

Discovering Ethics:

A Path to Virtue

A Study Guide for Inmates for use with the book

ETHICS FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

By His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Developed by The Radiant Heart Sangha of incarcerated Buddhists

At the TDCJ Mark Stiles Unit – Beaumont, Texas

March 2009

These materials were created by *Project Clear Light*, based on the organization and structure of, and with the use of some excerpts from, the Study Guide for Ethics for the New Millennium created by the Los Altos Study Group and distributed by *The Dalai Lama Foundation* (<http://www.dalailamafoundation.org/studyguides>). Project Clear Light's contact information is available at <http://www.projectclearlight.org/6101.html>, and The Dalai Lama Foundation's is at <http://dalailamafoundation.org/contact>.

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Study Guide for Inmates

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Acknowledgements

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to **The Dalai Lama Foundation** for all the support and encouragement they afforded us in developing both this *Study Guide for Inmates* and our own ethics program. Our initial aspirations for creating a “program” of ethics in a prison environment would not have gone anywhere without the insightful guidance and backing from Volunteer Chaplain Terry Conrad; he was indeed a path clearing Bodhisattva. A special thanks also goes out to Chaplain George Bell and the TDCJ Religious Practices Committee for believing in us and granting us the needed approval to implement this program. And lastly, an affectionate “ ‘preciate yah” must be expressed to the entire incarcerated Buddhist group (The Radiant Heart Sangha) at the Mark W. Stiles Unit for their help in tailoring this effort in addressing special “prison-oriented” concerns. All played a crucial role and deserve our deepest bow of reverence.

Preface

This “Discovering Ethics” Study Guide was prepared by three of the program’s founding members. Its structural organization and format is adapted from **The Dalai Lama Foundation’s** Study Guide for ETHICS FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM by His Holiness the Dalai Lama© 2004, www.dalailamafoundation.org.

Although the Dalai Lama is probably the most well-known Buddhist in the world, in *Ethics for the New Millennium*, His Holiness has found the very basis of ethics that is universal to all religious traditions.

We began using the original Study Guide for our own weekly sessions, but soon after we started it became apparent that we needed to tailor a version to fit our prison environment—make it more “prison-centric.” What you see here is the culmination of our efforts. Our sincerest hope rests in the wish that this Study Guide for Inmates will sow the seeds of other ethics programs throughout the Texas Criminal Justice System, and beyond.

From observations and notes taken during our first sixteen-week course, we learned that although our tailored adjustments made for lively discussions, something efficacious was still lacking. Granted, many insights and lessons were being gained from the actual sessions, but we were left wondering what was going on when group members returned to their dayrooms and cells? This reflection led to the development of a separate “Using Our Ethical Toolbox” workbook. Group participants liked the idea of adding specific practices and techniques for integrating the discussed ethical concepts into their daily lives.

Prison provides an incredible opportunity to undertake the work of becoming a more ethical person. Despite having fallen to the bottom rung of the social ladder, every prisoner possesses the same innate ability to cultivate inner virtue as any other ‘free-world’ person. The potential is there. Although many people, including prisoners themselves, might consider “offenders” to be society’s discarded refuse, and therefore beyond redemption, we do not! After all, doesn’t the beautiful and fragrant lotus grow out of the muddy bottoms of a stagnant pond?

Our hope is that this study guide and its accompanying workbook will serve as the first step on the path to virtue and happiness for all involved. We are convinced: If prisoners can effect positive change in their character while incarcerated, that huge triumph should stand as proof for the cultivation of virtue being accessible to all of humanity.

James Sepesi
John Harrup
Jack Vian

Introduction

For Western civilization, one of the most widely read philosophical works on ethics is the *Republic* by Plato. In a clever way of relating his intended lesson, Plato sets two of his main characters—Socrates and Thrasymachus—in the middle of a typical Greek debate. The philosophical exchange begins by Socrates (holding true to his usual provocative approach) baiting his opponent with a question: “Does justice pay?”

Thrasymachus bites. “Justice benefits the other,” he says casually. “What on earth are you talking about?” taunts Socrates. To explain his position, Thrasymachus offers a hypothetical situation. “If one citizen was to unknowingly lose his coin purse (money) on the ground in front of another citizen, which one of the two men benefits from justice?” he asks. Thrasymachus tries to imply that justice would only benefit the man who had lost his coins. The proper response would be to give the purse back to its rightful owner. But, what actual benefit does the finder receive? If, on the other hand, the man who found the money simply decides instead to keep it for himself, the benefit would then go to him. “Therefore,” Thrasymachus contends, “it actually pays to be unjust.”

Thrasymachus’ implication, in essence, is that being just (and the words moral or ethical could be freely exchanged here) only protects the interests of others and not those of oneself. If someone can pull off an unjust act, the benefit clearly goes to that unscrupulous person. “Really,” he says, “it is injustice that pays off much of the time.” (Where have we seen this type of mentality before? And, in what setting does it run rampant?)

As a counter to Thrasymachus’s assertion, and to point out his faulty thinking, Socrates launches into a long and complicated analogy about a healthy City-State—the *Republic*. “For a City-State to be healthy and flourish, it must be just. Injustice only serves to foster mistrust and fear, which eventually tears apart the very fabric of any social group. Hence, the survival of any City-State (our society) is contingent upon it being just,” Socrates proclaims. In the end, what we learn is that the City-State happens to be analogous to the individual citizen. What applies to the City-State also applies to the person. The survival of any community (or organism) depends on its people being more just than not.

Following a similar line of reasoning, the Dalai Lama argues that the very survival of humanity depends on its members being ethical (or just). He elaborates his argument by asserting that lasting happiness, which every being desires, stems directly from ethical conduct. A life based on an ethics of virtue ensures true happiness and fulfillment for the individual, and encourages it for others.

Hence, to express this universal message, the Dalai Lama structures *Ethics for the New Millennium* in accordance with the three levels by which ethical principles are applied—the inner, outer, and outermost. The concepts that comprise the inner level form the foundation from which “positive ethical conduct” can be built. Seeds of ethics must take root in each person first. Understanding these principles is key to developing a virtuous character. The outer level relates moral attributes to interpersonal relationships. Then, from there, ethics will naturally spread outward to the third level: society.

In the past, offers the Dalai Lama, the pervasive role religion played in the lives of people helped to cultivate and maintain ethical conduct within a culture. Today, however, because of the growth in secular society, pluralistic thinking, and the globalization of modern society, any ethical code that hopes to speak to a universal audience must avoid the twin shoals of religious dogma and moral relativism if it is to establish a consensus as to what constitutes positive or negative behavior, or what differentiates right from wrong. Perhaps the Dalai Lama’s plea is correct: “A spiritual revolution is called for”—one where ethical warriors are empowered to make the world a better place.

Suggestions for Discussion Group Members

As is the case with any learning experience, “we get out of it whatever we put into it.” From our observations, even the slightest effort invested in the program yields good returns; but truthfully, the more earnest and wholehearted the effort is, the greater the results. So, with this in mind, be sure to read each chapter of the text, go over the study guide before each session, participate in group discussions, and exercise the “ethical tools” as much as possible. Now granted, group sessions can be very thought provoking, but unless the talked-about concepts become common practice in everyday life, virtuous character will not develop. Talk is cheap! Skillful action is where it’s all at. And, getting there takes practice, practice, and more practice.

Here are a few pointers to remember while participating in the program:

- When assembled as a group, be mindful, considerate, and respectful of each other
- Raise hands and wait patiently to get called upon by the facilitator
- Do not talk over fellow discussion group members
- Try to keep comments brief and to the point; someone else may be waiting to say something
- Keep personal and sensitive information confidential; no one wants their dirty laundry aired out in public, or in prison for that matter
- Try to do the take-home “Ethical Toolbox” assignments; even the slightest effort provides much feedback and helps develop character
- When exiting the classroom to use the restroom, be quiet and do not disrupt others
- Take good care of the text and study guide; they have to be preserved for future programs
- Do **not** write in the text or study guide; participants are only allowed to write in their “workbooks”
- Keep side conversations with neighbors to a minimum
- Attend as many sessions as you can; two unexcused absences gets a participant dropped from the program; some excused absences are allowed such as guards not running an in-and-out, being temporarily off the unit, or other medical or administrative lay-ins

Preliminary Information

All group discussion members were asked to formulate their own definition of “Ethics” as a prompt to get everyone thinking about the topic of this program. However, to be more exact and facilitate future discussions, we feel it important to establish some agreement on a few key terms that will CONSTANTLY arise throughout the entire program. Words like *ethics*, *morality*, *virtue*, and *character*—among some others—will come up repeatedly in our conversations. Therefore, we offer a few definitions below. Study them well!

Ethics:

1. Webster’s New International Dictionary, 2nd Edition
 - a. A treatise on morals (Aristotle)
 - b. The science of moral duty, more broadly the science of the ideal human character and the ideal ends of human action. One of the chief problems with which ethics deals is concern for the nature of *summum bonum* or highest good, the origin and validity of the sense of duty, and the character and authority of moral obligation.

The principle ethical theories are:
 1. Such as considering happiness to be the greatest good, these may be egoistic as is usually the case with hedonistic and eudemonistic theories, or altruistic, as utilitarianism.
 2. Theories of perfectionism or self-realization.
 3. Theories resting upon the nature of man to the universe or to divine laws, as stoicism, evolution, Christian ethics. Intuition and empiricism in ethics are doctrines opposed with respect to the character of the sense of duty. Absolute ethics affirms an unchanging moral code; relative ethics regards moral rules as varying with human development.
 - c. Moral principles, quality or practice; a system of moral principles; as, social ethics, medical ethics, professional ethics; morals of individual action or practice, as the ethics of conscientious man.
2. The American Heritage Dictionary of English Language, 4th Edition
 - a. A set of principles of right conduct.
 - b. A theory or a system of moral values: “An ethic of service is at war with a craving of gain” (Gregg Easterbrook).
 - c. The study of the general nature of morals and the specific moral choices to be made by a person; moral philosophy.
 - d. The rule or standards governing the conduct of a person or the members of a profession: medical ethics.
3. Dictionary of Religion and Philosophy by Geddes MacCregor
 - a. The term ethics is derived from the Greek *ethos*, which means custom or usage. It has basic affinities, therefore, with similar notions in non-Western cultures, such as China, where the Confucian term *li*, meaning propriety or decorum has the same fundamental significance. The Greeks, e.g., Plato, used the term *dike*, meaning also custom or usage to designate the right way of behaving, very much as Confucius used the term *li* in Chinese.
 - b. The adjectives ethical and moral are synonymous and philosophers who concern themselves with ethical problems have sometimes been known as moral philosophers as contrasted with logicians, metaphysicians, and other specialists. Moral philosophers may either build systems of guidance in

reaching ethical decisions, i.e., decisions about what course of actions are good and bad, right and wrong. Modern ethics tends more in the latter than in the former directions, but both functions are necessary in the pursuit of ethical questions. Ethics as a whole belongs to value theory, which includes aesthetics and other branches.

Morality:

1. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Edition
 - a. A doctrine or system of moral conduct.
 - b. Particular moral principles or rules of conduct.
 - c. Conformity to ideals of right human conduct.

Virtue:

1. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Edition
 - a. Conformity to standard of right.
 - b. A beneficial quality or power of a thing.
 - c. A commendable quality or trait.

Character:

1. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Edition
 - a. The complex of mental and ethical traits marking and often individualizing a person, group, or nation.
 - b. Main or essential nature esp. as strongly marked and serving to distinguish.
 - c. Moral excellence and firmness.

