Study Guide for

ETHICS FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

By His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Developed and Offered by the Los Altos Study Group

March 2004

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Preface

This Study Guide has been prepared by a group of six friends associated with The Dalai Lama Foundation. We have been meeting regularly since November 2002, in Los Altos, California. Each month we review a chapter of *Ethics for the New Millennium* and take it as the starting point for an in-depth exploration of ethics in our own lives.

Our intention is to make this Study Guide available widely, through the Dalai Lama Foundation, to anyone who might want to start such a study group with their friends or colleagues. We offer it in the spirit of sharing an experience we have found meaningful and helpful in our own lives.

This document is available for downloading from the Dalai Lama Foundation website at http://www.dalailamafoundation.org/studyguide

Our sincere wish is that this Study Guide serve as a support for many around the world as they strive to develop their own ethical practice and lay a strong foundation for their own happiness.

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Introduction to *Ethics for the New Millennium*

Ethics for the New Millennium is addressed to a general audience. It presents a moral framework based on universal rather than religious principles. It rests on the observation that those whose conduct is ethically positive are happier and more satisfied and the belief that much of the unhappiness we humans endure is actually of our own making. Its ultimate goal is happiness for every individual, irrespective of religious belief.

Though the Dalai Lama is himself a practicing Buddhist, his approach to life and the moral compass that guides him can be of use to each and every one of us – Muslim, Christian, Jew, Buddhist or atheist – in our quest to lead a happier, more fulfilling life.

According to the Dalai Lama our survival has depended and will continue to depend on our basic goodness as human beings. In the past, the respect people had for their religion helped maintain ethical practice through a majority following one religion or another. Today, with the growing secularization and globalization of society, we must find a way that transcends religion to establish consensus as to what constitutes positive and negative conduct, what is right and wrong and what is appropriate and inappropriate.

Starting a Study Circle

About Study Circles

The Dalai Lama Foundation supports the study circle model to support ethics and peace education in a setting that combines hope and inspiration with a sense of community and personal reflection.

We believe if we are to build a world in the twenty first century where every sunrise promises reduced suffering, increasing concord and more widespread peace, we must begin in a small way, at a personal, family, and community level. As we develop a stronger understanding and practice of ethics, we will influence whatever surrounds us, whether as a parent, an employer, a community leader, or a policy-maker.

Study groups are a proven format for making the vital process of ongoing study and education come alive. These groups offer a forum for honest and respectful interaction that helps us to practice ethics and nonviolence in a very tangible way.

A study circle is simply a gathering of friends who are interested in learning more about a topic and how it can be applied in their lives. You do not have to change your life and you do not have to commit to taking any major action. However, most people find that their study does lead to personal, internal change and invigorates them to engage in some level of action.

The great thing about the study circle format is that you don't need to be an expert to start or lead a group. Our hope is that you will find this Study Guide may serve as an inspiration and map to setting out on your own course of exploration with your friends and colleagues. This Study Guide reflects the experiences of one group of six friends who have been meeting for over a year. The fun comes in creating your own culture, proceeding at your own pace, strengthening your bonds with your study partners, and enjoying your own learning style.

Study Materials

- Our first course of study is based on the book *Ethics for the New Millennium* by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.
- To accompany the Dalai Lama's book we have developed a Study Guide that gives a summary of each chapter's key concepts, as well as suggestions for discussion questions and practice exercises.

Getting Started

- Gather a group of friends who are interested in studying together. We've found that a group of four to ten people is about the right size. Find a home or comfortable environment for meeting.
- Set a regular meeting time. We've found that once or twice a month is about right for most groups.
- Choose a date for your first meeting and send out the invitation with the Warm-Up Session assignment (see below).
- Order the recommended book for everyone: *Ethics for the New Millennium* by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.
- Download the Study Guide for *Ethics for the New Millennium* or include the link in your e-mail invitation.
- Set a pace that's right for your group. Reading one chapter a month was the right pace for the Los Altos Study Group. Even the short chapters sparked lengthy, thoughtful discussions. Your pace may be different. Remember to allow time between sessions for personal reflection and to practice putting the principles into action in your life.
- If you need help to get your study circle started, email us at studycircles@dlfound.org
- We'd also love to hear about the experiences of your circle and get your feedback on our materials and ideas.

Meeting Format

There is no right or wrong way to structure your meetings and you will naturally adopt a format that feels most comfortable for your group. Here's a sample format that's worked for us.

- Before the meeting, read the assigned book chapter, review the Study Guide for that chapter, and reflect on the discussion questions.
- We enjoyed bringing snacks and having tea and coffee available as people arrived.
- In order to set the stage for the conversation to follow, take a few moments to share your motivation for coming together. What is it that animates you, personally to explore this subject? What do you seek to learn? To share?
- Have the facilitator start by summarizing the chapter's key concepts.
- Lead into a group discussion based on the questions you've selected.
- Near the end, go around the room to share final individual observations and commitment to any personal practices or actions based on the material you've covered.
- Close with one person giving voice to your hopes for how your work together may be of benefit to yourselves, your families, community, and our shared world.

Warm-Up Session

We found it useful to have a warm-up session before we started reading and formally studying *Ethics for the New Millennium*. It helped tremendously to get to know each other, get grounded in our own ethics and set a tone and intention for our time together.

Pre-work

Prior to our first session, we sent out an e-mail invitation providing logistics, the Objectives of the group and the Assignment for the first meeting as follows:

Objectives

- Enhancing our understanding of ethics and applying this understanding to our lives and personal growth using *Ethics for the New Millennium* as a study text.
- Getting to know each other better and increasing our sense of connectedness as members of our community, of humanity and of the world.
- Better integrating positive ethical conduct into our own lives and thus, by example and influence, spreading the ethical revolution needed for a happier world.

Assignment for First Meeting

Our first meeting will be a chance to get to know each other and begin our discussion about the topic of ethics. Prior to our meeting, please reflect on the following and come prepared to share:

- As I ponder the term "ethics," what does it mean to me and how have I developed and changed my personal ethics over time?
- At this point in my life, what are some ethical issues/dilemmas I personally face?
- Bring a newspaper, web or magazine article that addresses a community/world ethical issue that is of concern to you.

Session

We opened by introducing ourselves and sharing our hopes and intentions for the study circle.

We then addressed the questions from the pre-work. Also, before embarking on our own exploration we found it useful to take a look at how the dictionary defines ethics (see following page).

We wrapped up with a discussion about study circles, facilitation and how we wanted to work as a group.

Definitions of Ethics

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

       The principal ethical theories are:

       1. Such as consider happiness to be the greatest good; these may be egoistic, as is usually the case with hedonistic and eudaemonistic 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. Intuitionism 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.

   iii. Moral principles, quality or practice; a system or moral principles; as, social ethics, medical ethics, professional ethics forbids him; the morals of individual action or practice, as the ethics of conscientious man.
2. WordNet ® 1.6, © 1997 Princeton University
   i. Motivation based on ideas of right and wrong [syn: ethical motive, morals, morality]
   ii. The philosophical study of moral values and rules [syn: moral philosophy]
3. The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition
   i. A set of principles of right conduct.
   ii. A theory or a system of moral values: "An ethic of service is at war with a craving for gain" (Gregg Easterbrook).
   iii. The study of the general nature of morals and of the specific moral choices to be made by a person; moral philosophy.
   iv. The rules or standards governing the conduct of a person or the members of a profession: *medical ethics.*
4. Dictionary of Religion and Philosophy by Geddes MacCregor
   i. 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 courtesy 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.
   ii. The adjectives ethical and moral are synonymous and philosophers who concern themselves with ethical problems have been sometimes 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 is good or bad. They also analyze what is to be meant by good and bad, right or wrong. Modern ethics tends more in the latter than in the former direction, 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.

Chapter 1 – Modern Society and the Quest for Human Happiness

Key Concepts

Issues of modern society. People, and indeed all sentient beings, have a fundamental aspiration to be happy and to avoid suffering. It is the Dalai Lama's impression that people living in modern materialistic urban societies are less happy and experience greater emotional and psychological suffering than those living in relatively poorer agrarian societies. It seems a paradox that this inner suffering is so often found amid material wealth.

Closer examination reveals a "link between our disproportionate emphasis on external progress and the unhappiness, the anxiety and the lack of contentment of modern society." People in modern societies have a greater dependence on machines and services with much greater independence/autonomy relative to other human beings. This creates a sense that "others are not important to my happiness and their happiness is not important to me." People therefore tend to relationships and human connection less and less such that the community and belonging that characterizes less wealthy rural societies is replaced by a high degree of loneliness and isolation. Additionally, our focus on growth and progress leads to competitiveness, envy and stress as we attempt to "keep up with the Jones's". Our basic desire for happiness is severely hampered.

