Alternatively, we may wish for a baby so that we can lose ourselves in taking care of it.

Combining this syndrome with grasping at physical or verbal activity, we may compulsively feel the need to show our affection. We may do this by perpetually hugging, kissing, or doing things for someone, or by constantly verbalizing our love. It feels as if our affection does not exist

unless we express it. Moreover, our feelings are completely hurt if the person shuns our advances or responds with passivity or silence.

Similarly, to confirm the reality of our love, we may compulsively have to see or touch our beloved or to look at his or her photo on our desk. Insensitive to other demands on the person's time, we may incessantly call him or her on the telephone, for similar reasons. We may feel insecure unless we share every aspect of our life with a partner – intellectual pursuits, sports interests, business matters, and so on -- despite this being an unreasonable expectation or demand. This comes from thinking that sharing everything will make our relationship more real. Here, we are grasping at both mind's natural warmth and its leading to sensory and mental experience.

(2) Grasping at being the recipient of warm concern, we may feel unsettled unless we hear "I love you" or receive a kiss whenever parting from our loved one. It feels as if, without it, the person's love for us is unreal. We may similarly feel insecure and overreact unless we know every detail about our beloved's day.

(3) When we are afraid of feeling warm concern, we may fear losing control if we fall in love. We may also feel uncomfortable to show our love by giving someone a good morning kiss, by saying "I love you," or by calling him or her each day from work. When our loved one asks us to do any of these, we overreact, as if it would kill us. This aggravates the person's insecurity in our relationship.

(4) We may also feel afraid of being the recipient of warm concern. For example, we may fear losing our independence if someone falls in love with us. Someone hugging or kissing us, telling us he or she loves us, or calling us at work may also make us feel uncomfortable. Saying, "Don't be stupid," we respond insensitively, either by rejecting the person's expression of love or by offering a passive martyr's response. Acting as if the hug or kiss were an attack on our sovereignty, or some childish indignity we have to endure, devastates the person who loves us.

Grasping or Fearing Expression of Energy

This syndrome usually underlies the previous sensitivity problems.

(1) When we grasp at expressing our energy to feel more secure, we may feel the compulsive need to assert our will to prove our existence. We might also insensitively push ourselves on others, for them to confirm our existence by their response.

(2) When we grasp at receiving others' energy, we may insensitively demand that everyone focus their attention on us, to make us feel

significant and real. Hypersensitive to people ignoring us, we may make a fool of ourselves to gain notice. We may even pretend to be sick or act horribly, to force others to accept or reject our existence.

(3) We may also be afraid to express our energy. We may fear that if we assert ourselves, others will reject us. Such oversensitivity blocks our emotions and makes us insensitive to our feelings. Moreover, we may fear that exerting ourselves will leave us with no energy or no time. We resent demands that others make on us and feel them as a threat to our existence.

(4) Fear of receiving energy from others may make us self-conscious and uncomfortable if others show us attention. We may feel undeserving. If we need to visit someone who always complains, we might also be afraid that his or her negative energy would infect us. Consequently, we put up emotional barriers to defend ourselves.

Grasping or Fearing Rest

(1) When we grasp at taking a rest to feel more secure, we may constantly need to take breaks at work so as not to lose sight of being a person. Hypersensitive to noise, we may feel that we need peace and quiet to maintain our composure. We may long for sleep or even for death to escape our problems.

(2) Grasping to receive a rest from others, we may feel that if others would give us a break and leave us alone, everything would be all right. Coupling this syndrome with previous forms of grasping, we may feel that we cannot fall asleep unless our loved one is lying next to us, unless we make love, or unless we read a book.

(3) When we are afraid to take a rest, we may feel that we will no longer be a person if we stop being active. We may be unable to relax or to fall asleep from fear of missing something or of not being in control. We may also insensitively feel that no one can handle our job if we retire or go on vacation.

(4) We may also be uncomfortable at receiving a rest from others. If people do not call or ask us to do something for them, we may overreact by feeling unloved, unneeded, and unwanted.

Grasping or Fearing Expression of Pleasure

(1) Investing the experience of pleasure, happiness, or joy with the imagined power to establish our existence, we may grasp at it. This usually occurs in conjunction with fearing or grasping at one of the previous qualities. For example, terrified of boredom or wishing distraction, we may feel the need for sensory experience to provide us pleasure. Thus, feeling a

need for constant entertainment to feel alive, we may compulsively roam the shopping malls or play computer games. Unable to watch a television program for fear that we may be missing something better, we drive everyone insane by incessantly switching channels.

We may experience a similar restlessness with our sexual life. Never satisfied with what we have, we endlessly seek something more exciting to make life feel worthwhile. Moreover, we may hope to lose ourselves in the pleasures of sex. People who are psychologically dependent on recreational drugs, cigarettes, or alcohol may feel that they cannot enjoy a meal, a movie, or making love unless experiencing the effects of their favorite substance of abuse.

We may grasp at pleasure by measuring it with physical activity or verbal expression. For example, we may feel that we have to *do something* in order to have “fun.” We cannot simply enjoy someone’s company without having to run with the person from one activity to the next. We may also feel that our happiness with someone is not real unless we verbalize it. This may make the other person feel uncomfortable and, inevitably, it ruins the mood.

When we grasp for pleasure from rest, we may look forward all day to coming home after work or to putting the children to bed. Only then do we feel that we can relax and be our “real selves.” It seems as if during the rest of the day, we are not ourselves. This makes us overreact if anyone deprives us of the pleasure of our “private time off.”

A causative form of this syndrome is compulsively feeling that we have to please everyone or just someone special. Insensitive to our needs or emotions, we sacrifice everything in this quest. For example, we may feel ourselves worthless as a lover unless we bring our partner and ourselves to orgasm.

Moreover, when someone comes to see us, we may feel that we have to entertain the person. Otherwise, he or she will not enjoy the visit. We may also feel that we always have to be the clown and make others laugh. Otherwise, people will not accept us as we are. Even if we joke to try to lighten people’s moods, we need to remember that Buddha himself was unable to make everyone happy. How can we possibly succeed in his place?

(2) When we grasp at receiving pleasure, happiness, or joy from others, we may be obsessed with winning others’ approval. We may feel that unless others approve, we either cannot or must not be happy. Thus, insensitive to our needs and goals, we may “do good deeds” to try to justify our existence and worth in people’s eyes. Another form of this syndrome is

feeling that we need others to entertain us or simply to be with us. We feel incapable of being happy on our own.

(3) We may be afraid to express joy or to feel pleasure or happiness. For example, we may not “allow ourselves to be happy” because we feel that we do not deserve it. We may also find it difficult to relax and have a good time because of fear that others will disapprove. Some people with this syndrome may even have the irrational fear that a severe parent will punish them for having pleasure, as if catching them masturbating as a child. A causative form of this problem is feeling uncomfortable to give someone physical pleasure, because of fear of inadequacy or that we have nothing to offer. Consequently, we become a passive lover.

(4) Lastly, we may feel uneasy receiving pleasure or accepting expressions of others’ joy or happiness. For example, we may feel discomfort at someone trying to give us physical pleasure. It feels as if we were being invaded and so we are frigid. Moreover, we may feel frightened or threatened if someone tries to derive physical pleasure from us, as if it would deprive us of something. We may also be uncomfortable at others’ being pleased with us and offering us praise, because we feel we do not deserve it.

2 Relaxing Triplistic Appearances of Mind’s Natural Functions

Dispelling Insecurity through Deconstruction

To dispel the problems of insecurity that our confusion and its instincts create regarding mind’s natural functions, we need to identify the triplistic appearances that fuel these problems. Recognizing the absurdity of our fantasies, we then need to deconstruct these deceptive appearances. Methods such as seeing experiences as waves on the ocean help with the process.

Clear light mental activity is like an ocean. Its natural functions, such as producing verbal expression, are also activities. They naturally arise like waves or swells in mid-ocean. Circumstances, motivation, and an intention -- for instance, seeing the flight attendant coming down the aisle, wanting something more to drink, and deciding to ask -- affect when waves of certain activities arise and what form they take. Nevertheless, the waves repeatedly arise as characteristic features of everyone’s clear light mind.

When the impulse that brings on the wave of an action is a karmic one, mixed with confusion, our mental activity projects a triplistic appear-

ance onto the wave and the winds of our karma churn the energy. Consequently, one side of the wave seems to be a concrete agent, the other side seems to be a concrete object, and the wave itself appears to be a concrete action. Our mind becomes agitated and we experience the naturally arising wave as monstrous. This alarming experience throws us off balance: we become self-conscious and nervous. Indicative of insecurity, these two unsettling feelings drive us to grasp at, fear, or try to drown ourselves in being the seemingly concrete agent or object of the seemingly concrete activity. For example, inflating the orange juice, ourselves, and the act of asking for some into monumental objects, we feel too shy to ask for anything. We suffer greatly.

When we stop projecting triplistic appearances onto the waves, or we at least stop believing in these deceptive appearances, the winds of our karma automatically die down. Waves of clear light activity still naturally arise, but they no longer seem monstrous. The problem is not with the waves. Waves consist merely of water and do not disturb the depths of the ocean. The problem lies with the triplistic appearances that our mind unconsciously projects onto them. Experiences, such as asking the flight attendant for something to drink, are not disturbing in themselves. They disturb us only when we mix them with confusion.

To deconstruct our disturbing experiences correctly, we need to understand that we do exist. We do not exist, however, as a concrete “me” in our head that we need to make secure. We do not need to prove, justify, or defend our existence. Nor do we need to drown it in something. The vain attempt to do so just brings us battering from the waves of our disturbing experiences. Further, we need to divest words, deeds, and so on of the unrealistic power we imagine that they have to grant us security if we express or avoid them.

The deconstruction process does not leave us with sterile relations with others or with ourselves. What remains is the automatic functioning of mental activity’s seven facets. No longer on an endless quest for elusive security, we can act, speak, experience sensory and mental objects, love, be energetic, be quiet, and enjoy life with balanced sensitivity.

EXERCISE 20

Relaxing Triplistic Appearances of Mind’s Natural Functions

During the first phase of this exercise, we try to recall situations in which we grasped for security based on projecting and believing in triplistic appearances of our mental activity’s seven natural facets. With each mental action, we consider four forms this syndrome may take – grasping to

express the action, clutching to receive expressions of it, being afraid to express the action, and being uncomfortable at receiving expressions of it. We also try to recall any insensitivity to others' feelings or hypersensitivity to the situation that may have accompanied our experience.

During the exercise, we work with common illustrations of each syndrome. Later, we may explore other forms on our own. If we have never experienced some of the examples, we may try to empathize with someone we know who suffers from these problems and imagine what it must be like. For practice in a workshop, the group facilitator may choose one syndrome for each of mind's seven natural functions. When practicing at home, we may do the same, choosing only personally pertinent forms. For advanced or thorough practice, we may consider all the cited variations.

We start by creating a quiet, caring space and then recalling a specific situation and our imbalanced response to it. Regretting the suffering our behavior may have caused and resolving to avoid recurrences of it, we try to recognize the triplistic appearance involved. It may have taken one of two forms. The imagined triplicity may have consisted of (1) a seemingly concrete agent "me" who hoped to gain security by grasping at, avoiding, or drowning in (2) a seemingly concrete activity directed at (3) a seemingly concrete object. Alternatively, the triplicity may have comprised (1) a seemingly concrete recipient or object "me" who hoped to gain security by grasping at, avoiding, or drowning in (2) a seemingly concrete activity performed by (3) a seemingly concrete agent. We projected one of these triplistic fantasies onto a wave of our experience; and the winds of our karma churned the experience into something monstrous.

Recognizing the absurdity of our fantasy, we picture ourselves entering the situation afresh. Our clear light mind naturally swells and gives rise to an impulse for responding with an action. Mixed with confusion, the impulse grows like a wave and brings on a deceptive triplistic appearance of the action we would take. Consequently, the impulse grows larger and becomes an urge to respond in a neurotic way. At this point, we stop the turbulent process. Recalling that the projected appearance does not refer to anything real, we picture the projector of the triplistic movie in our mind shutting off and dissolving. In doing this, we make sure to avoid any dualistic feeling of a seemingly concrete and paranoid "me" shutting off a seemingly concrete projector in our head. Imagining that the winds of our karma die down, we try to relax our grasping or our fear. The wave of the experience no longer seems monstrous. It grows less intense.

From the perspective of the entire ocean, waves of activity are surface events. They can never disturb us: they naturally pass. Realizing this,

we return to the original impulse simply to respond to the situation with an action. Now, however, we imagine engaging nontriplistically in the deconstructed activity, without self-consciousness, tension, or worry. We try to experience the imagined action as a wave naturally arising from clear light mind and naturally settling back into it. In this way, we arrive at a non-triplistic experience of a wave of a natural mental function.

As a final step, we recall someone else acting in each disturbing manner toward us: imposing unneeded help, constantly speaking, and so forth. To defuse our hypersensitive response, we try to understand that he or she was overlaying one of mind's natural functions with a triplistic appearance. The person was grasping at (1) the seemingly concrete activity in order to gain security from being (2) the seemingly concrete agent of it, when directed at us as (3) its seemingly concrete object. Alternatively, the person feared (1) the seemingly concrete activity as a threat when we as its (2) seemingly concrete agent directed it at him or her as (3) its seemingly concrete object.

With this insight in mind, we deconstruct our own triplistic experience of the person's action. Again, we use the images of the projector of our fantasy shutting off and dissolving, the winds of our karma stilling, and the wave of the experience settling. As with Exercise Fifteen, we then direct compassion at the person, by wishing him or her to be free of the suffering that his or her confusion creates. Lastly, we try to imagine responding appropriately and nontriplistically with balanced sensitivity.

Physical Activity

(1a) To dispel the feeling that we always need to keep busy, we recall a wonderful conversation at the dinner table. Feeling too tense to continue talking when people had finished dessert, we jumped up and immediately washed the dishes. We might have felt out of place in the conversation and unconsciously hoped to escape our insecurity and discomfort by losing ourselves in the task. Our insensitivity in fussing with the table killed the conversation. Regretting our action, we see through the triplistic appearance of a seemingly concrete servile "me," the seemingly concrete unbearably dirty dishes, and the seemingly concrete imperative task of washing them, and imagine handling the situation differently. We try to feel that the projector stops and that the wave of our tension to do something settles. Then, we picture enjoying the rest of the conversation, without feeling uneasy. We clean up only when the talk is over.

Recalling someone else who suffers from this compulsive "washing up" syndrome, we think how tense and miserable it must make the person.

Instead of intolerance, we wish for him or her to be free of this pain. We imagine telling the person it is all right to do the dishes later.

(1b) To overcome our need to order others around, we recall seeing a relative or friend sitting idly in front of the television. Recognizing the triplistic scene of a seemingly concrete police officer “me,” a seemingly concrete lazy bum, and a seemingly concrete productive action to justify a person’s existence, we try to see its absurdity. Picturing the projector turning off, we try to feel our tension loosening. The wave of impulse loses intensity so that we no longer feel compelled to order the person to get moving. We imagine asking him or her to do something only if there is an urgent task, otherwise we are patient.

With understanding and compassion, we imagine similarly releasing triplistic feelings of outrage at someone telling us what to do. We picture calmly telling the person that we are enjoying the program, or simply getting up if there is something urgent.

(2) To stop expecting someone always to do things for us, we recall sitting at the table and noticing that we do not have a napkin. Dismissing as absurd our triplistic feeling of a seemingly concrete aristocrat “me,” a seemingly concrete servant “you,” and the seemingly concrete act of someone catering to another’s need, we imagine the movie abruptly ends. As the wave of our tension dies down, we picture getting the napkin ourselves.

Thinking of someone who expects us to wait on him or her, we apply the same method to try to calm our triplistic response of outrage or servitude. We imagine politely telling the person that we are in the middle of eating, or simply getting what the person wants if we are finished.

(3) To overcome feeling afraid to do something, we remember needing to change the ink cartridge in our printer. Our mind projected the absurd triplistic scene of a seemingly concrete incompetent “me,” a seemingly concrete overwhelming machine, and a seemingly concrete impossible task. Imagining that the projector turns off and dissolves into myth, we try to relax. As the wave of impulse to act turns gentle, we imagine facing the challenge straightforwardly, without melodrama. Even if we do not succeed, that does not make us a worthless person. We picture trying to figure out how to do it ourselves and only seeking help if all else fails.

Then, we think of someone who always asks us to do things for him or her because of lack of self-confidence. We try to imagine facing the person without feeling that the request is an imposition on a seemingly concrete “me” whose kindness everyone abuses. Instead, we imagine

patiently guiding the person through the task. If the person cannot do it, we picture helping him or her without resentment.

(4) To dispel feeling uncomfortable to accept someone doing something for us, we recall sharing the driving with someone on a long motor trip. The action movie came on of a seemingly concrete “me” who is not in control, a seemingly concrete “you” who has all the power, and a seemingly concrete terrorist act of someone usurping command. With our insight, the triplistic movie stops. Feeling the wave of terror quiet down, we trying to imagine sitting in the passenger seat without any tension. We also try to picture not making the other person feel nervous by commenting on his or her driving throughout the journey.

Then, we try to imagine responding nontriplistically, with balanced sensitivity, to someone finding it difficult to be a passenger while we are driving. We make sure that we are driving safely.

Verbal Expression

(1) To overcome insisting on having the last word, we recall listening to someone say something with which we disagreed. Triplistically projecting a seemingly concrete threatened “me,” a seemingly concrete challenger “you,” and the seemingly concrete act of speaking, which would have the power to restore one’s integrity, we felt compelled to retort sharply. We remind ourselves that voicing our opinion cannot make a supposedly solid identity more secure. At this reminder, we imagine that the projector shuts down and disappears. We try to feel the wave of tension to speak slowly settling. Without making the person feel that we can never accept what he or she says, we imagine only adding something if it is constructive.

Then, we recall someone who forever feels compelled to disagree with us. With understanding, patience, and compassion, we try to imagine listening silently

(2) To quiet the insecurity behind our insistence that someone talk to us when he or she has little to say, we remember someone visiting us and hardly speaking. We were haunted with a triplistic vision of a seemingly concrete unloved “me,” a seemingly concrete rejective “you,” and the seemingly concrete act of speaking words that could prove one’s affection. The person’s silence, however, did not mean that he or she did not love us. It did not invalidate the visit. As we focus on this realization, the movie stops. Relaxing our expectations, we try to feel the wave of insecurity that pushed our demand slowly quieting. In its place, we try to imagine enjoying someone’s silent company.

Similarly, we recall a loved one complaining that we never talk to him or her. Viewing this remark nontriplistically, we try to calm our overreaction to the implied accusation that we do not care for the person. There are many ways to show love.

(3) To dispel shyness at speaking up, we recall having to make a report to our organization. We were afraid that we would make a fool of ourselves and that the audience would laugh at us. The triplistic feeling was of a seemingly concrete moronic “me,” a seemingly concrete judgmental “you,” and the seemingly concrete act of opening one’s mouth and thereby proving one’s inadequacy. With our realization that the world does not end even if others criticize us for being a poor speaker, we try to feel that the projector crashes and our nightmare ends. Slowly relaxing the wave of our tension, we try to picture delivering the report so that people can hear us, without feeling nervous.

