



Humanistic Buddhism's “Ten Remedies for the Mind”

Buddhism in Every Step
(英文版)

(B12)

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Foreword

The afflictions of all sentient beings are endless; at the same time, Buddhist curatives and methods for how to deal with these ever changing afflictions are also endless. Just as in the Chinese idiom “All the thousands of variations are never apart from their root,” this root is indeed our minds. Therefore, this article will take “understanding our own mind: one mind with two doors” as the overall general teaching. As for the rest, the nine teachings are more specific: remedy ignorance with self-awakening, remedy greed with contentment, remedy anger with compassion, remedy desire with discipline, remedy arrogance with humility, remedy stinginess with joyful giving, remedy afflictions with right-mindfulness, remedy habitual tendencies with

the power of vows, and remedy attachment with non-self.¹

In this world, people need to manage their personal affairs, family relationships, and love relationships. As we trace back to the very source of all these affairs and relationships, we see that they are all results of how well we manage our minds. Therefore, the very thing we need to manage the most is our minds.

Our minds and thoughts are a unique team that especially needs our management and care. Are our thoughts correct? Are our views reasonable? Is our perception following the “Middle Way”? All of these need to be tended to. Contemplating and understanding our thoughts and views to distinguish if they are reasonable will be very helpful for us. If they are reasonable, everything will go smoothly; if they are not, our thoughts and views will cause unease and then worry. These feelings reveal that many problems in the mind are not well-tended.

If we manage our minds well, we can get along with people comfortably. If we do not pay attention to our minds, then problems will gradually emerge. It is just like drainage: if we do not regularly remove

1. A fundamental concept in Buddhism in that all phenomena and beings in the world have no real, permanent, and substantial self because everything arises, abides, changes, and ceases based on the law of dependent origination.

standing water and clean the gutters, the trash will pile up and breed mosquitos and insects, which will make our environment dirty and disordered. Similarly, if we do not manage our minds, the trouble within the mind will repeatedly create afflictions. We can say that everything in our whole lives, from our bodies to our minds, from internal to external affairs, from family to society or the country, requires management of the mind.

As the old saying goes, “People’s minds are as varied as their looks,” so the management of the mind is very tricky. This is because sentient beings’ thoughts are complex. However, Buddhism also has immeasurable and limitless methods to address them. As long as we are courageous in facing our afflictions, we can ascend as lotus flowers emerging out of a muddy pond.

Next, let me offer some suggestions from *Humanistic Buddhism’s “One Hundred Remedies for the Mind,”* found in my one-stroke calligraphy work. Because all the thousands of variations are never apart from their root, this root is indeed our minds. This article will take “understanding our own minds: one mind with two doors” as the overall general teaching and the other nine teachings as specific teachings. I will explain each, one by one, in the following sections.

I. Understanding Our Own Minds: One Mind with Two Doors

We all have a mind: however, not many of us really know and understand the mind. Chan Master Shitou Xiqian from the Tang dynasty said:

*Long have we dwelt with it, yet we do not
know its name,
Letting it go about however it inclines.
Even wise sages from the distant past could
not comprehend it,
So how could ordinary folks understand it?*²

People cannot be their own masters because they don't understand their minds, nor do they know where their original homes are. Since we are not able to find our way home, we can only drift along in the ocean of life without direction or goals, unable to find meaning and value in life. This kind of life is pitiful indeed.

Thus, if we want to be our own masters, to be able to manage ourselves or even manage any other thing in this world, the first thing we need to do is understand our own minds clearly. This is because things vast like the universe and tiny like a particle of dust all are perfectly one within a well-regulated

2. This verse is presented in order to illustrate our relationship with the true nature of the mind.

mind. If we do not know our own minds, we will be ignorant of everything; as a result, our future, certainly, will be a source of anxiety. Therefore, the importance of understanding one's own mind is obvious.

According to *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana Treatise*, "One mind opens to two doors": The "two doors" refer to "the door of suchness of the mind" and "the door of arising and ceasing of the mind." In other words, everyone is born with the "mind of suchness," which is the same as that of the Buddha; it is pure, contaminant-free, forever unceasing Buddha nature. Indeed, this is our life's essence, and it is known as "the door of suchness of the mind." However, ordinary sentient beings do not understand and are not able to know their "true mind" within; therefore, without realizing there is a treasure within them, they are like "a beggar with a pearl," wandering around the streets and lost in a sea of people, floating up and down, like a bubble in the ocean arising suddenly and ceasing suddenly. This is called "the door of arising and ceasing of the mind."

"The door of suchness of the mind" is righteous, kind, wholesome, and pure; "the door of arising and ceasing of the mind" is evil, mean, unwholesome, and defiled. That is to say, our minds can be righteous or evil, kind or mean, wholesome or unwholesome, true or false, big or small, high or low, pure or

defiled, enlightened or ignorant, saintly or ordinary, and so on.

The mind has incomparably great power. The mind is our master. The actions performed by our bodies and the speech uttered by our mouths are generated upon the stirring and compelling of our minds. If our minds are wholesome, we will do wholesome deeds and speak wholesome words; on the contrary, if our minds are unwholesome, this will lead to unwholesome deeds and harsh words.

“Body, speech, and mind” are the masters that create karma. If we can properly manage the three and are able to think, speak, and do righteous, wholesome, good, beautiful things every day and deal with people and matters with a mind of truth and sincerity, then our lives will constantly be enhanced toward the path of the Four Noble Truths, which lead to Buddhahood. Conversely, if the mind harbors and generates unwholesomeness, we will be drawn downward, be reborn life after life into the six realms of existence,³ and even suffer in the three low realms of existence.

3. These refer to possible destinations of rebirth and include heaven, the asura realm, the human realm as well as three lower realms, including the animal realm, the realm of hungry ghosts, and hell. The six realms also indicate all the modes of existence in which some form of suffering is endured due to sentient beings’ greed, anger, hatred, and ignorance. When sentient beings die, they are reborn into one of the six realms of existence. The cycle continues as a result of one’s karmic actions.