Science as religion. Within this context, the extraordinary achievements of science and technology have caused it to replace religion as the final source of knowledge in popular estimation. Thus science stands beside, or in place of, religion for many people. There is a danger of inappropriate and blind elevation of scientific principles to an absolute status, without conscious reflection and thoughtful choice as to what is right or wrong, good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate. Science, business and technology surround us, yet they do not address the issues of how to lead a moral life and how to be happy – the inner dimensions that define and motivate positive ethical conduct.

Ethical problems. Many of the problems of modern life–crime, abusive relationships, addictions, divorce, and suicide–are fundamentally ethical problems. They differ from the sufferings of sickness, old age and death in that none of these problems are by nature inevitable. They are of our own making. As we strive to gain happiness and fulfillment via material gain, we limit ourselves to satisfaction at the level of the senses. While this may be enough for animals, it is not enough for our uniquely human cognitive, emotional, imaginative and critical faculties. Our inner dimension must be cared for if we are to "enjoy the same degree of harmony and tranquility as those more traditional communities while benefiting fully from the material developments of the world."

Discussion Questions

1. The Dalai Lama suggests that the desire to be happy and avoid suffering is universal. What is it you seek in your life …at the soul level?

2. Quote from page 7: "We find modern living organized so that it demands the least possible direct dependence on others."

   Name three ways this is true for you.

   Name three dependencies that *do* exist in your life.

   Reflecting on what you've shared, what do you make of this statement and how your dependence/independence impacts your life?

3. Quote from page 10: "Many people, believing that science has 'disproven' religion, make the further assumption that because there appears to be no final evidence for any spiritual authority, morality itself must be a matter of individual preference."

   What strikes you as you read this statement?

   What experiences come to mind as supporting or refuting it for you and others you know?

   What are the implications or results in our world?

   How have you tended to or ignored your "inner dimension"? What links do you see to the ethical problems in your family and community?

Practice Exercises

1. Develop a practice to attend to your inner dimension on a daily basis…for example journaling, meditation, prayer, daily reflection with another, a walk in nature.

Chapter 2 - No Magic, No Mystery

Key Concepts

In this chapter The Dalai Lama strives to relate ethics to the basic human experience of happiness and suffering in order to avoid the problems which arise when we ground ethics in religion, i.e.

- The majority of people today are not persuaded of the need for religion so coming at ethics through religion is limiting
- There is conduct which is acceptable in one religious tradition but not another.

Religion and Spirituality. To frame the exploration of ethics, the Dalai Lama makes a distinction between these two:

- Religion is concerned with faith in the claims of salvation, an aspect of which is acceptance of some form of metaphysical or supernatural reality. Connected with this are religious teachings or dogma, ritual, prayer and so on.
- Spirituality is concerned with those qualities of the human spirit – such as love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony – which bring happiness to both self and others. These qualities involve an implicit concern for others' well-being and can be developed to a high degree without recourse to any religious or metaphysical belief system.
- Religious faith demands spiritual practice. Spiritual practice involves acting out of concern for others' well-being and transforming ourselves so that we become more readily disposed to do so.

Identifying and Evaluating Ethical Problems. The Dalai Lama makes a distinction between two types of suffering – those which have principally natural causes and those of human origin. It is the problems of human origin that we are responsible for, and, because they are essentially ethical problems, they can be overcome. However, they can not be overcome by external methods such as legal systems or rules to address every ethical dilemma, but only by inner discipline and ethical restraint. The source of establishing binding, non-dogmatic ethical principles is the observation that we all universally desire happiness and wish to avoid suffering. Thus one evaluates the ethics of an act (deeds, thoughts, words, desires, omissions) as positive or negative by reviewing:

- the impact on others' experience/expectation of happiness
- intent
- the nature of the act itself
- motivation

Key among these is motivation, which in the Dalai Lama's formulation goes beyond conscious intent to include that which inspires our actions – both those we intend directly and those which are in a sense involuntary.

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

The aim of spiritual and therefore ethical practice is to transform and perfect the individual's motivation, in the most comprehensive sense, and thereby increase positive ethical conduct.

Discussion Questions

1. The Dalai Lama makes a distinction between religion and spirituality. What strikes you about these definitions? With what do you agree/disagree/differ? How is this distinction useful?
2. The Dalai Lama suggests the ethics of an act (deeds, thoughts, words, desires, omissions) can be judged by reviewing the impact on others' experience/expectation of happiness, the intent, the nature of the act itself and the motivation. An act which does harm or violence is potentially an unethical act based on the review of the other two criteria. Can you think of some of your actions that do harm or violence to people's happiness that you consider ethical? Unethical? Actions that impacted you? (page 29)
3. "When the driving force of our actions is wholesome, our actions will tend automatically to contribute to others' well-being. The more this is our habitual state, the less likely we are to react badly when provoked." React to this statement and discuss what you do in your life to make this more of a habitual state.

Practice Exercises

1. Adopt a daily practice in support of transforming and perfecting your state of mind, orientation towards others, and habitual motivation.

Chapter 3 - Dependent Origination and the Nature of Reality

Key Concepts

How we view the world determines our responses and behavior. If we don't understand phenomena, we are more likely to do harm to ourselves and others. The perspective in this chapter is based on the Madhyamika (Middle Way) school of Buddhist philosophy. It begins from a rigorous investigation, using logic, of how phenomena – self and world – exist.

Middle Way World View. The central concept, *dependent origination*, can be understood at several levels:

- Things arise dependent on causes and conditions – a clay pot or oneself.
- Things are made up of parts. Each part itself is made up of parts, ad infinitum. This applies to mental as well as physical objects. In the case of the mind, each moment of consciousness has a beginning, middle and end.
- The independently-existing object can never be found. Things are labels on a basis of designation.

What's the point of going through this analysis? How can it help us in our daily lives? There are profound implications, including:

- Our whole perspective changes, from a world of isolated entities to the world as an organism, in which we are as interrelated cells, working in cooperation to sustain the whole. Our connection to every other living being is not a matter of sentiment, or religious doctrine, but reasoned fact. That is how life is. Each of our actions, every deed, word and thought, affects others, for good or ill. This is true even of thoughts, and no matter how inconsequential.
- This type of analysis counteracts our tendency to see things and events in terms of solid, independent, discrete entities, and challenges us to see things and events less in terms of black and white and more in terms of a complex interlinking of relationships.
- Even the cherished self can not be found to exist in a concrete way; we come to see that the habitual sharp distinction we make between "self" and "others" is an exaggeration. The precious self is "in the end, no more substantial than a rainbow in the summer sky."
- "…it is possible to imagine becoming habituated to an extended conception of self wherein the individual situates his or her interest within that of others' interests."
- "Due to the fundamental interconnectedness which lies at the heart of reality, your interest is also my interest."

Not Nihilism. The fact that nothing exists independently does *not* imply that ultimately nothing exists at all, or that reality is just a projection of the mind. Such a misunderstanding would undermine a sense of ethics. The implication of dependent origination is the opposite: to provide a firm support for a discourse of ethics. The reason is that "…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."

Discussion Questions

1. At a recent talk at Stanford, one of the panelists said, "I know what it means to identify with my country, but I have no idea what it means to identify with humanity as a whole." When you think of yourself, where do you "draw the line" between yourself and the world? Do you think of yourself primarily as an individual? A member of a family? A member of your country? A citizen of the world?
2. Is the life of a Nigerian worth the same as the life of an American? Why, or why not? Is it possible, or desirable, to feel that each life is of equal value, and act accordingly?
3. The word "karma" has come into casual usage, along with phrases like "what goes around comes around". Do you think cause and effect applies to everything in life, or just the physical world? In your view, do thoughts have effects? What would an example be? How could one know what effect a given thought might have?
4. If everything really works according to laws of cause and effect, why do bad things happen to good people, and vice versa?
5. Think of something in the last week that was a source of upset, suffering, worry, or confusion. How might looking at the situation and players from the Middle Way perspective change how you feel about it, and close off or open more possibilities for dealing with it?
6. The Dalai Lama says, "Due to the fundamental interconnectedness which lies at the heart of reality, your interest is also my interest." How does this square with the commonsense view that some situations have winners and losers? Is it an idealistic view of how things should be, or is it really how things are?
7. What is an experience you've had in which you most deeply and vividly felt that the interests of yourself and another were truly aligned?
8. In this chapter the Dalai Lama presents a viewpoint explicitly based on Buddhist philosophy. This school of philosophy involves discussions that can get into highly technical, involved arguments. In a book that claims to be secular, not based on religion at all, why do you think the Dalai Lama gives such a central place to this philosophy?