Similarly, if someone is too self-conscious to speak audibly when we ask a question, we imagine gently excusing ourselves for being unable to hear. Demanding with annoyance that the person speak louder only makes him or her feel more insecure.

(4) To stop feeling uncomfortable with others’ words, we recall someone saying something politically incorrect. Even if he or she directed these words at us, we realize that they do not have the power to rob us of our self-dignity. We took personal offense only because we subscribed to the triplistic program of a seemingly concrete self-righteous “me,” a seemingly concrete bigoted “you,” and a seemingly concrete act of speaking narrow-mindedly. Imagining that the projector shuts off, we try to relax. The wave of someone talking passes. If the person is receptive, we imagine suggesting a more sensitive way of speaking. If he or she thinks we are too touchy, we try to imagine holding our tongue.

We then recall ourselves unwittingly using a politically incorrect term and someone taking offense. Without feeling annoyance or guilt, we try to imagine accepting the person’s correction nontriplistically, with patience and gratitude.

Sensory or Mental Experience

(1) To overcome the compulsive drive to indulge our senses, we recall being at a buffet and tasting every item. We behaved as if in the triplistic movie of a seemingly concrete “me” about to face execution, a seemingly concrete “last meal,” and a seemingly concrete act of eating that could somehow make one’s life worthwhile. Our belief in the movie was clearly absurd. Imagining the preposterous movie stops, we try to relax any swell

of feeling deprived of our last chance to eat. In its stead, we try to picture leaving several dishes behind once we are full.

We then recall someone with us stuffing his or her plate. Without disapproval or disgust, we suggest before the person goes for a second helping that we come again when we get hungry.

(2) To stop feeling that we need others to know everything about us, we recall sitting next to someone on an airplane and telling the person all our problems. Understanding that others knowing what we are doing does not establish or confirm our reality, we try to see through our narcissistic fantasy. We had triplistically imagined a seemingly concrete, extremely important and interesting “me,” a seemingly concrete “you” who was dying to know our life story, and a seemingly concrete affirming act of knowing a person’s vital information. Imagining that the projector turns off and disappears, we try to feel the wave of our self-importance die down. Exercising discrimination, we try to picture telling others only what is necessary for them to know and confiding only in those whom we can trust.

Next, we recall someone who compulsively tells us every detail of his or her day. Normally, we find this very tedious. Understanding the person’s insecurity, however, we try to imagine gently changing the topic of conversation.

(3) To dispel feeling uncomfortable with sensory experience, we recall feeling shy and nervous to look directly at someone during a conversation. Realizing that the seemingly concrete act of looking in someone’s eyes does not expose a seemingly concrete inadequate “me” sitting behind my eyes, whom a seemingly concrete “you” will discover and surely reject, we imagine that the triplistic movie ends. As we try to relax, the wave of the experience becomes gentler. Instead of making the other person feel bad by looking at the wall while we are speaking, we picture maintaining normal eye contact during the conversation.

Recalling someone not looking at us while speaking, we try to understand the person’s triplistic feeling and not take it personally. Instead, we try to feel compassion for the person’s self-consciousness and discomfort. When we scold a child, for instance, if we insist that he or she still look at us, or if we still look at him or her in the eyes, we do not allow the child any self-dignity.

(4) To dispel our fear of being the object of others’ sensory experience, we recall having close body contact with a crowd on a subway. Realizing that a stranger’s body touching ours is not equivalent to rape, we do not wince and make the person feel terrible. Instead, we imagine that the projector stops showing the triplistic movie of a seemingly concrete virginal

“me,” a seemingly concrete filthy “you,” and a seemingly concrete disgusting act of physical contact. Doing so allows us to relax. With a calmer wave of response to the encounter, we picture merely experiencing the sensation and letting it pass.

Recalling an occasion when our body inadvertently touched someone else’s on the crowded subway and the person grimaced, we try to imagine shifting positions without feeling offended.

Expression of Warm Concern

(1) To overcome compulsively expressing affection, we recall seeing our partner or child and feeling that we simply must voice our love. Doing so in front of his or her friends embarrassed and annoyed the person. The projector was playing the triplistic movie of a seemingly concrete “me” who is starved for love, a seemingly concrete “you” who must be similarly starved, and a seemingly concrete act of expressing love that can fill the empty hole inside. Understanding that saying “I love you” does not make our love or us more real, we imagine that the projector stops. As the wave of anxiety behind the compulsion to express our love loses momentum, we try to relax and not make the person feel uncomfortable. We imagine saying “I love you” only at appropriate times – not too often and not too rarely, but especially when he or she needs to hear it. When overused, the words “I love you” lose their meaning.

Then thinking of someone who compulsively tells us he or she loves us, we try to relax our triplistic feeling of being humiliated. We imagine responding warmly and sincerely, “I love you too.”

(2) To overcome grasping to receive affection, we recall seeing our partner or child and asking for a hug. He or she told us not to be stupid. Although receiving a comforting hug may make us temporarily feel better, it cannot make us more real. Realizing that our need for someone constantly embracing us is like that of a small child for a security blanket, we relax our demands. We imagine that the triplistic movie ends of a seemingly concrete “me” whom nobody loves, a seemingly concrete “you” whose love we wish were real, and a seemingly concrete act of expressing and thereby affirming affection. As the wave of tension behind our compulsion dies down, we try to imagine asking for a hug only at appropriate moments and otherwise feeling secure in our relationship and in ourselves.

Recalling someone who makes such spoken or unspoken demands on us, we try to relax our triplistic feeling of protest at someone having expectations of what we should do. We picture hugging the person if the

time and place are appropriate and, if they are not, telling the person we will hug him or her later when the situation is more comfortable.

(3) To dispel feeling uncomfortable at expressing affection, we recall seeing a loved one who needed reassurance of our feelings. We had difficulty telling the person we love him or her. Saying “I love you,” however, or giving someone a hug, is not a sign of weakness. It does not deprive us of anything. Nor does it mean that we have become a slave to our passions or to this person and that we are no longer in control. Understanding this allows us to see through the triplistic appearance of a seemingly concrete self-sufficient “me,” a seemingly concrete imposer “you,” and a seemingly concrete act of expressing affection as a threatening demand. Imagining the projector turned off, we try to relax the wave of our tension and not let the person feel unloved, especially when he or she is depressed. On the contrary, we imagine saying “I love you” and sincerely meaning it. Then we give him or her a reassuring hug.

Recalling a loved one who has difficulty expressing affection, we try to understand that the person does not have to verbalize his or her love in order for us to be reassured of its existence. Instead of feeling unloved or rejected, we try to feel compassion for the person.

(4) To dispel discomfort at receiving affection, we remember feeling threatened and stiff when a loved one kissed us. Receiving physical displays of affection, however, does not rob us of our independence. It cannot render us into a baby who is no longer in control. Realizing this, we do not make the person feel like a fool by saying something nasty or by being passive. We picture the projector cutting off the triplistic movie of a seemingly concrete grown-up “me,” a seemingly concrete degrading “you,” and a seemingly concrete act of expressing love as something childish. As the wave of anxiety quiets, we try to relax and imagine accepting the show of affection warmly and responding in kind. If our discomfort is due to feeling that we do not deserve to be loved, we remind ourselves of the natural good qualities of our mind and heart. In this way, we try to banish our low self-esteem as absurd.

Then, recalling someone who feels uncomfortable receiving displays of affection, we imagine compassionately restraining from embarrassing the person. We can show our love in other ways.

Expression of Energy

(1) To stop feeling it necessary to assert our will, we recall going out for dinner with our friends and insisting that we go to the restaurant of our choice. Getting our way does not prove that we exist. We do not have to

feel insecure if we are not in control of everything that happens. No one can control everything anyway. Remembering this, we picture an abrupt end to the triplistic action movie of a seemingly concrete “me” who must control what happens, a seemingly concrete “you” who must be directed, and a seemingly concrete act of asserting energy to gain security through domination. The projector dissolves; the compelling wave of internal pressure to assert our will grows weak. We try to imagine, instead, being relaxed when discussing where to eat and being open to other suggestions.

If a friend insists on getting his or her way and there is no good reason to object, we try to imagine graciously accepting if only the two of us are going out. We do this without feeling defeated or hurt. If we are with a group of friends, we picture asking their opinion and going along with the majority choice.

(2) To overcome feeling the need for others to focus on us, we recall feeling frustrated when visiting or living with someone engrossed in the television or in the computer. Feeling insignificant and unloved, we insisted that the person shut off the machine and pay attention to us. Our insecurity caused resentment and no one enjoyed the encounter. We try to imagine seeing the person engrossed like this and not taking it as a personal rejection. Even if the person is trying to avoid us, we reflect that perhaps we are contributing to the problem by being too pushy and demanding more attention than is reasonable. We try to relax by imagining that the projector stops showing the triplistic melodrama of a seemingly concrete “me” who needs attention to establish his or her worth, a seemingly concrete “you” whose attention is vital, and a seemingly concrete act of directing energy that can affirm the existence and worth of its object. The wave of tension driving us to demand attention slowly dies down.

If we have nothing else to do and want to spend time sharing something with the person, we can try to develop interest in the television program or in the computer. Why do we feel that quality time with someone is restricted to sharing only what we like? Sometimes, however, we may need to remind someone addicted to television or to the computer that there are other things in life. But, we need to do this nontriplistically, without haughty disapproval or fear of rejection.

Recalling someone who demands our attention when we are engrossed in something or having a conversation, we try to imagine not feeling invaded. We picture warmly trying to include the person, if appropriate. Suppose the person is a small child and is not content if we merely hold him or her on our lap. We picture leaving what we are doing or

excusing ourselves for a moment. Without triplistic feelings of resentment, we imagine taking care of the child's needs.

(3) To overcome feeling afraid to assert ourselves for fear of rejection, we recall silently complying with someone's will or submitting to his or her outrageous behavior. If we wish to avoid confrontations, we need to remove our triplistic feelings, not our active input into the relationship. The passive contribution of our resentful silence shapes the relationship just as much as if we say something. We try to see through the triplistic appearance of a seemingly concrete unworthy "me," a seemingly concrete "you" whose acceptance is crucial, and a seemingly concrete act of expressing energy as something unreasonable. With this insight, the projector stops playing the unfortunate scene and the wave of self-doubt settles. We try to picture, instead, being more assertive without feeling nervous or tense. Even if the person becomes angry and rejects us, this does not reflect our worth as a human being.

We then recall someone who is afraid to assert him or herself with us. Dismissing any triplistic feelings that may lead us to take advantage of the person's docility or to become exasperated with it, we try to imagine gently encouraging him or her to speak up. We let the person know that even if we momentarily become angry at his or her words, this will not lead to our abandoning the relationship. Instead, this change in his or her attitude will enhance our respect and improve the relationship.

(4) To dispel our fear of others' energy, we recall dreading to visit a relative who always complains. We were afraid that his or her energy would infect us. The triplistic movie playing in our mind was starring a seemingly concrete threatened "me" and a seemingly concrete depressing "you," and was portraying the seemingly concrete act of emitting draining energy. With this recognition, we picture that the projector shuts off and disappears. The wave of anxiety quiets down. More relaxed, we try to imagine listening to the complaints and letting the energy pass through us. Depression or annoyance comes from making an invading force out of the person's energy and from putting up walls to defend us from it. The energy itself is just a wave of clear light activity, as is our experience of it. We take our relative seriously, but do not take the complaining personally.

We then recall someone who found our energy too threatening and shut him or herself off from us. Perhaps it was our teenager who rebelled at us being an overbearing parent. We try to imagine easing off without feeling anxious. Playing a more removed role in our teenager's life does not mean that we are no longer a caring parent. We can still be involved, but at a distance that the teenager finds more comfortable.

Rest

(1) To overcome grasping for a break, we recall feeling overwhelmed with work. It feels as if we are not really ourselves at the office. We can only feel like a person on the weekend. This triplistic science-fiction movie of a seemingly concrete exhausted “me” who is not myself, a seemingly concrete refreshed “me” who is myself, and a seemingly concrete act of resting that can bring the metamorphosis, is clearly absurd. We are equally a person on the weekdays and the weekend. Both are equally valid parts of our life. We may need a rest after a hard week of work, but a break cannot make us real again. This realization shuts down the projector. The wave of anxious longing settles down and passes. We try to imagine calmly looking forward to the weekend, without resentfully feeling trapped at work.

Recalling someone who takes frequent coffee breaks, we try to imagine responding calmly without triplistic feelings of disapproval or annoyance. If the person is lazy, we may need to speak with him or her about it. On the other hand, if the person’s workload is unreasonable or the working atmosphere is unpleasant, we may need to do something to improve the situation.

(2) To quiet our grasping at receiving a break from others, we recall our parents, for example, pressuring us to find a job or to get married. We feel that if they would only leave us alone, we would be all right. To release the anxious feeling of a seemingly concrete victim “me,” a seemingly concrete oppressor “you,” and a seemingly concrete act of respite that will solve all one’s problems, we picture the projector of this triplistic movie shutting down and dissolving. With the passing of our wave of tension, we acknowledge and try to appreciate our parents’ concern. When we build emotional barriers to an onslaught from parents, we can never rest or relax. We are always defensive and become hypersensitive to any remark they make.

Suppose our parents’ concern is valid and we have avoided doing anything because of childishly wanting to be independent and not liking someone to push us. With the projector absent, relaxing our tension becomes much easier. Imagining taking steps to improve our situation, we try to feel reinforced, not bullied by our parents’ concern. If we have been trying to find work or a partner, but have not succeeded, we imagine gently explaining this without feeling guilty. If we have valid reasons for not finding a job or for not getting married, we try to imagine calmly explaining them without being defensive or apologetic.

Suppose our parents become melodramatic. We try to experience their words and energy nontriplistically and reassure them that we are happy the way we are. We will be all right. If our parents are facing ridicule from their friends about our lack of a job or a spouse, we need to show sympathy. However, this does not mean that we need to be insensitive to ourselves. We may ask them, for instance, without arrogance, which is more important, their child's happiness or their friends' satisfaction.

We then recall someone who feels that he or she needs a break from us to feel like an independent, real person. Without taking this as a personal rejection, we try to imagine nontriplistically giving the person the time and the space to be alone. Everyone needs a rest sometime.

(3) To overcome being afraid to take a rest, we recall feeling uneasy about going on vacation. Then, we think how no one is indispensable. Suppose we were to die. Business would still go on. Realizing this, we picture that the projector stops showing the triplistic movie of a seemingly concrete irreplaceable "me," seemingly concrete work that no one else can do, and the seemingly concrete irresponsible act of taking a break. With the wave of tension quieted down, we try to relax and imagine leaving our work without feeling anxious or guilty.

Recalling someone else at work who does not want to take a vacation for the same reason, we imagine reassuring the person that everything will be fine while he or she is away.

(4) To quiet our fear of abandonment, we recall no one calling or visiting us when we were sick. We felt that nobody loved us. People, however, are busy and perhaps they thought that we needed a rest without being bothered. Considering this possibility, we try to picture a halt to the maudlin triplistic scene of a seemingly concrete abandoned "me," a seemingly concrete uncaring "you," and a seemingly concrete act of lying in bed, forsaken. The wave of self-pity driving us to reject any rest quiets down. We try to imagine regarding our loved ones' silence nontriplistically and picture enjoying peace and quiet.

We then remember someone feeling ill who would feel abandoned if we did not call or visit constantly. Relaxing our impatience, we imagine telling the person of our intention to let him or her have a total rest.

Expression of Pleasure

(1) To overcome grasping for pleasure, we recall switching endlessly through the television stations out of boredom or dissatisfaction. We never give any program a chance because we compulsively search for something better. A black hole will not swallow us, however, if we find

nothing to watch. At this realization, we imagine that the projector turns off the triplistic movie of a seemingly concrete “me” who requires constant amusement, a seemingly concrete program that provides complete entertainment, and a seemingly concrete act of enjoying pleasure. The wave of energy pushing us in an endless quest for pleasure dies down. More relaxed, we picture putting on the television only when we actually want to watch something. If we find something interesting, we try to imagine enjoying it, without clutching the remote control in case the program suddenly displeases us. We also picture shutting off the set when the program is finished. If nothing interesting is on, we imagine accepting that fact and turning off the television without repeating the search.

We then recall watching television with someone who compulsively switches channels. Feeling compassion for this person who can never enjoy anything, we try to experience his or her restlessness nontriplistically, without feeling it as an attack on our pleasure. In this way, we defuse the situation from becoming a battle of wills. This enables us to find a reasonable compromise.

(2) To quit compulsively striving to win others’ approval, we recall doing something just to please someone, such as taking a prestigious, but boring job. Pleasing others is of course very nice, but not at the expense of what is beneficial for others or for ourselves. Realizing that we do not need to justify our existence by gaining others’ approval, we try to relax. This means an end to the triplistic movie of a seemingly concrete inadequate “me,” a seemingly concrete “you” on a pedestal, and a seemingly concrete act of showing pleasure with someone as an affirmation of worth. With the wave of our insecurity quieted, we try to imagine making choices that feel comfortable and that are right for us. If others approve and are pleased, that is very good. If they do not approve, we feel secure enough that it hardly matters.

Then, we recall someone who always tries to win our approval. We try to relax our triplistic feeling of a seemingly concrete “you” who is trying to place responsibility for the success or failure of his or her decisions on a seemingly concrete “me” and the seemingly concrete act of someone granting approval. We try to imagine encouraging the person to decide for him or herself and assuring our love no matter what choice the person makes.

(3) To stop being afraid to have a good time, we recall being at an office party and thinking that we will lose our dignity if we dance. Realizing that having a good time and dancing are expressions of our human qualities, not a denial of them, we see through the triplistic movie. The

projector stops reflecting a seemingly concrete proper “me,” a seemingly concrete undignified dance, and a seemingly concrete degrading act of expressing pleasure. The wave of tension dies down. Without making everyone feel uncomfortable by sitting with a frown of disapproval, we relax and try to imagine dancing and enjoying ourselves like everyone else.

Thinking of someone who is afraid to relax and have a good time in our presence, we try to drop our triplistic feeling of impatience and disapproval of his or her shyness. It only makes the person feel more nervous and insecure. We then try to picture accepting the person no matter what he or she does.

(4) Lastly, to dispel feeling uncomfortable to accept others being pleased with us, we recall someone expressing his or her pleasure with our work. We protested, feeling that what we had done was inadequate and that we are no good. There is no harm, however, feeling good about what we have accomplished. It does not render us vulnerable or conceited. Understanding this turns off the triplistic movie of a seemingly concrete undeserving “me,” a seemingly concrete patronizing “you,” and a seemingly concrete insincere act of showing of pleasure. With the projector gone and the wave of tension quieted, we try to imagine, instead, accepting the approval graciously, saying thank you, and feeling happy.

We then recall someone being unable to accept our pleasure with him or her. The person is convinced that no matter what we say or do, we do not love him or her and we disapprove. We try to imagine quieting our triplistic feeling of outrage at the person not believing us. This enables us to relax and be more compassionate so that the person feels more secure in our approval.

Feeling Comfortable with Others and with Ourselves

During the second phase of the exercise, we practice with a partner. We try to experience the seven waves of natural activities without a triplistic feeling of a seemingly concrete “me” encountering a seemingly concrete “you” through involvement in a seemingly concrete act. This means engaging in and receiving the actions without feeling self-conscious, without being nervous of the person, and without worrying about our performance or about being accepted. To do this, we ourselves need to be totally receptive and accepting of the person and of ourselves. Being nonjudgmental and being free of mental comments are the keys to this practice.