As *The Connected Discourses* say, “If the mind is afflicted, sentient beings are afflicted. If the mind is purified, sentient beings are purified.” This is because the mind determines our happiness and suffering as well as the destiny of our lives. Therefore, Buddhism teaches that “in cultivation, one must cultivate the mind,” which means we need to regulate this flitting, unsettled, and unpredictable mind well.

Our minds normally depend on our five sense organs, the “eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body,” which rely on “sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch,” for all sorts of sensual pleasures and desires. As a result, all sorts of confused and delusive thoughts of greed, attachment, anger, jealousy, discrimination, haggling, and on to disputations between ourselves and others, selfishness, ignorance, and so forth arise. They prevent us from enjoying even a moment of peace. Thus, if we want to properly manage our minds, besides getting to know the mind, we need to have ways to tend to it.

As mentioned in *The Teachings Bequeathed by the Buddha Sutra*, “One who allows the mind to wander unchecked loses one’s wholesome undertakings. By restraining the mind in one place, one will not have any endeavor unaccomplished.” The sutra teaches us to “restrain the mind in one place,” focus the mind in one place, and not to be disturbed by the outside world. The word “one” is very important.

As I just said, all worldly phenomena are constantly arising and ceasing. All exterior phenomena in this world are varied and disordered; therefore, problems are inevitable. Thus, the Dharma realm of truth is the ideal and ultimate realm we should aspire to. For instance, in life, there should be one couple in the home, one husband and one wife, without any mistress; then the family will be healthy and sound. Undertaking any business also requires us to be wholehearted. Only if we can wholly focus will the business be successful.

However, how can we restrain the mind in one place? In Buddhism, there are various methods of cultivation, such as meditation, reciting Buddha's names, reciting mantras, contemplating the mind, counting the breath, transcribing sutras, practicing repentance, prostrating to the Buddha, pilgrimage, and so on. All of these are for calming our minds. However, I think it is most important for us to assure ourselves: "I am a Buddha." If we can always think to ourselves "I am a Buddha," naturally, we will not transgress against others; furthermore, we will apply the mind of Buddha to help others realize accomplishments and benefit others.

If we can assure ourselves that "I am the Buddha," we then can understand that "the mind, the Buddha, and all sentient beings are no different." Therefore, it is not only that others and I are the same, but even

mountains, rivers, the land, and the sentient or non-sentient beings are also all one within the mind. Therefore, we should respect and embrace them. In this way, we can regulate our minds and realize for ourselves that:

*As I see flowers, flowers are by nature
beautiful.*

As I see trees, trees are by nature vital.

*As I view circumstances, circumstances are
by nature transient.*

*As I view the mind, the mind is by nature
suchness.*

We then understand ourselves here and now. This is being successful in managing ourselves.

II. Remedy Ignorance with Self-Awakening

There is a riddle that says:

*Three dots form a pattern like in a
constellation;*

*A horizontal stroke with an upward hook
looks like a crescent moon.*

*One is in the animal realm due to it,
And one becomes a Buddha because of it,
too.*

This riddle's answer is the Chinese word *xin* 心 (literally, "heart or mind").

Our minds are not only the "physical heart" in our body that is formed when we inherit our parents' traits through the combination of causes and conditions; rather, there is also the "differentiating mind," also known as the "thinking mind" or the "accumulating mind," which arises when we face phenomena and circumstances every day; in other words, it is the delusive and unreal mind of liking, disliking, discriminating, comparing, haggling, anger, resentment, selfishness, attachment, and so on toward people, affairs, and circumstances.

If we do not manage such a mind of unwholesomeness well and allow it to incite trouble in our lives, directing us to do things or go to places without prudence, then we will end up not only suffering in this life but also in the next life. We may even be reborn as an animal and not be able to take human form again. Fortunately, everyone also has a "mind of suchness." As long as we know how to take good care of our minds, by developing our inner Buddha nature, we will not only have great achievement in this life but also become a sage or attain Buddhahood in the future.

However, all sentient beings' habitual tendencies, accumulated over many kalpas,⁴ are very deeply

4. An Indic unit of time measurement. A kalpa is an incalculably long period of time spanning the creation and destruction of the universe.

rooted. Therefore, it is very difficult to subdue the “obstinate” mind. The Buddha used many analogies for the mind, such as the mind is like a monkey, difficult to tame; the mind is like flashing lightening, occurring in an instant; the mind is like wild deer, chasing after sounds and forms; the mind is like a thief, robbing us of our virtue; the mind is like an enemy, causing suffering within our bodies; the mind is like young servants, being compelled by various afflictions; the mind is like a king, executing orders upon the body; the mind is like the source of spring water, endlessly flowing; the mind is like an artist, painting many pictures; the mind is like space, vast and boundless; and so on.

Therefore, the question is how do we control the mind that is as restless as a monkey? How do we catch that which is like a thief, robbing us of our virtues? There are many methods mentioned in the sutras, such as the “four bases of mindfulness,” the “five contemplations,” the “six sublime methods of practicing meditation,” the “nine stages of mental focus,” the “meditation on impurity,” and so on. However, I think the most important part is relying on our “self-awakening.”

I often say: It is a “condition” to have a teacher to teach and motivate us, and “self-awakening” is the “cause.” This so-called “self-awakening” is self-discipline, self-affirmation, self-inspiration, and

self-awareness: “Rely on oneself, rely on the Dharma, and rely on nothing else” is a teaching of the Buddha.

The Buddha wanted us to take refuge in ourselves, believe in ourselves, and affirm ourselves. This is called “relying on oneself”; taking refuge in the Dharma, in the truth, and in the illumination of our intrinsic nature is called “relying on the Dharma”; and not being led by the nose is “relying on nothing else.” This is reflected in the teaching style of Chan Buddhism. Chan masters do not teach through direct instruction but rather allow us to investigate for ourselves. This is because what we awaken to is indeed ours; if we do not awaken ourselves, the teaching still belongs to the teacher.