Practice Exercises

1. Each day pause and think about situations when you were aware of the interconnectedness with others and the impact of your thoughts, words and deeds on the living organism – our world.

Chapter 4 – Redefining the Goal

Key Concepts

In this chapter the Dalai Lama considers the nature of happiness, what genuine happiness is, what inner peace is and how we develop it, and the relationship of happiness and inner peace to ethics and spirituality.

Nature of Happiness. Happiness is a relative quality, which we experience differently according to our circumstances, constitution, and upbringing. We use the word "happiness" to describe very different states in our lives, many of which are short lived, satisfying the senses only. Contained within them is the seed of suffering. A great deal of external suffering can be attributed to our "impulsive" approach to happiness, when we think of ourselves only and not of others. When we act to fulfill our immediate desires without taking into account others' interest, we undermine the possibility of lasting happiness.

Genuine Happiness. According to the Dalai Lama's experiences, the principle characteristic of genuine happiness, of lasting happiness, is peace – inner peace. This peace is rooted in *concern for others* and involves a high degree of sensitivity and feeling. If we develop this quality, we will be able to maintain a strong sense of well being even when meeting life's difficulties.

Inner Peace. Where do we find it? What contributes to its development? There is no single answer for where we find inner peace. We have to identify its causes and conditions, and then diligently cultivate them. The Dalai Lama says that such things as good health, friends, freedom to express our personal views and a degree of prosperity (flourishing mentally and emotionally) help contribute to inner peace. Other contributors to inner peace are:

- our basic attitude – how we relate to existing circumstances;
- actions we undertake in our pursuit of happiness – those that make a positive contribution towards it, those whose effect is neutral, those that have a negative effect on it.

Ethical and Spiritual Acts. The Dalai Lama makes a distinction between ethical and spiritual acts. Ethical acts are ones where we refrain from causing harm to others' experiences or expectations of happiness. Spiritual acts are ones having the qualities of love, compassion, patience, forgiveness, humility, tolerance, etc. which presume some level of concern for others' well being. It is these kinds of acts which provide happiness both for others and ourselves. Most of our happiness arises in the context of our relationships with others. Altruism is an essential component that leads to genuine, lasting happiness.

Discussion Questions

1. Think of some times in your life when you have described yourself as happy. What do you mean by happiness?
2. When have you experienced happiness as short-lived, satisfying the senses only? How do you relate to the Dalai Lama's assertion that it can contain a "seed of suffering"? Does that ring true in your experience?
3. Why can a great deal of internal suffering be attributed to our "impulsive" approach to happiness?
4. Is genuine happiness an *emotional state* or a state of *enduring well being*?
5. How is it you cultivate inner peace? Why is discernment necessary?
6. Describe a time in your life when something difficult occurred and you were able to maintain an inner sense of peace in the midst of it? What helped you do this? What made it hard?
7. The Dalai Lama says that *altruism* is an essential component of our actions and is the most effective way to bring about genuine happiness that leads to lasting happiness. Do you agree? Why or why not?
8. What does it *truly* mean to be altruistic? How do we practice this without taking on the role of "martyr"?
9. Describe a situation when you held others' interests above your own and felt genuinely happy and your suffering diminished.
10. What is the relationship between ethics and happiness? Between spirituality and happiness?

Practice Exercises

1. Talk with at least two people in your family, asking them what they think it means to be truly happy….even when the circumstances are grim.
2. Notice what helps you to cultivate inner peace each day over the next two weeks. Reflect on what you have observed and develop a more intentional practice that will cultivate inner peace daily for you.

Chapter 5 –The Supreme Emotion

Key Concepts

This chapter considers the nature of empathy, our innate capacity for empathy and kindness, and also for rage, anger, and large-scale evil such as murder. The Dalai Lama discusses the motivation for empathy and kindness, empathy as the source of compassion, the cognitive component of love and compassion, and practices to expand and deepen the experience of empathy and compassion.

Nature of empathy. Empathy implies a capacity to enter into the pain of another. The literal Tibetan definition of empathy is "the inability to bear the sight of another's suffering". Though some people may not exhibit empathy, it does not prove that the capacity for this quality is not present in them. Our appreciation of a kindness shown to us is a reflection of our capacity for empathy.

Feelings foster empathy. Kindness allows us to respond with more trust. Peacefulness even encourages good health. On the other hand, violence intimidates us. Those who feel threatened are not likely to harbor goodwill for those who threaten them. By nature we prefer life over death, growth over decay.

What happens when empathy is absent. What about those whose lives seem to be totally given over to violence – Hitler, Pol Pot, Stalin, Mao? Such people do not come from nowhere, but from a particular time and place. Their imaginative faculty plays a role and becomes the governing factor. Vision properly motivated can lead to wonders; when vision is divorced from basic human feeling, the negative potential cannot be overestimated.

Empathy and ethics. The capacity for empathy is crucial to ethics. An ethical act is non-harming. If we cannot imagine the potential impact of our actions, we have no means to discriminate between right and wrong, harming and non-harming. If we can develop our capacity for empathy, we will become more sensitive to harming behavior and less likely to do harm.

Developing compassion. Reason plays a big role in empathy and compassion. When we apply our mental faculties to our feelings of empathy, we can enhance it and transform it into love and compassion. The Tibetan translation of "compassion" contains elements of love, affection, kindness, gentleness, generosity of spirit, connection; it does not imply pity.

Through sustained reflection on and familiarization with compassion, through rehearsal and practice, we can develop our innate ability to connect with others. The more we develop compassion, the more ethical our conduct will be. There is no substantial difference between us. When we act out of concern for others, it creates peace in our own hearts and brings peace to those around us. Compassion is the source and the result of patience, tolerance, and forgiveness. It is all-important, from the beginning to the end of spiritual practice.

Discussion Questions

1. Thinking of yourself and those close to you, give some examples of empathy that you have experienced as giver and/or receiver.
2. What types of situations encourage feelings of empathy? What shuts down our capacity for empathy?
3. What threatens you and what is the impact on your empathy? When have you accessed empathy even when threatened? What helped you do this?
4. Can you think of an experience in your own life where you responded with empathy and it defused an angry or charged situation?
5. Can you think of occasions in which you responded with cruelty or hatred? What was the impact on you? Others?
6. What are the ways we contribute to world-wide calamity, such as genocide, wars, conflagration, human trafficking, violence against others?
7. Does everyone have the capacity for empathy? In what ways is it innate or developed? How can we enhance it in ourselves? In others?
8. How do you see the link between empathy and positive ethical conduct?
9. How does the transformation from empathy to love and compassion take place in you?
10. What is the difference between pity and compassion? What do they both feel like?
11. Which factors obstruct compassion? Which factors cultivate it?

Practice Exercises

1. Practice a random act of kindness. Note the results both in yourself and in others.
2. When you feel angry or threatened, pause and create the space to engage your empathy and imagine compassionate responses. Then respond.
3. Loving Kindness meditation practice.

Chapter 6 – The Ethic of Restraint

Key Concepts

Developing compassion requires a two-pronged approach of 1) cultivating factors conducive to compassion – love, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, humility and so on – and 2) simultaneously cultivating restraint relative to those factors which inhibit compassion and transforming our habits and dispositions to perfect our overall state of heart and mind.

Cultivating a habit of inner discipline is not just a matter of suppressing or denying negative thoughts and emotion or obeying laws and precepts. Insight into the destructive nature of afflictive emotions is necessary. True inner discipline is grounded in a voluntary and deliberate effort to understand ourselves, our emotions and our impact on others and out of that understanding to consciously choose our response with discipline and restraint.

Nature of emotions and mind/consciousness. As a metaphor for the nature of the mind, the Dalai Lama describes the water in 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." This observation that emotions and consciousness are not the same thing tells us that we do not have to be controlled by our thoughts and emotions. Prior to our every action, there must be a mental and emotional event to which we are more or less free to respond, though it may be true that until we have learned to discipline our mind, we will have difficulty in exercising this freedom. The mind is like the president or monarch and the emotions like cabinet ministers, some of whom give good advice and some bad. The job of the main consciousness – the leader – is to determine which subordinate gives good advice and act on it and which gives bad advice and not act on it.

Ordinary vs. negative emotions. The primary attribute that distinguishes ordinary emotions from those which undermine peace is a negative cognitive component. A moment of sorrow does not become disabling grief unless we hold on to it and add negative thoughts and imaginings. It is the stories we tell ourselves about an event that undermine our basic serenity. Rational fear may be very helpful in heightening our awareness and giving us energy to flee or protect ourselves. The more dangerous and negative fear is one that our thoughts embellish to the point of unreasonableness and which can totally overwhelm and paralyze us.