Synonyms:

Many times the words *moral*, *ethical*, *virtuous*, *righteous*, and *noble* are used interchangeably. Yet, there are subtle distinctions between them. In general, all of these words mean conforming to a standard of what is right and good. However, more specifically **moral** implies conformity to established sanctioned codes or accepted notions of right and wrong <the basic *moral* values of a community>. **Ethical** may suggest the involvement of more difficult or subtle questions of rightness, fairness, or equality <committed to the highest *ethical* principles>. **Virtuous** implies the possession or manifestation of moral excellence in character <not a religious person, but *virtuous* nevertheless>. **Righteous** stresses guiltlessness or blamelessness and often suggests the sanctimonious <wished to be *righteous* before God and the world>. **Noble** implies moral eminence and freedom from anything petty, mean, or dubious in conduct and character <had the *noblest* of reasons for seeking office>.

This paragraph was extracted from the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Edition.

You can be an **ethical** person without necessarily being a **moral** one, since ethical implies conformity with a code of fair and honest behavior, particularly in business or in a profession (an ethical legislator who didn't believe in cutting deals), while *moral* refers to generally accepted standards of goodness and rightness in character and conduct—especially sexual conduct (the moral values she'd learned from her mother). In the same way, you can be **honorable** without necessarily being **virtuous**, since *honorable* suggests dealing with others in a decent and ethical manner, while *virtuous* implies the possession of moral excellence in character (many honorable business people fail to live a virtuous private life). **Righteous** is similar in meaning to **virtuous** but also implies freedom from guilt or blame (righteous anger); when the righteous person is also somewhat intolerant and narrow-minded, *self-righteous* might be [the correct] adjective.

Excerpted from the Oxford American Writer's Thesaurus

Program Structure and Session Format

We wholeheartedly support a peer-led discussion group model for conveying ethics training and peace education in the prison setting. This type of structure promotes an open atmosphere and encourages the free flow of ideas. All group discussion members sit behind tables, which form a circle. Facilitators sit at the circle as well, but close by a dry-erase board in order to present material. Although a facilitator's primary role is to help orchestrate group discussion, in only the slightest way does he or she assume any teaching mode. Everyone reads the text, follows along with the study guide, and offers his or her perspectives regarding the discussion questions. Facilitators lead the program by providing insight (having already been through one course), overseeing group activities, and stimulating participation.

One moderator and three or more co-facilitators initiate small group discussions for each Key Concept for the chapter under discussion each week. The summaries for each group, led by a co-facilitator, are brought back to the whole for each Key Concept. The moderator introduces each key concept and keeps the time for discussions.

As it pertains to each weekly session, we find the following components and methods extremely helpful. To set the proper tone for each session, our Chaplain comes in to lead everyone through a "centering" technique or relaxation exercise, which helps to clear the mind and prepare everyone for the day's activity. Next, the previous week's "ethical toolbox" assignment is reviewed. After insights are gleaned, the facilitator continues on by launching into a reading of the first key concept and its corresponding questions. Lively discussion ensues. At some point, one group activity is undertaken which somehow relates to one, or more, of the key concepts. As time starts to run out, the next "ethical toolbox" assignment is handed out and quickly gone over. Then, we close the session by reciting a dedication—pledging our day's meritorious efforts for the benefit of ourselves, our families, our friends, and our communities.

We honestly believe that if we are to build a better world, one with reduced suffering, increased happiness, and more widespread peace, all of us must begin in small very personal ways to cultivate virtuous character. As ethical principles take hold in our lives, we pray that we may eventually become moral beacons and make a positive influence on our surroundings—to our fellow offenders, our prison community, and beyond.

Objectives and Intentions

By adopting the above format, we hope to achieve the following objectives:

- Use the text *Ethics for the New Millennium* to hone our perspective on ethical issues; and, use the key concepts from each chapter as prompts to engage in thought-provoking and meaningful discussions
- Learn how "ethical tools" can be integrated into our daily lives
- From "where we are now," take steps to improve our own character and recognize how our own actions influence our immediate surroundings in an ethical way
- Help make a contribution to a growing ethical revolution
- Cultivate more peace and happiness in our own lives and share that positive energy with our community

Chapter 1 – Modern Society and the Quest for Human

Happiness

Key Concept #1

Happiness and Suffering: As human beings, no matter where we live or under what conditions we find ourselves, we all wish to be happy. This fact seems to be part of everyone’s nature—regardless of race, nationality, or religion. The Dalai Lama has noticed, through his extensive travels, that those individuals who live amongst material wealth are, in many ways, less satisfied and less happy than those who live in third-world nations. Unfortunately, modern technology and a ton of material “toys” does not necessarily equate to contentment and psychological well-being. Sadly, another by-product of materialistic societies is the greater value placed on individual desires and wants often to the detriment of community needs. This leads to an attitude that “others are not important to my happiness and their happiness is not important to me.” When this happens, connections to our very humanness starts to slip away, leaving many of us feeling separated, isolated, and lonely. Under these conditions, the tightly interwoven fabric of a society begins to unravel. Alienation sets in and the basic desire for happiness is undercut. Nowhere is this more evident than in our own environment of prison.

Questions for Key Concept #1

1. The Dalai Lama says that everyone wants to be happy, but what is happiness? What makes you happy?
2. What is the purpose of happiness? (Or does happiness have a purpose?)
3. In prison, do we ever truly experience happiness?

Key Concept #2

The “Quick Fix” of Science: When the Dalai Lama speaks of science he includes technology. Both scientific knowledge and technology have proven to be very effective at solving many of our external problems—building shelter, satisfying hunger, and treating disease—but all these developments are of limited benefit for the advancement of inner well-being. Technological success has given us the false impression that the key to our happiness somehow lies in material progress. For much of Western society, science has superseded religion in the public sphere, which, tends to promote the belief that science holds the answer to all of humanity’s ills. Quite often, this has led us to overlook the moral ramifications of technological progress. Although the benefits of science and technology have been a huge blessing to humanity, they offer inadequate tools for addressing the important issues of how to lead an ethical life and find lasting happiness—those inner dimensions that define and motivate the development of good character. If we are not careful, we run the risk of losing touch with “the wider reality of human experience”—that interconnectedness between us and the rest of humanity.

Questions for Key Concept #2

1. Is there anything in modern society that prevents or obstructs our individual pursuit of happiness?
2. Which do you feel has had greater influence on your sense of ethics, science or religion? Why?
3. As prisoners, do we face any unique ethical challenges?

Key Concepts #3

An Ethical Life: As our reliance on scientific knowledge and technology has increased, the influence of religion has waned in our daily lives, the consequences of which can be seen in every corner of society. Many of our problems in the world—abusive relationships, divorce, suicide, drug abuse, and crime—are basically ethical problems. This means many of our problems are of our own making. Without moral guidance of a spiritual tradition, many of us find it far too easy to go with the “maddening” flow and allow our lives to spin out of control. Take a moment and reflect upon the lifestyle we all led before coming to prison. What happens if we do **not** turn our backs on, or change our direction from, the current path we are stumbling down? Truly, a spiritual revolution is called for—one that encourages people to become more ethical beings which, in turn, will promote real, significant, and lasting happiness.

Questions for Key Concept #3

1. In general, how does our search for happiness relate to our need to pursue an ethical life?
2. If everyone is seeking to be happy and avoid suffering, then why is there so much suffering and unhappiness in the world?
3. In Prison, which problems are of our own making and which are outside our control? (Make a list of each)

Group Exercise

Before discussion, pass out index cards or slips of paper and have each person write down their personal definition of happiness. Gather up the cards for later use.

The actual exercise: Have groups craft a definition of happiness. Compare group definitions to the individual definitions completed earlier. Discuss differences in individual opinions verses group definitions.

Suggested Closing Dedication

May whatever constructive ideas and positive discussions that we have shared today make a lasting impression on our minds. Moreover, we dedicate all the beneficial merit generated by this group for the blessing of as many fellow beings as possible.

Chapter 2 – No Magic, No Mystery

This chapter relates ethics to the human experience of suffering and happiness—instead of grounding ethics in any religious context. The Dalai Lama feels that this approach will be more effective because a good percentage of people today shy away from material associated with organized religion. Some forms of behavior that are acceptable in one religious tradition may not ring true for other traditions or doctrines.

Key Concept #1

Religion and Spirituality: To frame the exploration of ethics, the Dalai Lama illustrates the difference between religion and spirituality. In his views, religion concerns itself predominately with faith, dogma, and salvation after death. Connected with this comes various metaphysical perspectives on supernatural reality, dogmatic rituals, prayer practices, and so on. Spirituality, on the other hand, is more concerned with virtuous qualities of the human spirit—such as love, compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, unity, wholeness, and harmony. These humanistic qualities that show concern for the well-being of others can be developed regardless of any particular belief system. Of course, religious faiths do include spiritual practices, but a “spiritual practice” by itself can act solely out of concern for others’ well-being.

Questions for Key Concept #1

1. Why is this chapter entitled, “No Magic, No Mystery”?
2. Do you find the Dalai Lama’s distinction between religion and spirituality relevant to your experience?
3. Why does he feel the need to divorce ethics from any religious foundation?

Key Concept #2

Evaluation of Ethical Problems: The Dalai Lama makes a distinction between two types of suffering: the suffering caused by natural events and the suffering created (and perpetrated) by humans. For those sufferings of human origin, we must take responsibility and overcome them ourselves. The key to accomplishing this is by realizing that every being desires happiness and wishes to avoid suffering. Once we understand this, we can better evaluate the ethics of our actions—what we do, what we say, what we think. Many of the troubles humans face arise in part to conflicting ethical concerns. These ethical conflicts must be confronted, not so much by external methods (like legal systems or utilitarian rules that address every ethical dilemma), but by continually analyzing our personal vices and employing ethical restraint. To determine whether an act will be (or has been), positive or negative, we must constantly review:

1. The impact of others’ experience/expectation of happiness
2. Our intentions
3. The nature of the act itself; and
4. Our motivation for committing the act.

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The most important aspect of this process is checking our motivation, which according to the Dalai Lama's formulation goes deeper than direct intent to include those "world views" or personal perspectives that inspire our acts.

"When the driving force of our actions is wholesome, our actions will tend automatically to contribute to other's well-being. The more this is our habitual state, the less likely we are to react badly when provoked."

Our aim of spiritual (ethical) practice is to transform and perfect our individual motivation, in the broadest sense, and thereby increase our ethical conduct.

Questions for Key Concept #2

1. The Dalai Lama gives general criteria for determining if an act is ethical. He places the greatest emphasis on our motivation. Why? And do you agree?
2. The Dalai Lama says, "The aim of...ethical practice is to transform and perfect the individual's_____. This is how we become better human beings." What word would you use to fill in the blank?
3. What can we do to follow the Dalai Lama's suggestion for making our habitual state more wholesome while in prison?

Group Exercise

Divide into groups and each group will come up with a "Convict Code." Optimally, each group will have five members, and each person will be responsible for one rule. The rules should be very short and concrete. For example, a rule could be something like: "No talking in front of the T.V." or "Throw trash in the can, not on the floor."

Reassemble into the larger group and share each smaller groups' codes.

Closing Dedication

May our awe for the mysteries of life translate into positive energy waves and wash over all beings.

Chapter 3 – Dependant Origination and the Nature of Reality

The views we hold regarding the world determine how we behave and respond to life. If our perception of reality is inaccurate, we are more likely to do harm to ourselves and others. To help explain his perspective on this issue, the Dalai Lama presents a philosophical concept from the Madhyamika (Middle Way) school of Tibetan Buddhism. He begins by using logic to thoroughly investigate how phenomena (components of reality) exist, both within the world and the self.