It is like our own bodies: our blood in our blood vessels offers nature’s nutrition that is most efficient and helpful for enhancing our health. If we rely on injections or IV nutrition, they are from outside of the body and thus provide limited benefits. Therefore, Chan Buddhism also says, “That which comes in through the door is not a family heirloom; that which emerges from the mind is of Buddha nature.”

We should have self-awakening all the time; for example, we should be aware of how well we treat others, how strictly we discipline ourselves, how diligently we are working, how hard we are studying, how much attention we pay to parents and family members, how much effort we give to help relatives

and friends, or even how much we contribute to society and the country. If we can always be aware of ourselves being not quite good, not quite enough, and not quite sufficient, then we will continue to improve and aim to be better.

By doing so, day by day, our moral integrity will naturally increase; our personal affinity and merits will also increase day by day. Moreover, our wisdom will also grow; when we have awareness, we can naturally perceive any unwholesome thoughts that emerge and immediately cut off outside negative influences or conditions. Scholar Wong Yangming said, “To capture the thief hiding in the mountain is easy; to capture the thief in the mind is difficult.” Nevertheless, when we have self-awakening, should we still be afraid of not being able to catch the thief in our minds easily? Therefore, “self-awakening” is the best way to manage the mind, for it is only through “self-awakening” that we can properly manage our bodies and minds.

III. Remedy Greed with Contentment

The Amitabha Triple Contemplation Service says, “All sufferings arise from greed and desires; it seems unknown from what greed and desire arise. Because one forgets the Amitabha Buddha of one’s intrinsic nature, various chaotic thoughts are all of mara.” Due to greed, selfishness, and discontentment, we

feel angry and afflicted when people and things do not obey our wishes. This brings the people around us as well as ourselves a lot of suffering, and we cannot live at ease.

There is a song that describes a person with a “never-contented mind.” The song is well phrased. The song says:

*Working all day only to satisfy hunger,
Yet when hunger is satisfied, one craves
clothing.
When both hunger and clothing are
satisfied,
One thinks of wedding a beautiful young
wife.
Yet with a lovable wife and also concubines,
A sedan and horses for transportation are
missing.
Yet with a herd of mules and horses,
Narrow farmlands become an issue.
Yet upon purchasing a million hectares of
fertile lands,
A government position is needed to prevent
being cheated.
One then complains that seventh or fifth
rank is too minor,
And then the fourth or the third is still too
low.*

*Yet when one becomes first rank in the
imperial court,
One then desires to be the emperor.
Once content as the Son of Heaven,
Then comes the hope of being immortal.
Wishful thinking and ambitions will never
end,
Only grief and regret will accompany us
on our journey to biting dust.*

The Eight Realizations of a Bodhisattva Sutra says, “The mind cannot be satisfied but only seeks more, increasing its wrongdoing and unwholesomeness.” The more greed and desires we have, the more unwholesomeness will be produced.

Greed and desires are like water: if we do not know to control them and we allow them to flow everywhere, they will not only endanger society and nature, but eventually they will also harm us and our descendants. Regardless of how much money we have, what we need for a day is only “a bed to sleep in inside one of the thousand houses and three bowls of rice to eat from, even if we have a fortune.” No matter how much we can eat or use, there is a limit. It is impossible to conveniently sleep in three beds every night, and even if our digestion system is strong, we cannot overindulge without restraint. Buddhism teaches the Middle Way. When we do everything, we should

know where to stop. Excess and not enough are both wrong attitudes for life.

Therefore, how can we manage our avaricious and insatiable minds? Contentment can lead us far away from a greedy and calculating mind. According to a saying in *The Origin of Auspicious Signs of the Crown Prince Sutra*, “Being illness free is the greatest benefit; contentment is the greatest wealth; good Dharma friends are the greatest kin; the unconditioned is the greatest peace.” Happiness and peace do not depend on how much we have and possess, but rather they depend on a mind that is content.

In contrast, greed and desires are like a bottomless hole that makes us constantly want to possess more and more. However, in real life, we do not actually make use of all that much. In order to sustainably promote peace, harmony, and stable development among people and self, people and people, and people and nature, we need to carefully find the balance between desire and necessity with the intention of cultivating mutual benefit and assistance.

As long as we can always think, “Although we don’t have a lot of wealth in life, we have a simple and happy family; although we do not have a feast to indulge in, we can still enjoy the fresh flavors of vegetables every day,” we can live in happiness and hope every day. Isn’t it like living in heaven and being the wealthiest person in the world? It is just like the

Buddha's cousin, Prince Bhadrika, who followed the Buddha and was ordained as a bhikkhu⁵ and realized that in a life without beautiful garments and delicacies, we can meditate in the forest with ease, enjoy simple food and clothing, practice walking meditation freely, and sleep peacefully, without any uneasiness—this is the most joyful thing in life.

The Teachings Bequeathed by the Buddha Sutra also says, “A content person even if lying on the ground still feels peaceful and happy; a discontent person even if in heaven still feels dissatisfied.” We might ask, “Where is heaven or hell? Where is poverty or wealth?” It all depends on if we are content or discontent about life. The more greed and desire we have, the more worries we will encounter. If we always counter our habitual tendencies of greed and desire by being content, being grateful, and cherishing our blessings, then our lives will be more comfortable and carefree.

IV. Remedy Anger with Compassion

“When a thought of anger arises, eighty thousand doors to obstacles open,” so Buddhism uses fire as a metaphor for anger which can burn down the forest of virtue;⁶ anger is also like a knife or sword that can harm our Dharma body and wisdom life. As

5. In Sanskrit, an ordained male monk.

6. This refers to the bounty derived from the good deeds we do.

mentioned in *The Garden Dharma of Forest Jewels*, there are six faults that result from anger: losing wholesome Dharma, falling into lower realms of existence, producing harsh speech, losing the joy of Dharma, stealing wholesome minds, and experiencing disasters. The faults caused by anger make our life journey difficult.