Nature of afflictive emotions. All those thoughts, emotions and mental events which reflect a negative or uncompassionate state of mind undermine our experience of inner peace. They are the source of unethical conduct and the basis of anxiety, depression, confusion and stress, all features of our life today.

Causes of afflictive emotions include the habit of thinking of ourselves before others, our tendency to project characteristics onto things and events above and beyond what actually is there and the seemingly unexplainable triggering that happens to us in the course of life.

Afflictive emotions rob us of our discriminative awareness, impairing our capacity to judge between right and wrong and to discern the likely outcome of our actions.

Afflictive emotions deceive us, seeming to offer satisfaction, e.g. of revenge or protection, but they do not provide true, lasting satisfaction. More often than not anger is an indication of weakness rather than of strength.

Afflictive emotions have an irrational dimension when our passions, strongly aroused, go to extremes and, for example, the individual once idolized now seems despicable and hateful, though of course it is the same person throughout.

Afflictive emotions are useless: the more we give in to them, the less room we have for our good qualities – kindness and compassion – and the less able we are to solve our problems. Negative thoughts and emotions undermine the very causes of peace and happiness. Consider the case of anger. As we become angry and think about the righteousness of our anger, we stop being compassionate, loving, generous, forgiving, tolerant and patient, depriving ourselves of the very things that happiness consists in. And anger tends towards rage, spite, hatred and malice, each of which is a direct cause of harm to others. When we become angry we lose all inner peace and, if it becomes habitual, others will simply avoid us.

Impact of negative, selfish actions. Negative actions produce a negative reputation, which makes others apprehensive and suspicious towards us, and eventually lead to the tendency to become quite lonely and miserable. When we act under the influence of negative thoughts and emotions we become oblivious to the impact our actions have on others. They are thus the cause of our destructive behavior both toward others and to ourselves. Our failure to check our response to the afflictive emotions opens the door to suffering for both self and others.

Process for countering negative thoughts and emotions:

1. First we must build our capacity to recognize afflictive emotions when they arise in us by paying close attention to our body sensations, thoughts and feelings, words and actions.
2. Next we must recognize the situations, activities and conditions which trigger these afflictive emotions and consider staying away from them until we can build up our inner resources and ability to restrain our thoughts and actions.
3. Then it is important to gain insight into our own negativity. This is a lifelong task, but unless we undertake it, we will be unable to see where to make the necessary changes. Continually ask yourself such questions as, *Am I happier when my thoughts and emotions are negative and destructive or when they are wholesome? What triggered afflictive emotions for me today? Wholesome thoughts and emotions?* Be like a scientist investigating how your mind works, and drawing the appropriate conclusions.
4. Finally, we must cultivate a strong habit of restraint in response to afflictive emotions. Keep in mind here the Dalai Lama is not suggesting denial of these feelings, but restraint. Restraint is a deliberate and voluntarily adopted discipline based on an appreciation of the benefits of doing so. This is very different than denial that suppresses emotions such as anger with a façade of self-control or out of fear of what others may think. Such behavior is like closing a wound that is still infected.

Ethical restraint consists in acts which take others' well-being into account. When we fail to restrain our response to afflictive emotions, our actions become unethical and obstruct our happiness. Ethical restraint recognizes that our interests and future happiness are closely connected to others' and asks us to learn to act accordingly.

Discussion Questions

1. The Dalai Lama provides two metaphors, lake with a muddy bottom and president with cabinet ministers, to distinguish mind/consciousness and emotions. What did you take away from these metaphors and how are they useful in understanding the ethic of restraint?
2. The Dalai Lama suggests the difference between ordinary emotions and afflictive emotions is a negative cognitive component. What do you think of this assertion?
3. Review the material on the nature of afflictive emotions and share what struck you, and/or what memories it sparked regarding your experience with such emotions.
4. What is your current state of personal insight and reflection in relation to afflictive emotions? What situations tend to trigger your negativity and how do you tend to respond – body sensations, thoughts, words and actions?
5. How is your inner discipline with respect to responding to negative thoughts and emotions? What habits and practices have helped you get this far in cultivating restraint?
6. What do you make of the Dalai Lama's distinction between denial of emotion and an ethic of restraint? Why is it important?

Practice Exercises

1. Make a list of those situations that tend to trigger your negative emotions and thoughts. Identify which ones you might remove yourself from as you build your inner resources for discipline and restraint.
2. On a daily basis, ask yourself the questions from the summary above to help you gain a greater understanding of your own experience of afflictive emotions.

Chapter 7 – The Ethic of Virtue

Key Concepts

An ethic of virtue is necessary to allow us to cultivate genuine happiness and inner peace. There is a saying in Tibet that the practice of virtue is as hard as driving a donkey uphill, whereas engaging in destructive activities is as easy as rolling boulders downhill. Through constant practice and familiarization, the experience of virtue becomes spontaneous and habitual.

An ethic of virtue requires consciously, actively and continuously cultivating and reinforcing our positive qualities, namely basic human, or spiritual, qualities. After compassion itself, the chief of these is denoted by the Tibetan word *so pa*.

So pa. Often translated as patience or forbearance, at a deeper level it implies courage, composure and being unperturbed in the face of adversity. It points to a deliberate, reasoned response to strong negative thoughts and emotions. *So pa* provides us with the strength to resist suffering and protects us from losing compassion even for those who would harm us. It involves a determination to not give into negative impulses and not return harm for harm. It is the means by which we practice true non-violence.

So pa should not be confused with mere passivity. When harsh words, strong stands or countermeasures are called for, *so pa* prevents negative thoughts and emotions from taking hold of us. It safeguards our inner composure so we can choose an appropriately non-violent response. We remain firm and courageous even if we are afraid. Thus our conduct is rendered ethically wholesome.

Cultivating *so pa*: In order to be able to access patience in difficult situations, one must practice it on a daily basis. One powerful way to practice is to reflect on the benefits of patience, which include:

- Reserving judgment, enabling compassion and giving rise to forgiveness;
- A developed reserve of calmness and tranquility that fosters relationships;
- Being better grounded emotionally which improves our physical health;
- The most powerful antidote to the affliction of anger (see other antidotes below).

It may also help to think of adversity not so much as a threat to our peace of mind but rather as the means by which patience is attained. Those who would harm us are our teachers of *so pa*.

Antidotes to afflictive emotions. An ethic of virtue also includes cultivating antidotes to afflictive emotions simultaneously with restraining our response to those afflictive emotions. The antidote for each afflictive emotion is its direct opposite:

- Patience opposes anger
- Humility opposes pride
- Contentment opposes greed
- Perseverance opposes indolence
- Spirituality and asking for help oppose helplessness and despair
- Giving opposes miserliness

An ethic of virtue requires we put the pursuit of virtue at the heart of our daily lives so that our actions become spontaneously ethical. We must habituate ourselves to the opposites of afflictive emotions even before those emotions arise. It is important to be generous, to be humble, to rejoice in others' good fortunes, to overcome our habitual tendency to laziness, and, when our actions fall short of our ideals, to maintain an attitude of regret (not guilt) with resolve for repentance.

Helpful daily practices include making a habit of concern for others' well-being, a short morning reflection on the value of conducting our lives in an ethically disciplined manner, and/or a short evening reflection on how we conducted our day.

> *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.*

Discussion Questions

1. Think of an example of *so pa* from the last six months. Share the story and how it relates to the definition and practice as outlined in the chapter.
2. Discuss your reaction to the suggestion that patience must be a daily practice to be available spontaneously in difficult situations.
3. What has helped you develop a practice of patience or *so pa* in the face of negative thoughts and emotions?
4. How have you proactively countered negative emotions with their antidote? What helps/hinders you from doing this on a daily basis?
5. Describe the qualitative difference for you between "giving to get" and "giving without attachment".
6. In what way does humility have positive or negative connotations in your life, your community, at work? What do you see as the impact on us and our ethics?

Practice Exercises

1. On a daily basis, pause and reflect on others and how you can and do contribute to their well-being.
2. Practice the antidotes daily. Choose one for each month as a focus.
3. Reflect daily on your conduct. In what way was/wasn't it ethically disciplined?

Chapter 8 - The Ethic of Compassion

Key Concepts

Compassion is based on the innate human sense of empathy, and can be developed without limit. We can extend our compassion to the point where the individual feels so moved by even the subtlest suffering of others that they come to have an overwhelming sense of responsibility towards those others. While this "great compassion" is an ideal to inspire us, it is not necessary to attain it to lead an ethically wholesome life.