Key Concept #1

Middle Way World View: The central concept, *dependant origination*, expresses certain characteristics of reality:

1. All “things” arise dependent on causes and conditions—both for inanimate objects (like clay pots) and animate objects (like people or plants).
2. All things are made of parts; and these parts are made of even smaller parts, and so on. This applies to physical objects as well as mental ones—like thoughts and emotions. All parts are transitory (not lasting forever). For instance, each moment of consciousness comes into existence and then fades away, having a beginning, middle, and an end.
3. No separate, independently-existing object can ever be found. Things that are in a seemingly solid state of existence only appear that way; everything will change into another state eventually, and, the labels that we give these temporary “things” are merely constructed for the purposes of communicating our common sense, everyday experience of reality.

So, what is the point of going through this analysis? How can it help us in our daily lives? Because *dependent origination* has profound implications for how we view reality, which means:

1. Our whole world perspective changes. Instead of seeing a world full of isolated entities, we see the world as one big connected organism. All the cells are interrelated, working together in cooperation to sustain the whole. Thus, all phenomena are connected in some way. That’s just how life is! This theory encompasses actions too. Each one of our deeds, words, and thoughts has an effect in some form or fashion.
2. We are forced to abandon our tendency to see objects and events as discrete entities, but instead, we start recognizing the complex, interlinking relationships that make up our life experience throughout reality.
3. Even our perceived “self” ceases to exist in the way we normally assume. Any distinction between “self” and “others” begins to blur. The precious self is “in the end, no more substantial than a rainbow in the summer sky.”
4. Interconnectedness lies at the heart of reality. Hence, your interests are my interests as well.

Questions for Key Concept #1

1. Who are you? In one paragraph, identify yourself. What factors contribute to your overall sense of self?
2. What role does perception play in our experience of reality?

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3. How does our sense of self skew our perceptions?
4. Has the Dalai Lama convinced you that cause and effect (karma) rules the universe?

Key Concept #2

Not Non-Existence: We must not fall into the trap of thinking that because nothing exists independently, nothing exists at all. Such misunderstandings only serve to undermine our sense of ethics. The Middle Way posits “the concept of dependent origination compels us to take the reality of cause and effect with utmost seriousness. By this I mean the fact that particular causes lead to particular effects, and that certain actions lead to suffering while others lead to happiness.”

Question for Key Concept #2

1. If you knew that you would totally cease to exist after death, would that change your moral outlook?

Group Exercise

Break into groups of three or four members and take five to ten minutes to see who can create the longest “causality chain” for a given topic, e.g., How many hands are involved in getting us our food? or, How many other people are affected by a banker losing his or her job?

Reassemble into the larger group and share each smaller group’s “causality chains.”

Suggested Closing Dedication

By understanding how we all are connected in the web of life, we hope our motivations turn more toward concern for others. May all feel the benefit of our developing attitude.

Chapter 4 – Redefining the Goal

In this chapter, the Dalai Lama considers the nature of happiness. What is genuine happiness? What is inner peace? How do we develop it? And, why is ethical conduct so important to finding true and lasting happiness?

Key Concept #1

Nature of Happiness: Most of what we experience, or think of, as happiness is relative, depending on our conditioning throughout life and our mentality at the time. Many of us loosely use the word *happiness* to describe short-lived states that satisfy our senses. Contained within these temporary states is the seed of suffering. Why? Because the happiness doesn't last! The ups must come down. Quite often, this condition leads to an "impulsive" groping around for happiness and selfish behavior. When we act to fulfill our immediate desires without properly considering others, all strides toward lasting happiness begin to stagger.

Questions for Key Concept #1

1. What is the difference between short term happiness (hedonism) and happiness that lasts?
2. Why doesn't hedonism lead to long-term happiness?

Key Concept #2

Genuine Happiness: As the Dalai Lama sees it the main characteristic of true, prolonged happiness is inner peace and contentment. This peaceful disposition arises out of concern for others and involves a high degree of sensitivity and compassion. If we successfully develop these qualities, we will empower ourselves with a strong sense of well-being, even when assaulted by any of life's difficulties.

Questions for Key Concept #2

1. Give an example of something in your life that causes you to feel genuinely happy.
2. Altruism – What is it?
 - a. Can you think of an example from your own life where someone has been altruistic towards you?
 - b. How can we cultivate genuine altruism; that is, a sense of giving or sharing without feeling the need to be paid back, or feeling like a martyr for our actions?

Key Concept #3

Inner Peace: Where do we find it? And what contributes to its development? Well, there is no single answer for finding inner peace. First, however, it is always a good idea to do a little trial and error in order to identify the causes and conditions for peace (of course, some helpful guidance from happy people wouldn't hurt) and then cultivate those causes and conditions. The Dalai Lama says that factors such as good health, fine friends, personal expressions, and some degree of prosperity (flourishing mentally and emotionally) help contribute to inner peace. It also helps to have a positive outlook and attitude in dealing with existing circumstances. Reinforcing skillful actions while in the pursuit of happiness definitely works wonders for quickening its attainment.

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Questions for Key Concept #3

1. Think of a time when you have felt true inner peace. Identify the causes and qualities that led to that feeling.
2. How can we achieve a feeling of inner peace in prison? Or is it even possible?

Key Concept #4

Ethical and Spiritual Acts: The Dalai Lama offers a subtle difference between ethical and spiritual acts. Ethical acts are ones that do not stifle other peoples' experiences or expectations of happiness; whereas, spiritual acts are ones that possess the qualities of love, compassion, patience, forgiveness, humility, tolerance, and so on. Spiritual acts presume some level of concern for the well-being of others. Thus, they contribute to the happiness for both ourselves and others. Much of our personal happiness arises in the context of how we treat other people. Altruism, or the devotion to the welfare of others, is a crucial aide in discovering genuine, lasting happiness.

Question for Key Concept #4

1. What is the difference in an ethical act and a spiritual act?
2. How do ethical and spiritual acts interact to contribute to our happiness?
3. Does prison limit our sense of devotion to others? If limits exist are they self-imposed or external?

Group Exercise

Split the large group into two groups: One side believes that a person can achieve inner peace in prison, and the other group does not. Have both groups sit opposite of each other throughout the entire session and take a tally on whether this affects the group dynamic or not. At the end of the session, discuss any noticed attitudinal differences.

Suggested Closing Dedication

We dedicate today's constructive exchanges and discussions to all beings that have yet to discover lasting happiness. May all of us quickly find it together.

Chapter 5 – The Supreme Emotion

Key Concept #1

Nature of Empathy: Our ability to empathize allows us the capacity to share another person’s pain. The literal Tibetan definition of empathy is “the inability to bear the sight of another’s suffering.” Though some people may not exhibit empathy and appear cold-hearted, it does not prove they lack the capacity to experience empathy. Even a small sign of appreciation, like a grin or nod, after an act of kindness reflects the capacity for empathy. Empathy is the stepping-stone for developing compassion.

Questions for Key Concept #1

1. What is the difference between empathy, sympathy, and pity? How do they affect our view and experience of suffering?
2. What is compassion? Give an example of a time when you have shown compassion to a fellow offender?

Key Concept #2

Feelings Foster Empathy: Human beings are social creatures, so no matter how rational we humans try to be, we cannot escape the need for emotional connections. Acts of kindness tend to promote trust and strengthen feelings of togetherness. Contentment alleviates stress and encourages good health. While conversely, violence induces anxiety and drives people apart. Frustration adds tension and can depress the immune system. We gravitate toward love and flee from negativity. By nature, we prefer life to death, growth over decay. Emotions are what bind us to our humanity.

Question for Key Concept #2

1. What role do our own positive or negative feelings play in the role of fostering empathy?

Key Concept #3

Absence of Empathy: What about those individuals whose life seemed totally given over to violence—like Hitler, Pol Pot, Stalin, Mao? Such beings were not extraterrestrial transplants, but sprang up right here on Earth, in a particular period and setting. So, what happened to them? Basically, a hardening of the heart occurred because of their ideological vision becoming so distorted and twisted that it limited their ability to identify with the rest of humanity. When anyone’s vision gets divorced from basic human emotion, that person’s negative potential cannot be underestimated. Desensitized feelings inhibit empathy.

Question for Key Concept #3

1. Does everyone have the capacity for empathy? Why or why not?

Key Concept #4

Empathy and Ethics: A capacity for empathy is a crucial component of ethics. For any act to be truly ethical, it must not bring harm—to either oneself or others. If we cannot foresee the potential impact of our actions, we have no way of discerning right from wrong, harming from non-harming. If, however, we

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can develop our capacity for empathy, we become more sensitive to hurtful behavior and less likely to do harm.

Question for Key Concept #4

1. Can a person be ethical if he or she has no sense of empathy? Why or why not?

Group Exercise

Have the sponsor or moderator lead the entire group through the “Meditation on Compassion” exercise (see Appendix 2).

Key Concept #5

Developing Compassion: Empathy must be tempered by wisdom in order to bring about proper compassion. Misguided compassion can, in certain circumstances, actually be very detrimental. True compassion contains elements of love, affection, kindness, gentleness, generosity of spirit, and emotional connection; but, nowhere does it imply pity. Pity plays no part in compassion. The skillful development of compassion involves sustained reflection, rehearsal, and practice of compassionate acts until we can effectively make compassion a natural reflex. The more our compassion develops, the more ethical our conduct will be. As we act increasingly out of concern for others, peace settles in to our hearts and compassion automatically ripples out to touch all of those around us. Patience, tolerance, and forgiveness radiate from a compassionate heart. Therefore, it is extremely important that the cultivation of compassion remain steadfast throughout our ethical practice, from beginning to end.

Questions for Key Concept #5

1. What does it mean to say that compassion must be tempered by wisdom?
2. What is the purpose of compassion as it concerns ethics?

Suggested Closing Dedication

May the generosity of our spirit be a shining example unto the world. We offer every compassionate thought generated during today’s session to all those who suffer in the hopes that all will find relief.

Chapter 6 – The Ethic of Restraint

Key Concept #1

Inner Discipline: Developing mental self-control is more than simply suppressing or denying negative thoughts and destructive emotions. It involves cultivating wholesome qualities like love, tolerance, forgiveness, humility, and so on. True inner discipline comes from observing our mind and gaining a real understanding of our innermost selves. As experience grows, we begin to recognize how our mental state—both unwholesome and wholesome—effects our well-being and that of others. Over time, we learn to respond more skillfully by restraining negative attitudes and enhancing positive ones.

Questions for Key Concept #1

1. Can one cultivate a habit of inner discipline in a prison environment, and if so, how?
2. Does cultivating inner discipline help others around us, if so, how?

Key Concept #2

Nature of the Mind and Its Emotions: As a metaphor for the nature of the mind, the Dalai Lama describes the water of a lake: “When the water is stirred up by a storm, the mud from the lake’s bottom clouds it, making it appear opaque. But the nature of the water is not dirty. When the storm passes, the mud settles and the water is left clear once again.” When emotions stir, they can cloud the mind; nonetheless, that still does not change the pure nature of the mind. This means that we do not necessarily have to be controlled by our every thought and emotion. There exists a space between each mental event and its corresponding action that actually allows us time to respond, if we learn to discipline ourselves to do so. Learning to recognize that brief space allows us the freedom to respond skillfully—instead of reacting haphazardly. The mind is like a president and thoughts/emotions are like cabinet ministers, some giving bad advice and some good. The mind, as a decision maker, must determine which advice to follow—rejecting the bad and heeding the good.

