

How to Transform Your Afflictive Emotions into Happiness

According to Buddhadharmā, in mundane language, klesha (kleśa) in Sanskrit means our negative emotions, moodiness, and all sorts of mental sufferings or disease. The opposite of klesha is “Bodhi,” which means ultimate liberation or perfect awakening.

How should we, then, use various methods taught in Buddhism, to help us liberate ourselves from the bondages of these negative emotions and mental diseases, to free ourselves from the destructive patterns of self-grasping and attachments, so that we could also obtain long-lasting happiness, stability, and perfect well-being? If we are able to attain these two goals, then we are said to have transformed all our negative emotions into a path of meditation or Dharma, and we are capable also to transform our “kleshas” into the “Bodhi.”

There are four methods to do so:

1. Follow the Buddha’s teaching on the “Four Seals:” The Four Seals are:
 - (i) Everything conditioned is impermanent.
 - (ii) Everything influenced by delusion is suffering.
 - (iii) All things are empty and selfless.
 - (iv) Nirvana is peace.

Firstly, we must contemplate on the impermanent nature of all compounded or conditioned phenomena. Second, think that all the samsaric nature in this world, be it animate or inanimate, is by itself influenced by delusion, hence therefore “suffering”. Thirdly, but when you perceive the reality of all phenomena, you will then realize that “all things are empty and self-less”. If you can contemplate on these teaching (and its meanings) frequently and get yourself familiarized with its essence, you are able to purify or transform your own mind. By and by, the root of all negative emotions – your “ego” will lose its grip, enabling you to enter into the realization of “non-self” (anatta) – which is the reality of all things. You will be able to cut-off your ego-grasping and attain the fruition of Nirvana – the peaceful state of ultimate joy and happiness. “Nirvana is peace” – you could then transcend all dualistic states of negative emotions and sufferings.

I encourage you to contemplate on the teaching of the Four Seal every day. We should make this as our daily meditation and remember these four crucial points in our hearts. We would definitely obtain tremendous benefits by doing this daily practice consistently and mindfully.

2. Remember and contemplate on this Wisdom Quote from Shantideva’s “Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra” (A Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life) – “If the problem can be solved why worry? If the problem cannot be solved, worrying will do you no good.”

In this samsaric life of ours, we have ups and downs, happiness, and sufferings. It is quite impossible to have a good life that's 100% free from sufferings and unhappiness, this is just the reality of life as it is. So, when we encounter some difficulties in life, and if we could solve these issues by applying various antidotes or methods, then why should we be worried? But even if we have tried our best to deal with the issues at hand, but we are nowhere near to our solutions, then what's the point of worrying? It would be just a complete waste of time, energy, and resources!

So just accept our life as it is, and deal with our problems as they come. Life is just like a wave... you can't change the way it breaks. We can only learn how to surf on this roller coaster. Because good things can come from even seemingly bad events... don't be quick to judge

So, when you are challenged with some difficulties in life, please remember this wisdom quote of Shantideva. You can face your problems fearlessly and mindfully, pacify your inner emotional turmoil and paranoia, and help yourself to gain some level of inner peace, joy, relaxation, and spacious awareness.

3. As it was stated in the Seven Points of Mind Training: "Drive all blames into oneself. Contemplate the great kindness of everyone."

- (i) Drive all blames into oneself.

We tend to blame or criticize others when we have some relationship issues with others. We tend to be self-righteous, and it's all because of others' bad attitude that we have to deal with the mess that is happening now... Others were to blame for hurting me or mistreating me. Due to this strong clinging to the attitude of "having things only my way", we have tremendous negative feelings and mental discomforts in our minds. We become easily angry, jealous, and aggressive. It's good if we can purify this way of thinking and begin to take "response-ability" – our ability to "respond" back into our hands. We need to contemplate on the faults of our ego-grasping, our ignorance as well as our past negative karma. Instead of looking outward for someone or something to blame, we look within and start to reflect on our own faults and impurities. We begin to commit ourselves to rectify these mistakes or weaknesses, and begin anew inside out, and we take back our power – so that we could improve things in a positive and healthy manner, for the highest good of all. Practice this slogan well and I guarantee your personal relationships will begin to bloom and thrive!

- (ii) Contemplate the great kindness of everyone.

We all live in an interdependent world of co-existence. As small as a small act of drinking a cup of tea, we can't do it without gathering some necessary causes and conditions, and we can't do that by relying on our own effort alone - all things (dharma, phenomena, principles) arise in dependence upon other things. This principle of Pratīyasamutpāda (Sanskrit, Pāli: paṭiccasamuppāda), commonly translated as "dependent arising", is a key doctrine in Buddhism shared by all schools of Buddhism

So, you see, our happiness and well-being depend upon other sentient beings, so does our Dharma practices. In order to attain perfect Buddhahood, we need all mother sentient beings to help us. Hence the kindness of sentient beings is as great as the kindness of all the Buddhas – we need both the Buddhas and all mother sentient beings to attain perfect awakening. For example, in order to practice Six Paramitas e.g., generosity, moral ethics, patience, diligence, meditation and wisdom – we need other sentient beings as our object of paramitas. Without them, we won't be able to practice these Six Perfections, and we won't be able to generate the altruistic mind of enlightenment – the Bodhicitta as well!

In short, from now until we attain enlightenment, from mundane benefits to supra-mundane attainments, we have to rely on other sentient beings. All mother sentient beings are so kind to us in every aspect of life, therefore we should be grateful to them as well. When we contemplate on this important verse mindfully, the great Bodhi mind of awakening (Bodhicitta) will arise within us, and countless merits, benefits and qualities will flow from this altruistic mind to benefit oneself and others.

So please practice these two slogans diligently - “Drive all blames into oneself. Contemplate the great kindness of everyone.”

4. If you are unhappy or feeling down, you can also engage yourself in some Deity Yoga (Yidam) practices.

You can begin by visualize your personal deity (Yidam) (the one you feel the strongest connection with) right before you, and request for his/her empowerments and blessings, so that your inner emotions and turmoil would be pacified and purified, and you could be blessed with the deity's loving kindness, compassion, and great qualities. Visualize the powerful blessings of the deity dissolve into you and meditate upon this non-dual state between you and your personal deity. Have strong feelings that your body, speech and mind become inseparable with the body, speech, and mind of the deity.

These are the four ways with which we can purify our sorrow into joy, and to transform our negative emotions (kleshas) into enlightenment (Bodhi).

Short teachings given by Khenpo Tsulnam Rinpoche