Equanimity. If we reserve ethical conduct for those whom we feel close to, the danger is that we will neglect our responsibilities toward those outside this circle. The categories of friend, enemy and stranger are not stable. If our love is based on attractiveness, and we feel compassionate only to those on a lower social scale than us, our compassion is not stable. Compassion based on equanimity provides a much more solid basis for our relationships with others. So in order to develop compassion we must struggle against feelings of partiality.

Equanimity is not detached indifference. The essential challenge as we begin to extend our compassion toward all others is to maintain the same level of intimacy as we feel toward those closest to us. This is the ground in which to plant the seed that will grow into great compassion.

Self-interest. Does commitment to this ideal of compassion mean we must abandon our own interests? To the contrary, it is the best way of achieving our aim of happiness, the wisest course for fulfilling self-interest. Why? Because if qualities such as love, patience, tolerance and forgiveness are what happiness consists in, 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.

There is a common attitude that compassion is actually an impediment to success in professional life. But when compassion is lacking, our activities are in danger of becoming destructive. The ethic of compassion provides the necessary foundation and motivation for both restraint and the cultivation of virtue.

Barriers to compassion. If this ideal of love and compassion seems too high and difficult, consider the alternatives to seeking happiness: violence and aggression? Money?

Problems include burnout and "going through the motions." If this starts to happen, best to disengage for a while, regroup, and make a deliberate effort to reawaken the basic sensitivity towards others' suffering. Despair is never a solution. It is, rather, the ultimate failure. Perseverance is necessary.

A common objection is that the ideal of compassion requires one to enter into the suffering of others, thereby bringing suffering onto oneself. Remember, there is an important qualitative distinction between experiencing one's own suffering and experiencing suffering in the course of sharing in the suffering of others.

The bottom line: compassion and love are not luxuries. As the source both of inner and external peace, they are fundamental to the continued survival of our species.

Discussion Questions

1. Can you recall a moment in which you have experienced a strong sense of compassion? What moved you so? How do you relate to this strong compassion? As a form of suffering or joy or responsibility or what?
2. Take an extended look at where you draw the boundary of your sense of empathy and compassion. Family? Extended family? Close friends? Acquaintances? Colleagues? Company? Town? Nation? Poor people?
3. Who do you think of as justifiably outside your circle of empathy and compassion? Strangers? Democrats? Republicans? People of a different race? Abortionists? Murderers? Pedophiles? Hitler?
4. What do you make of the Dalai Lama's assertion that equanimity is the fertile ground within which the seed of great compassion can grow?
5. In what ways do you experience a conflict between compassion and asserting one's interests in the real world? In what ways do you see them as aligned?
6. Is compassion weak?
7. What barriers have you experienced to practicing and developing compassion? What motivates or helps you to persevere?

Practice Exercises

1. Once a week set aside time to expand your circle of compassion. Bring to mind an individual or group outside your boundary of compassion. Spend time cultivating a sense of empathy for them and their suffering and transform this empathy into compassion.
2. When your self-interest and compassion seem to be in conflict, use journaling to reflect on how the lack of compassion for others may be connected with destructive behaviors that will have long term if not short term consequences for you. How could restraint and cultivation of virtue be useful?

Chapter 9 – Ethics and Suffering

Key Concepts

In this chapter, the Dalai Lama discusses the types of suffering we experience, the positive and negative aspects of suffering, and offers ways we can alleviate it in our lives.

Nature of Suffering. In our quest for happiness we naturally and properly seek to avoid suffering, which lies at the very heart of our existence. It is a natural fact of life. Suffering also connects us to others and is the basis of our capacity for empathy. Suffering falls into two interrelated categories:

- *Avoidable forms* arising as consequences of war, poverty, violence, crime, illiteracy, and disease; and
- *Unavoidable forms* arising from problems of sickness, old age, and death. Other forms of unavoidable suffering include meeting with the unwanted – mishaps, accidents, and adversity – lack of contentment, and the phenomena that pleasurable experiences themselves tend to become a source of suffering.

Cause of suffering. According to Buddhist and other Indian religions/philosophies, suffering is seen as a consequence of *karma*, which is a Sanskrit word meaning *action*. It denotes an active force in which future events are influenced by our actions. Everything is not predetermined. We create karma ourselves. In everything we do there is cause and effect.

Experience of suffering. There is much we can do to influence our experience of suffering. How we respond to it has an impact. We can be dispassionate and rational or fret over our misfortunes. We can accept it and use it to develop inner strength or be bitter about it. There is a clear relationship between the impact suffering has on our heart and mind and our practice of inner discipline.

The degree to which suffering affects us is largely up to us. Suffering is magnified by self-absorption. If we let a problem engulf us, we suffer. If we look at the problem from a distance, we will see it in relation to other things. It may help to compare the problem with similar or worse events others or we have experienced. If we shift our focus away from self towards others, if we come to see our problem in relation to others' suffering, we experience a freeing effect and more peace of mind.

The Dalai Lama mentioned that he deals with difficult situations by remembering that the basic human disposition toward affection, freedom, truth and justice must eventually prevail. The time of greatest gain in terms of wisdom and inner strength is often that of greatest difficulty. With the right approach, such as a positive attitude, the experience of suffering can open our eyes to reality. Our confidence, self-reliance and courage can grow and be strengthened as a result of suffering.

In response to difficult problems, we can

- Feel overwhelmed or go on a picnic, take a holiday, ignore it. These options bring short-term relief but the problem remains. If we avoid a difficult issue, we cannot resolve it. Mental and emotional unrest will follow.
- Face up to the situation directly; examine and analyze the problem, determine its causes and find out how to deal with them. This approach is preferred even though it may bring more pain temporarily. If we desire to confront suffering head on, we can remember that nothing within the realm of what we commonly experience is permanent. Everything that arises does so within the context of innumerable causes and conditions and is subject to change. The causes of joy and sorrow do not rely on a single source.

Shantideva's advice on suffering. The Dalai Lama finds the advice of Shantideva, an Indian scholar-saint, simple and helpful. Whatever difficulties we face, we should not let them paralyze us. Instead, examine the problem. If we find possible solutions, there is no need to worry. If there are no solutions, there is also no need to worry. If nothing can change the situation, worry will only make it worse.

Suffering can awaken our empathy, cause us to connect with others and serve to increase our compassion and love. Unfortunate events are potential sources of anger and despair and also, equally, sources of spiritual growth. The choice is up to us and how we respond.

Discussion Questions

1. What is your definition of suffering? On what is it based?
2. How do you view karma? What is your experience of causes leading to effects?
3. What is your normal way of dealing with a problem or difficult situation?
4. Have you ever been strengthened by suffering? If so, in what ways?
5. Has suffering ever connected you with others? If so, how?
6. Are you someone who worries? What results have you experienced?
7. In what ways, if any, will your approach to suffering change after reading this chapter?

Practice Exercises

1. Define a current problem in your life that is causing you to suffer. Examine it and identify its causes. Deal with it in a "new" way.

Quotes on Suffering

from His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama
Source: *The Path to Tranquility*, compiled and edited by Renuka Singh

Suffering increases your inner strength. Also, the wishing for suffering makes the suffering disappear.

Encountering sufferings will definitely contribute to the elevation of your spiritual practice, provided you are able to transform the calamity and misfortune into the path.

We learn from the principle of dependent origination that things and events do not come into being without causes. Suffering and unsatisfactory conditions are caused by our own delusions and the contaminated actions induced by them.

The truth of suffering is that we experience many different types of suffering. The three categories are: suffering of suffering – this refers to things such as headaches; suffering of change – this is related to the feeling of restlessness after being comfortable; and all-pervasive suffering that acts as the basis of the first two categories and is under the control of karma and the disturbing mind.

In dealing with those who are undergoing great suffering, if you feel "burnout" setting in, if you feel demoralized and exhausted, it is best, for the sake of everyone, to withdraw and restore yourself. The point is to have a long-term perspective.

We have been and are still going through endless suffering without deriving any benefit whatever from it. Now that we have promised to be good hearted, we should try not to get angry when others insult us. Being patient might not be easy. It requires considerable concentration. But the result we achieve by enduring these difficulties will be sublime. That is something to be happy about!

Chapter 10 – The Need for Discernment

Key Concepts

Ethical discipline. The word "discipline" often has negative connotations for people, because they understand it as something imposed against their will. However, in some situations we all accept the exercise of discipline voluntarily; for example, when we take a doctor's advice to avoid certain foods, we follow that advice even though it may be hard at first.