Questions for Key Concept #2

1. What are some ordinary emotions? What are some negative emotions? What are some destructive emotions?
2. Were negative or unreasoned emotions driving you when you committed your offense? (You do not have to give details of your offense) Would it have turned out differently if positive and reasoned emotions had been driving you?
3. When do our afflictive emotions get us in trouble?

Key Concept #3

Nature of Afflictive Emotions: All those thoughts, emotions, and mental events that reflect a negative or uncompassionate state of mind undermine our development of contentment and the search for lasting happiness. Afflictive emotions are destructive. They are the source of unethical conduct and the basis for anxiety, depression, confusion, and stress—prominent features in daily life today. Such emotions cause habitual selfish thinking, putting “me” before everyone else. The agitation caused by afflictive emotions can rob us of our discriminating awareness, cloud our better judgment, and blind us from recognizing the

outcome of our actions. Mental states like these have an irrational dimension to them and end up being harmful, the cultivation of qualities like kindheartedness and compassion. For instance, consider the emotion of anger: as we become angry and think about the righteousness of our anger, we stop being compassionate, loving, generous, forgiving, tolerant, and patient. The emotion of anger often lashes out and brings harm to others. Eventually, if anger is allowed to settle in, it can destroy our inner peace and chase away those people we care for.

Question for Key Concept #3

1. If we “settle in” with negative emotions, or if those “bad advice givers” capture most of our attention, what will our life be like?

Key Concept #4

Countering Negativity: First we must teach ourselves to be more aware of afflictive emotions when they arise while paying particular attention to our bodily sensations, thoughts and feelings, words and actions. Second, we need to recognize the situations, activities, and conditions, which **trigger** afflictive emotions. Then, we keep our distance from those situations until we can build up our inner resources and ability to restrain negative thoughts. Third, we must become intimately familiar with our own patterns of negativity. This is a lifelong task, but unless we begin to make the effort, we will never be able to see where behavioral change must take place. One method for doing this is by continually asking ourselves questions like: Am I happier when my thoughts are destructive or when they are wholesome? What triggered negative emotions in me today? Positive thoughts? Be like a scientist investigating how the mind works, and then draw some appropriate conclusions. Finally, cultivate a strong habit of restraint in response to afflictive emotions. Keep in mind that this is not denial, but skillful restraint. Denial suppresses emotions such as anger under the mask of self-control or out of fear of what others might think. Restraint, on the other hand, is a deliberate and voluntarily adopted discipline based on our understanding of the effect of our action.

Questions for Key Concept #4

1. Think back on a situation where our actions were selfish and negative. What kind of impact did this have on others? And, how did such actions affect us?
2. Are we willing to make an effort to recognize afflictive emotions in ourselves; recognizing your triggers and your responses (body sensations, word, thoughts and actions), gaining insight into our negativity and cultivating a strong habit of restraint in response to those afflictive (destructive) emotions?
3. Is it possible, living in a closed environment like ours, to counter negative emotions and actions when everyone else is so negative?

Key Concept #5

Ethical Restraint: Actions should be done in a manner that takes the well-being of others into consideration. When we fail to restrain or control our responses to afflictive emotions, our actions become unethical and impede our happiness. Ethical restraint acknowledges that our happiness depends on the happiness of others. Therefore, we must learn to act accordingly.

Questions for Key Concept #5

1. Can ethical restraint be maintained in the prison environment? How can we do it realistically?
2. What habits and practices can help us cultivate restraint? Often the case with prison offenders is that we are followers of clique-group ethics. We survived in a gang or “in the streets” with our homeboys because we accepted their code, and likely we never ever had positive values to which we could remain faithful. So, what makes you think that you can adopt universal ethics and become a responsible individual—who as a matter of habit chooses to restrain his or her lifelong negative emotions—in the interest of others’ happiness? Or why would you even want to do so? (Reality Check!)

Group Exercise

Using an Emotionmeter

Let us say that when you become consciously aware of your emotional state-of-heart you are using your “emotionmeter.” Using your emotionmeter, measure your emotional state-of-the-heart feelings as you begin this exercise. When the group has formed a circle, begin with a neutral quiet time to calibrate your emotionmeter. Introspectively measure how you are feeling when your mind has been cleared and make a mental note to yourself of that level (try to gauge if there are any intense negative or positive feelings at this neutral state).

Measure Negativity

One at a time in a clockwise direction, have each group member say aloud a single negative emotion. Allow time for contemplation about how you are affected by that negative thought, then continue to the next person until all members have exhausted the list of negative emotions or become exhausted themselves. (Do not spend too long a period on the negatives).

Take a measurement of how you are feeling: What is your state-of the-heart after contemplating negative emotions? Do you feel sad, alarmed, worried, irritated, empty or bored? But, do not share your results until the end of the exercise.

Measure the Positive

Do not leave the group in the negative state! Do the same with positive emotions for at least the same amount of time. When the process is complete take another measurement of your feelings and report your findings to the group.

Conclude the Experiment

Consider and talk about how the practice of thinking of positive things can improve your state-of-the-heart.

Suggested Closing Dedication

May the discussions today enable us to foster more ethical restraint in our daily walk. And, may our efforts till the ground for true happiness to flourish.

Chapter 7 – The Ethic of Virtue

Key Concept #1

Ethic of Virtue: There is a saying in Tibet that the practice of virtue is as hard as driving a donkey uphill; whereas, engaging in destructive activity is as easy as rolling a boulder downhill. This old adage is testament to the difficulty of developing virtuous character. Nevertheless, for happiness and well-being it must be developed! The level of virtue we obtain equates directly to how much inner peace and happiness we can achieve. The more virtuous we are, the happier we will be. An ethic of virtue requires constant attention to the cultivation and reinforcement of positive qualities, namely our basic human qualities. After the quality of compassion, the second most important quality in our ethical toolbox is a quality that happens to be best denoted by the Tibetan word *so pa*: what in English might be closely translated as patience or forbearance.

Questions for Key Concept #1

1. What was your first thought when it was suggested that “patience must be developed”?
2. What goals would one have to set in order to maintain an ethic of virtue (patience) in a prison environment?

Key Concept #2

Steadfast Patience: The reason the Dalai Lama offers the word *so pa* to describe this essential quality for virtue is because the Tibetan word more accurately conveys its conceptual meaning. At a deeper level, *so pa* implies an inclusion of several richer attributes: specifically courage, composure, and strength in the face of adversity. This points to a deliberate, reasoned response to negative thoughts and emotions. The quality of *so pa* empowers us to resist suffering and protects us from losing our compassion even for those who would harm us. We can fight the urge to return harm for harm in kind. *So pa* is the solid base from which non-violence is built. We must also understand that *so pa* in no way implies mere passivity or being a total pushover. When stern words, strong stands, or persistent countermeasures need to be employed, *so pa* helps us safeguard our inner composure in order to choose an appropriate non-violent response. We can remain firm and courageous even when afraid. Thus, our conduct is rendered ethically wholesome.

Questions for Key Concept #2

1. Considering the pressure of prison life, can one use patience, even when being provoked to fight?
2. In the past, have you recognized patience or forbearance in your response to a situation, such as not giving in to negative impulses or returning harm for harm?

Key Concept #3

Cultivating Forbearance: In order to employ patience effectively in difficult situations we must practice it on a daily basis. It is just like learning any skill. One powerful method for doing this is by reflecting on the benefits forbearance brings, which include:

1. Reserving judgment, enabling compassion, and giving rise to forgiveness;
2. Developing a storehouse of calmness and tranquility that improves relationships;

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3. Being better grounded emotionally which improves physical health; and
4. Discovering antidotes for the affliction of anger.

It also helps to view adversity not so much as a threat to our peace of mind but as a precious opportunity to develop patience. Any individual who would do us harm is actually a jewel of opportunity, an opportunity to employ *so pa*.

Questions for Key Concept #3

1. In the tough environment we are in, and when difficult situations arise, how do we (or how can we) cultivate patience?
2. Explain how patience (and the practice of thinking about the benefits of patience) can be thought of as a **deliberate response** (as opposed to an unreasoned reaction) to the strong negative thoughts and emotions that tend to arise throughout our everyday existence.

Key Concept #4

Antidotes to Afflictive Emotions: Though an ethic of virtue means learning to restrain (or putting the brakes on) our own afflictive emotions, at the same time it also entails cultivating appropriate antidotes to afflictive emotions. The antidote for each emotion has a direct opposite:

1. Patience opposes anger
2. Humility opposes pride
3. Contentment opposes greed or desire
4. Perseverance opposes laziness
5. Spirituality and asking for help opposes helplessness and despair
6. Giving opposes miserliness (stinginess) and attachment

An ethic of virtue stipulates that we must integrate the pursuit of virtue into our daily lives to the point at which actions become spontaneously ethical. We cultivate a habit of recognizing destructive emotions as they arise. We bring to mind our intention to be generous, humble, and joyful regarding the happiness and well-being of others. Whenever our actions do fall short of our ideals, we receive this without judgment, guilt, or blame. Instead, we need to foster repentant resolve.

If we truly desire to be happy, there is no other way to proceed but by way of virtue: it is the method by which happiness is achieved; and, we might add, that the basis of virtue, its ground, is ethical discipline.

Questions for Key Concept #4

1. What afflictive emotion causes us the most difficulty?
2. Explain how we could employ the antidotes daily; and, how you might pause and reflect on others and how you can contribute to their well-being.

Group Exercise

Listening to What You Speak

Speaking into the air is like pronouncing your blessings. Put the voice to your sincere feelings by:

1. Sharing your appreciation for the group study and those who make it a possibility for you;

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2. Sharing your appreciation for other group members who participate and contribute to this experience;
3. Sharing your appreciation for the peer-educators and their awesome and tireless preparations for the group sessions;
4. Speaking good things about people around you, like your cellie or one of the security officers (or someone who has recently harmed you).

Suggested Closing Dedication

May our resolve to become more virtuous people be a blessing to all those that live around us. And, in turn, may they pick up the moralistic vibe and spread it even further.

Chapter 8 – The Ethic of Compassion

Key Concept #1

Compassion: The quality of compassion sprouts from our innate sense of empathy; which, can be developed without limit. Our compassion can become so sensitive that whenever we encounter suffering we get overwhelmed by a feeling of responsibility toward those in pain. That’s really compassionate! While this level of “great compassion” serves as a model to inspire us, it is not necessary to attain this level in order to lead an ethically wholesome life.

Questions for Key Concept #1

1. Can you recall a moment when you have experienced a strong sense of empathy for what someone was going through? How did it make you feel?
2. How can an offender who is taught to be selfish achieve this “Great Compassion” spoken of by the Dalai Lama?

Key Concept #2

Balance: The Dalai Lama uses the term *equanimity* to relate how we can extend compassion equally to all beings without reservation or prejudice. If we reserve our ethical conduct for only those we feel close to, we neglect our responsibility toward the rest of humanity. One of the reasons we extend our compassion to those outside our circle of immediate associates is because those people who fall within our categories of friend, stranger, and enemy are subject to change. A friend one day might quickly become an enemy the next, or visa versa. Compassion based on equanimity provides a much more solid basis for our relationships. In an effort to develop true compassion, we must struggle against our tendency to be partial. Moreover, being balanced in how we offer our compassion toward others helps us maintain the same level of intimacy with our nearest companions. Ensuring equality with our compassion nurtures our conduct into great compassion.