If triplistic feelings of nervousness or self-consciousness arise, we try to deconstruct them as in the first phase of the exercise. We imagine the projector of fantasy in our mind shutting off and dissolving. Then, we try to

picture the winds of our karma stilling, the wave of the experience seeming no longer monstrous, and lastly the wave settling back into the ocean of our mind. If various positive or negative feelings arise while doing this exercise, we also try to feel them pass like an ocean wave, without grasping at or fearing them.

Holding our own hand for a few moments to accustom ourselves to nontriplistic sensations, we begin by massaging the person's shoulders. We then experience being massaged. Following this round, we sit face to face and massage each other's shoulders simultaneously. Without worrying about what we are doing or how well we are doing it, and without judging our own or the person's performance, we simply experience the wave of the physical activity and let it pass. We enjoy the wave, but do not inflate it into something concrete to grasp at, to fear, or to lose ourselves in.

Next, we speak to the person from our heart for a few minutes about how we have been the last few days and what we have been feeling. Then, we listen to the other person do the same. When speaking, we try not to worry about the person accepting or rejecting us. When listening, we try to be totally attentive, receptive, and nonjudgmental. In both situations, we try not to make a big deal out of the conversation. We accomplish this by recognizing as absurd and then imagine an end to any triplistic movie projected onto the interaction.

We follow this with gently looking in the person's eyes, without feeling we have to say or do anything. The other person does the same. We completely accept each other. When it feels right, each of us expresses our warmth to the other, without forcing it or feeling self-conscious or nervous. We may take the person's hand, give him or her a hug, or say, "I really like you" or "It's nice to be with you" -- whichever feels natural. We then try to feel and accept each other's energy, without being nervous or putting up defenses. Then, we completely relax and sit quietly with each other. In the end, we just feel the joy of being in each other's presence.

First, we practice this sequence with someone of the opposite sex, then with someone of the same gender. If possible, we practice with persons of each sex who are our own age, then younger, then older -- first all three of the opposite sex and then all three of the same gender as ourselves. Including among these persons people from different cultural or racial backgrounds and alternating people we know with those who are new to us is also helpful. We try to note the different levels of self-consciousness and nervousness we experience with people in each category. In each case, we use the image of projector shutting down to deconstruct our triplistic feelings and just be relaxed and accepting.

We practice the third phase while focusing on ourselves. Since looking at ourselves in a mirror or at pictures from our past often supports a feeling of dualism, which then provides a foundation for feeling a triplicity, we work without props. We try to experience the seven natural actions directed at ourselves without a triplistic feeling of a seemingly concrete action and two “me”s present – the agent and the object of the action. This means being nonjudgmental, fully relaxed, totally accepting of ourselves, and verbally silent in our mind.

First, we smooth our hair without inflating the action and without feeling like either the doting parent or the child enduring the insult of being groomed. Next, we speak to ourselves silently about how we need to work harder or to be more relaxed. By imagining that the projector stops showing a triplistic movie, we carry this out without identifying as either the disciplinarian or the naughty child. Relaxing our confusion also allows us to avoid making the soliloquy traumatic. Without feelings of self-hatred, disgust, or guilt, we simply say what we need to do.

We now hold our hand reassuringly, without a projector and a confusing movie. In this way, we try to relax the triplistic feeling of a seemingly concrete person doing the touching, a seemingly concrete someone else feeling the touch, and a seemingly concrete and rather silly act of touching. Then, we show ourselves warm concern by stretching our legs if we are sitting cross-legged or by loosening our belt. We try to do this without feeling we are rewarding someone, being allowed to relax, or doing something monumental. Next, we try to feel our own energy, without being frightened. Totally accepting ourselves, we try to relax fully and to sit quietly without feeling lost, restless, or bored. Lastly, we try to feel the joy of simply being with ourselves. We enjoy our own company, nontriplistically and fully at ease. Practicing this phase of the exercise immediately after the second one makes the process of relaxing much easier.

3 Dispelling Discomfort at the Eight Transitory Things in Life

Eight Transitory Things in Life

The *lamrim* (graded stages) literature speaks of eight transitory things in life. These “eight worldly *dharmas*” are praise or criticism, good or bad news, gains or losses, and things going well or poorly. We may be either the recipient or the agent of each of the eight. In either case, we usually overreact and lose our balance. We become excited,

depressed, or uncomfortable at receiving or giving any of them. In things going well or poorly, we feel similarly unbalanced when we are the recipient or agent of these passing occurrences.

A traditional way to overcome hypersensitivity to receiving or giving these ephemeral things is to see the relativity of what we experience. For example, although some may praise us, others will always find fault, and vice versa. Thus, we may deconstruct a scene of receiving criticism by recalling the thousands who have praised or blamed us throughout our life and who will do so in the future. When we need to criticize someone, we may similarly recall the myriad times we have had to praise others or to offer them constructive criticism. We will undoubtedly have to do the same in the future. Such thoughts and the equanimity they grant us put our experiences into perspective and help us not to overreact. We still feel appropriately happy or sad when we receive or need to give any of these things, but we do not become emotionally overwhelmed or upset by the event.

When we receive these transitory things in life, we may also consider what makes a person's present words seem to reflect his or her true feelings toward us. When someone yells at us, for example, why do we immediately lose sight of all the pleasant things he or she has said before? When the person calms down and again speaks lovingly, why do we sometimes deny the significance of the previous upsetting scene? Why, on the other hand, do we sometimes cling to the memory of the wound as having more reality, no matter how much the person reassures us? Praise, blame, and so forth are perishable entities. None of them lasts.

Deconstructing Dualistic Appearances of Receiving or Giving Any of the Eight

Another method for maintaining balance in face of gains, losses, and so forth is to deconstruct the dualistic appearances our mind projects onto receiving or giving them. For example, when we receive a thank-you or lose someone's friendship, our mind creates the feeling of a seemingly concrete "me" and a seemingly concrete gain or loss. Believing that this deceptive appearance corresponds to reality and feeling insecure, we take this experience as an affirmation or as a denial of our worth as a person. Not only do we overreact to the present experience by becoming elated or depressed, we grasp for more gains and fear more losses in the elusive quest to make this imaginary concrete "me" more secure.

Overreacting to the eight transitory things derives from grasping at or feeling uncomfortable with mind's natural qualities. Receiving or giving praise, criticism, or good or bad news entails receiving or giving verbal expression, sensory experience, and energy. Being the recipient or agent of gains or losses involves the same qualities, physical activity, and sometimes warm concern. Being the recipient or agent of things going well or poorly requires receiving or giving joy or its absence.

To stop overreacting to these things in life, we need to deconstruct our experiences of them. Receiving or giving something pleasant, for example, does not prove that an imaginary concrete "me" is so wonderful. Nor does it threaten the independence of such a "me." Likewise, receiving or giving something unpleasant does not prove that this seemingly concrete "me" is a terrible person. Nor does it establish a seemingly concrete "me" or "you" as deserving pain.

Because our confusion makes us feel that if something is verbalized it is real, our mental comments and worries reinforce such dualistic feelings. Therefore, we can begin to dispel our belief in these myths by not verbalizing or commenting before, during, or after receiving or giving these things.

Correct deconstruction enables us to relax when receiving or giving the eight transitory things in life. Without denying that they are directed at us – not at thin air or at someone else -- we do not take them personally. Without denying that we, not anyone else, are aiming them at others, we do not give them self-consciously. We experience these events as waves of our clear light mind's natural activities, such as receiving or giving verbal expression.

Moreover, correct deconstruction does not rob these events of the happy or sad feelings that naturally accompany them. It simply divests the events of any power to upset us. Consequently, we avoid hypersensitive responses and prevent insensitive behavior. By accepting the reality of the situation at hand, we can deal with it sensibly. For example, we can calmly evaluate the praise or the criticism and learn something from it.

EXERCISE 21

Dispelling Discomfort at the Eight Transitory Things in Life

During the first phase of this exercise, we work with each of the eight transitory things in life, one at a time, considering first receiving it and then giving it to someone. We begin by recalling a situation in which we overreacted to one of the eight. Whether our pattern is to grasp at the

transitory thing or to feel uncomfortable with it, we regret any pain that our loss of balance might have caused the person or us. We resolve to try to prevent this from happening again and then deconstruct our disturbing syndrome.

Tantra practice sometimes employs forceful imagery to shock us out of habitually neurotic emotional patterns. In the previous exercise, we accustomed ourselves to a gentle form of deconstruction with the imagery of the projector, wind, and so forth. Now, let us try a stronger image to dispel the dualistic appearance and our belief in it that made us overreact. We shall use the image of the balloon of our fantasy popping, introduced in Exercise Eleven.

A concrete “me” sitting in our head and a gain or a loss so absolute that it establishes the worth or the worthlessness of such a “me” are preposterous fictions. They do not refer to anything real. When we picture our realization of this fact popping the balloon of our fantasy, we try to experience the burst shocking us out of our daydream. We try to feel our confusion and our attachment or aversion disappearing in an instant, leaving no trace. The popping of our fantasy leaves us only with the wave of experience that served as its basis.

Trying to feel this wave from the oceanic perspective of clear light activity, we next try to imagine receiving or giving each of the eight transitory things in life without tension or internal commentary. Without denying either the experience of this wave or the feeling of happiness or sadness that it naturally brings, we let it settle and pass.

We then recall feeling tense at someone overreacting when he or she received from us or gave to us the same transitory thing. Understanding the confusion behind the person’s hypersensitivity, we deconstruct our dualistic response by imagining it abruptly popping like a balloon. Then, compassionately accepting, for example, the person’s anger or depression at receiving our constructive criticism, we try to imagine responding nonjudgmentally with balanced sensitivity. We neither ignore the person’s emotions, nor become upset and feel guilty. Instead, we imagine feeling sad at the event and letting the person know what we feel. Although we are calm, if we show no emotion the person may only become more upset.

For initial practice in a workshop or at home, we may work with merely receiving each of the eight transitory things and choose only personally relevant examples. For advanced or thorough practice, we may work with all the cited examples for both receiving and giving each.

Receiving or Giving Praise or Criticism

(1) We recall either gloating or feeling unworthy when receiving praise from someone. For instance, our supervisor might have told us that we are a good worker who is kind to the rest of the employees. Dismissing our feeling of seemingly concrete words proving a seemingly concrete “me” to be a saint or a hypocrite, we try to imagine listening to them without tension or internal comment. They are merely waves of verbal expression and sensory experience, no more and no less. We naturally feel happy if they are true or feel sad if they are false, but we do not make a monumental event out of receiving the praise. Out of modesty, we may politely deny the recognition, but we do not make a disturbing scene of protest.

We then recall feeling annoyed or awkward at someone who boasted or protested too loudly when we commended him or her for good work. Understanding the confusion behind the person’s overreaction, we deconstruct our dualistic response to it and try to imagine listening patiently. We feel sad at his or her lack of maturity and balance. However, without saying anything aloud or to ourselves, we imagine letting the experience of hearing this pass. Next time, we will consider more carefully the value of praising the person to his or her face.

(2) We repeat the procedure remembering when we praised someone, such as for a job well done. We might have felt condescendingly gracious, compromising, or uncomfortable when saying the words. These feelings arose from believing in a concrete “me” who could prove its existence by bestowing concrete words of praise or who felt its superiority threatened by their utterance. All that happened, however, was the arising of verbal expression from our clear light mind. Remaining mindful of this fact, we try to experience the arising of our words nondualistically and let them pass. We then recall and deconstruct feeling suspicious or embarrassed at someone who was uneasy while praising us.

(3) Next, we work with feeling anger, mortification, or low self-esteem when receiving criticism or blame, such as for working poorly. Suppose we successfully deconstruct the experience so that we do not overreact to hearing these words. We may still be hypersensitive to the person’s negative energy. To avoid upset, we need to let that energy pass through us without aversion or fear, as we learned in Exercise Twenty. When we relax and see the person’s energy as a wave of clear light activity, it cannot harm us. Then, we recall and deconstruct feeling guilty or cold with someone who overreacted when we constructively criticized

him or her.

(4) Lastly, we deconstruct feeling self-righteous, nervous, or upset at offering someone constructive criticism, for example concerning his or her performance at work. We need to let go of the feeling of a seemingly concrete “me” standing on a pedestal asserting its existence through uttering seemingly concrete words, or quivering in fear of reprisal and loss of security because of these words. Again, we try to experience offering criticism as a wave of clear light activity. Similarly, we recall and then deconstruct being annoyed or disappointed at someone who felt too timid or too polite to point out our mistakes when we asked for a critical evaluation of our work.

Receiving or Conveying Good or Bad News

(1) Following the same procedure, we recall receiving good news, such as that we passed our exam. We might have responded by becoming so overexcited and falsely self-confident that we did not study hard enough for the next test and failed. Alternatively, we might have felt that it was just a lucky accident. Superstitious, we became too nervous to do well the next time. Relaxing our dualistic view, we try to imagine hearing the news as a wave of sensory experience. We feel happy that we passed and then continue studying hard for future exams. We also recall and then deconstruct condescendingly feeling that someone was acting like a child when the person became overexcited at our conveying good news.

(2) Next, we remember giving someone good news, for instance that he or she passed the exam. Possible overreactions include self-importantly taking credit for the person’s happiness or becoming more excited than the person did so that he or she felt uncomfortable. Alternatively, we might have jealously felt that the person did not deserve to pass. Quieting down the feelings of dualism behind these responses, we try to imagine conveying good news as a wave of clear light verbal activity. We naturally feel happy at the news, but do not inflate our role. Then, we recall and deconstruct feeling embarrassed or disgusted at someone’s seemingly inappropriate show of emotion when the person became more excited than we did when conveying good news.

(3) Next, we recall receiving bad news, such as that we failed the exam. We might have felt sorry for ourselves, protested that the test was unfair, or become angry with the person who conveyed the news. On the other hand, we might have felt that this proves us a failure and that we deserve punishment. We might even think to punish ourselves. We dismiss

these dualistic impressions as absurd and try to imagine hearing the news with sober equanimity. Accepting the facts, we resolve to study harder.

We then recall feeling emotionally stiff or awkward when someone cried at receiving bad news from us. Deconstructing the dualistic response we had, we try to imagine responding instead with quiet sadness and sympathy.

(4) Lastly, we remember giving someone bad news, such as that he or she failed the exam. Possible overreactions include having felt guilty or having gloated self-righteously that the person deserved it. Sometimes, we are so afraid of hurting the other person that we do not convey bad news at all. Quieting our dualistic feelings, we try to imagine breaking the news without tension. Then, we recall and deconstruct feeling uncomfortable or impatient when someone felt awkward or reticent when giving us bad news.

Being the Recipient or Agent of Gains or Losses

(1) Continuing as above, we recall gaining something, such as a gift of money from someone. On the one hand, we might have become overexcited or we might have felt that this proved how wonderful we were. Alternatively, we might have felt undeserving or robbed of our independence and now obligated to the person. We deconstruct either response and try to imagine receiving the money with appreciation, happiness, and grace.

We then recall feeling rejected or frustrated when someone felt uneasy at our offer to help with some money. Deconstructing the dualistic response that we had, we do not insist. Honoring the person's need for self-dignity, we imagine trying to find anonymous ways of helping.

(2) We follow the same procedure remembering giving someone financial help, for instance our elderly parent living on an inadequate pension. We might have felt, because of prior guilt, that our gift made us a more worthwhile person and proved us a good son or a good daughter. On the other hand, we might have felt deprived and uncomfortable at parting with the money. Deconstructing each of these feelings, we try to imagine offering the money unself-consciously, with warmth and respect.

Then, we recall and deconstruct feeling outraged when someone had expectations of us or made unreasonable demands because of our accepting a gift. We try to imagine politely refusing or returning the present without making a fuss.

(3) Next, we recall losing something, such as someone's friendship. Taking this as a personal rejection, we might have overreacted by

feeling devastated, by feeling indignant that we do not deserve this loss, or by convincing ourselves that this proves that we are no good. Deconstructing the dualistic feelings behind our response, we try to imagine experiencing the loss as a wave of clear light activity. Life goes on. Feeling sad at not only our own, but also at our friend's loss, we send the person thoughts of compassion and wishes for happiness.

We then recall feeling guilty or cold when someone became depressed or angry when we ended an unhealthy relationship. Deconstructing the dualistic response we had, we try to imagine experiencing the person's upset as a wave of clear light energy and words. Respecting the person's feelings, we also try to increase our compassion.

(4) Lastly, we remember depriving someone of something, such as when needing to say no. We may have felt afraid beforehand to hurt the person and uncomfortable while speaking. Alternatively, we might have delighted in our action and felt that the person deserved it. Having to say no is never easy or pleasant but, deconstructing the experience, we try to imagine saying it nondualistically.

Then, we recall feeling stupid or annoyed for even asking for a favor when someone felt terrible at having to refuse it, for example when he or she was unable to help. Deconstructing the dualistic response we had, we try to imagine warmly reassuring the person that we understand. We will find someone else or manage on our own.

Receiving or Fulfilling Expectations and Demands

As a supplement to the issue of being the recipient or agent of gains or losses, we may work with three levels of increasingly stronger hypersensitivity to giving something to someone. We may overreact to giving something on our own initiative, to giving it because someone expects us to give it, or to giving it upon demand. Here, we work specifically with saying thank you and with apologizing to someone. Since thank-yous and apologies seem to require giving something of "ourselves," rather than merely a possession such as money, we are often particularly hypersensitive to expectations and demands for them.

We start with the issue of saying thank you. First, we recall simply thanking someone. If our appreciation was insincere, we may have felt patronizing. On the other hand, we may have thought that thanking someone placed us in a subordinate, vulnerable position and now we felt obligated to return the favor. Deconstructing the experience, we try to imagine thanking someone without these dualistic feelings. Saying thank you, after all, is just verbal expression. Even if we do not appreciate someone else's

actions or what he or she did was unhelpful, still the person may appreciate a thanks. We need to be sensitive, however, to the person's ethnic background. In some cultures, thanking someone for showing courtesy or kindness is an insult. A thank-you implies that we did not expect this from him or her.

We need to remember these points when trying next to dispel our overreaction when someone expects a thank-you from us. Belief in a seemingly concrete "me" undoubtedly lies behind feeling indignant, insulted, or guilty. The same is true with our overreaction of feeling condescending, resentful, or demeaned when thanking someone because of an expectation that we do so. If thanking someone will just inflate his or her pride, or the person was merely being helpful to gain our praise or to make us indebted, then not saying thank you may be more helpful. Even in such cases, however, we need to deconstruct any dualistic feelings of moral superiority.

Lastly, we consider possible overreactions when someone demands a thank-you from us. We may self-righteously refuse, feeling outrage, or we may feel guilty for not having thanked the person earlier. Being hypersensitive, we may then feel arrogant, scornful, or defeated if we choose to thank the person upon demand. Deconstructing these disturbing emotions and attitudes, we try to imagine saying thank you graciously and sincerely, apologizing for not having previously said it.