Once the fire of anger ignites, no matter how loving a relationship between a boyfriend and girlfriend is or how much a couple loves each other, they may immediately turn against each other and even wish to end the other person's life. This has been explained thusly: "When we love, we wish the other person will live; when we hate, we wish the other person will die." Anger can cause us to lose our loved ones, friends, ourselves, and even our various sorts of good causes and conditions, and other people would not even want to acknowledge us because they suspect anger. It is like the saying in *The Teachings Bequeathed by the Buddha Sutra*, "The harm from anger destroys all the wholesome Dharma and ruins a person's good reputation, and people will not enjoy that person's presence in this life and future lives."

How do we extinguish the fire of anger in our minds? We must use the water of loving-kindness and compassion to put it out. "Loving-kindness" is bringing happiness, and "compassion" is removing suffering. The more loving-kindness and compassion

we have, the less anger will occur. In fact, conflict between people is due to a scarcity of empathy and tolerance, as we do not accommodate the other person while we insist on our own positions and needs. When the other person does not live up to our expectations, we then feel infuriated and irrational, using any means to harm the other person.

When we act on anger, we are not only unable to resolve our problems, but we also create hindrances for our relationships. Whenever we feel angry and become infuriated, wanting to blame and hurt another person, we might try to take some deep breaths and calm ourselves down. Think thoroughly. See if there is any method to resolve the problem or seek advice from good Dharma friends and discuss strategies for solving the problem. An ancient wise man once said, “Walk three steps forward, and then reflect; walk three steps backward, and then deliberate. When anger arises, we need to contemplate. Ceasing the fire of anger is the most auspicious action for all.”

With loving-kindness and compassion, one will face neither hindrances nor enemies. Some people are very capable and strong but have short tempers and disagreeable personalities. Other people normally do not accept them nor like to work with them. Therefore, they are not able to develop their talents. On the other hand, some people have less ability, but they are considerate, kind, and compassionate,

not caring if someone else has the advantage. When these kinds of people are in need, friends all lend a helping hand, which makes it easier for them to accomplish their goals.

There was a young man who asked me, “How do I control my anger?” I replied, “Ask yourself.” When we are angry, we have the option to speak or act badly; the choice is up to you. For a moment’s anger and impulsivity, you may wreck your future; after weighing the pros and cons, would you still act impulsively and out of control?

Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva “views sentient beings with compassionate eyes of loving-kindness; / His ocean of accumulated merits is infinite.” By treating people with loving-kindness and compassion, we cultivate our merit. A person would rather have nothing than lack loving-kindness and compassion. According to a popular saying, “People who offer love will be loved; people who offer respect will be respected.” Between people, if we give a bit more loving-kindness and compassion, we will receive more love; as a result, more wholesome conditions and less infuriation will occur. Do not embarrass and trouble others. Both sides should take a step back, in order to open up more opportunities to meet and work together again in the future. This will give our lives broader horizons.

If we each can remedy anger with loving-kindness and compassion, putting our feet in other people's shoes, exchanging positions with others, showing empathy, and not bullying the weak, then people will not be at odds with one another; no war will happen between countries; and world peace will come.

V. Remedy Desire with Discipline

Desire is like a bottomless hole, never satisfied. If we do not regulate desires, we may commit all sorts of wrongdoings, such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying, which result in suffering or even burdens for others, ourselves, or all of society.

There are two kinds of desires: desire for the wholesome and desire for the unwholesome. The power of desire for the wholesome will inspire us to happily listen to right Dharma, working hard to improve ourselves, constantly making breakthroughs, and going beyond. Successful or accomplished people from all walks of life all have wholesome motivations. People who have desire for the unwholesome are those who indulge in their endless greed, without reflecting on themselves and who are unwilling to deal with things pragmatically; they only want to reach their goals by offending, hurting, or taking advantage of others.

Every person's desire has two aspects: inner worry and outer distress. Inner worry refers to our habitual

tendencies of chasing after the five desires: wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep; outer distress refers to the six sense objects, which are constantly stimulating and tempting us: form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and dharmas. If we want to attain freedom and liberation from these two and not be enslaved by desire, we must cultivate our minds and transform our actions.

How can we treat our desires? Observing precepts can help prevent and restrain us from blindly chasing desire. The five precepts—refrain from killing, refrain from stealing, refrain from sexual misconduct, refrain from lying, and refrain from consuming intoxicants—are Dharma remedies that will enhance and purify our desires.

Some people, for instance, suffer setbacks from a relationship. Unable to acquire love from the other person and not wanting anyone else to have it either, a rejected lover might even think of killing the other person. If he has taken the precept of refraining from killing, this precept will give him the strength of self-control, and he therefore will not kill others.

When we see something that we like and think of appropriating it, if we have taken the precept of refraining from stealing, we will remind ourselves that we should acquire things the proper way. After getting married, when we meet someone else whom we get along well with in a social setting, as we remember that we are observing the five precepts, we

then will be careful with our actions and not cross the line so that we can avoid people's gossip that could endanger our marriages. When we face financial difficulty and are thinking of resorting to deceitful means, we will think about how it is hard to establish trust and, once we lose trust, it will cost our footing in society, and then we will be more careful about our actions. It is hard to avoid drinking in social business settings. Using tea as a substitute is the best option. If not, we should know how to moderate ourselves. Never drink excessively and thereby commit the wrongdoing of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, or lying. Doing so will cause great losses at the expense of little gains, destroy our future and ruin someone's life or reputation, and we will end up bitterly remorseful.

Our whole lives we are tempted by all sorts of desires, like the desire for money, relationships, power, and so on. Therefore, in the process of promoting Humanistic Buddhism, I advocate living "the reasonable economic life, the righteous political life, the community service life, the virtuous life of loving-kindness and compassion, the ethical life of respect, and the purified sentiment life" in order to "extinguish greed, anger, and ignorance by diligently practicing morality, meditative concentration, and wisdom." We must take refuge in the Triple Gem to become Buddhists and uphold the five precepts in order to

improve our behaviors and start the journey of the Buddha Way. We should manage our desires by following the principles of the five precepts. We should not offend but respect and care for each other, building mutual assistance and trust. If one family member upholds the five precepts, the whole family will be happy and fulfilled; if everyone observes the five precepts, then society will be harmonious and peaceful.

