

How to Use This Workbook

Welcome to your workbook towards liberation! This booklet contains all the information you will need for the course. Read ahead if you like, or enjoy the material presented comprehensively during each class.

Included in this workbook:

1. **Self-reflection questions** (on the coloured paper) to integrate the teachings into your life. The Buddha's wisdom may be interesting, but it can become life-changing if you fill in the worksheets!
2. **Meditations** on each topic to practice during the week
3. **Powerpoint summaries** with space for you to take notes on during class

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Keep Yourself Nice

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(1) Wisdom Worksheet

- Sit down with a nice cup of tea or coffee, reflect on the questions, and fill in what you can.
- Bring it with you next week and be ready to discuss at least one point in class (don't worry - you don't have to hand it in! Just share what you are comfortable with).

General motivation and goals

1. What is the main thing you hope that Buddhism can help with?

Dependent origination

2. What is one good thing that happened to you this week?

3. What causes and conditions brought it about? Who or what else did it involve?

4. If it was just you, did it involve a change in your own attitude? Was there a trigger?

5. Describe one bad thing that happened to you this week (start with something simple!)

6. What does it depend on? List as many factors that could change the situation:

7. How could it make you a better person?

8. What is one opportunity that can arise from this?

Conclusion and a nod to the future

9. One thing that stood out for you or was helpful about the topic tonight?

10. One thing you can change for the better right now, in your own attitude or thinking?

Meditation on a Dependently-Arising Self

"Who am I, really?"

- Lama Yeshe says we can make a very practical, simple beginning - ask "how, at this moment, do I interpret myself?"
- Ask...Who am I? What am I?
- How much is based on gender? Can you imagine how your life would be different if you were born the opposite gender? The women here, imagine the results of all the work and effort of your life if you were a bloke, how would things be different? If you are a guy, imagine going through your life, but being treated like a girl.
- What about age? How old are you? And how old do you feel on the inside? Our age is constantly changing, and how old we feel also changes. We can be taken back to feeling like a little kid, or feel the relief of having left the angst of youth behind. We look at others and think 'old person' as if they were born that way.
- What about race or culture? We could identify as Serbian, Croatian or Macedonian and fight, or we can identify as Australian, embrace multiculturalism, and create a Balkan soccer team. We can identify with the old country, and also the modern world.
- Ask... Who am I? What am I?
- What about family life? How much of our identity is tied up with what we do, our role? If we take away parenting, marriage, our ancestry, who are we? Yet we feel we have a unique identity. Can you imagine who you are, separate from your family?
- What about career or occupation? If we lose that, do we also lose our sense of worth?
- Ask...What do you do? ...What flows through you?
- What about our looks? If we were born short, or tall, can you imagine how people would relate to? How would it change? How much of who you are is tied up with your height? With your looks? If we were born super-model beautiful, would we have worked on our character our humour, our inner qualities, as much?
- Ask... how do I interpret myself right now?
- How am I limiting myself, without even knowing it?
- At any time, we have a choice...
- What element could I focus on right now, to bring forth a helpful quality within myself?

(2) Renunciation Worksheet

- Sit down with a nice cup of tea or coffee, reflect on the questions, and fill in what you can.
- Bring it with you next week and be ready to discuss at least one point in class (don't worry - you don't have to hand it in! Just share what you are comfortable with).

Do your short-term concerns support your long-term goals?

1. What types of activities or concerns dominated your attention during the past week?

2. What proportion of your time was spent in maintaining the worldly concerns?

3. What are some *short term changes* you could make this week, so you could spend more time on your long-term goals?

4. What is the biggest change you need to make? How will you do things differently *in the coming week*, to support that?

5. What is a time where you voluntarily underwent hardships for something that really mattered to you. What did you say to encourage yourself?

6. List three of the things most important to you in life:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

7. How can your activities of the next week contribute to or support these things?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

8. What stops you doing what matters *most* to you? What distractions? What fears?

9. What would you be doing right now if you knew you couldn't fail?

Meditation on the Eight Worldly Concerns

"Don't give up what you want most for what you want now!"