We repeat the procedure with apologizing to someone. First, we recall apologizing on our own initiative. If we viewed our experience dualistically, we may have felt condescending or embarrassed. Deconstructing the dualistic feeling behind these responses, we imagine apologizing simply as a wave of verbal expression, accompanied by sincere regret and consideration for the person's feelings.

Then, we try to dispel feeling incensed, indignant, or guilty when someone expects an apology, and subsequently feeling unrepentantly smug, resentful, or humiliated when apologizing. Such overreactions come from confusion. Lastly, we recall someone demanding an apology. We may have refused, feeling self-righteous and outraged, or we may have felt extremely guilty. If we give in to the demand, we may apologize feeling arrogant, scornful, or defeated. These overreactions bring us only aggravation and pain. We need to deconstruct them. Even if someone expects or demands an apology from us, the experience of being the recipient or fulfiller of expectations and demands is still just a wave of clear light activity.

Suppose we were not at fault and someone's demand for an apology is unjustified. The traditional training in cleansing our attitudes recom-

mends giving the victory to others. If we say we are sorry, even if we were not at fault, the dispute and hard feelings are finished. If, however, we do this with a dualistic feeling, we again feel defeated or resentful. Apologizing nondualistically allows us to maintain our balance. Moreover, if we acknowledge that undoubtedly both of us were at fault and then apologize for our part in the problem, we leave the door open for the person to acknowledge his or her part too. This helps to prevent the person from taking advantage of our forgiving nature.

Being the Recipient or Agent of Things Going Well or Poorly

(1) We next recall being on the receiving end of things going well, for example in a relationship with someone. The person was acting lovingly and all was going smoothly. We consider overreactions we might have had of being elated or perhaps smugly feeling that this proved how wonderful we were. On the other hand, we might have worried that it was too good to be true and therefore clutched to the relationship in fear of losing it. We might even have convinced ourselves that the person would soon discover our true self as a terrible person and would then abandon us. In addition, we might have felt that we would inevitably ruin the relationship by our usual stupid behavior. Deconstructing such dualistic feelings, we try to imagine simply enjoying our happiness with the relationship, without making something monumental of it.

We then recall feeling impatient or annoyed when someone felt insecure in a good relationship with us. Deconstructing the dualistic response that we had, we try to imagine extending our understanding and compassion. We do not make the person feel even more nervous by scolding him or her for acting like an idiot.

(2) We then remember being the agent of things going well in a relationship. We had been trying our best to be a loving friend or partner and our efforts had succeeded. Recalling any feelings of being the self-sacrificing martyr or worries that we would inevitably slip and show our true nature, we deconstruct these tensions. We try to imagine continuing to act kindly, without being self-conscious, and regarding this as a wave of physical activity, warm concern, and positive energy. Then, we recall and deconstruct feeling exasperated when someone felt low self-esteem, though he or she was acting perfectly well in a relationship with us.

(3) We follow the same procedure recalling being the recipient of things going poorly in a relationship. Possible overreactions include feeling sorry for ourselves that nothing ever works out or feeling relieved that the person found out the truth and was treating us the way we

deserve. We deconstruct these feelings and try to imagine accepting the situation and seeing what we can do to salvage the relationship.

We then recall feeling disappointed or irritated when someone constantly complained at things going badly in a relationship with us, but did nothing constructive to try to improve the situation. Deconstructing the dualistic response that we had, we try to be patient.

(4) Lastly, we remember being the agent of things going poorly in a relationship. We had been acting inconsiderately and were picking fights with the person. Now, we deconstruct any dualistic feelings we might have had of hopelessness, depression, guilt, or self-satisfaction. Trying no longer to imagine ourselves as a terrible person or as the self-righteous avenger, we nevertheless accept responsibility for our behavior. It arose as a wave of clear light activity, but it need not continue. Without being tossed by this wave, we resolve to change our ways. Then, we recall and deconstruct feeling callous or unforgiving when someone felt awful at having hurt us in a relationship.

Avoiding an Emotional Roller Coaster When Directly Relating to Someone

The second phase of the exercise entails giving and receiving from a partner the eight transitory things in life. Without feeling tense, self-consciousness, silly, elated, glorified, depressed, or hurt, we try to experience each action nondualistically as a wave of clear light activity. If any of these disturbing emotions arise, we may follow the previous procedure to deconstruct the dualistic appearances behind them – imagining the balloon of our fantasy popping, and so forth. We need to take care, however, to avoid “over-deconstructing” the experience and consequently divesting it of all feeling. Therefore, when we spontaneously feel happy or sad, we try to relax with these feelings and to resist inflating them. We also need care to avoid depersonalizing these experiences. Otherwise, we may become insensitive to the person.

First, we praise our partner by remarking, for instance, that his or her hair looks pretty. We try to do this without being patronizing or flirtatious. Then, we receive a similar compliment, trying to resist any feelings of being sexually harassed. Next, trying to avoid being intrusive or cruel, we offer constructive criticism by suggesting, for example, that our partner needs to go on a diet. We try to offer this advice gently, without being afraid to hurt the person’s feelings and without feeling insecure that he or she will reject us for what we said. We then receive a similar suggestion and deconstruct feeling insulted or hurt.

Next, without the exaggerated enthusiasm used when speaking to a two-year-old, we tell our partner good news, such as tomorrow will be a day off from work. We then receive similar good news trying to avoid becoming overexcited with anticipation. Without being afraid to upset the person, we then convey the bad news that we lost the book that he or she loaned us. We receive the same news and try to accept it without becoming annoyed or depressed.

Turning next to gains and losses, we try to avoid feeling any dualistic tension in the face of either of them. First, we experience giving and receiving money from each other and then taking it away and having it taken away from us. Then, we thank the person on our own initiative, demand a thank-you in return, and receive that thanks. Correspondingly, we receive a thank-you from the person's own initiative and a demand for a thanks in return, and then we fulfill that demand. Next, we apologize to the person on our own initiative, demand an apology in return, and receive that apology. We end this sequence by receiving an apology from the person's own initiative and a demand for an apology in return, and then we fulfill that demand. We try to do all this without disturbing emotions or attitudes.

Next, without gloating, we acknowledge to ourselves and feel happy at our efforts to improve the relationship and that it seems to be working. Then, trying to resist feeling solely responsible for the success, we admit to ourselves and feel happy that he or she has been working hard too. We repeat the process, acknowledging with sadness, but trying to avoid feeling guilty, that the relationship has degenerated because we have been acting poorly. It might also have not developed because we have made no efforts. Lastly, we think how the relationship has sunk or not evolved because the person has been behaving terribly or has ignored our show of friendship. We try to do this nonaccusingly, yet feeling sad.

Avoiding Emotional Extremes When Relating to Ourselves

During the third phase of the exercise, we skip practicing with a mirror and begin by sitting quietly without any props. We direct the eight transitory things to ourselves and try to experience them without feeling the presence of two "me"s: one the agent and the other the recipient. We may use the previous deconstruction procedure if needed. Through this process, we divest the experiences of any tension or feelings of self-consciousness.

First, we encourage our positive efforts by praising ourselves. We try to do this without feeling self-patronizing, uneasy, or undeserving. Then, we criticize ourselves for mistakes we are making, trying to avoid

being accusatory or feeling low self-esteem or guilt.

Next, we tell ourselves good news, such as that there is only one day left until the weekend. We try to do this without feeling like a parent holding out hopes for a reward to a child or like a child being goaded to behave nicely. Then, we tell ourselves bad news, such as we have to go back to work tomorrow. We try to avoid feeling like either a taskmaster or a slave.

Following this, we try to imagine experiencing a gain, such as figuring out the solution to a personal problem, without feeling like either a brilliant psychologist or a dense patient. Then, we imagine experiencing a loss, such as being unable to remember someone's name or unconsciously saying the wrong word when we mean something else. This frequently happens as we grow older and can be especially unnerving during the first years. We try to imagine experiencing this without becoming annoyed with ourselves or feeling that we need to reserve a place at the nursing home.

Also helpful is deconstructing the experience of actively giving ourselves a gain or a loss. For example, we picture doing something nice for ourselves, like taking a hot bath. We try to imagine relaxing and enjoying it without feeling like a self-satisfied master who has rewarded someone or like a beast of burden that has been rewarded. Similarly, we picture restricting ourselves, for instance not taking dessert because we are dieting. We try to imagine doing this without feeling like a disciplinarian or a naughty child being punished.

Next, we think about the things that have been going well in our life, without feeling proud as the agent of this achievement or undeserving as the recipient. Then, we conclude by thinking about the things that have been going poorly. We feel sad, but try to avoid feeling like either the guilty perpetrator or the helpless victim.

During the second part of this phase, we turn our attention to the series of past photos of ourselves and try to experience nondualistically the eight transitory things as they relate to those periods of our life. We praise ourselves for our strong points during those times and criticize our mistakes. Next, we tell ourselves both the good and bad news of what happened because of our behavior then. We follow this with thinking of the gains and losses we have experienced because of those actions. Lastly, we acknowledge and feel happy about the things that went well and acknowledge and feel sad about the things that went badly at those times.

4 Dissolving Disturbing Emotions into Underlying Deep Awareness

Both grasping at mental activity's natural facets for security and fearing them as a threat arise from projecting and believing in dualistic and triplistic appearances. Deconstructing these confusing appearances leaves us with merely the experience of these natural functions. Similarly, disturbing emotions also arise from projecting and believing in deceptive appearances, especially dualistic ones. Under the influence of these emotions, we become insensitive or hypersensitive. Upon deconstruction, we find underlying them the key for gaining balance -- our network of five types of deep awareness.

The following presentation derives from the abhidharma discussion of the five major disturbing emotions: naivety, arrogance, longing desire, jealousy, and anger. Other-voidness teachings provide the most detail about their deconstruction into deep awareness. Since low self-esteem is rampant in the West, we shall expand the scope of the classic presentation of the five major emotions to include related emotions that arise within the context of self-disparagement. In doing so, we follow the Buddhist commentary tradition of filling in a classical text with logical implications that adapt its teachings to specific situations. Shantideva's method of countering pride, competitiveness, and jealousy by exchanging the viewpoint from self to others suggests the analytical tool we shall use: shifting the aim from others to self.

Naivety

Naivety (*moha*) is the confusion, either about cause and effect or about reality, that accompanies destructive behavior or thought. Such confusion may arise because of not knowing about these matters or because of apprehending them in an inverted manner. When we are naive about cause and effect, we may believe that our insensitive actions and overemotional behavior have no effects. We might also imagine that they bring happiness when in fact they cause harm. Hypersensitive to any suggestion that our taxing behavior is responsible for our strained relations, we might in addition blame everyone else for our troubles. When we are naive about reality, we do not realize that the dualistic appearances our mind creates are merely waves of clear light activity.

They do not refer to anything real. Consequently, we overreact.

Distorted, antagonistic thinking often accompanies naivety, making us closed-minded. This leads to stubbornly denying the existence of cause and effect or refusing to accept the existence or facts about a situation or about someone. It also makes us defensively or aggressively insist that our dualistic experiences correspond to reality.

Since naivety, especially in its closed-minded forms, is a common ailment that most people do not even detect, let us list some examples:

Naively denying the existence of our feelings, we alienate ourselves from them.

Although upsetting thoughts or images obsessively come to mind, we do not want to think about them.

We imagine that by not thinking about our problems, they will go away.

Believing that we are the center of the universe, we do not want to consider another's view.

We insist that someone do something for us even if the person has no time.

Convinced that we are incapable of relating, we are frightened of others and close ourselves off from meaningful contact.

Refusing to accept the reality of a loved one as an independent person, we become overprotective.

When we recognize the dualistic appearances behind our naivety, we can deconstruct them. For example, suppose we have a sixteen-year-old and our mind has been creating the feeling of a seemingly concrete threatened "me" versus a seemingly concrete threatening thought, such as "you no longer need me in the same way as you did as a baby." According to the other-voidness view, when we relax the grip of insecurity, we find awareness of reality. In other words, we know that our child is sixteen years old. Nevertheless, we do not wish to think about what this fact implies, and so we feel anxious. Naively believing that treating our child like a baby will create no problems, we are overprotective. Anxiety and naivety, then, obscure our awareness of reality.

Further beneath our tension lies the awareness that constitutes the deepest sphere of reality, namely the clear light mental activity that gives rise to experience. When we fully relax, we experience thoughts as merely waves on the ocean of the mind. Thus, thinking of our child as an independent person is no longer a threatening experience.

The self-voidness position explains that when we relax the grip of frightened naivety, we find underlying it mirror-like awareness. We had taken in the information of our child looking, acting, and speaking

like a sixteen-year-old, but either had not paid attention or had chosen to ignore it. When we open our mind and our heart, we reach the underlying experience that was there all along – merely taking in information like a camera or a microphone.

In short, naivety is not like producing and engaging with objects, taking in information, or knowing what things are. This disturbing emotion is not a fundamental feature of mental activity. It arises only when we overlay these basic activities with dualistic appearances and believe in them. Only when we conceive of a concrete “me” facing a concrete “object” do we become frightened of our experiences. Consequently, we naively shut ourselves off as if we could avoid reality. When we release our feeling of dualism, or at least our belief that it refers to what is real, we discover the mirror-like awareness of reality that was there all along as the structure of our experience.

Arrogance and Stinginess

Arrogance is the self-aggrandizing feeling that we are better than others are, in all or in just certain ways. For example, we are arrogant about being wealthier, more clever, or better looking. It may be conventionally true that we have more money than someone else has. However, when we project and believe in the dualistic appearance of a seemingly solidly wealthy “me” and a seemingly solidly impoverished “you,” we feel that this makes us a better person. Thus, we become proud, conceited, and arrogant.

A syndrome related to arrogance occurs when we transpose self-aggrandizement to others. We feel that they are inherently better than we are, in all or in just some respects. Although abhidharma analysis does not discuss this disturbing emotion, inordinate esteem of others commonly occurs among people with low self-esteem. Since the structure of aggrandizing others parallels that of self-aggrandizing arrogance -- with the difference being merely a shift of aim from others to self – the two emotions deconstruct in the same way.

The dualistic appearance of ourselves or others as concretely superior to someone, or to others in general, is nonsense. No one exists in this fantasized way. We all share the same fundamental features of mind and heart that allow us to become a Buddha. When we realize this, we relax the grip of our disturbing emotion. What remains is the underlying mental activity, namely awareness of equalities. We were merely considering others and ourselves in terms of a shared feature, how much money we have. Only when we overlay such consideration with a

dualistic appearance and concrete identities do we regard one side as inherently better and the other as inherently worse.

Stinginess is the unwillingness to share something with others. It derives from the dualistic appearance of a seemingly concrete “me” as inherently more worthy of possessing something than a seemingly concrete “you” are. A nervous feeling that sharing with this “you” would threaten the security of this “me” often accompanies belief in the deceptive appearance.

If we suffer from low self-esteem, we might transpose the aim of stinginess to ourselves. With a denial of self-entitlement and an inability to say no, we do not allow ourselves a fair portion of something – be it money, time, energy, or space – and give more to someone than we can afford. We do this because we believe in the dualistic appearance that our mind creates of a seemingly concrete “me” as truly unworthy and of a seemingly concrete “you” as inherently more deserving. Insecure and anxious, we unconsciously feel that setting limits and keeping anything for ourselves will incite the person to reject or abandon us.

The self-deprivation associated with anorexia resembles destructive self-denial in favor of others. Both involve a comparison of ourselves with others; anorexia, however, does not involve sharing anything. On the other hand, miserliness – the hoarding of money with unwillingness to spend it even on ourselves – does not partake of the same structure as anorexia and self-deprivation in favor of others. This is because miserliness does not entail comparison with someone else. Moreover, as a disturbing and destructive emotion based on confusion, denial of self-entitlement in favor of others differs from the constructive self-sacrifice of a parent for a child that even animals exhibit.

Arrogance and stinginess are similar disturbing emotions. With both, we consider ourselves as better than someone else is. Deconstructing the dualistic appearances that fuel our stinginess enables us to relax our insecurity and tension. Again, we discover underlying awareness of equalities. We were simultaneously considering others and ourselves in terms of possibly sharing something. The same deep awareness becomes apparent when we relax our inordinate esteem of others and our destructive self-denial in favor of them.

Longing Desire and Clinging Attachment

Longing desire is the obsession to possess someone or something, while clinging attachment is the nervous insistence not to let go once we possess the person or thing. Both are based on the dualistic

appearance of (1) a seemingly concrete “me” who cannot live without having some person or object and (2) a seemingly concrete “you” or object that could make me secure if I only had it or if I never let it go.

Traditional discussions of longing desire and clinging attachment present only the active form of these disturbing emotions. A passive form, however, frequently occurs. It manifests as the obsession to be possessed by or to belong to someone or to some collective group, and not to be abandoned once we belong. Most often, the person we wish to belong to is a lifetime partner and the collective group is a business firm or a club. Thus, although these disturbing emotions often occur among persons with low self-confidence, they may also affect a wider population.

We need to see through the deceptive appearance fueling these disturbing emotions. Denying our ability to cope on our own, we are exaggerating the qualities of someone or something. Fooled by this, we become infatuated. When we deconstruct the appearance by understanding that it does not refer to anything real, we relax the grip of our insecurity. Underlying our inflation of the person, the group, or the object into someone or something truly special, we find individualizing awareness. We merely specified a particular person, organization, or thing. Only when we overlay that specifying with a dualistic appearance and concrete identities do we experience ourselves as inherently deprived and the person, group, or object as inherently alluring.

Jealousy

Jealousy is the inability to bear someone else’s achievement, for instance his or her success. We wish that we could achieve it instead. A variation occurs when someone receives something from someone, such as love or affection; we wish that we could receive it instead. This disturbing emotion derives from the dualistic appearance of (1) a seemingly concrete “me” who inherently deserves to achieve or receive something, but did not, and (2) a seemingly concrete “you” who inherently did not deserve to get it. Unconsciously, we feel that the world owes us something and it is unfair when others get it instead.

Under the influence of low self-esteem, we may direct toward ourselves a disturbing emotion akin to jealousy. With self-depreciation, we feel that we are inherently undeserving of what we have, while others innately deserve it instead.

Naivety about cause and effect usually accompanies jealousy. For example, we do not understand and even deny that the person who

received a promotion or affection did anything to earn it. Moreover, we feel that we should get it without having to do anything to bring it about. Alternatively, we feel that we did do a lot but still did not get the reward. Our mind makes things appear to happen for no reason at all, or for only one reason: what we alone did.

When we deconstruct these deceptive appearances, we relax our feelings of injustice. Beneath our jealousy is merely awareness of what has been accomplished. This makes us aware of a goal to achieve. If we do not begrudge someone else for achieving or receiving it, we can perhaps learn how the person accomplished the feat. This enables us to see how to accomplish it ourselves. We only feel jealous because of overlaying this awareness with a dualistic appearance and concrete identities.

Anger

Anger is the generation of a rough state of mind toward someone or something, with the wish to rid ourselves of it or to do it harm. This disturbing emotion derives from the dualistic appearance of (1) a seemingly concrete “me” who cannot possibly endure this person, group, or object and (2) a seemingly concrete “you,” group, or object which, if I could eliminate would make me secure. Just as longing desire fixates upon and exaggerates the good qualities of someone or something, anger focuses on and inflates the negative qualities.