VI. Remedy Arrogance with Humility

Arrogance is one of the five poisons and six fundamental afflictions. By asking ourselves, “Am I arrogant in dealing with people?” we may reflect on our thoughts and conduct.

Arrogant people think highly of themselves, so it is hard for them to defer to others, and they generally do not like cooperating with others and do not accept others’ opinions. They are oblivious to others’ existence, so they behave indecorously and think they are above others, or they think they are somehow different from others. They look down on others but are also afraid to be belittled; even males look down on females, experienced staff members bully new employees, and so on. These are all common forms of arrogant behaviors we experience.

It has been said that “The mountain of arrogance is too high, blocking the ocean of virtue.” Because arrogant people are self-important and have their noses

in the air, they do not take the initiative to consult others. They are not mindful of the wholesome Dharma that they hear. Arrogance therefore blocks their good causes and conditions for learning and improving and causes them to miss opportunities to be close to good Dharma friends. They are unable to have good interpersonal relationships in an organization and feel their talents are not appreciated. Therefore, their complaints and dissatisfaction keep building up. What they lose in life outweighs the gain.

How do we subdue arrogance? Humility is the remedy for treating arrogance: The Never Disparaging Bodhisattva mentioned in *The Lotus Sutra* is a model of the practice of subduing self-pride. He respected everyone whom he believed to have Buddha nature and would attain Buddhahood one day. Regardless of their status, position, gender, and age, he would join his palms respectfully and praise them, “You all will attain Buddhahood, and I dare not disparage you.”

During Sudhana’s journey in search of knowledge, he visited fifty-three good Dharma friends from all walks of life, whether they were rich or poor, noble or common, male or female, or old or young; he humbly received their teachings, which earned him praise and acceptance. In the process of this journey, he had subdued his habitual tendency of self-pride, broadened his horizons, and enhanced his wisdom and morality.

In fact, no matter how good we are, there is always someone out there who is better. The things a person knows is only a speck of dust in the boundless universe. Isaac Newton, the scientist who discovered gravity, humbly said in his memoir, “I do not know how I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.” The greater a person is, the more he knows his limit and, therefore, is humbler.

“Humbleness brings benefit; arrogance incurs harm.” We should take this as a reminder when we deal with people and matters. Do not be arrogant over a small achievement and lose many opportunities to learn. We should be even more modest and consult teachers with gratitude. Only being humble can really be beneficial.

The habitual tendency of self-pride is innate. Therefore, forty years ago, when constructing the Fo Guang Shan Pure Land Cave, we purposely designed an entry gate that was only four feet high. The unusually short height of this large gate was intended to remind people that before realizing the truth, we should lower our heads and be humble; then we can achieve.

Humble people are mature and poised, having loving-kindness and compassion as well as a dignified appearance. Whoever sees them is touched by their cultivation and gives rise to respect in the mind. Arrogant people consider themselves unrivaled in the world yet are rejected by others. Humbleness is like rice plants, which bend further down when they ripen, and like fruitful trees, which push their branches ever downward. We should behave ourselves humbly and be accepted by others, which will benefit our whole lives abundantly.

VII. Remedy Stinginess with Joyful Giving

Some people are not willing to socialize with others due to their stinginess. Afraid to suffer loss, they seek petty advantage, caring only for their own benefit and worrying that if they interact with others, they will have to give. Therefore, they isolate themselves in a jail-like life, away from human relationships and living unhappily.

A Taiwanese idiom is “Tie your money in twenty-four knots.”⁷ This saying is used to describe a stingy person who is unwilling to spend when spending is needed and is also unwilling to contribute and give when giving is necessary. Having this stingy characteristic makes life unenjoyable and hopeless. If we

7. Tying 24 knots would make it difficult for thieves to easily access that money.

want to improve this kind of life, we need to rely on joyful giving to treat our habitual tendency of greed.

All sentient beings are our field of merit. Therefore, joyful giving is the most reliable investment in life. No matter if it is the giving of wealth, the giving of the Dharma, or the giving of fearlessness, practicing giving will generate merit; hence, it is also called “planting the field of merit.” Even though acts of giving may be categorized, such that “Differing in the mind, the field, and the object, the acts result in superior or inferior effects,” as long as we give and offer sincerely, no matter if we are giving to righteous people, parents, the sick, the poor, or even to all sentient beings, all of them are our supreme field of merit.

People should learn to give. Just offering a nod, a smile, a good word, or a bit of convenience are all forms of giving. Giving is a habit, and we need to develop this habit in day-to-day behavior. A sutra recorded a story about a rich man who was stingy and greedy. One day, he listened to the Buddha’s teaching regarding the benefit of practicing joyful giving. The benefit is being safe and happy in this life and being rich in the next life. After he heard the teaching, the rich man started pondering, “Now, although I am well-off in life, the savings in the bank will be exhausted one day. I should go and consult the Buddha about how I can continue accumulating my merit in order to be a wealthy person in life after life.”

Therefore, this rich man went to consult the Buddha about how to practice joyful giving in order to be happy and rich in every life. The Buddha told the rich man that although the act of giving looks like handing over something to others, in fact, it is like sowing seeds in the dirt. When the time and conditions are right, is it necessary to worry if they will bloom and bear fruit or offer nothing to harvest? In this world, nothing can be apart from the law of cause and effect. Giving is like sowing seeds; if time and conditions are mature, should we worry whether the field will bear fruit?

The Buddha then picked up grass from the ground, put it in the right hand of the rich man, and guided him, “You now put the grass that is in your right hand into your left hand.” After listening to the Buddha’s teaching, the rich man started practicing giving the right hand’s grass to the left hand. In the course of giving the grass to the other hand, he discovered it was quite a struggle for him since he was not used to giving. He wondered, “Why should I give the grass in my right hand to the left hand?”