Questions for Key Concept #2

1. Do we place boundaries on our circle of compassion? Guards, fellow offenders?
2. Why would someone be left out of your circle of compassion?

Key Concept #3

Self-interest: Does commitment to this ideal of compassion mean that we must abandon our own interests? No! What happens in actuality is that while we are looking out for the welfare of others, we are also simultaneously looking out for our own best interests. That is the amazing thing about how compassion really works. If qualities such as love, patience, tolerance, and forgiveness are what brings about happiness, and if compassion is both the source and fruit of these qualities, then the more we are compassionate the more we provide for our own happiness. The ethic of compassion builds the necessary foundation and motivation for both restraint and the cultivation of virtue.

Questions for Key Concept #3

1. Does showing genuine concern for others (compassion) in our environment make us weak?

2. In what way does your own interest conflict with asserting compassion? How does it serve our interests by curtailing our self-interest?

Key Concept #4

Barriers to Compassion: A common objection to our goal of compassionate living is that we must take on the suffering of others, lumping a whole lot of suffering onto ourselves. But, this is not how things actually play out. If our ideal of love and compassion seems too high and difficult, consider some of the alternative methods for seeking happiness: violence and aggression? One usual problem that people encounter while developing their compassion is burnout. Sometimes our continuing efforts at compassion can get a bit too much to handle. If this happens, it's best to disengage for a while, regroup, and make a deliberate effort to re-energize our sensitivity to others' suffering. Despair is not an option! It is, rather, the ultimate failure. Perseverance is the key. The bottom line: compassion and love are not luxuries. As the source of both inner and outer peace, these qualities are essential to the continued survival of humanity.

Questions for Key Concept #4

1. What are some barriers we face in our environment that keeps us from asserting compassion?
2. How can we overcome these barriers?

Group Exercise

The "I" Game Rules

1. If you use the word "I" in regular conversation, you are subject to losing one of your "candy bars" if challenged.
2. Rule One: Does not apply when you are reading the "I" word from something written, only when spoken in regular conversation.
3. When you are challenged by another group member for saying "I" (the selfish word) you must give one of your candy bars (only in the imaginary sense) to the challenger while extending compassion to him or her.
4. If you lose **all** of you candy bars, you must say, "My thoughts have been about myself" aloud before the group.
5. At any time, you may voluntarily give one of your "candy bars" to some other member, including someone who has lost all of theirs, expecting nothing in return.
6. The word "I" is not always used with a selfish connotation, for example: I want to give you a "candy bar." For the purpose of this exercise, however, the substitute language for expressing "I" is "the selfish word." When challenging say, "You said the selfish word."
7. The purpose of the exercise is to disclose to our own awareness how often we might think about self and express ourselves using the word "I," and how we might apply some of that energy to thinking compassionately about others' happiness and well-being (freedom from suffering).

Suggested Closing Dedication

As we begin to recognize the brilliance of balancing our distribution of compassion, may all our positive action bring benefit to whoever crosses our path.

Chapter 9 – Ethics and Suffering

Key Concept #1

Nature of Suffering: Multiple incidences of pain and stress pepper our daily life. Even on a seemingly pleasant day, there are still a few moments of irritation. Various forms of stress plague our existence and accumulate, or compound, on top of each other to create a general quality of suffering. This is simply a facet of the human condition. And, although our experience of suffering has one beneficial by-product—allowing us to connect with and share in each other’s humanness—we still, nonetheless, need to skillfully avoid those forms of self-generated suffering and lovingly embrace those unavoidable ones. Some avoidable forms are war, poverty, violence, crime, illiteracy, and sickness. Unavoidable ones are catastrophic disease, old age, death, unforeseeable mishaps, accidents, natural disasters, and changing conditions—even pleasurable experiences subside and disappear, leaving a loss.

Questions for Key Concept #1

1. Give your definition of suffering or name some types of suffering.
2. When you suffer what do you feel?

Key Concept #2

Cause of Suffering: The suffering we experience can be viewed from the perspective of understanding the operation of Karma (a Sanskrit word meaning “action”—every action created by the body, speech, and mind). Karma is an active force, influencing future events that affect us directly. We create our own karma, personally. Nothing is predetermined; each choice we make manifests a cause for every effect that we encounter.

Questions for Key Concept #2

1. What is your definition of karma?
2. Do you believe that your actions affect others around you or just yourself?

Key Concept #3

Experience of Suffering: We can do much to influence the degree to which we suffer. If we let all of life’s problems eat at us, our suffering may consume all hope for happiness. Instead of fretting over our discontent, we can turn irritation into an opportunity for building inner strength. Inner strength leads to acceptance, which opens our hearts and minds. With an open heart, we can take our troubles in stride and relate to others’ suffering with compassion. This shift in mentality actually causes a “freeing” effect and brings more peace of mind.

The Dalai Lama mentions that one of his methods for dealing with difficult situations is by reflecting on how all humans have a natural inclination toward affection, freedom, truth, and justice. Substantial spiritual gains—like wisdom and inner discipline—are usually made by entering the frontier of greatest difficulty. With such lucidity, our confidence, self-reliance, and courage grow and blossom, even while being fertilized by the muddy waters of suffering.

Questions for Key Concept #3

1. When we suffer are we alone?
2. Tell the group how you may have been able to shift your focus away from yourself to someone else, perhaps during a difficult time; or, how you helped someone through a tough time, and because of that, lessened your experience of suffering in turn.

Key Concept #4

Skillfully Responding to Suffering: Many times when we feel overwhelmed, we react by going into a panic, taking a holiday, or simply ignoring our troubles altogether. Approaches like this may bring short-term relief but, in actuality, our problems only go into hiding, waiting to confront us at some future date. Avoiding difficult issues never resolves anything. A more skillful approach, however, is to face situations directly through examining distressing problems, determining their primary cause, and then making an appropriate response. Even if this dredges up temporary pain, always remember that nothing in the realm of what we commonly experience is permanent. Everything changes given enough time. The key is to know that by understanding our painful circumstances it will lead us to lasting happiness.

Questions for Key Concept #4

1. What have you worried about in the last 3 days? Did it help to worry?
2. Is it possible to experience worry, anxiety, panic, and the like and not get carried away by them?
3. Are you someone who worries about things you cannot change? Do you think that you can approach suffering differently after reading this chapter?

Key Concept #5

Shantideva's Advice: The Dalai Lama finds the advice of Shantideva (an ancient Indian scholar-saint) simple and extremely helpful. For whatever difficulties that arise throughout our life, we must not allow them to paralyze us. Instead, apply reason to the problem. If a problem arises and a solution exists, we will find it eventually, so, there is no point in worrying! If the solution to our problem is not apparent there is no point in worrying ourselves. Worry can only make things worse. A better technique is to calmly and rationally seek out a resolution; or, do what you have to do to live with it. All situations change. Suffering can awaken our empathy, cause us to connect with others, and serve to increase compassion and love. Unfortunate events are both a potential source for increased negativity and equally, a source for spiritual growth. Which path we choose is up to us.

Question for Key Concept #5

1. What is your opinion of Shantideva's advice?

Group Exercise

Break into small groups of three or four members. Together devise a list of emotions that personally cause each member the most anguish. Share why we think that this happens. Reassemble and discuss the insights discovered with the larger group.

Suggested Closing Dedication

What we learned today about responding to suffering is crucial to finding happiness, for ourselves and others. May each of us become better shock absorbers of suffering which can only allow more beings relief from stress, tension, and pain.

Chapter 10 – The Need for Discernment

Key Concept #1

Ethical Discipline: For some people the word “discipline” has negative overtones due, in part, to several movie images of overbearing Karate instructors, or some other imposing authority figure. For ethical discipline, however, we should really conjure up a more self-empowering image. Self-discipline is something we all do when we recognize a genuine need: like when we must diet to lose weight for health reasons. If it comes down to us dying, we muster the necessary intestinal fortitude. Ethical discipline is important because it serves as our main method for evaluating opposing claims of one person’s right to happiness and another person’s equal right. If we ignore another persons right to happiness in the pursuit of our own, eventually subconscious guilt will tear apart any peace of mind we seek. Haven’t we all seen how selfish people become miserable in old age? Therefore, a disciplined restraint is called for in order to cultivate our own happiness and ensure that no harm comes to others in the process. This involves restraining ourselves in response to negative emotions while simultaneously fostering virtuous qualities like love, compassion, patience, tolerance, and forgiveness. When these virtues are present in our character, our actions will contribute to the well-being of everyone, including ourselves.

Questions for Key Concept #1

1. Is it possible to develop ethical discipline in prison?
2. Give examples of how you experienced ethical discipline in prison.

Key Concept #2

Ethical Conduct: For an action to be truly ethical, it must not be harmful. Placing any moral value on an action involves a good measure of discriminating wisdom: having the foresight to recognize potential outcomes and which course of action “ought” to be taken. An action can be moral in one set of circumstances, but not in another. Ethical conduct cannot be reduced to simply following some set of predetermined rules, nor can any action be judged abstractly apart from the fundamental question of happiness and suffering. So, how do we tell whether an action is ethical or not? By evaluating our actions according to four criterion:

1. Was the time and circumstances of the action appropriate?
2. Was any person’s freedom denied?
3. Was there, or will there be, any remorse because of that action?
4. What were the intentions behind the action? Were they wholesome or unwholesome?

If we are motivated by hatred, selfishness, or deception, our actions will have a negative impact, on both others and ourselves. We must use discernment continuously to guarantee our proper motivation.

Questions for Key Concept #2

1. Can you think of an example where rules, laws, or codes conflict with each other or with the universal code of ethics, which seeks happiness as a goal?
2. Are there any rules, laws, or codes that bring about suffering needlessly?
3. Is all ethical conduct relative for the prison environment?
4. How do we decide personally what is ethical in any given situation?

Key Concept #3

Discernment: When we face an ethical dilemma, we need both critical faculties and imaginative powers. They allow us to discriminate between temporary and long-term benefits, to assess likely outcomes of our actions, and choose the greater good over the lesser. Ethical dilemmas are addressed through “skillful means and insight.” *Skillful Means* asks us to consider whether our action is motivated by compassion. *Insight* evaluates the dilemma in context and helps us choose the action that causes the least harm. We must use discernment constantly to guarantee our proper motivation, our broad-sightedness, our clear comprehension, and our compassion while maintaining impartiality.

Questions for Key Concept #3

1. Have you ever been “checked” by another offender or told to “check yourself”? What were the results?
2. Do we have a choice in all our actions? Were any of your actions mistakes?

Key Concept #4

Basic Ethical Laws: At times, some situations present themselves so quickly that there is not much time for discernment. In such cases, a decent level of virtuous character must be in place. Spontaneous reactions reflect whatever skillful habits and dispositions have been developed. Moreover, it is probably a good idea to have basic ethical principles or precepts to guide our daily lives. Almost all of the most helpful principles are shared by all religious traditions and humanist philosophies. For example, all agree on the perils of killing, stealing, untruthfulness, and sexual misconduct. Also, all seek to avoid hatred, pride, malicious intent, covetousness, envy, lust, racism, and senseless violence. Ethical rules teach people about what actions have proven to be constructive, thereby, saving everyone from having to learn morality, over and over again, through direct experience.