The abhidharma discussion does not include as a form of anger negative feelings toward oneself. Yet, a disturbing emotion akin to anger clearly arises in people with low self-esteem. Something that either we or someone else has done often prompts it, while feelings of inadequacy and guilt normally accompany it. Thus, we may be infuriated with ourselves simply because of shortcomings we have or mistakes we have made. On the other hand, when someone acts terribly toward us, we may similarly overestimate our own bad qualities and blame ourselves. Insecure and afraid of rejection if we say anything about the incident, we suppress the anger we might feel toward the person. We direct it at ourselves instead.

According to the other-voidness presentation, when we deconstruct the deceptive appearances fueling our anger, we relax the tension of our hostile rejection. We find simply mirror-like awareness, for instance that someone is acting in a certain way. The self-voidness position explains that we discover awareness of reality. We are simply differentiating between the way that someone is and is not behaving and seeing nonjudgmentally that one is appropriate and the other is not. Only when we overlay this funda-

mental activity with a dualistic appearance and inherent identities do we respond with violent emotion toward what we find unacceptable.

Worry and Complaint

Worry and complaint are two additional disturbing syndromes that arise from projecting dualistic appearances onto deep awareness and other innate facets of our mind. Worry comes from viewing ourselves as inherently helpless and regarding a person or a situation as something out of our control. When we relax our insecurity and tension, we find merely individualizing awareness and concern about someone or something. Our calmer view allows us to evaluate the situation to see what can be done, if anything, and then simply to do it. As Shantideva said, "If a situation can be changed, why worry about it? Just change it. If we cannot do anything to change it, why worry? It does nothing to help."

When we realize that underlying someone's neurotic worries over us are warm concern and individualizing awareness, we can defuse our hypersensitive response. Instead of viewing the person's behavior dualistically as a threat, we focus on awareness of individualities. Being the object of this type of awareness coming from someone cannot possibly rob us of our individuality. Moreover, recognizing the person's concern for us reinforces our patient understanding.

When we complain about having to do something or haughtily protest when someone asks us to do it, we are also caught in a dualistic web. A seemingly concrete "me" appears to be facing an inherently distasteful task that we do not want to do. When we relax the grip of this compelling feeling, we find accomplishing awareness focused on a task that needs doing. Also present is reality awareness focused on the issues of our ability to do it and of the propriety of our doing it. We also see that someone asking us to do something does not threaten our freedom. In this way, we just do what needs to be done, if there is no harm, or we decline if the task is inappropriate. We may use a similar method to avoid overreacting when we hear someone else complaining about having to do something.

EXERCISE 22

Dissolving Disturbing Emotions into Underlying Deep Awareness

During the first phase of this exercise, after creating a quiet, caring space, we look at a photograph or simply think of someone toward whom we have felt or are currently feeling disturbing emotions. For each emotion, we may need to choose a different person. If we cannot recall feeling a

particular upsetting emotion, we may extrapolate from familiarity with others' experience of it and try to imagine what it must be like. Acknowledging and regretting the pain that our imbalance may have caused the person about whom we felt the emotion, we resolve to try to overcome these problems.

First, we try to recognize the dualistic feeling behind each disturbing emotion as based on sheer fantasy, and then we endeavor to deconstruct it. We begin the process by trying to relax completely. As we feel our tension easing, we try to feel the fantasy and its accompanying disturbing emotion releasing themselves, by using the image and feeling of the clenched fist of our mind slowly opening. Since tension often manifests in a tight feeling in our gut or chest, we also try to feel a clenched fist opening there. We may supplement the method with the image and feeling that tightly grasping the dualistic appearance and disturbing emotion was like tightly clutching a color image projected on water. Nothing substantial was ever there.

With our mind, emotions, and feelings now clear, we try to recognize and rest in the corresponding form of deep awareness that underlay our disturbed state of mind. The more we relax our mental and physical tension, the deeper we are able to settle into the underlying awareness. If relaxing our mental grip also releases repressed feelings of sadness or pain, we try not to become tight again with fear. Instead, we try to let the feelings flow and pass with our breath as we normally exhale.

Next, we look at a photo or think of someone who has felt or is currently feeling the same disturbing emotion toward us. Again, if we cannot recall anyone like this, we may extrapolate from what others have told us from their experience. Similarly deconstructing our overreaction toward being the object of someone's upset emotions, we try to rest again in the underlying form of awareness. We conclude by trying to feel compassion for this person, who does not relax and contact his or her deep awareness. Disturbing emotions are bringing the person much pain.

For practice in a workshop, the group facilitator may choose one form of disturbing emotion for each of the five types of deep awareness. When practicing at home, we may do the same. For advanced or thorough practice, we may work with all the disturbing emotions associated with each of the five types of awareness.

Dissolving Naivety into Mirror-like Awareness of Reality

(1) First, we consider an example of naivety about cause and effect. We may choose a small child, for instance, on whom we naively felt

that our words or actions had no effect. We had insensitively felt that fighting with our partner in front of him or her did not matter. Viewing the experience dualistically, we had imagined a concrete “me” acting in a vacuum and the child as a concrete entity unaffected by surroundings. Our insensitivity has brought the child much unhappiness, which we now regret.

Realizing that such ways of existing are impossible, we drop our naivety about the situation. Suppose we had known about the effects of our actions, but had felt it too painful to admit or to deal with. We now try to drop the tension behind our naive assumption that if we do not think about or acknowledge something, it will disappear. From the other-voidness point of view, we find awareness of reality. We see the conventional facts of the situation. In other words, we see the effects of our actions on the child. They had been there all along. We either had not noticed them or had ignored or denied them if we did. From the viewpoint of the self-voidness presentation, we find mirror-like awareness taking in the information that is clearly there.

We focus for a minute on these two mutually supportive types of awareness: awareness of reality and mirror-like awareness. Such vision allows us to deal soberly and sensitively with the situation now. We need care, however, not to feel guilty by overinflating the importance of our actions. As explained in Chapter Six concerning not being afraid to respond, we have contributed to the situation but have not been the sole source.

Now, we focus on someone who insensitively said something painful to us and was naively unaware that his or her words would be upsetting. For example, perhaps the person said something about a loved one we had recently lost. Deconstructing the hypersensitive feeling of a seemingly concrete poor “me” who has been hurt by a seemingly concrete cruel “you,” we try to relax. We try to discover the underlying mirror-like awareness of reality. Our loved one is gone. Whether or not someone reminds us, nothing can change this fact. This helps us to accept reality, although no one can deny that it is sad. Realizing how terrible the person must feel when others overreact to his or her insensitive remarks, we try to feel compassion. We hope that the person will soon overcome his or her naivety.

(2) Next, we repeat the procedure with an example of naivety about reality. We choose, for instance, someone who told us something about him or herself that we have difficulty accepting, such as that he or she is getting older and now tires more easily. Until now, we have denied

or ignored this fact or have not taken it seriously. Feeling ourselves to be a seemingly concrete “me” for whom things are as we imagine them to be, we have been trying to relate to a seemingly concrete “you” who matched our dreams. Our insensitivity has caused the person frustration, which we now regret. Trying to release the tension of our naivety, we find mirror-like awareness of the person’s reality. Taking in the information and accepting it as true enables us to treat the person with proper sensitivity and respect.

Then, we focus on someone who has naively refused to accept the truth about us, for instance that we are not romantically interested in him or her. Deconstructing our dualistic feeling of a seemingly concrete “me,” about whom everything is obvious, frustrated by a seemingly concrete blind “you,” we try to remain with mirror-like awareness of our actual feelings about the person. This helps us to stop overreacting by being defensive. Feeling compassion for the person living under this illusion gives us the balanced sensitivity to impress the truth without being cruel.

Dissolving Arrogance into Equalizing Awareness

(1) We next look at a picture or think of someone to whom we arrogantly feel superior in one way or another or have felt this way in the past. This may be someone from our personal life or perhaps someone of a different race whose picture we saw in a magazine. Our conceit has led to hatred and pain, which we deeply regret. We notice that we have compared the two of us and judged ourselves to be a seemingly concrete superior “me” and the other to be a seemingly concrete inferior “you.” When we try to relax the tension and insecurity that compel us to make the comparison, we find equalizing awareness. We are merely considering the two of us as human beings. This allows openness and balanced sensitivity toward the person.

Turning to someone who arrogantly feels he or she is better than we are, we similarly deconstruct our oversensitive response of outrage. Our response came from feeling like a seemingly concrete maligned “me” being insulted by a seemingly concrete arrogant “you.” We may be poorer than this person is, but that does not make us an inferior being. Calmly focusing on deep awareness of our equality as human beings, we try to feel compassion toward the person whose prejudice produces so many problems.

(2) We then choose someone whom we consider, with inordinate esteem, as better than we are in one way or another. Our obsequious

attitude makes the person extremely uncomfortable, which we now regret. Relaxing the tension of our dualistic view of a seemingly concrete inferior “me” and a seemingly concrete superior “you,” we try to rest in the equalizing awareness lying beneath. We may not be equal in education or in our position at work, but we both have our strong and our weak points. We both have joys and sorrows in our life.

Lastly, we focus on someone who aggrandizes us as better than he or she is. Relaxing any discomfort or annoyance we might experience, we deconstruct our dualistic feeling of a seemingly concrete, perfectly normal “me” imposed upon by a seemingly concrete, preposterous and tedious “you.” We try to rest in deep awareness of our equality and direct compassion toward this person who feels ill at ease in our presence. He or she may deny or reject our verbal reassurances that no one is inherently better or worse than others are. Yet, if we keep our deep awareness in mind, our actions will speak louder than our words.

Dissolving Stinginess into Equalizing Awareness

(1) Next, we focus on someone with whom we did not want to share something. Our insensitive stinginess hurt the person, which we now regret. We try to relax our dualistic feeling of a seemingly concrete “me” who would be deprived if this seemingly concrete undeserving person were to share what I have. When we loosen our tension, we find equalizing awareness of the two of us as people who could partake of something. This view of equality enables us to accept the fact that the person would also enjoy having a share. We try to imagine nondualistically giving him or her some of what we have. A traditional method to overcome reticence to share is to give a portion of something with our right hand to our left.

Choosing someone stingy who was unwilling to share something with us, we similarly deconstruct our hypersensitive feelings of a seemingly concrete, poor deprived “me” and a seemingly concrete selfish “you.” Trying to focus on our equality as human beings, we see that missing a share does not make us inferior. We then try to direct compassion at the person whose selfishness causes others so much resentment.

(2) We then turn to someone for whose sake we wanted to deprive ourselves of our own fair portion of something -- for instance our free time -- in order to give the person more than he or she needed or even wanted. Our attitude was unhealthy, not only for ourselves but also for the person, which we now regret. Relaxing our dualistic feeling of a seemingly concrete unworthy “me” and a seemingly concrete, more

deserving “you,” we settle into an awareness of equality that allows fairness to us both.

Lastly, we consider someone who, with destructive self-denial, has kept little or nothing for him or herself and given us more than our due share of something. The person may be, for instance, an overly doting and anxious parent who sacrifices everything for our sake. With insensitivity and narcissism, we may have taken the situation for granted with the feeling of a seemingly concrete “me” who deserves the attention and a seemingly concrete “you” who owes it to me. Alternatively, with hypersensitivity and guilt, we may have protested and rebelled with the feeling of a seemingly concrete undeserving “me” and a seemingly concrete “you” who owes me nothing. In either case, we regret the pain our attitude must have caused our parent. We try to deconstruct our feeling of dualism and relax in the equalizing awareness with which we merely consider the two of us. Compassion for our parent, whose compulsive and often unnecessary sacrifice must make life difficult for him or her, allows us gratefully to accept our fair share and to refrain from abusing our parent's generosity.

Dissolving Longing Desire into Individualizing Awareness

(1) Following this, we look at a picture or think of someone whom we long or have longed to possess in some way or another. We may choose a person from our life or perhaps a magazine photo of someone scantily dressed. Acknowledging the pain that we caused by insensitively treating the person as merely a sex object, we feel regret. We then try to relax the anxious, insecure feeling of a seemingly concrete deprived “me” who desperately needs to have a seemingly concrete enticing “you.” This leaves us with individualizing awareness. Rather than grabbing after the person, we are merely focusing specifically on him or her or on some of his or her qualities. We try to appreciate these points without overinflating them.

Turning to someone who longs to possess us, we try to relax our hypersensitive feeling of a seemingly concrete endangered “me” being hunted by a seemingly concrete pursuing “you.” In place of being obsessed with escaping, we see the person with awareness of him or her merely as an individual. This allows us to deal compassionately and straightforwardly with the person without feeling intimidated or acting cruelly.

(2) We then focus on someone to whom we wish or have wished we belonged, for instance as a life partner or as an employee. We regret

the discomfort our expectations and demands may have caused the person. Relaxing the insensitive dualistic feeling of a seemingly concrete “me” for whom self-worth and fulfillment only can come from this seemingly concrete “you” including us in his or her intimate circle, we again discover individualizing awareness underlying our longing desire. We are merely specifying this person and focusing on some of his or her qualities. If we add equalizing awareness, we further see that others may share similar qualities. Although each person is a unique individual, no one is so special as to be indispensable. Other potential partners and jobs surely exist.

Lastly, we consider someone who longs to be our partner and for us to include him or her in all aspects of our life. Relaxing the hypersensitive dualistic feeling of a seemingly concrete claustrophobic “me” imposed upon by a seemingly concrete demanding “you,” we arrive at awareness of the person as an individual. Respectful compassion allows us to set appropriate limits without being harsh or insensitive.

Dissolving Clinging Attachment into Individualizing Awareness

(1) First, we focus on someone toward whom we feel or have felt clinging attachment, for instance our preadolescent child. Perhaps we treat him or her as a fledgling whom we try to hold on to and keep in the nest. Regretting the discomfort and embarrassment we cause our child, especially in front of his or her friends, we try to relax. We deconstruct the anxious, insecure feeling of a seemingly concrete “me” who cannot live without a seemingly concrete “you” as my baby always under my close supervision. Loosening our tight emotional grip leaves us aware of our preadolescent simply as an individual. A more gentle loving view allows us to respect our child’s individuality and to be sensitive to his or her need for space and freedom.

Next, we consider someone, perhaps in our family, who clings to us with attachment as his or hers to control. We try to relax our hypersensitive feeling of a seemingly concrete threatened “me” being oppressed by a seemingly concrete manipulative “you.” Seeing our family member simply as an individual allows us to find a compassionate solution that leaves the person feeling secure in our love.

(2) We may follow the same deconstruction procedure with someone to whom we cling with attachment as the person to whom we belong. Feeling insecure, we are terrified that he or she may abandon or fire us. Regretting the pressure our attitude causes the person, we try to relax our tension. We do this by deconstructing our dualistic feeling of a seemingly

concrete insecure “me” whose only hope for protection from hardship is a seemingly concrete savior “you.” Our calm awareness of the person as an individual and our consequent respect for his or her situation allow us to face with dignity whatever might happen in the relationship.

Lastly, we focus on someone who, with clinging attachment, is emotionally dependent on us and is paranoid that we will abandon him or her. Relaxing the hypersensitive dualistic feeling of a seemingly concrete vampire “you” draining the resources of a seemingly concrete victimized “me,” we become aware of the person simply as an individual. Treating the person with respect and compassion reinforces his or her feeling of self-worth and self-confidence.

Dissolving Jealousy into Accomplishing Awareness

(1) Next, we focus on someone toward whom we feel jealous, either now or in the past. Consider, for example, the new boyfriend or girlfriend of our previous partner. It feels as though we are a concrete “me” who inherently deserves our old partner back and the person is a concrete “you” who inherently does not merit the honor of enjoying her or his company. We regret the pain that our jealousy has brought. When we relax the tension of our bitterness, we discover underlying it awareness of what has been accomplished. We see that the person has accomplished having our old girlfriend or boyfriend as his or her partner. Our emotional sobriety allows us now to see our old partner’s strong and weak points more objectively, with mirror-like awareness of reality. Appreciating what the person toward whom we felt jealous now has to deal with, we know how to relate sensitively.

Choosing someone who has been or is currently jealous of what we have achieved, we deconstruct any feelings of annoyance or guilt we might have. We might feel, for example, that we are a concrete “me” who inherently deserves what we have gotten and that the person is a concrete “you” who inherently does not deserve the same. Trying to relax, we become aware simply that we have accomplished what we have through cause and effect. This enables us to wish, compassionately, that this person might find the causes to achieve the same.

(2) We consider next someone whom we feel or have felt is more deserving of what we have than we are. For example, we might have been born into a wealthy family and, uncomfortable with our privileged life, felt that a homeless person deserved it more than we do. Lavishing the person with unearned gifts, however, never taught him or her the value of work. The person became dependent and lazy, which we now

regret.

The dualistic view that fueled our self-depreciation and guilt was that we are a seemingly concrete undeserving “me” and the person is a seemingly concrete more deserving “you.” Relaxing the tension of this view, we settle into the accomplishing awareness that we, not the other person, have gained or achieved what we have. A dispassionate mind allows us to reflect that, according to the laws of karma, whatever happens to us is the result of our previous actions. If we have not done anything obvious in this life to warrant what we have, we must have done something positive in earlier lives that has brought about our gain. Being at peace with our situation allows us to use what we have to provide others with the opportunities to achieve the same for themselves.

Lastly, we think of someone who feels that we are more deserving of what he or she has than he or she is. We might feel disgusted with the person’s low self-esteem or, opportunistically, wish to take advantage of the person’s discomfort with his or her lot. Our dualistic view may be of a seemingly concrete insulted “me” being exploited by a seemingly concrete absurd “you” who is trying to alleviate feelings of guilt. Relaxing our confusion leaves us with accomplishing awareness. We are aware that the person has attained what he or she has and that now we may receive a part of it. We try to feel compassion for this person whose charity is driven solely by feelings of guilt.

Dissolving Anger into Mirror-like Awareness of Reality

(1) We then focus our attention on someone toward whom we are or have been angry. We may even choose a political figure whose policies annoy us. Our anger causes terrible scenes that disturb everyone around us, which we now regret. Thinking of the person or seeing his or her picture makes us self-righteously feel like a seemingly concrete oppressed “me” facing the onslaughts of a seemingly concrete terrible “you.” When we try to relax the tense impulse to destroy what we dislike, we discover mirror-like awareness. We are merely taking in the information about how the person is acting. We also discover awareness of the reality of the situation: we are differentiating that the person is acting like this and not like that. This understanding provides the calmness to see that although the person may be acting horribly now, he or she can change. This permits us to respond more appropriately.

Turning to someone who is angry with us, we deconstruct any dualistic feelings of rejection or outrage at the person’s accusations, such as “How dare *you* accuse *me*.” Fueling our feeling is belief in the myth

of a seemingly concrete innocent “me” and a seemingly concrete unfair “you.” Trying to relax leaves us with mirror-like awareness of what we have done and reality awareness to see its propriety. If what we did was wrong, we try to imagine calmly apologizing. If we were right, we try to imagine not feeling threatened. In either case, we try to feel compassion for the person who is obviously miserable while being upset.