- Think about gain and loss. Do I want more money and possessions than I actually need? Do I put myself ahead of the welfare of others while I pursue gain? Do wealth and possessions bring permanent happiness, or do I worry about losing what I have? DO I own my possessions, or do they own me?
- Think about success and failure. Are success and happiness inextricably bound together? Does success in one area threaten happiness in other areas of my life? Is there such a thing as success that can never be lost? If you have a failure, is it permanent?
- Think about praise and criticism. Do nice words make a real difference in my life? Are they ever enough? How can I learn from mistakes if I avoid criticism?
- Think about pleasure and pain. Is pleasure permanent? Is pain permanent? Is momentary pleasure worth the effort put into achieving it? What can we learn from pain? Is it useless?
- By pursuing the eight worldly concerns - putting in so much effort to avoid even the slightest discomfort and great and continuous effort for short-lived pleasures - we are like a moth flying to the flame, experiencing a brief joy of anticipation but only creating the cause for more suffering in the future.
- "Don't give up what you want most for what you want now!"
- Think about the benefits of broadening your vision. Can you imagine being less stressed and more relaxed? Can you imagine being able to fully enjoy what you have because you naturally recognise it will not last?
- Can you imagine not being distracted from the things that matter most to You? Can you imagine spending more quality time with your family, looking after your health, and helping to make the world a better place?
- Can you imagine being rid of suffering forever, achieving a lasting, stable happiness?
- What binds us to this cyclic existence is enchantment with the eight worldly concerns. To achieve liberation from the rat-race, we need to be motivated by renunciation, the determination to definitely emerge from suffering and all its causes! To end this reflection, make an investment in your own future happiness.
- Think of the three things most important to you in life. How are you supporting them in your actions right now, this week?
- Think of your main focus for the coming week. What ratio of your time will you spend on maintaining the worldly concerns? What ratio will you spend on working towards your long-term goals? What are three things you can change right now, to adjust the balance?
- What would you be doing right now if you knew you couldn't fail?
- Dedicate this reflection to 'not sweating the small stuff', but making sure your daily actions reflect and support your values and what matters most to you.

(3) Bodhicitta Worksheet

- Sit down with a nice cup of tea or coffee, reflect on the questions, and fill in what you can.
- Bring it with you next week and be ready to discuss at least one point in class (don't worry - you don't have to hand it in! Just share what you are comfortable with).

Getting started on equanimity

1. Think of someone close to you. How could you extend that feeling of love to others?

2. Think of someone you have little compassion for. Is there anyone who would be upset if they were hurt? How could you think more realistically? What have you forgotten, ignored?

3. When someone you love acts badly towards you, how do you cheer yourself up?

4. When you do experience affective empathy (where you *feel* for them)?

5. When have you experienced cognitive empathy (where you *reason it out*)?

6. What would you say to yourself, to turn these into compassion (an activity of mind)?

Using 'intelligent selfishness'

7. Give an example (from your own life if you can) when self-cherishing backfired:

8. Give an example (your own!) where putting others first benefitted everyone:

9. Think of a current problem. How could you apply intelligent selfishness? What is the long-term *beneficial* outcome that you want?

10. What is a possible long-term beneficial outcome for them? What could you do to take both your own and their needs into account?

Equanimity and Kindness Meditation

A whole world of support

- Imagine you are sitting on a gently sloping hillside. It's a beautiful day, calm and clear. On either side of you the two people who have supported and looked after you the most (usually mother and father), without them you would not have survived....
- Feel how good it is to be with them, and how you sincerely want the best for them. Feel this as a physical warmth at your heart, that flows through your body as warm, blissful light. Feel this warmth of kindness radiate out to them.
- Behind you all the people who supported you - a close brother or sister, best friend, a really good doctor, a kind teacher at primary school, the person who got you out of a fix, or who wrote a book that changed your life. Feel their support, how they've "got your back"....
- Feel the warmth in your heart growing stronger. Light beams radiate out to each of them, and as the kindness hits them they become happy, free of problems.
- In front of you are all the people who challenged you to grow and develop. The rude boss who you practiced patience with, the unethical business that clarified your own stance, the betraying partner that showed you how *not* to behave, the social injustice that you stood up to even though you were scared, the person who hurt you that you first got an opportunity to practice forgiveness....
- The warmth flowing from your heart frees them from negativity, transforming before your eyes. Their destructive behaviour falls away like a crusty shell.
- On either side of you are all the people throughout history that have indirectly contributed to your well-being. If you wear glasses - the person who invented the optical lens and spent their life refining it. If you wear a wristwatch, the people who contributed to the 200 year search for measuring longitude. All the medical researchers, many who were social pariahs and ostracised for their ideas. Patients who lived through medical trials, especially cancer, so treatments could be developed. An incalculable amount of benefit from strangers...
- Feel how now, the entire world is permeated with the warmth of your kindness. How it flows from your heart as easily as breathing.
- Thinking of these three groups of people: the friends who have kept your head above water, the challengers without which you would have no character or moral strength, and the strangers who you experience indirect benefit from continuously. Feel the whole world of support....
- Wish them all to live harmoniously, free from bias or prejudice, to be free of suffering, and to attain a lasting, stable happiness. Make a resolution to contribute to that in your own way, no matter how small!
- The light and warmth of kindness flows back to you in great waves, and absorbs into your heart. Breathe in this warmth and strength, and breathe out warmth and kindness. Feel the ebb and flow of the whole world of support....