He kept vacillating back and forth. After a few hesitations, the rich man realized the truth, “The right hand is mine and so is the left hand; giving to the left hand is also giving to myself!” Giving looks like providing for others, but really it is giving to ourselves. Since others are us, why should we be haggling over

every little gain to possess the money for ourselves? There is a couplet on the Fo Guang Shan Devotee Building which reads, “Coming from the ten directions, going to the ten directions, all join to accomplish the undertakings of the ten directions. / Tens of thousands of people give, tens of thousands of people relinquish, and together they form wholesome affinities of tens of thousands of people.” This is the best description of joyful giving.

Giving may be distinguished into giving with notions (expecting any form of return) and giving without notions (not expecting any form of return). Giving with notions, though, will produce the fruit of being reborn in the human or heavenly realms, and the givers will still be in the six realms of existence, enjoying their merits from giving yet not free from affliction. Therefore, we should elevate our giving from giving with notions to giving without notions, “the emptiness of the three aspects.” We should go beyond the relationship of the three aspects of giving—I, the giver; you, the recipient; and the gift—and be free from the notions of you and I, big and small, and more and less. Knowing that the essence of giver, recipient, and the gift is emptiness, and not giving rise to any attachment to them—this is pure giving.

Many parents worry about how the financial condition of their descendants will be after they pass away. Therefore, we try all means to pass down

as much wealth as possible to our descendants. However, the fact is that our descendants have their own virtues and capabilities, so there is no need for us to give them things. They have their own methods to manage their lives. On the other hand, if our descendants are not equipped with any virtues and capabilities, even if we leave them abundant wealth, one day the bank will be empty if they never put in anything, so why not give our wealth to people from the ten directions, increasing our own merit for being reborn in a better place? In this way, we can also benefit our descendants.

In summary, it is through joyful giving and forming affinities with others that we can correct our stingy and greedy habitual tendencies. It is only by ridding ourselves of stinginess and greed that we can attain freedom of body and mind and broadly form wholesome affinities among people.

VIII. Remedy Affliction with Right Mindfulness

The Heart Sutra says, “Bodhisattvas who rely on the prajnaparamita have neither worry nor obstruction. Without worry and obstruction, there is no fear. Away from confusion and delusion, they will ultimately reach nirvana.” Everyone desires the state of mind without any obstruction; at the same time, affliction is like our shadow, never leaving us.

How does one live a life that is free of obstruction? How can we have less agitation and worry? We can manage all afflictions by cultivating right mindfulness. When we meditate in the meditation hall, the discipline master always reminds us to bring forth our mindfulness. How can the mind abide in right mindfulness and not be confused by the external circumstances? Buddhism provides the four bases of mindfulness to help us live a carefree life.

The four bases of mindfulness include: one, contemplating the impurities of the body; two, contemplating the non-self of phenomena; three, contemplating the suffering of the feelings; and four, contemplating the impermanence of the mind. In general, our suffering is due to attachment to a self and attachment to that which belong to a self. Attaching to our own views, or attaching affectionately to someone and not letting go, these troubling feelings cause great suffering for ourselves and others. The four bases of mindfulness provide remedies for our afflictions caused by the body, the mind, phenomena, and feelings that are very close to us yet most difficult to let go.

We should “contemplate the impurities of the body.” For example, when the daughter of a woman from the Matangi⁸ caste was infatuated with Ananda, the Buddha applied his skillful teaching, leading her to live and practice in the Sangha community. Under the

8. A low caste in India.

Buddha's instruction, she contemplated the impurities of the body and felt averse to affectionate craving.

"Contemplating the non-self of phenomena" means understanding all phenomena arises and ceases; no one can take control and make them happen. If we can understand the law of cause and condition, understanding all things come from the combination of causes and conditions, then we can follow and accept any circumstances peacefully and be free.

We should "contemplate the suffering of the feelings," for life is half happiness and half suffering. Sometimes we seem to possess happiness, but knowing all phenomena are ever changing and impermanent, we realize that we should not worry about the momentary ups and downs and accept what comes and goes while calmly observing changes.

"Contemplate the impermanence of the mind," for our mind fluctuates between different moods, good and bad or wholesome and unwholesome, based on the external circumstances. Thus, we should not commit to any irreversible causes and conditions due to momentary emotion.

Evading the situation is not a way to solve a problem. Instead, the best choice is giving rise to right mindfulness. A student monk asked Chan master Dongshan, "How can we escape cold and hot

weather?” Master Dongshan replied, “Why not go somewhere that has no cold and hot weather?” The student monk asked again, “Where is the place that is not cold and hot?” Master Dongshan said, “A place that when it is cold, the coldness will kill you; when it is hot, the heat will kill you.” The student monk didn’t understand and asked again, “Didn’t you say go to a place that is not cold and hot. Why did you mention being killed by coldness and heat?” Master Dongshan smiled calmly, “When it is cold, use coldness to train yourself; when bothered by heat, use heat to train yourself.”

The Avatamsaka Sutra says:

*The mind is like an artist,
Able to paint all kinds of pictures;
The five aggregates all are born thence,
There is no phenomenon that is not
generated thus.*

The world is a vast range of circumstances; no matter if good, bad, hard, or easy, all arises from the mind and our thoughts. Therefore, practice the four bases of mindfulness to stay in the right mindfulness of loving-kindness and compassion, sincerity, diligence, optimism, and helpfulness. As a result, wholesome affinity and good fortune will come along with right mindfulness.

An old saying explains that “A thousand-year dark room / Can be illuminated instantly with a single light.” Right mindfulness is the lamp of the Buddha nature in our minds. As long as we light up the lamp in our minds, no matter where we go, the brightness will go with us. Therefore, there will be no darkness in life, and no matter how many difficulties we will encounter, we will not be afraid because wherever there is the Dharma, there is a way.

IX. Remedy Habitual Tendencies with the Power of Vows

It is important to remember that “Correcting one’s afflictions is easy; ridding oneself of habitual tendencies is difficult.” When behavior becomes a habit, then habitual behaviors will act out naturally. When a habit is rooted, it cannot be removed for many lives. For instance, Mahakasyapa,⁹ who had attained arhathood, still unconsciously danced when he heard music; the Buddha’s disciple Gavampati’s¹⁰ mouth was constantly chewing after he finished his meals. These are all the remainders of past habitual tendencies that still affected their present lives.