(2) Next, we choose someone who mistreated us. With low self-esteem, we blamed ourselves and silently redirected our anger inwardly. Later, our suppressed feelings might have manifested in hysterical crying or self-destructive behavior. The person could not understand our conduct and felt helpless and dismayed. He or she may even have lashed out and told us to stop being stupid. We regret the frustration and grief that our internalized rage has caused us both. Relaxing our self-recriminating anger, we try to let go of our dualistic feeling of a seemingly concrete guilty “me” and a seemingly concrete “you” who might abandon me if I said anything about the incident. Deconstructing like this, we find mirror-like awareness of what happened between us, and reality awareness that it was like this and not like that. The calmness and clarity this discovery grants allows us to stop dwelling on blame and to find a solution.

Then, we consider someone who is afraid to object when we say or do something hurtful, and redirects the anger inwardly instead. We try to relax our exasperated dualistic feeling of a seemingly concrete frustrated “me” who is trying hard and a seemingly concrete impossible “you” who is not cooperating. With mirror-like awareness, we see our behavior and the person’s response. Reality awareness reveals that the relationship is painful to both of us and not to just us alone. Understanding the person’s emotional distress gives us the patience and compassion to deal with the situation in a more gentle and sensitive manner.

Dissolving Worry into Individualizing Awareness and Caring Concern

Next, we look at a picture or think of someone we obsessively worry about now or have done so in the past. Acknowledging the discomfort we cause him or her, we feel regret. Noticing our dualistic feeling of a seemingly concrete helpless “me” facing a seemingly concrete “you” who is out of my control, we try to deconstruct it. Relaxing our tension leaves us with individualizing awareness of the person and with warm concern. Calmer now, we try to imagine what we can do to help, if anything, and then we try to picture simply doing it.

Focusing on someone who constantly worries about us, we try to deconstruct our hypersensitive feeling of a seemingly concrete suffocating “me” being smothered by a seemingly concrete overbearing “you.” Relaxing our tense paranoia, we find individualizing awareness of the person and concern about ourselves. Aware of the pain that the person’s behavior is bringing us, we try to appreciate the suffering that he or she is experiencing too. With compassion, we then try to turn our concern to the person, with the wish that he or she be free of this suffering and the worry that is causing it.

Dissolving Complaint into Accomplishing Awareness of Reality

Lastly, we choose someone who asked or told us to do something that we did not wish to do. Insensitive to others, we exasperated everyone around us with our complaints. Regretting this now, we try to note the dualistic and triplistic appearances that fuel this turmoil. Arrogant and outraged, we felt like a concrete “me” who was inherently too good to have to do this task or to be told what to do. The task seemed innately degrading, while the person asking us to do it seemed like a concrete “you” who was trying to rob us of our independence and dignity. If the person later reminded us of the task, we became even more furious, thinking that he or she did not trust our intention or ability to do it.

We try to relax our belief in this paranoid vision. The more we relax, the more tension we release. Our accomplishing awareness has been focusing on what needs to be done, and our reality awareness has been dealing with the issues of our ability to do the task and of the appropriateness of our doing it. Calmer now, we imagine deciding what to do and, no matter what we choose, we try to feel compassion for the person who needs the task done.

Then, we turn our attention to someone who complained about something that we asked him or her to do. Deconstructing our overreaction of annoyance at a seemingly defiant “you” confronting a seemingly concrete innocent “me,” we try to relax. Seeing what needs accomplishing, we try to imagine calmly evaluating whether the person can do it and whether doing it ourselves would be more appropriate or perhaps less of a bother. We try to feel compassion for the person who has become so upset in the face of this task.

Overcoming Loneliness and Resolving Conflicts

During the second phase of the exercise, we sit in a circle, create a quiet, caring space and then focus on other members of our group. Since we

may not feel any disturbing emotions toward these people, we can work with the feeling of loneliness. Even if we are not lonely now, almost everyone has sometime felt lonely.

We begin by remembering the feeling of loneliness and then looking at the people around the circle. When we are obsessed with feeling sorry for ourselves, we are caught in the dualistic appearance of ourselves as a seemingly concrete “me,” inherently alone, and of these people as seemingly concrete, unattainably distant “you.” We naively close ourselves off from any contact. Trying to relax our tension allows us to reach our mirror-like awareness. With it, we try to take in information about the people. Moreover, with awareness of reality, we try to see that each of them, with appropriate effort on our part, could become a friend. This vision helps to dispel our fear.

Next, we try to notice how loneliness colors our experience of seeing these people. By making us feel either better or worse than they are, it creates a distance. Feeling perhaps that they are not good enough for us, we do not want to open ourselves and share our feelings or thoughts in friendship. Perhaps feeling the opposite -- that we are not good enough for them -- we fear rejection. Now, we try to relinquish our paranoid fantasies and to discover the equalizing awareness that lies behind them. We have been considering these people and ourselves in the same moment. Appreciating the connection that this automatically creates, we try to extend our natural warmth to them.

Until now, we might have hoped for someone special to come. Attached to the dream of an ideal friend, we might have longed for such a person to end our loneliness as we looked around the circle. Realizing that no one can meet such a high ideal helps us to drop our fantasy. This opens us to the experience of the moment, namely looking at each person in the circle with awareness of his or her individuality. Trying to do this now, we realize that everyone has both strong and weak points. When we accept that fact, we can begin to form realistic friendships.

We might have often envied others for having close friends. Further, before our session began, we might have noticed someone in our group who aroused our interest and hopes. We were jealous that he or she was joking with others. Trying to relax, we find ourselves left with accomplishing awareness. We now look at the people in the circle with this awareness that to form a friendship we also need to approach them and speak.

Some of our previous friendships may have failed. We might now be bitter and angrily blame others for having been cruel. Trying to relax

the dualistic feeling of oppressor and victim leaves us with mirror-like awareness of what took place. Further, with awareness of reality, we see simply that our former friends acted unacceptably and not as we would have preferred. This does not mean that all friendships will inherently turn sour or that everyone will inevitably hurt us. Realizing this, we try to look at each person in the circle with openness and no preconceptions.

We may have worried that others will dislike us. Trying to relax our anxiety leaves us looking at each person as an individual, with concern about how he or she will respond to us. Our wish is that the person be happy with us. Recognizing that this wish for someone to be happy is the wish of love, we try to strengthen that loving concern. Love opens the door to forming friendships.

We might have complained about loneliness or about having to join groups to meet people. Trying to relax our feeling sorry for ourselves, we find ourselves looking at each person in the circle merely with awareness of what we have done. To meet these people, we had to come here. Happy at the opportunity for friendship that we now have, we try to look at each person with appreciation and gratitude that he or she has also come.

Following a similar method is helpful for conflict resolution, especially if both parties agree to try the same approach. We need to switch from closed-minded naivety about the other's position to mirror-like awareness of reality. Dropping our arrogance, we need to see each other as equal and each other's position as equally valid. Unattached to how we would like things ideally to be, we need to use individualizing awareness to evaluate the specifics of the situation. Not jealous if the other party were to get his or her way over certain points, we need to work out compromises with accomplishing awareness.

Most of all, we need to drop our anger. With mirror-like awareness of reality, we need to see our differences objectively. This enables us to resolve them nonjudgmentally. Instead of worrying about how the other party will respond, we need to feel concern that he or she be happy with our proposals. Therefore, we need to make them reasonable. In addition, instead of complaining if the person objects to any points, we need to see what has to be done to accomplish our aim. If we have a conflict with someone in our group, we may sit privately with the person and use this approach to try to resolve it.

Dislodging Low Self-Esteem

We practice the third phase of the exercise while focusing on the disturbing emotions that we might have toward ourselves. These emotions most frequently arise in association with low self-esteem. After creating a quiet and caring mental space, we look at our face in a mirror. We try to relax the closed-minded naivety we might have in not wanting to accept, for example, that we are old and fat. To help us do this, we need to let go of our value judgments and preconceptions of how we should look. The breathing method of letting go and the images of writing on water and a swell on the ocean may also be useful for this. Since we need especially gentle concern toward ourselves, we may intensify our initial generation of care with the line of reasoning:

I am a human being and have feelings, just as everyone else does.

How I regard and treat myself affects my feelings, just as how others regard and treat me affects how I feel.

Therefore, just as I hope that others care about me and about my feelings in our interactions, I care about myself. I care about my feelings. I care about my feelings toward myself.

With mirror-like awareness of reality, we then try to look objectively at what we see. Identifying with a younger and slimmer “me,” we may be too proud to admit that we no longer look like that. Relaxing our arrogance, we now try to look at ourselves with equalizing awareness. We see that whether thin or fat, young or old, each appearance is equally “me.”

We may be clinging to the image of an ideal weight and hair color that is outdated and unrealistic. Relaxing our attachment to this ideal, we try to look with individualizing awareness at how we are at this stage of life. Further, we might envy the way that we looked and felt when we were younger. Letting go of our envy, we try to look at ourselves with accomplishing awareness. We gained our previous look and level of energy because of youth. Those times are gone. Now, we can only accomplish what is realistic for our age. We may be angry with ourselves for having gained so much weight. Realizing that this does not help, we try to relax our anger. With mirror-like awareness of reality, we see simply that we are old, not young, and fat, not thin. Seeing the facts enables us to deal with them more soberly and sensitively.

If we are overly worried about how we look, we try to relax and

look at ourselves with the caring concern that underlies our tension. Accepting the situation specific to our age, we set ourselves a reasonable goal for losing weight. If we frequently complain about having to diet, we try soberly to see what we need to do to accomplish our goal. Then, we try simply to do it.

We repeat the exercise putting down the mirror and just working with our disturbing feelings about ourselves. Lastly, we work with our upsetting emotional responses to the series of photographs of ourselves from the past.

PART III Outline for the Advanced Exercises

Exercise 19 **Identifying the Syndromes of Grasping at Mind's** **Natural Functions for Security**

Procedure

- Create a quiet, caring space
- Recall incidents in which either you or others have experienced the following forms of behavior
 - For practice in a workshop, choose one example from each of the four syndromes associated with mind's seven natural functions, or choose just one illustration for each function
 - When practicing at home, do the same or work only with personally pertinent syndromes
 - For advanced or thorough practice, consider all the examples of each syndrome
- Think about how such behavior may arise because of grasping at one of mind's natural functions for security or because of fearing it as a threat
- Reflect on how this confusion causes insensitivity or hypersensitivity to yourself or to others

- Recognize and acknowledge the problems that may result from this
- For abbreviated practice, choose four or only one example for each of mind's natural functions, or work with only personally pertinent examples

Examples

1. Physical activity

- Grasping at being the agent
 - Being a “workaholic,” to justify your existence and worth by being productive
 - Trying to lose yourself in work, so that you do not have to think about personal problems
 - Feeling the need to keep your hands forever busy, because of nervous insecurity
 - Being unable to let others do anything for themselves, so that you can feel needed
 - Immersing yourself in helping others, as a way to avoid helping yourself
 - Being unable to pass an electronic gadget without pressing the buttons, so that you can prove you exist by producing effects
 - Bossing people around, to assert your existence by making them do something
 - Feeling that if only you could find the perfect job, you could cope with life
 - Feeling that if only you could be in control of everything in life, you would feel secure
 - Resting on the laurels of your achievements, in the hope of feeling more secure
 - Planning innumerable projects, to establish your worth
 - Feeling that if only you had accomplished something earlier in life, you would now be secure
 - Feeling that if only you had not committed certain mistakes in your youth, you would now be secure
 - Having to live at the center of activity in a bustling city, to feel alive

- Becoming anonymous in a bustling city, to lose yourself
- Going every day to the shopping mall to watch the people, in order to gain a feeling of life
- Being hyperactive, because of fear of missing out on something
- Pushing your children into a grueling schedule of sports and lessons after school, so that they will not miss out on anything
- Grasping at being the recipient
 - Needing always to be waited on by others, to gain a sense of self-worth
 - Compulsively eating out, to lose yourself by not having to deal with a domestic scene
 - Compulsively asking others what you should do, because of feeling unsure of yourself
 - Feeling that if you could only find a partner to do everything for you, you would be better able to cope with life
- Fear of being the agent
 - Feeling incompetent to handle the latest electronic equipment, because of low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence
 - Feeling that you are hopelessly clumsy, for the same reasons
- Discomfort at being the recipient
 - Being unable to bear someone driving you, because of feeling insecure if you are not in control
 - Being unable to bear someone paying your bill, because you feel it robs you of your dignity
 - Being unable to bear someone telling you what to do or even asking you to do something, because you feel it threatens your independence

2. Verbal expression

- Grasping at being the agent
 - Talking compulsively, even if you have nothing to say
 - Always having to voice your opinion, as if everyone were interested to know what you think

- Feeling you must always get in the last word, because you feel you must always be right
 - Grasping at being the recipient
 - Insisting that someone talk to you, otherwise you feel ignored and nonexistent
 - Being addicted to listening to talk shows, as a form of escape
 - Having others speak for you on the telephone, to feel more secure
 - Fear of being the agent
 - Feeling nervous to tell someone what is on your mind, because of not wanting to jeopardize your security in the situation as it is
 - Feeling nervous to speak before an audience, because of fear of proving yourself an idiot
 - Discomfort at being the recipient
 - Being unable to accept criticism, throwing it back at the person who gave it, accusing him or her of the same fault
 - Feeling personally threatened when someone says something politically incorrect
 - Being unable to bear someone speaking for you on the telephone, because of feeling that it negates your existence
3. Sensory or mental experiences
- Grasping at accumulating them
 - Feeling compelled to visit and photograph every site when you go abroad as a tourist, to prove that you were there
 - Trying to lose yourself in sightseeing, in order to forget your problems at home
 - Needing to have music or television playing from morning until night, otherwise you feel lost in a frightening vacuum of silence
 - Always having to smell fresh air, in order to feel alive

- Compulsively needing to taste every dish at a buffet, otherwise you feel you were not really there
- Touching every item of clothing in the store as you walk past the rack, to ground you to reality
- Giving each person a hug when you enter or leave a room, to reassure your existence through body contact
- Compulsively needing to keep informed about your family, your friends, or world affairs – having immediate information somehow makes you feel more real
- Never knowing when to stop asking questions – not knowing what is happening, or where you are going when someone takes you out, makes you feel completely insecure
- Playing music at ear-shattering volume, because of wanting to lose yourself in it
- Enhancing your senses with recreational drugs, because of feeling that the more intense your sensory experiences are, the more real you become
- Enduring the pain of body-piercing, for the same reason
- Grasping at being the object of them
 - Feeling the need to be seen at the right parties and the right places, wearing the latest fashions, otherwise you feel insecure
 - Needing others to hear you singing at Karaoke bars, to affirm your existence
 - Indiscriminately telling your personal affairs to people sitting beside you on the plane, to make your experiences more real
 - Constantly complaining about your problems to others, to avoid dealing with them yourself
- Fear of having them
 - Being frightened to make eye contact during a conversation, as a way to avoid someone seeing the real “me”
 - Feeling threatened by the unfamiliar odors of a foreign market, as if they challenged who you are
 - Being afraid to taste something new, for the same reason

- Being frightened to feel your emotions, since feeling nothing seems more secure
 - Being uncomfortable even to be in the same room with someone who is terminally ill, because of unconsciously feeling your own existence threatened
 - Discomfort at being the object of them
 - Overreacting if anyone sees you undress, as if this exposed the real “me”
 - Feeling self-conscious if someone records your voice during a speech, because of feeling that now what you say actually counts
 - Feeling threatened if others’ bodies touch yours on a crowded subway, as if physical contact with someone were a more real encounter than being one inch away
 - Being paranoid about giving information about yourself to anyone, because of being obsessed with your privacy
4. Expression of warm concern
- Grasping at being the agent
 - Compulsively needing to be in an intimate relationship with someone, otherwise you feel that life is not worthwhile and that you are unreal
 - Longing for a baby so that you will feel needed, or so that you can lose yourself in taking care of it
 - Compulsively feeling the need to show your affection, by perpetually hugging, kissing, or doing things for someone, or by constantly verbalizing your love – as if your affection does not exist unless you express it
 - Compulsively having to see or touch your beloved or to look at his or her photo on your desk, to confirm the reality of your love
 - Incessantly calling your beloved on the telephone, for similar reasons
 - Insisting on sharing every aspect of your life with a partner, to make your relationship more real
 - Grasping at being the recipient

- Feeling unsettled unless you hear “I love you” or receive a kiss whenever parting from your loved one, as if without it the person’s love were unreal
 - Feeling insecure unless you know every detail about your beloved’s day, as if without this your relationship were unreal
 - Fear or discomfort at being the agent
 - Being afraid of losing control if you fall in love
 - Feeling uncomfortable to show your love by giving someone a good morning kiss, by saying “I love you,” or by calling him or her each day from work
 - Fear or discomfort at being the recipient
 - Fearing a loss of independence if someone falls in love with you
 - Feeling uncomfortable when someone hugs or kisses you, tells you he or she loves you, or calls you at work, as if it were an attack on your sovereignty
5. Expression of energy
- Grasping at being the agent
 - Compulsively needing to assert your will, to prove your existence
 - Pushing yourself on others, for them to confirm your existence by their response
 - Grasping at being the recipient
 - Demanding that everyone focus their attention on you, to make you feel significant and real
 - Pretending to be sick or acting horribly, to force others to accept or reject your existence
 - Fear or discomfort at being the agent
 - Fearing that if you assert yourself, others will reject you
 - Fearing that exerting yourself will leave you with no energy or no time
 - Resenting demands that others make on your time or energy, feeling them as a threat to your existence
 - Fear or discomfort at being the recipient

- Being self-conscious and uncomfortable, or feeling undeserving if others show you attention.
- Being afraid of others' negative energy infecting you and so putting up emotional barriers when meeting them

6. Rest

- Grasping at taking a rest
 - Constantly needing to take breaks at work, so as not to lose sight of being a person
 - Always requiring peace and quiet, to maintain your composure
 - Longing for sleep or even for death, to escape your problems
- Grasping to receive a rest
 - Feeling that if others would give you a break and leave you alone, everything would be all right
 - Feeling that you cannot fall asleep unless your loved one is lying next to you, unless you make love, or unless you read a book
- Fear of taking a rest
 - Feeling that you will no longer be a person if you stop being active
 - Being unable to relax or to fall asleep from fear of missing something or of not being in control
 - Feeling that no one can handle your job if you retire or go on vacation
- Discomfort at receiving a rest
 - Feeling unloved, unneeded, and unwanted if people do not call or ask you to do something for them

7. Expression of pleasure

- Grasping at being the agent, in conjunction with grasping or fearing another natural mental function
 - Compulsively roaming the shopping malls or playing computer games, because of feeling a need for constant entertainment to feel alive

- Being unable to watch a television program and incessantly switching channels, for fear that you may be missing something better
- Never being satisfied with your sexual life and endlessly seeking something more exciting, to make life feel worthwhile
- Hoping to lose yourself in the pleasures of sex
- Feeling that you cannot enjoy a meal, a movie, or making love without recreational drugs, alcohol, or a cigarette
- Feeling that you have to *do something* in order to have “fun”
- Being unable to enjoy someone’s company without having to run with the person from one activity to the next
- Feeling that your happiness with someone is not real unless you verbalize it
- Feeling that only after coming home from work or after putting the children to bed can you relax and be your “real self”
- Compulsively feeling that you have to please everyone or just someone special, to justify your existence
- Feeling worthless as a lover unless you bring your partner and yourself to orgasm
- Feeling you have to entertain someone when he or she comes to see you, otherwise the person will not enjoy the visit
- Feeling that you always have to be the clown and make others laugh, otherwise they will not accept you as you are
- Grasping at being the recipient
 - Being obsessed with winning others’ approval and feeling that unless others approve, you either cannot or must not be happy
 - Compulsively doing “good deeds,” to try to justify your existence and worth in people’s eyes