Ethical discipline is indispensable because it is the means by which we mediate between the competing claims of one person's right to happiness against another person's equal right. If we ignore other people's right to happiness to advance our own, this will lead to anxiety in our own mind and a sense of disquiet. Restraint is needed in the pursuit of our happiness, so that we do not cause harm to others in the process.

Ethical discipline entails not only restraint in our response to negative emotions, but also the cultivation of virtue, such as love, compassion, patience, tolerance, and forgiveness. When these qualities are present in our lives, all our actions will contribute to the well-being of all, including ourselves.

Ethical conduct depends on us applying the principle of non-harming. The moral value of an action must be discerned, not left to following rules or precepts. We must use our intelligence to judge in relation to time, place and circumstance, and to the long-term impact on the totality of all others. An action can be moral in one set of circumstances, but not in another. Ethical conduct cannot be reduced to following a set of rules, nor can any particular act be judged as right or wrong when viewed in the abstract, i.e. apart from the fundamental question of happiness and suffering. Ethical action is dependent on many factors:

- Time and circumstance
- A person's freedom or lack of it
- Degree of remorse
- Intention behind the action

If we are motivated by hatred, selfishness or desire to deceive, our actions will have a negative impact, both for self and others.

Discernment. When we face an ethical dilemma, we need both critical and imaginative powers. They allow us to discriminate between temporary and long-term benefit, to assess the likely outcome of our action, and to choose the greater good over the smaller. We need to consider the ethical dilemma in terms of the "union of skillful means and insight." *Skillful means* asks us to consider whether our action is motivated by compassion. *Insight* evaluates the dilemma in context and lets us take the action that causes least harm.

Discernment must be constantly employed to check our own motivation and ask ourselves whether we are being selfish or broad-minded, thinking short-term or long-term, compassionate to all or partial to our own family.

Basic ethical precepts. Sometimes there is little time to consider and be discerning, so spiritual development is very important. Our spontaneous actions tend to reflect our habits and dispositions. If these are unwholesome, our actions will be destructive. At such times it can be very useful to have basic ethical precepts to guide us in our daily lives. It is most important to keep others' interests at heart and in the forefront of our mind. Perhaps we can look to basic ethical principles agreed upon by all religions and humanist philosophy, including: No killing, stealing, telling lies, sexual misconduct. All religions agree on avoiding hatred, pride, malicious intent, covetousness, envy, greed, lust, harmful ideologies (such as racism). Sexual misconduct may be questioned in times of easy and effective contraception, but the precepts in every religion reminds us sexual misconduct, especially infidelity, can become obsessive leaving no room for constructive action. It is violent towards one's partner and can lead to other harmful acts, such as lying and deception, even murder in the case of unwanted pregnancy.

Responding to the conduct of others. We almost never know all the reasons and circumstances for someone else's behavior. Therefore, it is better to be aware of our own shortcomings rather than find fault with another. We can only correct our own conduct. If someone else repeatedly engages in unethical conduct, we may have to avoid such a person, but not cut them off completely. We may attempt to influence their conduct, provided that our own motives are pure and our methods are non-harming.

Ethical dilemmas of science and technology. Modern science and technology have given us the ability to prolong life. Each case must be considered in the light of reason and compassion, taking into account all circumstances. In situations of genetics and biotechnology, the principle of non-harming is very important. Genetic experimentation should not be carried out for fame or profit. We must proceed with caution and humility, be aware of the potential for abuse. The motivation for such work should be compassion, not utility. Considerations of utility can easily lead to abuse of some groups of people who are deemed to be less useful to society.

Cloning, animal experimentation, and the like are unwholesome actions, as is the inhumanity of factory farming. We need laws and international codes of conduct. But mostly, we need individuals to have an awareness of the harm these practices inflict on humans and animals. Scientists must be motivated by ethical restraint and compassion.

Discussion Questions

1. What is your response to the suggestion of the need for ethical discipline? How is this present in your life? Is it more chosen and internal or imposed and external?
2. What does the Dalai Lama mean by "wise discernment?" How is this present in your life?
3. How are we putting our own happiness above the pain of others, both individually and collectively? Give some examples.
4. Is all ethical conduct relative? How are we to decide what is ethical in any given situation?
5. Do we have a choice in our actions? Think of an action you took in your life that you now consider a mistake: Did you have a choice at the time? Was your action a considered choice?
6. What are some ethical dilemmas in science and technology that you struggle with? Is discernment always the same as a clear distinction between right and wrong? Is it sometimes the same? How is it different?

Practice Exercise

1. Think of an ethical dilemma you face, big or small. Evaluate the situation with the "union of skillful means and insight" and let that guide your actions.
2. Identify a social dilemma that you feel strongly about, and have a strongly-held position on. Delve beneath the surface to find different cases and evaluate the ethics of each case individually, bearing in mind that we must use our intelligence to judge in relation to time, place and circumstance, and to the long-term impact on the totality of all others. How does the principle of non-harming come into play in the issue you are considering?

Chapter 11 – Universal Responsibility

Key Concepts

Our every act has a universal dimension. Thus ethical discipline, wholesome conduct and careful discernment impact not only our personal realm but also increasingly impact the communal realm in an increasingly complex and interdependent world. We cannot afford to ignore the interests of others, nor the planet.

Universal responsibility means that when we see an opportunity to benefit others, we seize it. We avoid divisiveness and cultivate contentment. Our actions reflect our concern for the welfare of all beings and all creation. We reorient our hearts away from self and toward others, acknowledging the equal right of all others to be happy and free of suffering.

Emphasizing our essential unity. Focusing on superficial differences causes divisiveness and suffering. We can emphasize how we all are essentially the same. When we understand that everyone wants to be loved, to be happy, and not to suffer, concern for well-being of others arises almost by itself. Most people naturally understand this in relation to their own families and their friends. It is important to extend this understanding to other communities and nations, for these no longer exist in isolation.

Cultivating contentment is crucial for maintaining peaceful coexistence. Lack of contentment spawns greed and sows envy. It promotes aggressive competitiveness and excessive materialism. It is the source of damage to our environment. Contentment is not only a matter of ethics, it is a matter of necessity. We have to live in the world we create. The Dalai Lama challenges us to question the culture of perpetual economic growth, which fosters chronic discontent. Inequality among nations is a source of trouble for everyone. Even the rich feel the symptoms of poverty in their own lives.

Honesty and justice. Universal responsibility leads to a commitment to honesty, i.e. when our actions are simply what they seem to be. If we pretend to be one thing and our actions reveal something else, this causes suspicion and fear. When we commit ourselves to honesty, we help reduce the level of misunderstanding, doubt and fear throughout society. Universal responsibility and honesty require us to act when we perceive injustice. If we don't speak, is it out of fear about what others will think? Not speaking could be unethical if we are ignoring the wider implications of our silence.

Working together. As individuals, communities and nations, we need each other to solve our problems. We need to seek non-violent solutions to conflict and further the growing acceptance of human rights and diversity. We must remind ourselves that order imposed by force has, historically, proven short-lived. By contrast universal responsibility is based in the dynamics and functions of our inner world, of consciousness and spirit, of our hearts and minds. Today, individually and as communities and nations, we must consider our needs in relation to the needs of others, and evaluate how our actions will affect others. This is the foundation for genuine peace and harmony, and the path that will allow us to move beyond war and violence as the means we use to resolve differences.

Discussion Questions

1. Think of some recent actions you've taken and ponder their universal dimension – their subtle or direct impact on others and the world. Did you have this consciousness at the time you took the action?
2. What is the universal dimension of poverty, i.e. how do you feel the symptoms of poverty in your own life?
3. What is contentment and how do you know when you are content? Does being content influence how you are in the world? Explain.
4. How do you cultivate contentment?
5. What forces in your life promote divisiveness, competitiveness and excessive materialism? What is your response?
6. How can we, as individuals, press for equality and justice among people, communities and nations? What is your personal contribution?
7. How do you know when you are being honest?
8. Have you ever not spoken out for fear of group opinion? How does that feel? What is the impact on you, others, the situation? Have you spoken out against injustice in the face of adversity? What is the feeling and impact of that?
9. When was the last time you showed affection for the marginalized? Connected with someone marginalized and felt an essential human connection with them?

Practice Exercises

1. On the morning of each day of a week, write down one thing in your life for which you feel contentment. Think about it throughout the day.
2. Help one marginalized person in your community in some way.
3. Choose one community or world situation you care about and identify and adopt three simple actions that you will take to assume responsibility for your actions in relation to that situation.

Chapter 12 – Levels of Commitment

Key Concepts

The Dalai Lama notes that for those who agree with his perspective that universal responsibility is fundamental to both personal happiness and the creation of a better world, it is essential to begin to employ compassion in our everyday lives, to put principles into practice. But *how much* is required? What level of commitment is needed to bring *enough* compassion into one's life?