Questions for Key Concept #4

1. What are your basic ethical principles?
2. Is it possible to think about your actions before you act?

Key Concept #5

The Conduct of Others: We will never know all the causes and conditions driving someone else’s behavior. Therefore, it is definitely a better strategy to focus on our own habits and attitudes rather than paying too much attention to the faults of other people. Besides, it is hard enough to be mindful of our own conduct. If certain associates of ours repeatedly engage in unethical conduct, we may have to tactfully avoid hanging out with such people, in a skillful, non-judgmental manner. If this is not an option, we can strive to be true to ourselves and grateful for the opportunity to practice. We help by ensuring that our motives are pure and our methods skillful.

Questions for Key Concept #5

1. What is a skillful way to influence the conduct of other people without “getting in their business”?
2. What is your practice, as an individual, to sharpen your awareness regarding personal conduct?

Group Exercise

When ethics are relative (not laws or codes), there is the need for us as individuals to make discerning choices to resolve dilemmas regarding our responses, which can and do affect others. In a group discussion, select from the following examples of ethical dilemmas and propose their resolutions:

Regarding authority figures: An officer orders you to do something that you believe is not reasonable. You believe that you have the right to challenge any order based on its reasonableness, and you expect that prison official to give you an answer, which explains the reason for the order. Instead, the officer threatens you with a disciplinary case. What do you do?

Discrimination: You tend to discriminate against others. You have created in your mind, places for certain people to be in. You put them in their place even though this “place” does not exist for them since it’s only in your mind. To justify your thinking about how you stereotype other people, sometimes into a group they don’t belong to, you say to yourself that you are raising your standards, avoiding bad company, or choosing your friends. How can you avoid discriminating against others?

Suggested Closing Dedication

May each of our contemplations on ethical conduct add to the betterment and well-being of everyone we meet. We offer this aspiration wholeheartedly and without reservation for the benefit of humankind.

Chapter 11 – Universal Responsibility

Key Concept #1

Universal Dimension: Each of our actions has a universal dimension. In some form, every act we perform affects the lives of our fellow beings and the environment. Everything we do has wider implications. None of us exists in a void. Thus, we can neither afford to ignore the effects of our actions on others, nor the planet.

Universal responsibility refers to the moral burden we all share toward each other and the environment. We have a responsibility to something more than just ourselves. Our accountability extends to a larger world. When we operate by this principle, our hearts connect with humanity and we naturally become more virtuous or ethically mindful. So, as those opportunities to be of greater benefit present themselves, we don't hesitate to make a difference.

Questions for Key Concept #1

1. Do we normally consider (or concern ourselves with) how our actions affect those around us, our community, and our world? How can we be more conscious of the “universal dimension”?

Key Concept #2

Unity of Community: When we elect to focus on unimportant differences, dis-unity tears people apart and aggravates suffering. Instead, why don't we simply take notice of how we are all essentially the same? All beings desire love, happiness, and freedom from suffering. By fully understanding this, we as communal beings naturally come together and form strong ties. Connections build communities. And, at no other time in the history of humanity have communities been so tightly inter-connected—in a global net, so to speak. Hence, it is incumbent upon all of us to reach out and support unification.

Questions for Key Concept #2

1. Do we, and other people throughout society, really believe that everyone **wants** to be loved, happy, and free from suffering? Discuss: Why don't we act like it? How can we focus on unity of humanity?
2. How do our expectations and judgments belie our recognition that all beings want to be free from suffering?

Key Concept #3

Cultivating Contentment: A good measure of contentment is crucial for social coexistence. Happy people make for a healthy society. Dissatisfaction leads to discontentment, which breeds such destructive emotions as resentment, envy, and greed. In such an atmosphere, aggressive competitiveness and excessive materialism begin to flourish, damaging relationships and the environment. We must all live in the world that we all create. Contentment, therefore, is not only a matter of ethics, but also survival. The Dalai Lama challenges us to seriously question those cultural values that focus too heavily on economic growth and turn us away from true happiness.

Question for Key Concept #3

1. Can we find contentment while in prison?

Key Concept #4

Honesty: Universal responsibility requires a commitment to honesty. Being honest means aligning our actions with what we stand for. Professing certain beliefs and then acting contrary to those beliefs causes others to be suspicious and leery of us. When we abide by a policy of truthfulness, we help to reduce the level of misunderstanding, doubt, and fear throughout society. Furthermore, when being truly honest, it means that we have an obligation to combat injustice skillfully—to be “engaged” citizens. If we hold our tongues and don’t speak out because we fear what others may think, then our silence is a form of dishonesty. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

Questions for Key Concept #4

1. Is there a time when being less honest seems to work well? And why?
2. Is lying to ourselves unethical?

Key Concept #5

Working Together: As individuals, communities, and nations, we definitely need each other to solve our problems. None of us can get much accomplished by him- or herself alone. Teamwork is called for! When it comes to conflict, we must find non-violent solutions. We need to move toward universal acceptance of human rights and tolerate diversity. Today, more than ever, we are obligated, both individually and collectively, to consider the wants, desires, and needs of all beings. Each one of our actions has ramifications for others and being conscious of that fact lays the foundation for genuine peace and harmony. This can occur by embracing the practice of universal responsibility, which allows us to move beyond our usual tendency toward violence and war as a means for resolving our differences.

Question for Key Concept #5

1. How can we promote more non-violent conflict resolution? Discuss: How do we cultivate better ways of “getting along”?

Group Exercise for KC #5

Break into small groups of three or four members. Discuss concrete and realistic ways of developing harmony (working together) in our prison environment. Consider what we can do individually and collectively. Make a list of your ideas and suggestions. Elect a spokesperson for your group.

Reassemble into the larger group. Each spokesperson should stand before the group, in turn, and share their group’s list.

Suggested Closing Dedication

By the power of our positive contribution, may anyone connected to us receive the wholesome reverberations of our virtuous thoughts.

Chapter 12 – Levels of Commitment

If we agree with the Dalai Lama’s premise that universal responsibility lays the foundation for both personal happiness and social harmony, we must begin to integrate more compassion into our daily lives. This involves putting ethical principles into action. But **how much** is required? What level of commitment is needed to bring **enough** ethical conduct and compassion into one’s life?

Key Concept #1

Begin where we can: It is not necessary to radically change our lives or adopt some super-ethical vocation in order to cultivate more compassion. We do not have to become a Gandhi, a Martin Luther King, or a Dalai Lama to be a virtuous person; we can start as the people we are right at this moment. At first, we can consciously make small gestures of kindness and then grow from there. Steadfast compassion only develops over time. So, we begin where we are and do as much as we can, when we can.

To do this effectively, we need to align our compassionate motivation with what we say and do. For example, we may try to greet the guards with a courteous “Good morning!” or pick up some trash in the dayroom. We need not make a show of our considerate act. Maybe we could organize a letter campaign for political prisoners; or, become an activist for some larger social issue. Perhaps, as offenders, we can conduct our lives in constructive ways: handling our business fairly, speaking with humility, and being a beacon of understanding. Sometimes, it’s the subtle differences that count the most.

Questions for Key Concept #1

1. In what ways (either obvious or subtle) can we start to use more compassion in our daily lives?
2. While in prison, what can we do to be of service to others? Discuss: The different levels—prison, community, society, and the world.

Key Concept #2

Not too much: Whatever sacrifices we make, whatever kindness we allot to others must be done freely by choice and within reason—voluntarily and in moderation. Practical limitations should be set, overextending our compassion to others and neglecting ourselves would not work. Nevertheless, without giving away all our time, energy, and belongings, we should still give until it “hurts good.”

Even the Dalai Lama admits to retaining a few of his expensive wristwatches instead of selling them to build huts for the poor. His testimony demonstrates how each of us has to start with our current circumstances and make the changes we are capable of now. At the same time, we must never forget to check for any inconsistencies between our principles and our actual behaviors. Our best intentions should synchronize with our actions. Realistically, we cannot force ourselves to become infinitely compassionate in one day, one week, or even one year; we take the steps we can, how we can.

Questions for Key Concept #2

1. Why must we be realistic with our compassion?
2. In what ways can we live more moderately, conserving what we do get?

Group Exercise for KC #2

Break into small groups of three members. Develop a quick skit which conveys a prison situation (probably something negative) and then show how compassion can be interjected into that situation to help. Reassemble into the larger group and then, in turn, present each skit or short play.

Suggested Closing Dedication

May our compassion grow strong roots and be a cause for resounding happiness to abound throughout the world.

Chapter 13 – Ethics in Society

Social policy is supposed to serve humanity. Therefore, it stands to reason that a good “sense of compassion” needs to inform the establishment of such standards. This involves everyone! As more of us recognize the importance of selfless “concern for others,” we empower ourselves to effect positive social change. In this chapter (and the following two), the Dalai Lama addresses several areas of social significance: education, the media, the natural environment, politics and economics, peace and disarmament, and inter-religious harmony. He invites us to consider his views and think about how we can better mesh social standards and policy with our own personal commitment to ethical conduct, universal responsibility, and compassion.

Key Concept #1

Education: Regrettably absent from our modern educational system is any substantial ethics training. The moral “education” was primarily, for the most part, attended to by religious institutions. However, as the influence from such organizations declined over time, secular education was left to pick up the slack, which it has not done. Thus, children are being reared to have rote knowledge without compassion. Many of us, in fact, are a direct by-product of this situation. To counteract this trend, the Dalai Lama offers several suggestions like: educating children to consider the universal dimension of their actions and build on their natural feelings of empathy; taking measures to ensure that parents and teachers lead by example with principled, disciplined and compassionate behavior; focusing on social issues from the perspective of collective survival; and eliminating all perpetuation of narrow-minded, intolerant, nationalistic, and bigoted mentalities. Even we adults probably need a good dose of “re-education” ourselves.

Questions for Key Concept #1

1. Do older “convicts” have any educational responsibility to those offenders new to the system?
Discuss: How to lead by example!
2. What sort of constructive and ethical education should we have received, or now be receiving, from society?

Group Exercise for KC #1

Break into small groups of three or four members. Discuss: What sort of healthy, constructive, and ethical education should we have received as children? Offer subjects that should have been taught and skills that we should have acquired. Is that any different from what we should be learning now in prison? Make a list of the ideas, techniques, and skills that need to be learned in order for us to become more ethical beings. Elect a spokesperson from your group to present the list.

Reassemble into the larger group and then, in turn, present each list.

Key Concept #2

The Media: At no other time in history has the media been so influential to so many people. It is definitely the “Information Age.” With the vast amount of data, messages, and images floating around the world, there comes a huge responsibility for both the producers of it and the consumers. Producers need to be

held accountable for what they offer the public; and, consumers need to hold themselves accountable for what they accept. All of us must be discerning enough to not allow ourselves to be “played” by the media. We accomplish this by keeping a critical eye on what we are spoon-fed by news agencies, advertisers, and movie moguls. We should look to see whether or not information is ethically wholesome and reject those messages that lead to indifference, hardening of our hearts, or lack empathy. Our relationship with the media cannot be taken lightly.

Questions for Key Concept #2

1. What role of responsibility do we play when interacting with the media—T.V., radio, newspapers, and magazines?
2. What impact does so much sex and violence have in our lives?

Key Concept #3

The Natural Environment: The natural world is our home; therefore, it is in our best interests to look after it. The Dalai Lama suggests that we develop methods of manufacturing that do not harm ecosystems, recognize the universal dimension of our actions and take the time, both individually and collectively, to exercise restraint and tone down our acquisitive lifestyles. Both education and the media must play an active role in fostering attitude changes in corporate entities and individuals.

Questions for Key Concept #3

1. What sorts of action can we take to protect the environment?
2. How can we be less exploitive of our prison resources?