- Feeling that you need others to entertain you or simply to be with you, because of feeling incapable of being happy on your own
- Fear of being the agent
 - Not “allowing yourself to be happy,” because you feel that you do not deserve it
 - Finding it difficult to relax and have a good time, because of fear that others will disapprove
 - Feeling uncomfortable to give someone physical pleasure, because of fear of inadequacy or that you have nothing to offer
- Fear or discomfort at being the recipient
 - Feeling discomfort at someone trying to give you physical pleasure, as if you were being invaded
 - Feeling frightened or threatened if someone tries to derive physical pleasure from you, as if this would deprive you of something
 - Being uncomfortable at others’ being pleased with you and offering you praise, because of feeling you do not deserve it

Exercise 20
Relaxing Triplistic Appearances of Mind’s Natural Functions

I. Focusing on a person or on some situation from your life
Procedure

- Create a quiet, caring space
- Recall situations in which you grasped for security based on projecting and believing in the triplistic appearances of your mental activity’s natural facets, such as in the following examples
 - For practice in a workshop, choose one syndrome for each of mind’s seven natural functions

- When practicing at home, do the same or work only with personally pertinent examples
 - For advanced or thorough practice, consider all the cited variations
- Recall any insensitivity to others' feelings or hypersensitivity to the situation that may have accompanied your experience
 - If you have never experienced some of the examples, recall someone you know who suffers from these syndromes and imagine what it must be like
- Regret the suffering your imbalance may have caused
- Resolve to avoid recurrences of it
- Recognize the triplistic appearance involved, in one of two forms
 - (1) a seemingly concrete agent "me" who hoped to gain security by grasping at, avoiding, or drowning in (2) a seemingly concrete activity directed at (3) a seemingly concrete object
 - (1) a seemingly concrete object or recipient "me" who hoped to gain security by grasping at, avoiding, or drowning in (2) a seemingly concrete activity performed by (3) a seemingly concrete agent.
- Recognize that your mind has projected this fantasy onto a wave of experience and that the winds of your karma have churned the wave into something monstrous
- Recognize the absurdity of the fantasy
- Picture the projector in your mind shutting off and dissolving
- Imagine the winds of your karma becoming still
- Relax your grasping or your fear
- Imagine the wave of the experience no longer seeming monstrous – it begins to settle and you arrive at the underlying non-triplistic experience of a wave of one of mind's natural qualities
- Realizing that waves of activity can never disturb the depths of the ocean of your mind, imagine engaging nontriplistically in the deconstructed activity, without self-consciousness, tension, or worry

- Imagine experiencing the action as a wave naturally arising from clear light mind and naturally settling back into it
- Recall someone else acting in the same disturbing manner toward you
- To defuse your hypersensitive reaction, understand that the person was overlaying one of mind's natural functions with a triplistic appearance, in one of two forms
 - The person was grasping at (1) the seemingly concrete activity in order to gain security from being (2) the seemingly concrete agent of it, when directed at you as (3) its seemingly concrete object
 - The person feared (1) the seemingly concrete activity as a threat when you as its (2) seemingly concrete agent directed it at him or her as (3) its seemingly concrete object
- Deconstruct your triplistic experience of the person's action, by using the image of the projector shutting off and dissolving, the winds of karma stilling, and the wave settling
- Direct compassion at the person, by wishing him or her to be free of the suffering that his or her confusion creates
- Imagine responding appropriately and nontriplistically with balanced sensitivity
- To abbreviate the practice, choose one illustration for each syndrome, or just work with personally pertinent examples

Examples

1. Physical activity

- To dispel feeling that you always need to be doing something
 - *The scene* -- having a wonderful conversation at the dinner table
 - *The triplistic feeling* – a seemingly concrete servile “me,” the seemingly concrete unbearably dirty dishes, and the seemingly concrete imperative task of washing them
 - *The nontriplistic response* -- enjoying the rest of the conversation and cleaning up only when the talk is over
 - *The nontriplistic response to someone acting like this* -- telling the person it is all right to do the dishes later

- To overcome ordering others around
 - Seeing a relative sitting idly in front of the television
 - A seemingly concrete police officer “me,” a seemingly concrete lazy bum, and a seemingly concrete productive action to justify a person’s existence
 - Asking the person to do something only if there is an urgent task, otherwise being patient
 - Calmly telling the person you are enjoying the program, or simply getting up if there is something urgent
- To stop expecting someone always to do things for you
 - Sitting at the table and noticing that you do not have a napkin
 - A seemingly concrete aristocrat “me,” a seemingly concrete servant “you,” and the seemingly concrete act of someone catering to another’s need
 - Getting it yourself
 - Politely telling the person you are in the middle of eating, or getting the napkin if you are finished
- To overcome fear of doing something
 - Needing to change the ink cartridge in your printer
 - A seemingly concrete incompetent “me,” a seemingly concrete overwhelming machine, and a seemingly concrete impossible task
 - Trying to figure out how to do it yourself and only seeking help if all else fails
 - Patiently guiding the person through the task or, if the person cannot do it, offering help
- To dispel feeling uncomfortable to accept someone doing something for you
 - Sharing the driving with someone on a long motor trip
 - A seemingly concrete “me” who is not in control, a seemingly concrete “you” who has all the power, and a seemingly concrete terrorist act of someone usurping command

- Sitting in the passenger seat and not making the other person feel nervous by commenting on his or her driving throughout the trip
 - Making sure that you are driving safely
2. Verbal expression
- To overcome insisting on having the last word
 - Listening to someone say something that you disagree with
 - A seemingly concrete threatened “me,” a seemingly concrete challenger “you,” and the seemingly concrete act of speaking, which would have the power to restore one’s integrity
 - Adding something only if it is constructive
 - Listening silently, with patience
 - To quiet the insistence that someone talk to you when he or she has little to say
 - Someone visiting you and hardly speaking
 - A seemingly concrete unloved “me,” a seemingly concrete rejective “you,” and the seemingly concrete act of speaking words that could prove one’s affection
 - Enjoying the person’s silent company
 - Reaffirming that there are many ways to show love
 - To dispel shyness at speaking up
 - Having to make a report to your organization
 - A seemingly concrete moronic “me,” a seemingly concrete judgmental “you,” and the seemingly concrete act of opening one’s mouth and thereby proving one’s inadequacy
 - Delivering the report so that others can hear you
 - Gently excusing yourself for being unable to hear
 - To stop feeling uncomfortable with others’ words
 - Someone saying something politically incorrect
 - A seemingly concrete self-righteous “me,” a seemingly concrete bigoted “you,” and a seemingly concrete act of speaking narrow-mindedly

- Suggesting a more sensitive way of speaking if the person is receptive, or holding your tongue if he or she thinks you are too touchy
 - Accepting correction with patience and gratitude
3. Sensory or mental experience
- To overcome the compulsive drive to indulge your senses
 - Being at a buffet
 - A seemingly concrete “me” about to face execution, a seemingly concrete “last meal,” and a seemingly concrete act of eating that could somehow make one’s life worthwhile
 - Leaving several dishes behind once you are full
 - Suggesting before the person goes for a second helping that you come again when you get hungry
 - To stop feeling that you need others to know everything about you
 - Sitting next to someone on an airplane
 - A seemingly concrete, extremely important and interesting “me,” a seemingly concrete “you” who was dying to know my life story, and a seemingly concrete affirming act of knowing a person’s vital information
 - Telling others only what is necessary for them to know and confiding only in those whom you can trust
 - Gently changing the topic of conversation
 - To dispel feeling uncomfortable with sensory experience
 - Having a conversation with someone
 - A seemingly concrete inadequate “me” sitting behind my eyes, a seemingly concrete “you” who will discover and surely reject this “me,” and the seemingly concrete act of looking in someone’s eyes as a way to expose the person’s true self
 - Maintaining normal eye contact during the conversation
 - Not insisting that the person look at you
 - To dispel fear of being the object of others’ sensory experience
 - Having close body contact with a crowd on a subway

- A seemingly concrete virginal “me,” a seemingly concrete filthy “you,” and a seemingly concrete disgusting act of physical contact
 - Experiencing the sensation and letting it pass
 - Shifting positions, if possible
4. Expression of warm concern
- To overcome compulsively expressing affection
 - Seeing your partner or child
 - A seemingly concrete “me” who is starved for love, a seemingly concrete “you” who must be similarly starved, and a seemingly concrete act of expressing love that can fill the empty hole inside
 - Saying “I love you” only at appropriate times
 - Responding warmly and sincerely, “I love you too.”
 - To overcome grasping to receive affection
 - Seeing your partner or child
 - A seemingly concrete “me” whom nobody loves, a seemingly concrete “you” whose love I wish were real, and a seemingly concrete act of expressing and thereby affirming affection
 - Asking for a hug only at appropriate moments
 - Hugging the person if the time and place are appropriate and, if they are not, telling the person you will hug him or her later when the situation is more comfortable
 - To dispel feeling uncomfortable at expressing affection
 - Seeing a loved one who needs reassurance of your feelings
 - A seemingly concrete self-sufficient “me,” a seemingly concrete imposer “you,” and a seemingly concrete act of expressing affection as a threatening demand
 - Saying “I love you” and sincerely meaning it
 - Understanding that the person does not need to verbalize his or her love in order for you to be reassured of it
 - To dispel discomfort at receiving affection
 - Being kissed by a loved one

- A seemingly concrete grown-up “me,” a seemingly concrete degrading “you,” and a seemingly concrete act of expressing love as something childish
 - Accepting the show of affection warmly and responding in kind
 - Showing your love in nonphysical ways
5. Expression of energy
- To stop feeling it necessary to assert your will
 - Going out for dinner with friends
 - A seemingly concrete “me” who must control what happens, a seemingly concrete “you” who must be directed, and a seemingly concrete act of asserting energy to gain secure domination
 - Being open to other suggestions
 - Unless there is a good reason to object, graciously accepting
 - To overcome feeling the need for others to focus on you
 - Visiting or living with someone engrossed in the television or in the computer
 - A seemingly concrete “me” who needs attention to establish his or her worth, a seemingly concrete “you” whose attention is vital, and a seemingly concrete act of directing energy that can affirm the existence and worth of its object
 - Developing interest in the program, or gently reminding the person that there are other things in life
 - Including the person in what you are doing
 - To overcome feeling afraid to assert yourself
 - Being with someone behaving outrageously toward you
 - A seemingly concrete unworthy “me,” a seemingly concrete “you” whose acceptance is crucial, and a seemingly concrete act of expressing energy as something unreasonable
 - Being more assertive
 - Gently encouraging the person to speak up
 - To dispel your fear of others’ energy

- Visiting someone who always complains
- A seemingly concrete threatened “me,” a seemingly concrete depressing “you,” and the seemingly concrete act of emitting draining energy
- Listening to the complaints and letting the energy pass through you
- Easing off

6. Rest

- To overcome grasping for a break
 - Feeling overwhelmed at work
 - A seemingly concrete exhausted “me” who is not myself, a seemingly concrete refreshed “me” who is myself, and a seemingly concrete act of resting that can bring the metamorphosis
 - Calmly looking forward to the weekend, but not longing for it
 - Improving the work situation, if possible
- To quiet grasping at receiving a break from others
 - Your parents pressuring you to find a job or to get married
 - A seemingly concrete victim “me,” a seemingly concrete oppressor “you,” and a seemingly concrete act of respite that will solve all one’s problems
 - Acknowledging their concern and calmly explaining what you have been doing and why
 - Giving the person time and space to be alone
- To overcome being afraid to take a rest
 - Having a lot of work at the office when it is time for your vacation
 - A seemingly concrete irreplaceable “me,” seemingly concrete work that no one else can do, and the seemingly concrete irresponsible act of taking a break
 - Letting someone else handle your work or letting it wait until you return
 - Reassuring the person that everything will be fine while he or she is away

- To quiet your fear of abandonment
 - Being sick and no one calling or visiting you
 - A seemingly concrete abandoned “me,” a seemingly concrete uncaring “you,” and a seemingly concrete act of lying in bed, forsaken
 - Enjoying the peace and quiet
 - Telling the person of your intention not to call and not to visit while he or she has a total rest
7. Expression of pleasure
- To overcome grasping for pleasure
 - Being bored and switching endlessly through the television stations
 - A seemingly concrete “me” who requires constant amusement, a seemingly concrete program that provides complete entertainment, and a seemingly concrete act of enjoying pleasure
 - If you find something interesting, enjoying it without switching stations; and if nothing interesting is on, shutting the set
 - Finding a reasonable compromise of what to watch
 - To quit compulsively striving to win others’ approval
 - Doing something just to please someone, such as taking a prestigious, but boring job
 - A seemingly concrete inadequate “me,” a seemingly concrete “you” on a pedestal, and a seemingly concrete act of showing pleasure with someone as an affirmation of worth
 - Making choices that feel comfortable and that are right for you
 - Encouraging the person to make his or her own decisions and assuring your love no matter what choice the person makes
 - To stop being afraid to have a good time
 - Being at an office party

- A seemingly concrete proper “me,” a seemingly concrete undignified dance, and a seemingly concrete degrading act of expressing pleasure
- Dancing and enjoying yourself like everyone else
- Accepting the person no matter what he or she does
- To dispel feeling uncomfortable to accept others being pleased with you
 - Someone expressing his or her pleasure with your work
 - A seemingly concrete undeserving “me,” a seemingly concrete patronizing “you,” and a seemingly concrete insincere act of showing pleasure
 - Accepting the approval graciously, saying thank you, and feeling happy
 - Being more relaxed and compassionate with the person so that he or she feels more secure in your approval

II. While focusing on someone in person

Procedure

- While facing a partner, do the following without a triplistic feeling of a seemingly concrete “me” encountering a seemingly concrete “you” through involvement in a seemingly concrete act – in other words
 - without feeling self-conscious
 - without being nervous of the person
 - without worrying about your performance or about being accepted
 - being totally receptive and accepting of the person and of yourself
 - being nonjudgmental
 - without making mental comments
- If triplistic feelings of nervousness or self-consciousness arise, follow the same procedure as in the first phase of the exercise to deconstruct them
 - Imagine the projector of fantasy in your mind shutting off and dissolving
 - Picture the winds of your karma stilling

- Imagine the wave of the experience seeming no longer monstrous
- Feel the wave settle back into the ocean of your mind
- If various positive or negative feelings arise, also feel them pass like a wave on the ocean, without grasping at or fearing them
- Practice the sequence first with someone of the opposite sex, then with someone of the same gender
 - If possible, practice with persons of each sex who are your own age, then younger, then older – first all three of the opposite sex and then all three of the same gender as yourself
 - Among these persons, include people from different cultural or racial backgrounds and alternate working with people you know and those who are new to you
 - Note the different levels of self-consciousness and nervousness you experience with people in each category

Steps

- Create a quiet, caring space
- Hold your hand for a few moments to accustom yourself to non-triplistic sensations
- Massage the person's shoulders, experience being massaged, and then sit face to face and massage each other's shoulders simultaneously
- Speak to the person from your heart for a few minutes about how you have been the last few days and what you have been feeling, and then listen to the other person do the same
- Gently look in the person's eyes, without feeling you have to say or do anything, while the other person does the same -- completely accept each other
- When it feels right, express your warmth to the person, and then accept the other person doing the same
 - Take the person's hand, give him or her a hug, or say "I really like you," whichever feels natural
- Feel and accept each other's energy
- Completely relax and sit quietly with each other
- Feel the joy of being in each other's presence

III. While focusing on yourself

1. Repeat the procedure used with someone in person, without a mirror or photos of yourself
 - Smooth your hair
 - Speak to yourself in your mind about how you need to work harder or to be more relaxed
 - Hold your own hand reassuringly
 - Show yourself warm concern by stretching your legs if you are sitting crossed-legged or by loosening your belt
 - Feel your own energy, without being frightened
 - Totally accept yourself, relax fully, and sit quietly without feeling lost, restless, or bored
 - Feel the joy of simply being with yourself and enjoy your own company

Exercise 21 ***Dispelling Discomfort at the Eight Transitory Things in Life***

I. While focusing on various persons from your life

Procedure

- Recall a situation with someone in which you overreacted to giving or receiving one of the eight transitory things in life, working through the following examples
 - For practice in a workshop or at home, work with merely receiving each of the eight transitory things and choose only personally relevant examples
 - For advanced or thorough practice, work with all cited examples for both receiving and giving each
 - For Section 3b, work through each step
- Regret any pain that your loss of balance might have caused the person or yourself
- Resolve to try to prevent this from happening again
- Recognize that your overreaction came from projecting and believing in a dualistic appearance of your experience

- Focus on the fact that a concrete “me” sitting in my head and a gain or a loss so absolute that it establishes the worth or the worthlessness of such a “me” are preposterous fictions that do not refer to anything real
- Picture your realization of this fact popping the balloon of your fantasy
- Experience the burst shocking you out of your daydream and feel your attachment, aversion, and confusion disappearing in an instant, leaving no trace
- See that the popping of your fantasy leaves you only with the wave of experience that served as its basis
- Feel this wave from the oceanic perspective of clear light activity and imagine receiving or giving the transitory thing without tension or internal commentary
- Without denying either the experience of this wave or the feeling of happiness or sadness that it naturally brings, let it settle and pass
- Except for Section 3b, “Receiving or fulfilling expectations or demands,” recall feeling tense at someone overreacting when he or she received or gave the same transitory thing to you, as in the examples of related responses given after the primary forms cited for each syndrome
- Understanding the confusion behind the person’s hypersensitivity, deconstruct your dualistic response by imagining it abruptly popping like a balloon
- Compassionately accept the person’s hyperemotional response and imagine reacting nonjudgmentally with balanced sensitivity
- Without ignoring the person’s emotions or becoming upset and feeling guilty, imagine feeling sad at the event and letting the person know what you feel

Examples

1. Praise or criticism

- Receiving praise
 - *Primary forms of the syndrome* -- gloating or feeling unworthy when receiving praise that you are a good worker who is kind to the rest of the staff

- *Related responses to someone having the syndrome* -- feeling annoyed or awkward when someone boasts or protests too loudly at your offer of praise
 - Giving praise
 - Feeling condescendingly gracious, compromising, or uncomfortable when praising someone for a job well done
 - Feeling suspicious or embarrassed when someone is uneasy while praising you
 - Receiving criticism
 - Feeling anger, mortification, or low self-esteem when receiving criticism or blame for working poorly
 - Feeling guilty or cold when someone overreacts to your criticism
 - Giving criticism
 - Feeling self-righteous, nervous, or upset at offering someone constructive criticism for his or her performance at work
 - Feeling annoyed or disappointed when someone is too timid or too polite to point out your mistakes when you ask for a critical evaluation of your work
2. Good or bad news
- Receiving good news
 - Becoming overexcited and falsely self-confident, or superstitious and nervous at receiving good news, such as that you passed your exam
 - Condescendingly feeling that someone is acting like a child when the person becomes overexcited at your conveying good news
 - Conveying good news
 - Feeling self-important, overexcited, or jealous at giving someone good news, for instance that he or she passed the exam
 - Feeling embarrassed or disgusted at someone's seemingly inappropriate show of emotion when the person becomes more excited than you when conveying good news to you