In fact, there are good and bad habits. For example, good habits, like being diligent, honest,

9. He was a musician in a prior life.

10. In a previous life, he was a grazing cow.

humble, courteous, patient, and so on, will enhance our morality, loving-kindness and compassion, and wholesome affinities with people. On the other hand, bad habits like being arrogant, lazy, lax, or suspicious will create hindrances for personal relationships as well as unnecessary difficulties.

Habitual tendencies and afflictions are the same as the karma that affects our future lives. Therefore, the Buddha explains karma with these similes, “like seeds” and “like habitual tendencies,” in order to illustrate the power of karma and habitual tendencies, which last for three periods of time in the cycle of birth and death under the law of impermanence. Furthermore, there are three important factors (karmic weight, habitual tendencies, and the thoughts at the very moment of one’s death) that can influence our rebirth. Therefore, cultivating positive, optimistic, and active habits can impact us greatly during the moments of birth and death.

Although everyone has some innate habitual tendencies, Buddhists don’t believe in fatalism¹¹ but rather assert that by improving our lives through diligent cultivation and making good affinities with others, we can change our habitual tendencies and personalities. How then can we not be fettered by our

11. The belief that all events are predestined and that there is no way to avoid them.

afflictions and form wholesome habitual tendencies? First, we need to make a vow. Through vows, we decide to eliminate our unwholesome habitual tendencies. Making a vow is like sowing good seeds in the field of the mind.

The Buddha is like a great doctor prescribing medicine according to the disease. Therefore, Buddhism has various teachings used as remedies for our afflictions, helping us to transform ignorance into enlightenment and bad habitual tendencies into good habitual tendencies. However, although many people seem to understand the teachings, their minds become confused when encountering situations. When seeing other people's great achievements in cultivation, we can only sigh in envy and feel inferior in comparison. The key of success is to "make vows." People who make vows are determined and have clear goals. Making vows can help us get through the challenges resulting from our habits.

As I mentioned in *Humble Table, Wise Fare*:

*Reducing a fraction of a bad habitual
tendency will open up a fraction of
bright prospect;*

*Eliminating all affliction will help some
attain Bodhi.*

To change bad habitual tendencies, we need to form good habits. Therefore, after making a vow, we can follow the Noble Eightfold Path and take it as our guide.

Everyone's success is achieved by relying on determination, aspiration, and the power of vows. Sakyamuni Buddha, for instance, sat under the bodhi tree and vowed, "Until I attain perfect enlightenment, I will not rise from this seat." Eventually, he realized the truth about life and the universe; Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva took the hell realm as a place for spiritual practice. He vowed, "Only if the hell realm is empty, will I become the Buddha; only if all sentient beings are liberated, will I attain enlightenment"; Amitabha Buddha's forty-eight great vows resolved to build a worry-free Western Pure Land; Medicine Buddha's twelve great vows bring hope for people to avoid mishaps and prolong their lives; and Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva perceives the world's lamentations with great compassion. These are all examples of applying bodhi vows to fulfill righteous deeds.

It is as stated in *An Inspiration to Give Rise to the Bodhi Mind*, "Having a vow, all beings can be liberated; having a bodhi mind, Buddhahood is attainable." When a person realizes his unwholesome habitual tendencies hinder his progress and future, in order to enforce his determination for change and motivation for action, he needs to make a vow to

manage his negative habitual tendencies and set a vision and goal for himself. When we have direction in life, our habitual tendencies cannot easily manipulate us. No matter how painstaking the process is, we will find a way to conquer it.

X. Remedy Attachment with Non-Self

The Yogacara School classified human consciousness into eight consciousnesses.¹² A person has a strong sense of “I” because there is a very strong attachment of self that arises from the seventh consciousness and thereby generates the fundamentals of the four major afflictions—self-view, self-pride, self-ignorance, and self-craving. This seventh consciousness strongly attaches to the eighth consciousness and does not let go, which causes all sentient beings’ confusion, delusion, and attachments.

Because we are accustomed to self-attachment, we moreover attach to all the people and things that we have. We are picky, choosy, and have a clear preference about what we like or dislike; therefore, we deny or reject whoever disagrees with our opinion.

Some supervisors who are full of themselves have very strong viewpoints. They expect their employees

12. Eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness, mind consciousness, manas consciousness, and storehouse consciousness, which is the accumulation of the other consciousnesses and influences karma.

to follow their orders, which might make the employees feel as if their capabilities are not being recognized, so they think about leaving the company. As for employees, if they insist on their own views and cannot accept their supervisor's instruction, the supervisor will hire someone else to replace them. The conflicts between co-workers are also the result of self-centeredness and selfishness. Similarly, some parents think that because they give birth and raised their children, they can control or pressure them, which leads to a bad relationship with their children. At the same time, some children take all the things that their parents do for them for granted; they are not grateful and do not know to repay the kindness, which results in damage to their relationship with the parents.

Whether associating with people at work or in the family, conflicts and opposition result from being attached to our own views or opinions and not accepting differences. This causes us to lose chances to establish good relationships with others.

Therefore, if we want to manage our inborn attachment, we should contemplate non-self. Non-self is the wisdom of emptiness that can help us tolerate, accept, resolve, and undertake something that is wholesome or unwholesome, whether we like it or dislike it. When we embrace acceptance, we can expand ourselves infinitely, immeasurably, and

limitlessly. Every day that we practice non-self is a day that we can accumulate virtue. If we truly practice non-self, eventually, there will be nothing we cannot achieve.

The practice of non-self is the highest form of management of the self. Because of non-self, we can assume magnanimity toward people who are different. We seek sameness despite differences while distinguishing differences within sameness. It is like a beautiful garden: although every plant is different and displays its own beauty, the flowers flourish together. Doesn't this make life more colorful and interesting?