Key Concept #4

Politics and Economics: In prison, we are fairly separated from the political process. The closest we get is playing “office politics” at our unit jobs. In this regard, the Dalai Lama would suggest that we avoid petty games and learn to build more accord between our co-workers. As it relates to economics, we have our own “underground prison economy” to contend with. No matter how we conduct our “business,” there still exists an interdependent aspect to our financial dealings. How can we exchange items and services in a fairer manner? If we operate from a compassionate nature, our commercial transactions will come to reflect better human values. Our challenge is to find better ways of cooperation, wherein our humanity is acknowledged and the rights of all are respected.

Questions for Key Concept #4

1. How can we work to understand our competitive nature? Or, maybe just counterbalance it?
2. How can we conduct our “prison business”—participating in the underground prison economy—more ethically?

General Social Question for Fun

1. How can we align our social policies with our commitment to ethical conduct, universal responsibility, and compassion?

Suggested Closing Dedication

Considering all the positive discussion we have had today, we offer up any beneficial energy to those in our immediate environment. May it ripple out to encompass all beings.

Chapter 14 – Peace and Disarmament

Key Concept #1

Violence: A basic quality of violence is that it begets more violence. Arguments turn into fights, fights become riots, riots rage into battles, and battles escalate into all out war. All acts of violence spread tension, stress, and anxiety within their immediate proximity. This is why the Dalai Lama says that “where there is violence, there is always and inevitably suffering.” In prison, unfortunately, violence happens to be an accepted form of conflict resolution. Overt acts of disrespect can provoke a physical attack. Much of the time, offenders seem ever so quick to execute an assault at the slightest perceived provocation. Violence makes prison an intensely traumatic environment.

Questions for Key Concept #1

1. At times, prison can be rather violent. What do we think are the underlying causes of this? The really deep down causes?
2. How does each of us personally deal with violence?

Key Concept #2

Nature of Peace: We must clearly recognize the distinction between peace as an absence of violence and peace as a state of tranquility founded on the deep sense of security that arises from understanding each other, tolerating different points of view, and respecting others’ rights. Real peace is something more profound than a fragile standoff based on the fear of mutually guaranteed harm—like what happens between two rival gangs. Real peace rests in the hearts of content individuals. When people know true happiness, fear and violence will disappear from the world.

Questions for Key Concept #2

1. Is the world without violence possible? Why or why not? Where does it get us if we believe in one way over another?
2. How could the prison environment be more peaceful? Tranquil?

Group Exercise for K C #2

Break into small groups of three or four members. With true rehabilitation in mind, design a modern and more peaceful and more productive prison. Make drawings of buildings, list policy guidelines (both for inmates and guards), describe programs, and offer any other outlandish (but practical) beneficial ideas. Elect a spokesperson for the group.

Reassemble into the larger group and then, in turn, present the designs.

Key Concept #3

Peace Starts with the Individual: Violence and peace are dependant on us; we make both. It is, therefore, totally left up to us which one we choose to create. Peace can only be achieved by disciplining our responses to unwholesome thoughts and destructive emotions; and, by cultivating certain virtuous qualities: generosity, truthfulness, patience, tolerance, loving-kindness, compassion, and wisdom. This is often difficult because we usually encounter so many opposing forces pulling against us. Forces like the

idolization of violence in society. Ponder for the moment all the money invested in promoting football, WWE wrestling, and the most recent action film. Of course any change toward more rational and compassionate social values cannot be dictated or mandated from the outside, substantial positive change must occur from the inside.

Questions for Key Concept #3

1. We have been conditioned to glamorize violence, how do we break free from the stranglehold it has over us?
2. Why is it important to foster inner peace before trying to change the world?

Key Concept #4

Ethics Monitor: Even though real change begins internally, we must still make efforts to help promote such change externally. This involves learning to talk amongst ourselves in a spirit of reconciliation and compromise. It might be a good idea to establish an official body whose principle task is to monitor human affairs from an ethical standpoint. Their views and opinions could serve as the planet's conscience.

Question for Key Concept #4

1. Would it be feasible to create a peer ethics council? Discuss: Could it possibly have any authority? For the world, or maybe, on a smaller scale for prison?

Suggested Closing Dedication

Considering all the strife in the world, may our positive thoughts shower down upon all beings and bless them with relief from violence.

Chapter 15 – The Role of Religion in Modern Society

Key Concept #1

Religion’s Value: Although much of society is becoming increasingly secular, religion will remain relevant to the modern world. Religious belief is not necessary for either ethical conduct or happiness. The virtuous qualities of compassion, peace, patience, and tolerance are most often learned in this context. When properly employed, religion is an extremely effective instrument for achieving happiness. All religious traditions encourage a sense of responsibility toward others, provide support for developing ethical discipline, and teach concern for human suffering in a fundamental way. No matter what, religion will probably remain pertinent to humanity; there is a very practical use for it—creating better people.

Questions for Key Concept #1

1. Is there any social influence from religion on today’s cultural environment? Discuss: What impact is this having on humanity?
2. Can happiness realistically be achieved without some sort of spiritual fulfillment?

Key Concept #2

Inter-religious Harmony: Throughout history, twisted people have used their religious beliefs as a source for inciting conflict. Tension between varying religious factions is of great concern for today’s interconnected world where people with diverse ideologies and practices live right next to each other. One of the best ways of overcoming such strife is through the promotion of inter-religious harmony. How can this be encouraged?

The Dalai Lama’s method relies on cultivating understanding—identifying the obstacles that obstruct inter-religious harmony and developing ways to overcome them. One obstacle is ignorance of the other traditions. Mutual understanding is fostered by dialog, both by experts and by ordinary practitioners. As a means to build togetherness, the Dalai Lama suggests having different faiths gather together to pray for common good, or take trips to each other’s sacred sites. Such efforts would help people see that, regardless of belief systems, all religions are concerned with promoting happiness through the cultivation of compassion, love, patience, tolerance, humility, and so on.

Questions for Key Concept #2

1. Are there any inter-religious tensions in prison?
2. How do we foster respect for other faith groups? Build understanding?

Group Exercise for KC #2

Break into small groups of three or four members. You all are the event planners for a “Inter-religious Celebration Day.” Describe what sort of activities and events will be taking place, e.g., showcase booths, group prayer sessions, workshops, presentations, and dinners. Get as specific as you want. Make a list of all the events going on throughout the day. Elect a spokesperson to present your group’s ideas.

Reassemble into the larger group and then, in turn, present your plans.

Key Concept #3

From One “True” Religion to Religious Diversity: One major source of religious disharmony is the misuse of religion in the sense of using belief to reinforce one’s self-centered, personal views. It is much too easy for many people to label their religion as the one “true” religion and thereby separate themselves from all others. This obviously causes huge problems in having superiority complexes. How best do we resolve each unhealthy view that plagues humanity? Granted, it does serve a purpose for each practitioner to believe that his or her own chosen belief system is the correct path, but at the same time, it is also important to accept the reality that other religious views are just as valid as our own. The Dalai Lama recognizes that although he feels Buddhism works best for him, it might not be the best chosen path for everyone.

The Dalai Lama coined a slogan to help resolve this dilemma: “One religion for each person, many religions for humanity.” Diversity amongst various religious traditions is enormously enriching. There is no reason to find ways of saying that all religions are ultimately the same. This would water down each tradition. Though there are indeed many common spiritual qualities between traditions, there exist some real differences. If we are serious about human rights as a universal principle, it is essential to develop a genuine sense of religious diversity or pluralism. Rather than striving for one “world religion,” the Dalai Lama thinks that it would be better to have a “world parliament of religions” which suggests democracy, mutual respect, and diversity.

Questions for Key Concept #3

1. What do we believe is spiritually? Does everyone have to follow the same path as ours?
2. What practices can we develop to promote religious tolerance and respect?

Key Concept #4

Cautions About Religious Conversion: Adopting a religious belief will not necessarily make someone a better person. While the Dalai Lama agrees that it is fine to learn from other traditions, he also acknowledges that it is probably most practical to develop one’s practice within the tradition of one’s birth and culture. This avoids confusion between the different cultures associated with different religions. It is important to ask: “Am I attracted to this new tradition because of the essential teachings; or, is it because I find the rituals more fascinating; or, is it because I imagine this new tradition will be less demanding?” Conversion to a different tradition requires proper motivation for doing so. If a person does, after long and mature consideration, convert to another faith, it is important not to fall into the trap of criticizing one’s previous faith, in order to justify the decision to others—or to him- or herself for that matter.

Questions for Key Concept #4

1. Has any thought of converting to another religion crossed your mind? If so, what religion did you consider?
2. Must we follow a religion to become better people?

Key Concept #5

Practice of Religion Key to Value: Is it really healthy to argue the merits of differing traditions on the basis of “reality” truth claims; or, is it better to evaluate whether or not a practice is effective in each

particular case? Truly, we couldn't consider the effectiveness of a medical treatment apart from the effect on each individual patient. Religious teachings would have little practical value if they simply remained in the realm of intellectual curiosity as opposed to actually entering the heart of the practitioner and getting implemented into his or her daily life.

Questions for Key Concept #5

1. By definition, must there be only "one" truth?
2. Why is it important to have a "practice" for the development of our ethical character?

Suggested Closing Dedication

By understanding and appreciating the differences in varying religions, may we all relish and respect diversity. And, may the wholesome views generated today connect with the hearts of all beings.

Chapter 16 – An Appeal

In this last chapter, His Holiness challenges all of us to make each moment of our lives as full, productive, and meaningful as possible—even if we find ourselves in the disagreeable circumstances of incarceration. In order to do this right, we must fully comprehend that our very own happiness is directly proportional to the happiness we help bring about in others. If we can look outside ourselves and be more compassionate to all beings, we may just finally discover that lasting peace we all so desperately desire.

Key Concept #1

Compassion: All throughout this text, the Dalai Lama has been arguing that true, lasting happiness is based upon being as compassionate as possible for each other. Through acts of kindness, affection, honesty, and justice we not only help others but ensure our own benefit as well. Furthermore, by using compassion to its utmost, we make our lives more meaningful. Simply being compassionate is not dependent on any religious commandment or philosophical precept. Compassion is a universal, humanistic quality. When we put compassion in the driver’s seat of our lives, there is no doubt that peace, fulfillment, wisdom and happiness will be found.

Key Concept #2

Making Life Meaningful: A stable sense of purpose and lasting satisfaction comes from helping others, not from acquiring the latest material gadget or bouncing from one sensual pleasure to another. The Dalai Lama offers the following suggestions for finding happiness and providing life with meaning:

- Engage in spiritual practice acting out of concern for others
- Relinquish envy and let go of the desire to triumph over others
- Try to benefit others
- Welcome others with a smile
- Be straightforward
- Try to be impartial; treating everyone the same
- Try to treat people as though they were close friends
- If you cannot help others, at least **do not** harm them
- As you enjoy your visit to this world, help those who are downtrodden and cannot help themselves
- Try not to turn away from those whose appearance is disturbing, ragged, or unwell; try to never think of them as inferior to yourself

This short prayer by Shantideva, 8th Century Indian Saint, inspires the Dalai Lama in his quest to benefit others.

*May I become at all times, both now and forever
A protector for those without protection
A guide for those who have lost their way
A ship for those with oceans to cross
A sanctuary for those in danger
A lamp for those without light
A place of refuge for those who lack shelter
And a servant to all in need*

Appendix 1 – Insight Meditation

By Chaplain Terry Conrad CVCA

By taking some amount of time each day to sit quietly, allowing the body to relax and the mind to settle, we realize a more balanced view of our life and what we experience. When there is more space around our thoughts and feelings, we will be more likely to make better choices about what we say and do.