Start where we are. The Dalai Lama suggests that no one needs to radically change their life situation and adopt an entirely new way of life. We need not abandon our current work to live a peasant life like Gandhi or even to become a doctor, teacher or monk if this is not already our work. Each of us can begin with our current life situation and begin to bring more compassion into our every day living. We can start where we are, and do as much as we can.

The Dalai Lama notes that this requires doing our work with the intention to benefit others, and to live our principles. We can do this in small ways, such as turning off a dripping faucet or helping someone who needs assistance getting on the subway. Or, we can do it in large ways; if we realize that our work can cause harm to others then we may choose to change our work out of a sense of responsibility. In living our life, have the courage to be the responsible, honest politician, the businessman who considers the waste produced by their production facilities, the lawyer who fights for justice, the plumber who installs low-flow toilets, the Muslim who respects Jews (and vice versa!)

Voluntary and in moderation. Whatever we do for others, whatever sacrifices we make, should be voluntary and with a conscious understanding of the benefit of such action. The Dalai Lama strongly encourages those with wealth to view their resources as a tremendous opportunity to help others; sharing their wealth to alleviate suffering. At the same time, everyone cannot and should not divest themselves of all their belongings or live the life of a monk; rather we should move from where we are with moderation.

He notes that he owns several expensive time pieces that he could sell and build huts for the poor, but he has not yet chosen to do this. In sharing this story from his own life, the Dalai Lama shows how we can each start from our current life situation and make the changes we are able to in the moment, and how we can have compassion for ourselves as we recognize where our principles and actions are not yet aligned.

We don't need to try to become infinitely compassionate in one day or one week or one year; we take the steps we can, moving forward in moderation.

Discussion Questions

1. What are your thoughts about the Dalai Lama's view that different people may bring differing levels of commitment – that each person can start from where they are and do what is possible in moderation, rather than there being an absolute level of commitment required of all beings?
2. When you think about the work you do in the world, can you see ways that it can be done in service of others? How would your work or your attitude toward it change if you focused on doing it *in service*?
3. For many of us, the gap between how we act and how we want to act can sometimes induce feelings of guilt. How do you see the Dalai Lama's perspective on the levels of commitment in relation to the concept of guilt?

Practice Exercises

1. In thinking about your life situation, are there ways you can imagine to live with more compassion and universal responsibility? What would constitute "what you can do" at this point in your life to live more compassionately? If you wish, choose a specific way and put this into practice for a period of time.

Chapter 13 – Ethics in Society

Key Concepts

If we are committed to the ideal of concern for others, it follows that this commitment should inform social and political policies. Otherwise, our policies are likely to harm instead of serve humanity as a whole. The Dalai Lama suggests six areas be addressed: education, the media, our natural environment, politics and economics, peace and disarmament, and inter-religious harmony.

In this chapter and the following two chapters, the Dalai Lama expresses his personal views on what might be done. He invites us to use these personal views to spark our own thoughts about how to align our social and political policies with our personal commitment to ethical conduct, universal responsibility, and compassion.

Education. The general, modern educational system neglects the discussion of ethical matters largely because a) it was developed in a time when religious institutions were highly influential throughout society and b) human and ethical values are generally held to fall within the scope of religion. As the influence of religion has declined, the schools have not filled the gap. Thus we are bringing up children to have knowledge without compassion.

The Dalai Lama suggests we:

- Show children that their actions have a universal dimension and build on their natural feelings of empathy so they come to have a sense of responsibility to others.
- See to it our behavior as parents and teachers is principled, disciplined and compassionate, since children learn from actions, not words.
- Frame the important social issues, not as belonging only to the sphere of religion, but as a matter of our continued survival.
- Eliminate from our schools' curricula any tendency toward presenting others in a negative light. Take care that love of country, religion and culture do not develop into narrow minded nationalism, or religious bigotry.

Media. The media has an influence over individuals never imagined 100 years ago. This confers a great responsibility on not only all who work in media, but also on all who, as individuals, watch, read and listen. The Dalai Lama's key points include:

- Investigative reporting is an important service, assuming the investigator doesn't act from improper motives, is impartial and respects others' rights.
- Sex and violence are enjoyed by the viewing public and motivated by commercial interests. The concern is whether the effect is ethically wholesome or if it leads to indifference, hardening of the heart and lack of empathy. The constant repetition of sex and violence tends to create the impression that human nature is essentially negative, while the opposite is true. To be ethically responsible the media needs to reflect this simple fact.

- While regulation of the media is clearly necessary, the only true discipline comes from within. This implies a responsibility to educate our children so they may be more disciplined and compassionate when they become involved in the media.

Natural environment. The natural world is our home and therefore it is our own best interest to look after it. The Dalai Lama suggests:

- We develop methods of manufacture that do not destroy nature.
- We recognize the universal dimension of the actions we take as individuals and, based on this, exercise restraint. Individuals in the industrially developed nations have a particular responsibility to change their lifestyle.
- Education and the media must both play a role here. The Dalai Lama uses the environmental degradation now occurring in Tibet as an example, and notes the efforts of the Tibetan government in exile to introduce children to their responsibilities as residents of this fragile planet.

Politics and economics. The Dalai Lama suggests a continuation of current political and economic policies will result in the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. He suggests:

- Politicians are a product of their societies, so if we want less corrupt politicians, we must practice ethical discipline in our own lives.
- Competition be conducted with a spirit of generosity.
- The more each of us develops our compassionate nature, the more commercial enterprise will come to reflect basic human values.
- Ethical concepts are gaining ground in international relations. Words like reconciliation, non-violence and compassion are becoming stock phrases among politicians. Collectively we are giving more weight to justice and truth.
- The more interdependent our economic relationships become, the more interdependent our political relationships must become. Alliances comprising hundreds of millions of people are increasingly transcending geographical, cultural and ethnic divisions. At the same time regional communities united in trade, social policy, and security arrangements can consist of a multiplicity of autonomous ethnic, cultural, and religious groups. The challenge of the new millennium is to find ways for better inter-community cooperation, wherein human diversity is acknowledged and the rights of all respected.

Discussion Questions

1. As you look around your community and nation, what political and social polices do you see that you would say are inconsistent with compassion and concern for others?
2. Reflecting on your experience in the education system as a child or parent, what concerns do you have about the cultivation of knowledge without compassion? What reasons do you find for hope?
3. What reaction do you have to the Dalai Lama's suggestions? What other actions do you see to take?
4. How do you take personal responsibility to reconcile your value of compassion and ethical conduct with your consumption of media?
5. What has helped society make progress in our stewardship of the natural environment over the last 30 years? What needs doing now and how can you translate that into individual action?
6. What do you feel and think as you read the Dalai Lama's thoughts on what are the needed and hopeful directions in politics and economics?

Practice Exercises

1. Choose one of these arenas for concerted ethical discipline and develop a plan of action in your daily life. Whatever your level of commitment, walk the talk over the next month.

Chapter 14 – Peace and Disarmament

Key Concepts

Qualities of violence:

- Violence means suffering. Violence begets violence.
- It is impossible to predict the outcome of violence, and impossible to be sure of its justness at the outset.
- War is like fire in the human community, one whose fuel is living people.

Nature of peace. We must make a distinction between peace as an absence of war and peace as a state of tranquility founded on the deep sense of security that arises from mutual understanding, tolerance of others' point of view and respect for others' rights. Peace in this sense did not exist during the 40 years of the Cold War. That was just an approximation. Real peace is something more profound than a fragile equilibrium based on mutual hostility. It ultimately depends on the resolution of internal conflict. The fact of human interdependence is so fundamental and clear today that the only peace meaningful to speak about is global peace.

Peace starts with the individual. War and peace do not exist independently of us. Peace in the world depends on peace in the hearts of individuals. We must each discipline our responses to negative thoughts and emotions. We need to develop basic spiritual qualities. We need to develop compassion.

This is often difficult, as we are conditioned to regard warfare as exciting, even glamorous. But nowadays those who instigate war are far removed from the conflict. It's like a computer game where weapons exist solely to destroy human beings but without the need for face-to-face fighting, or for feeling the impact of our actions. Meanwhile, the impact on non-combatants grows ever greater. Women, children, and the elderly are the prime victims not only during, but long after the war is over.

But weapons cannot act by themselves. Someone has to push a button to launch a missile strike or pull a trigger to fire a bullet. We must dismantle the military establishments we have built. Peace cannot be imposed by force. We cannot enjoy true peace until we dismantle injustice *in our own human hearts.* Lasting peace is only possible when each of us makes an effort internally. We must learn to do nothing to contribute to the suffering of others.