- Receiving bad news
 - Feeling sorry for yourself, becoming angry, or feeling that you deserve to be punished when receiving bad news, such as that you failed the exam
 - Feeling emotionally stiff or awkward when someone cries at receiving bad news from you
- Conveying bad news
 - Feeling guilty or gloating self-righteously when giving someone bad news, such as that he or she failed the exam
 - Feeling uncomfortable or impatient when someone feels awkward or reticent to give you bad news

3a. Gains or losses

- Gaining something
 - Becoming overexcited, feeling that it confirms how wonderful you are, or feeling obligated and robbed of your independence when gaining something, such as a gift of money
 - Feeling frustrated or rejected when someone feels uneasy at your offer to help with some money
- Giving something
 - Feeling yourself a more worthwhile person or feeling deprived when giving someone something, such as financial help to an elderly parent
 - Feeling outraged when someone has expectations of you or makes unreasonable demands because of your accepting a gift
- Losing something
 - Feeling devastated, indignant, or convinced that this proves that you are no good when losing something, for instance someone's friendship
 - Feeling guilty or cold when someone becomes depressed or angry at your depriving him or her of something, such as when ending an unhealthy relationship
- Depriving something

- Being afraid to hurt someone or feeling delighted when depriving someone of something, such as when having to say no
- Feeling stupid or annoyed for even asking for a favor when someone feels terrible at having to refuse it

3b. Expectations or demands

- Thanking someone
 - Feeling patronizing, obligated, or subordinate when thanking someone on your own initiative
 - Feeling indignant, insulted, or guilty when someone expects a thank-you from you
 - Feeling condescending, resentful, or demeaned when thanking someone because the person expects a thanks
 - Feeling self-righteous, outraged, or extremely guilty when someone demands a thank-you from you
 - Feeling arrogant, scornful, or defeated when thanking someone upon demand
- Apologizing
 - Feeling condescending or embarrassed when apologizing to someone on your own initiative
 - Feeling incensed, indignant, or guilty when someone expects an apology from you
 - Feeling unrepentantly smug, resentful, or humiliated when apologizing because someone expects an apology
 - Feeling self-righteous, outraged, or extremely guilty when someone demands an apology from you
 - Feeling arrogant, scornful, or defeated when apologizing upon demand

4. Things going well or poorly

- Having things go well
 - Feeling smug or that it is too good to be true when being the recipient of things going well, for example in a relationship with someone
 - Feeling impatient or annoyed when someone feels insecure in a relationship with you that is going well
- Making things go well

- Feeling yourself to be the self-sacrificing martyr or being worried that you would inevitably ruin things when being the agent of things going well, such as in a relationship
- Feeling exasperated when someone feels low self-esteem, though he or she is acting perfectly well in a relationship with you
- Having things go poorly
 - Feeling sorry for yourself or feeling that that you are getting what you deserve when being the recipient of things going poorly, for instance in a relationship
 - Feeling disappointed or irritated when someone constantly complains at things going badly in a relationship with you, but does nothing constructive to try to improve the situation
- Making things go poorly
 - Feeling depressed, guilty, or self-satisfied when being the agent of things going poorly, such as in a relationship
 - Feeling callous and unforgiving when someone felt awful at having hurt you

II. While focusing on someone in person

1. While facing a partner, do the following without feeling tense, self-conscious, silly, elated, glorified, depressed, or hurt, but with appropriate feelings of happiness or sadness, by following the previous procedure to deconstruct disturbing emotions if they arise
 - Praise the person, for example that his or her hair looks nice, and then receive a similar compliment
 - Offer constructive criticism, such as the person is overweight and needs to go on a diet, and then receive similar criticism
 - Tell the person good news, such as that tomorrow will be a day off from work, and then receive similar good news

- Tell the person bad news, such as that you lost the book that he or she loaned you, and then receive similar bad news
- Give the person some gain, for instance some money, and then receive a similar gain
- Give the person a loss, for instance take back the money, and then receive a similar loss
- Thank the person on your own initiative, demand a thank-you in return, and receive that thanks
- Receive a thank-you from the person's own initiative and a demand for a thanks in return, and fulfill that demand
- Apologize to the person on your own initiative, demand an apology in return, and receive that apology
- Receive an apology from the person's own initiative and a demand for an apology in return, and fulfill that demand
- Acknowledge to yourself the success of your efforts to improve the relationship with the person and admit to yourself the person's successful efforts as well
- Acknowledge to yourself your responsibility for the relationship degenerating with the person and admit to yourself the person's responsibility for this as well

III. While focusing on yourself

1. While focusing on yourself without a mirror, do the following nondualistically, repeating the deconstruction procedure if needed
 - Praise yourself for your positive efforts, and then criticize yourself for the mistakes you are making
 - Tell yourself good news, such as that there is only one day left until the weekend, and then tell yourself bad news, such as you have to go back to work tomorrow
 - Imagine experiencing a gain, such as figuring out the solution to a personal problem, and then experiencing a loss, such as being unable to remember someone's name

- Imagine doing something nice for yourself, like taking a hot bath, and then restricting yourself, for instance not taking dessert because you are dieting
 - Think about the things that have been going well in your life, and then think about the things that have been going poorly
2. Repeat the procedure while looking at a series of photographs of yourself spanning your life
- Praise yourself for your strong points during those times and criticize your mistakes
 - Tell yourself both the good and bad news of what happened because of your behavior then
 - Think of the gains and losses you have experienced because of those actions
 - Acknowledge the things that went well and the things that went badly at those times

Exercise 22

Dissolving Disturbing Emotions into Underlying Deep Awareness

I. While focusing on a photo or on a thought of someone from your life

Procedure

- Choose someone toward whom you have felt or are currently feeling one of the disturbing emotions – you may need to choose a different person for each emotion
 - For practice in a workshop or at home, choose one form of disturbing emotion for each of the five types of deep awareness
 - For advanced or thorough practice, work with all the disturbing emotions associated with each of the five types of deep awareness
- Create a quiet, caring space
- Acknowledge and regret the pain that your imbalance may have caused the person

- Resolve to try to overcome these problems
- Recognize the dualistic feeling behind the disturbing emotion as based on sheer fantasy
- Deconstruct it
 - Relax completely
 - As you feel your tension easing, feel the fantasy and its accompanying disturbing emotion releasing themselves, by using the image and feeling of the clenched fist of your mind slowly opening
 - Try to feel the clenched fist of physical tightness in your chest and gut also relaxing and opening
 - Try to feel that tightly grasping the dualistic appearance and disturbing emotion was like tightly clutching a color image printed on water
 - Feel your mind, emotions, and feelings are now clear
- Recognize and rest in the corresponding form of underlying deep awareness
- Look at a photo or merely think about someone who has felt or is currently feeling the same disturbing emotion toward you
- Follow the same procedure to deconstruct your overreaction
- Rest in the underlying form of awareness
- Feel compassion for the person, who does not relax and contact his or her deep awareness

Examples

1a. Naivety about cause and effect

- *The person and your disturbing attitude* – a small child in front of whom you naively felt that fighting with your partner would not matter
- *The dualistic appearance* – a seemingly concrete “me” acting in a vacuum and a seemingly concrete entity unaffected by surroundings
- *The underlying deep awareness* – awareness of reality with which you see the effects of your actions, and mirror-like awareness taking in the information that is clearly there
- *The person and his or her disturbing attitude directed at you* – someone saying something painful about a loved one you re-

cently lost, naively unaware that his or her words would upset you

- *Your dualistic feeling* – a seemingly concrete poor “me” who has been hurt by a seemingly concrete cruel “you”
- *The underlying deep awareness* – mirror-like awareness of the reality that your loved one is gone, although no one can deny that this is sad

1b. Naivety about reality

- Someone who told you something about him or herself that you have difficulty accepting or that you have naively denied, such as that he or she is getting older and now tires more easily
- A seemingly concrete “me” for whom things are as I imagine them to be and a seemingly concrete “you” who matches my dreams
- Mirror-like awareness of the information that the person has told you and awareness of the person’s reality
- Someone who naively refused to accept the truth about you, for instance that you are not romantically interested in him or her
- A seemingly concrete “me,” about whom everything is obvious, frustrated by a seemingly concrete blind “you”
- Mirror-like awareness of your actual feelings about the person

2a. Self-aggrandizing arrogance

- Someone to whom you feel superior in one way or another
- A seemingly concrete superior “me” and a seemingly concrete inferior “you”
- Equalizing awareness of the two of you as human beings
- Someone who feels he or she is better than you are
- A seemingly concrete maligned “me” insulted by a seemingly concrete arrogant “you”
- Equalizing awareness of the two of you as human beings

2b. Inordinate esteem of others

- Someone whom you aggrandize as superior to you in one way or another
- A seemingly concrete inferior “me” and a seemingly concrete superior “you”
- Equalizing awareness of the two of you as human beings
- Someone who aggrandizes you as superior to him or her

- A seemingly concrete, perfectly normal “me” imposed upon by a seemingly concrete, preposterous and tedious “you”
- Equalizing awareness of the two of you as human beings

3a. Stinginess

- Someone with whom you did not want to share something
- A seemingly concrete “me” who would be deprived if this seemingly concrete undeserving “you” were to share what I have
- Equalizing awareness of the two of you as people who could partake of something
- Someone who was unwilling to share something with you
- A seemingly concrete, poor deprived “me” and a seemingly concrete selfish “you”
- Equalizing awareness of the two of you as human beings

3b. Destructive self-denial in favor of others

- Someone for whose sake you wanted to deprive yourself of your own fair portion of something in order to give the person more than he or she needed or even wanted
- A seemingly concrete unworthy “me” and a seemingly concrete, more deserving “you”
- Equalizing awareness of the two of you as human beings, equally deserving fairness
- Someone who has kept little or nothing for him or herself and given you more than your due share of something
- A seemingly concrete “me” who deserves this and a seemingly concrete “you” who owes it to me, or a seemingly concrete undeserving “me” and a seemingly concrete “you” who owes me nothing
- Equalizing awareness of the two of you as human beings, equally deserving fairness

4a. Longing desire to possess someone

- Someone whom you long to possess in one way or another
- A seemingly concrete deprived “me” who desperately needs to have a seemingly concrete enticing “you”
- Awareness of the person as an individual or of some of his or her specific qualities
- Someone who longs to possess you

- A seemingly concrete endangered “me” being hunted by a seemingly concrete pursuing “you”
 - Awareness of the person as an individual
- 4b. Longing desire to belong to someone
- Someone to whom you wish you belonged, for instance as a life partner or as an employee
 - A seemingly concrete “me” for whom self-worth and fulfillment only can come from this seemingly concrete “you” including me in his or her intimate circle
 - Awareness of the person as an individual or of some of his or her specific qualities
 - Someone who longs to be your partner and for you to include him or her in all aspects of your life
 - A seemingly concrete claustrophobic “me” imposed upon by a seemingly concrete demanding “you”
 - Awareness of the person as an individual
- 5a. Clinging attachment to possessing someone
- Someone, for instance your preadolescent child, whom you have treated as a fledgling and tried to keep in the nest
 - A seemingly concrete incomplete “me” who cannot live without a seemingly concrete “you” as my baby always under my close supervision
 - Awareness of the person as an individual
 - Someone, perhaps in your family, who clings to you as his or hers to control
 - A seemingly concrete threatened “me” being oppressed by a seemingly concrete manipulative “you”
 - Awareness of the person as an individual
- 5b. Clinging attachment to belonging to someone
- Someone to whom you cling as the person to whom you belong and whom you are terrified may abandon or fire you
 - A seemingly concrete insecure “me” whose only hope for protection from hardship is a seemingly concrete savior “you”
 - Awareness of the person as an individual
 - Someone emotionally dependent on you who clings with attachment and is paranoid that you will abandon him or her
 - A seemingly concrete victimized “me” being drained of resources by a seemingly concrete vampire “you”

- Awareness of the person simply as an individual
- 6a. Jealousy
- A new boyfriend or girlfriend of your previous partner
 - A seemingly concrete “me” who deserves my old partner back and a seemingly concrete “you” who does not merit the honor of her or his company
 - Awareness that the person has accomplished having your old girlfriend or boyfriend as his or her partner
 - Someone who is jealous of what you have achieved
 - A seemingly concrete “me” who deserves what I have gotten and a seemingly concrete “you” who does not deserve the same
 - Awareness that you have accomplished what you have through cause and effect
- 6b. Self-depreciation and guilt with what one has
- Someone whom you feel is more deserving of what you have than you are
 - A seemingly concrete “me” who does not deserve what I have and a seemingly concrete “you” who deserves it more
 - Awareness that you, not the other person, have gained or achieved what you have through cause and effect
 - Someone who feels that you are more deserving of what he or she has than he or she is
 - A seemingly concrete insulted “me” being exploited by a seemingly concrete absurd “you” who is trying to alleviate feelings of guilt
 - Awareness that the person has attained what he or she has and that now you may receive part of it
- 7a. Anger directed externally
- A political figure whose policies annoy you
 - A seemingly concrete oppressed “me” facing the onslaughts of a seemingly concrete terrible “you”
 - Mirror-like awareness taking in the information of how the person is acting, and awareness of the reality that the person is acting like this and not like that
 - Someone angrily accusing you of something
 - A seemingly concrete innocent “me” and a seemingly concrete unfair “you”

- Mirror-like awareness of what you have done, and reality awareness of its propriety
- 7b. Suppressed anger redirected internally
- Someone who mistreated you, in response to which you blamed yourself and silently redirected your anger inwardly
 - A seemingly concrete guilty “me” and a seemingly concrete “you” who might abandon me if I said anything about the incident
 - Mirror-like awareness of what happened between you, and reality awareness that it was like this and not like that
 - Someone who is afraid to object when you say or do something hurtful, and redirects the anger inwardly instead
 - A seemingly concrete frustrated “me” who is trying hard and a seemingly concrete impossible “you” who is not cooperating
 - Mirror-like awareness of your behavior and the person’s response, and reality awareness that the relationship is painful to both of you and not to just you alone
8. Worry
- Someone about whom you obsessively worry
 - A seemingly concrete helpless “me” facing a seemingly concrete “you” who is out of my control
 - Individualizing awareness of the person and warm concern
 - Someone who constantly worries about you
 - A seemingly concrete suffocating “me” being smothered by a seemingly concrete overbearing “you”
 - Individualizing awareness of the person and concern about yourself
9. Complaint
- Someone who asked or told you to do something that you did not wish to do
 - A seemingly concrete “me” who is too good to be told what to do by a seemingly concrete “you” who is trying to rob me of my independence
 - Accomplishing awareness of what needs to be done and reality awareness of your ability to do it and the propriety of your doing it

- Someone complaining about something that you asked him or her to do
- A seemingly defiant “you” confronting a seemingly concrete innocent “me”
- Accomplishing awareness of what needs to be done and reality awareness of the person’s ability to do it and the propriety of his or her doing it

II. While focusing on someone in person

1. To dispel loneliness, repeat the procedure while sitting in a circle with a group, by looking around at the people and directing the deep awareness at them that is left after deconstructing each disturbing emotion or attitude
 - Deconstruct the naivety accompanying the dualistic appearance of yourself as a seemingly concrete “me,” inherently alone, and these people as seemingly concrete, unattainably distant “you”
 - Discover mirror-like awareness taking in the information about them and reality awareness that, with appropriate effort on your part, each could become a friend
 - Deconstruct the arrogance accompanying the dualistic appearance of them as not good enough for you or the low self-esteem of yourself as not good enough for them
 - Discover equalizing awareness considering these people and yourself at the same moment and appreciate the connection that this automatically creates
 - Deconstruct the longing desire accompanying the dualistic dream of each of these people as an ideal friend who can end your loneliness
 - Discover individualizing awareness of each person as having his or her strong and weak points
 - Deconstruct the jealousy accompanying the dualistic memory of someone in the group who was joking with others before the session
 - Discover accomplishing awareness that to form a friendship you also need to approach these people and speak

- Deconstruct the anger accompanying the dualistic feeling of oppressor and victim when remembering others acting cruelly in previous friendships that failed
 - Discover mirror-like awareness of what took place and reality awareness that your former friends acted unacceptably and not as you would have preferred – appreciate that this does not mean that everyone will inevitably hurt you
 - Deconstruct the dualistic worry that others will dislike you
 - Discover individualizing awareness of each person and caring concern about his or her happiness with you, which is the wish of love
 - Deconstruct the dualistic complaints about having to join a group to meet people
 - Discover the accomplishing awareness that to meet these people, you had to come here, and appreciate the fact that they came too – this affords you an opportunity for friendship
2. To resolve a conflict, repeat the procedure in private while facing someone in the group with whom you have a dispute
- Deconstruct closed-minded naivety about the person's position into mirror-like awareness of reality
 - Deconstruct arrogance into awareness of both of you as equal and both your positions as equally valid
 - Deconstruct attachment to how you would like things ideally to be into individualizing awareness to evaluate the specifics of the situation
 - Deconstruct jealousy if the person were to get his or her way over certain points into accomplishing awareness to work out a compromise
 - Deconstruct anger into mirror-like awareness of reality to see your differences objectively
 - Deconstruct worry about how the person will respond into concern that he or she be happy with your proposals

- Deconstruct complaints if the person objects to any points into accomplishing awareness of what needs to be done to accomplish your aim

III. While focusing on yourself

1. To dislodge low self-esteem, repeat the procedure while looking in a mirror

- Relax the closed-minded naivety of not wanting to accept, for example, that you are old and fat, and focus on your image with mirror-like awareness of the reality of what you see
- Accompany this with letting go of value judgments and preconceptions of how you should look, by using the breathing method of “letting go” and the image of writing on water
- Generate caring concern toward yourself, by thinking
 - I am a human being and have feelings, just as everyone else does.
 - How I regard and treat myself affects my feelings, just as how others regard and treat me affects how I feel.
 - Therefore, just as I hope that others care about me and about my feelings in our interactions, I care about myself. I care about my feelings. I care about my feelings toward myself.
- With mirror-like awareness of reality, look objectively once more at what you see
- Relax the pride of not admitting that you look like that, and focus with equalizing awareness that whether thin or fat, young or old, each appearance is equally “me”
- Relax the attachment of clinging to an image of an ideal weight and hair color that is outdated and unrealistic, and focus with individualizing awareness at how you are at this stage in life
- Relax the envy of how you looked and felt when you were younger, and focus with accomplishing awareness that you gained your previous look and level of energy because of youth and now you can only accomplish what is realistic for your age

- Relax the anger at having gained so much weight, and focus with mirror-like awareness of the reality that you are old, not young, and fat, not thin
 - Relax the worries about how you look, and focus with warm concern, accepting the situation specific to your age and setting yourself a reasonable goal for losing weight
 - Relax the complaints about having to diet, and focus soberly with accomplishing awareness of what you need to do to reach your goal
2. Repeat the procedure without a mirror, working with your disturbing feelings about yourself
 3. Repeat the procedure while looking at a series of photographs of yourself spanning your life, working with your disturbing emotional responses to what you see