Find a comfortable place to sit, allow the back to straighten with the head balanced on the neck and shoulders. Can you feel the weight of your body on your seat? Can you feel your contact with the earth?

Take each of these inquiries slowly, one at a time. Put your full attention on each inquiry. Can you feel the way you are breathing? Is there any tightness or resistance around the breath? Scan the body, notice any tension, tightness or holding.

Notice that when you bring your attention to the tightness, the body naturally releases itself.

Can you feel the weight of your head on your neck?

On your shoulders?

In your back?

At your seat?

How deeply are you willing to feel?

Notice the body relax itself with each out-breath.

Honor whatever you feel without trying to change or transform anything.

Honor your experience without judging, telling a story, wanting to change or transform anything.

Notice how the sensations in the body come and go.

Notice how your thoughts and feelings come and go without your having to do anything.

Can you feel the way you are breathing?

Honor what you feel.

Appendix 2 – The Meditation on Love

By Chaplain Terry Conrad CVCA – Adapted from “Awakening Through Love” by Lama John Makransky

We’ve heard it said that love is the most powerful force in the world, but what does this really mean? For many of us, love is something that comes and goes, the feeling we have about someone else, the memory of a moment we shared with someone or the fantasy we have about something in the future. If we look a little deeper, love is the sense of connection that we feel with the people and things that are dear to us. Love is a way to identify what’s important to us. There is often a misunderstanding about love due to our tendency to use love in a selfish way, to define ourselves by how others feel about us or to manipulate others for our own sense of importance or self-worth. This abrogation of the power of love will only cause suffering.

Love is the lens through which we can view all of our relationships. What does this look like? What qualities do we experience as love? Love is understanding, patience, tolerance, fortitude, acceptance and a sense of openness and attentiveness. Love does not judge, criticize, have expectations or conditions, it holds no animosity or resentment but allows things to be just as they are. Love is interested, curious, joyful and compassionate. Love is both respectful and admiring even in the face of adversity, difficulty, illness and death. If we are to allow love to be integral to our life, then it must begin with the relationship we have with ourselves.

One of the oldest practices in Buddhist tradition is the meditation on love. Enlightened masters for thousands of years in all the great spiritual traditions have understood the importance and power of love. This practice has six parts; take your time with each part before moving on. This may take more than one session. Move on only when you feel you are ready.

1. The Benefactor – Begin by picturing a person in your life that has loved you unconditionally. This is someone that has cared for you, someone that you liked to be with. It doesn’t matter if they are living or not, whether you are still in touch with them or not, it is just someone that you know has loved you and wished you well. We call this person our benefactor. Imagine your benefactor sitting in front of you, looking and smiling at you.
2. The Wish – Picture your benefactor sending you the Wish of Love. The Wish of Love is like a prayer, it goes:
“May you be happy, may you have deepest well-being.”
Picture them making this wish for you. The wish looks and feels like a warm, radiant beam of sunlight coming from the heart of your benefactor into your heart, your chest, your whole body. Without getting involved in any stories about your benefactor, wondering where they are or what they are doing, focus on the Wish of Love.
“May you be happy, may you have deepest well-being.”
3. Receiving the Wish – Allow the warm radiance of the wish to enter into your being, to fill you with its nourishing, healing warmth. Your benefactor already loves you so allow the radiant purity of their wish to bring light and warmth into every cell, every pore of your being. Is there

any resistance or reluctance to your receiving the wish? Do not push this away or ignore it, instead hold any resistance up into the light of the wish, let it be illuminated and revealed by the wish. Ask yourself, "What is my reluctance?" "What is difficult about this?" "Is there any reason why wouldn't I want to receive the wish?"

4. Making the Wish for Ourselves – When you feel you have received the wish from your benefactor, begin to make the wish for yourself. **"May this one (myself) be happy, may this one have deepest well being."** Allow yourself to receive the wish from yourself by picturing the warm, light radiance move down from the top of your head, filling your entire body. Notice any resistance or reluctance to your receiving the wish from yourself. Hold any resistance up into the illumination of the wish; allow it to be bathed in the light of the wish.
5. Making the Wish for Others – Once we have received the wish, from our benefactor and from ourselves, we then make the Wish of Love for others. **"May you be happy, may you have deepest well-being."** Begin with your benefactor and send them the wish, picture a beam of light from you joining with the light coming from them. When you are ready, think of others close to you and send them the wish... move on to friends... people around you... people you don't know but know of... people in difficulty, sick, homeless. Think of others like you that are isolated from friends and family. Think of people you don't like. Make the wish for them all, for all beings. Why wouldn't we make the wish? Wouldn't the world be a better place if everyone made the wish for each other instead of holding onto petty negative attitudes, opinions and disagreements?
6. Dedication – Picture your benefactor dissolving into light... visualize all those for whom you made the wish dissolving into light... dissolve this light radiance into the radiance of your heart. End with the wish:
"May all beings be happy, may all beings have deepest well-being."

Appendix 3 – The Meditation on Compassion

By Chaplain Terry Conrad CVCA - Adapted from "Awakening Through Love" by Lama John Makransky

The ability for love and compassion are already within all of us, however, for some of us it takes practice to express these appropriately. The foundational basis of compassion is empathy, the ability to experience our own suffering, and to then recognize it in others. If we do not allow ourselves to experience and honor what we are feeling, then we will have difficulty knowing empathy and expressing compassion. This practice is based on a very old and reliable skillful means to help us to do this. Much like the Meditation on Love, we bring to mind people that have been our spiritual benefactors, individuals that have inspired us by their love and compassion for others such as Jesus, Buddha, any saint or great leader, your parents, or a spiritual teacher or mentor.

We begin by sitting in a relaxed way, aware of the weight of our body on our seat, how we are breathing. When you are ready, bring your benefactor to mind, picture them behind you and a little bit above you. They are smiling at you and sending you love in the form of the Wish of Compassion.

"May you be free from suffering, may you have deepest freedom."

Allow yourself to bath in loving and healing energy of the wish, like a warm gentle rain of blessings that soaks into your very being.

1. Allow yourself to experience the relaxing and releasing of any physical pains, tension or holding in your body. Feel the radiance of the wish soaking into your muscles, your bones, your organs, heart and brain. Breathe the wish into your lungs and feel it's healing, nourishing energy spread throughout your body.
2. Bring into your experience any worries, fears or anxiety you may have about taking care of your personal needs. Receive the wish into these feelings and concerns.
3. Bring into your experience any anxiety, fear or anger you may have about any of the people in or around your house or your pod. Are you concerned about what someone else says or thinks about you? Allow the wish to cleanse, purify your thoughts and worries about others and what they are doing or saying.
4. Allow your benefactors wish of compassion to saturate and rinse out any feeling of
 - i. Self doubt, regret, guilt or sense of unworthiness.
 - ii. Emotions of anger, blame, betrayal or disappointment.
 - iii. Bring the wish into any feelings of loneliness, sadness, isolation or hopelessness.
 - iv. Into any feelings of longing, feeling incomplete or addictive cravings.
5. Sense what it's like for so many others that have these same feelings, people you know or see everyday that have exactly the same feelings as you have. As you picture each person in your mind, send them the wish of compassion:

"May you be free from suffering, may you have deepest freedom."

Picture you benefactor, and anyone else that came to mind during this mediation, visualize them each dissolving into light, into each other, and into your heart. Experience the wholeness, the unity and completeness that we all suffer in exactly the same way, we can all receive the wish of compassion from each other. End by making the wish for all beings:

"May you be free from suffering, may you have deepest freedom."

Appendix 4 - Starting an Ethics Program

The awesome thing about this “ethics” program is that anyone can start one. No one needs to be some expert or possess a great teaching ability. It only requires a good measure of passion, desire, and a little luck in finding an Administrative sponsor (like a volunteer chaplain). A safe bet would be to enlist the unit Chaplaincy Department to set something up. The Religious Practice Committee in Huntsville has already approved the program. So, the only other factors needed are some eager offenders, a sponsor, and an available time slot in the chapel schedule.

Of course, who knows, an industrious person might be able to persuade the psychology or education departments to facilitate such a beneficial program. Just approach someone in the prison administration that would be open and willing to assist.

If any further information or aid is needed (like copies of the text *Ethics for the New Millennium*, study guide, or workbook), simply write an I-60 to Chaplain Conrad at the Stiles Unit Chapel. As an alternative, feel free to contact him through his prison ministry at:

Chaplain Terry Conrad CVCA
c/o Project Clear Light
2220 Postoffice Street, Suite B
Galveston, TX 77550

Once a discussion group has been started, that’s when the fun begins. Remember: nobody who chooses to participate in this program has to drastically change his or her life; we all start from “where we are” and progress at a reasonable pace. Quite honestly, though, most people discover that this program leads to personal change and empowers them in very concrete ways. All of us are capable of bettering our character and infusing more happiness into our lives, even while incarcerated.

Needed Material

- The primary source for guiding group discussions comes from the Dalai Lama’s book *Ethics for the New Millennium*.
- This “study guide” further supports group sessions and ethical character development by providing each chapter’s key concepts, corresponding discussion questions, and suggested group activities.
- The “Using Our Ethical Toolbox” handouts offer outside assignments for integrating ethical concepts into daily life.

Appendix 5 - Suggestions for Discussion Group

Facilitators

Although we initially envisioned the format of our weekly sessions as a peer discussion group, it quickly became apparent that skillful group facilitators were needed—those few who possessed the charisma, grasp of material, and speaking ability necessary to orchestrate lively discussions. Facilitators are quite a bit like being radio talk show hosts; they must provide background information to introduce topics, get exciting discussions rolling, and tactfully move participation along. Facilitators set the tone and bring the energy that stimulates discussion. In addition, every once in a while, facilitators may need to prod or encourage the comments from reticent individuals. Considering everything, being a facilitator is not as easy as one might initially anticipate.

Bringing It On

Group members respond to the facilitator's enthusiasm and passion. When a lull in the discussion occurs, facilitators must be ready to liven up the banter. When one member drones on and on for far too long, facilitators have to politely consolidate comments and then move forward with phrases such as: "Great example! What you're saying is 'X,' which is a good point, but let's see what others have to add." Of course, it will be the style and personality of the facilitator that keeps the group's exchanges jumping. Also, care must be taken to ensure that discussions stay on track and on topic. Above all, facilitators serve as conversation motivators.

Teaching vs. Leading

Please remember that the job of a facilitator is not to teach but to lead group participation. This involves choosing which issues to focus on, which relevant information to bring in, and which part of personal testimony to insert. Enough latitude exists, however, to help facilitators tailor their sessions in any manner which best conveys chapter concepts effectively. Skits, plays, poetry readings, or different group activities may be devised if it will help express ideas better. These guidelines are just that: guidelines. Nevertheless, experience shows that when the study guide format is closely followed, group participants feel more comfortable.

General Suggestions

- Not everything written by the Dalai Lama will be easily understood. Be prepared to explain esoteric terms and complex words. Have some resource books on hand, like a dictionary.
- Use key concepts and questions to springboard into relevant discussion, but do not stray too far from the main topic.
- Gauge the discussions to fit whatever time schedule is available. This may cause minor points to be skipped. If extra time presents itself, return to what was missed or expand on popular topics.
- Recognize that this program is about developing virtuous character over the long haul rather than quibbling over which specific actions are ethical and which ones are not. Try to avoid using detailed situations and people's names; no one wants to hear about being mentioned in some discussion group.

Appendix 7 – Sample Certificate of Completion