A non-self person has an open, optimistic, and joyful disposition when encountering people and events as well as when dealing with things. This is because when we practice non-self, there is no boundaries set up and we do not place limits on ourselves. Therefore, when we have good causes and conditions, we accept them joyfully; when we have difficulties and setbacks, we take them as workouts for life. The more challenges life has, the stronger we become.

Spring wind and summer rain can nourish our lives; autumn frost and winter snow are also good causes and conditions for tempering ourselves. A person who heals self-attachment with non-self, under different circumstances, can contemplate causes

and conditions and not act compulsively. Accepting all conditions every day, he is in perfect ease, living joyfully in every moment and building affinities to benefit all beings.

Conclusion

The above ten points help us understand our bodies and minds; they also provide teachings that can treat the afflictions of our bodies and minds, which enable us to transform ignorance into enlightenment and affliction into wisdom.

Life is full of chaotic situations, and afflictions seem immeasurable. Tracing back to the source of all turmoil, it is mainly due to our minds. As long as we can properly manage our minds, things will go smoothly, and we can glimpse the Buddha's wisdom in a blooming flower. It is as mentioned in *The Collection of Old Man Hanshan's Dream Travels*:

*Renouncing one's body and mind, one sees
the Dharma king.
There is no need to question about the cau-
sation of the past,
As long as we can recall our intrinsic
nature,
Even the grass, trees, and forests illuminate
universally.*

When we know our own minds and manage them well, we will see that the Buddha's light shines everywhere.

Although our afflictions are immeasurable, Buddhist remedies are also unlimited. I cannot describe all the teachings that can regulate our minds one by one. However, included below are the contents of "One Hundred Remedies for the Mind." When troubling thoughts arise, we can contemplate their implications. For this reason, I believe you will be able to realize the ease and freedom described in the verse, "Coming upon where the waters ends, I would sit and watch the clouds rise."

1. Remedy desire with discipline.
2. Remedy negligence with responsibility.
3. Remedy laziness with diligence.
4. Remedy carelessness with caution.
5. Remedy opportunism with pragmatism.
6. Remedy frivolousness with staidness.
7. Remedy evasiveness with the courage to confront.
8. Remedy empty talk with actions.
9. Remedy flattery with honesty.
10. Remedy passiveness with proactiveness.
11. Remedy blind obedience with direction.
12. Remedy inexperience with mastery.
13. Remedy clumsiness with dexterity.
14. Remedy disarray with focus.

15. Remedy impatience with patience.
16. Remedy a lack of self-esteem with dignity.
17. Remedy dejection with aspiration.
18. Remedy timidity with courage.
19. Remedy pretense with sincerity.
20. Remedy cruelty with kindness.
21. Remedy arrogance with humility.
22. Remedy discord with compromise.
23. Remedy animosity with tolerance.
24. Remedy suspicion with trust.
25. Remedy greed with contentment.
26. Remedy vanity with contentedness.
27. Remedy stinginess with philanthropy.
28. Remedy immaturity with maturity.
29. Remedy harshness with magnanimity.
30. Remedy insult with respect.
31. Remedy dispiritedness with awe-inspiring demeanor.
32. Remedy vulgarity with tastefulness.
33. Remedy crudeness with elegance.
34. Remedy impropriety with dignity.
35. Remedy panic with composure.
36. Remedy recklessness with deliberation.
37. Remedy stress with relaxation.
38. Remedy complexity with simplicity.
39. Remedy bias with an open mind.
40. Remedy rigidity with cheerfulness,
41. Remedy dullness with humor.

42. Remedy passiveness with optimism.
43. Remedy anger with joy.
44. Remedy ill will with goodwill.
45. Remedy possessiveness with a willingness to share.
46. Remedy crudity with tenderness.
47. Remedy indifference with passion.
48. Remedy melancholy with a smile.
49. Remedy reprimand with encouragement.
50. Remedy slander with praise.
51. Remedy reproach with inspiration.
52. Remedy offensive language with loving words.
53. Remedy bullying with care and protection.
54. Remedy profanity with blessings.
55. Remedy protest with silence.
56. Remedy violence with benevolence.
57. Remedy unrighteousness with justice.
58. Remedy ruthlessness with sympathy.
59. Remedy treachery with loyalty.
60. Remedy heartlessness with gratitude.
61. Remedy discrimination with impartiality.
62. Remedy immorality with altruism.
63. Remedy enmity with affinity.
64. Remedy confrontation with harmony.
65. Remedy a loner's tendency with fellowship.
66. Remedy division with cooperation.
67. Remedy interference with delegation.
68. Remedy conservatism with innovation.

69. Remedy isolation with association.
70. Remedy ignorance with self-awakening.
71. Remedy affliction with right mindfulness.
72. Remedy heresy with right view.
73. Remedy vices with right action.
74. Remedy improper livelihood with right conduct.
75. Remedy insolence with reverence.
76. Remedy fastidiousness with gratification.
77. Remedy bloodshed with protection.
78. Remedy transgression with precepts.
79. Remedy wastefulness with a cherishing mind.
80. Remedy shamelessness with shame and humility.
81. Remedy lethargy with vigor.
82. Remedy selfishness with willingness.
83. Remedy habitual tendencies with the power of
vows.
84. Remedy bureaucracy with expediency.
85. Remedy anger with compassion.
86. Remedy stinginess with joyful giving.
87. Remedy mundane sentiments with spiritual
aspirations.
88. Remedy ignorance with prajna wisdom.
89. Remedy delusive thoughts with the mind of Chan.
90. Remedy angst with serenity.
91. Remedy attachment with non-self.
92. Remedy burning affliction with cool calmness.
93. Remedy darkness with brightness
94. Remedy pollutedness with purification.

95. Remedy attachment to emptiness with a wondrous existence.
96. Remedy frivolous debate with the truth.
97. Remedy flaws with perfection.
98. Remedy thoughts of success and failure with dependent origination.
99. Remedy bigotry with the Middle Way.
100. Remedy the impermanence of arising and extinguishing with a perfect outcome for all.

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