Disarmament. If we can develop a broad commitment to disarmament, then we can establish clear objectives for disarming gradually. We must create the conditions favorable to those objectives by building on existing initiatives. Those initiatives, although they have proven less than successful, testify to humanity's basic wish to live in peace.

- There is a growing recognition of the irony that weapons of mass destruction can hardly be considered useful. They are expensive to produce, and expensive to stockpile and yet we stockpile them because we can't imagine using them. How can we foster a dialogue and increase the recognition that weapons of mass destruction, in whatever context, no longer serve the interests of humanity?
- There is a tendency towards regional security groupings and less narrowly defined communities. This could lead to the elimination of the danger of many nation states defending themselves and harboring weapons of mass destruction. This, in turn, could lead to a global police force. A global police force would safeguard justice, communal security, and human rights worldwide. It would protect against the appropriation of power by violent means. Already we are used to the UN's protective forces, which is a step in this direction
- We can build on the work of the United Nations and its subsidiaries such as UNESCO, UNICEF, etc. The communications revolution has spawned an emerging global consciousness. If we could develop the UN to its full potential, it could carry out the wishes of humanity. For that, we would need to end the manipulation of weaker nations by the more powerful and give individuals the right to be heard by the UN council in complaints against their governments.
- We need to create Zones of Peace, internationally recognized demilitarized zones. Naming places like Tibet such peace zones would free other countries from the need to defend themselves from that place. Germany could be a zone of peace.
- The coming together of individuals in international groups to help those less fortunate, e.g. Doctors Without Borders is a powerful setting for the spirit of connection and compassion to flourish.
- Individuals working in any way to foster the making, selling and transporting of arms can help to dismantle the arms industry. They can begin by asking themselves whether they can really justify their involvement. There is no such thing as a "safe" arms client.

Ethics monitor. We must learn to dialogue in the spirit of reconciliation and compromise. We need to establish a body whose principle task is to monitor human affairs from the perspective of ethics. Their deliberations would be the world's conscience.

Discussion Questions

1. Is a world without violence and war possible, in your opinion? Why or why not?
2. Is it possible for people living under oppressive governments to achieve self-determination and justice through non-violent means?
3. The Dalai Lama often speaks of "world peace through inner peace." In what ways can you connect this formula to your own life?
4. How do you establish tranquility in your own heart based on a profound sense of inner security?
5. What are your inner work practices? Are they effective? How do they impact violence and peace in your daily life? In your community? In the world?
6. What can you do to contribute to some of the suggestions in this chapter to support disarmament and foster world peace?
7. How could you begin to change the attitude of those around you towards war, violence and world peace? (What about their jadedness? Sense of powerlessness? Disillusionment? Your own?)
8. How can individuals influence governments to work more seriously for world peace?

Practice Exercises

1. Within your own environment, be it at home, at work or at school, develop a "Zone of Peace" that includes others (e.g. redecorate the room, use words that reflect a more peaceful attitude towards situations, play music).
2. Identify friends and family with whom you can engage in meaningful dialogue around this topic and do it on a routine basis for the next 3 months.
3. Notice an arena of conflict in your life and strive to approach others involved with a spirit of reconciliation, compromise and compassion.

Chapter 15 –The Role of Religion in Modern Society

Key Concepts

Religion valuable but not necessary. It is not a given that religion is relevant to the modern world. Religious belief is not necessary for either ethical conduct or happiness. The spiritual qualities of compassion, peace, patience, and tolerance are what is necessary. The Dalai Lama's view is that these spiritual qualities are best developed in the context of religious practice. Properly employed, religion is an extremely effective instrument for achieving happiness. It encourages a sense of responsibility toward others, provides support for developing ethical discipline, and is concerned with addressing human suffering in a fundamental way. And today people still suffer, perhaps more mentally than physically.

Inter-religious harmony. Religion has often been a source of conflict in human history. Religious conflict is a real issue in today's interconnected world, in which people with diverse beliefs and practices come in close contact. The key to overcoming such conflict is 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 of the obstacles is lack of understanding for the traditions of others. The best way to overcome this is through dialog, both among experts and also ordinary practitioners. Other beneficial practices include people of different traditions gathering together to pray for a common good, or making pilgrimages to sacred sites together. All these practices help people see that regardless of doctrinal differences, all the religions are concerned with promoting happiness through the cultivation of compassion, love, patience, tolerance, humility and so on.

From one "true" religion to religious pluralism. Another source of religious disharmony is the misuse of religion in the sense of using religion to reinforce one's selfish attitudes. It is all too easy to relate to our religion as a label which separates us from others. This brings up a real problem, i.e. the claim of each religion to be the one "true" religion. How to resolve this? The practitioner needs to have a single-pointed conviction in his or her chosen path, which is supported by a deep conviction in the truth of that path. At the same time it is necessary to reconcile this belief with the reality that other people hold their traditions in the same way. The practitioner must find a way to at least accept the validity of other religions while maintaining a wholehearted commitment to his or her own. For example, the Dalai Lama says that personally it is his conviction that Buddhism is the best path for him, but he can't say it's best for everyone.

The Dalai Lama's way to resolve the contradiction is with the formula: "one religion for each person, many religions for humanity". The diversity that exists among different traditions is enormously enriching. There is no need to find ways of saying that all religions are ultimately the same. Yes, they all emphasize the spiritual qualities, but that's not the same as saying they're all one. As we advance along the path, we are eventually forced to acknowledge real differences in the teachings.

If we are serious about human rights as a universal principle, it is essential to develop a genuine sense of religious pluralism. Rather than a "world religion," the Dalai Lama supports the idea of a "world parliament of religions", which suggests democracy, mutual respect and pluralism.

Cautions re: religious conversion. Religious conversion alone will not necessarily make someone a better person. While it is fine to learn from other traditions, it is best to look to develop one's practice within the tradition of one's birth and culture. This avoids confusion between the different ways of life that go with different religious traditions. If one is seriously attracted to the fundamental teachings of another religion, it is important to ask again and again, "am I attracted to this religion for the right reasons, because of the essential teachings, or because I find the cultural customs or rituals attractive, or I imagine it might be less demanding?" If one 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 one's decision to others.

Practice of religion key to value. It is unhealthy to argue the merits of this or that tradition on the basis of metaphysical truth claims; the important thing is whether the practice is effective in particular cases. You can't consider the effectiveness of a medical treatment separate from its effect on the patient. Taking religious teachings is of little value if it remains at the level of the intellect, and does not enter the heart. Simply relying on faith without understanding or implementation is of limited value.

Religious people have a lot to contribute to today's world, but until they really put their religion into practice, they will never be taken seriously. And this means, among other things, developing good relations with other faith traditions.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think about the role and effect of religion in today's world? Is it a force for good? Is it a negative force, something that mainly divides people? Is it relevant in today's world of science and global commerce?
2. What are your means of cultivating the spiritual qualities of compassion, peace, patience, tolerance? How would you describe your spiritual life? How might you move one step further along the continuum from intellectual concept to heartfelt practice?
3. Do you actively practice the religion you were born into or have you adopted another faith tradition as your own? If you've converted, have you reflected on what attracted, and continues to attract, you to that new tradition, i.e. is it the essential teachings, or the cultural customs and rituals associated with the tradition?
4. If you've converted, how do you relate to your religion of origin? Are there painful feelings or criticisms associated with it? If so, are there any possibilities for healing those feelings?
5. In what ways do you encounter religion as 'one true religion' in your life and community? Religion as 'one religion for each person, many religions for humanity'?
6. Are there opportunities you could explore for expanding inter-religions harmony and understanding by sharing something meaningful with people of different faith traditions, for example meals, informal or structured discussions, shared celebrations or worship?

Practice Exercises

1. Choose one of the core spiritual qualities of compassion, peace, patience, tolerance you want to cultivate in pursuit of ethical conduct and happiness. Survey your religion, other religions or spiritual teachings to find, choose and implement a practice to help you in cultivating this in your life.
2. Implement one of the ways you identified for expanding your understanding and harmony with those of different faith traditions.

Chapter 16 – An Appeal

Key Concepts

In this chapter the Dalai Lama makes an appeal to all of us, in the face of life's impermanence, to make the rest of our life in each present moment as full, productive and meaningful as possible. To approach death without remorse is to live responsibly in the present moment with compassion for others. Our happiness is inextricably bound up with the happiness of others. If society suffers, we ourselves suffer.

Compassion is one of the principal things that makes our lives meaningful. It is the source of lasting happiness and joy and is the foundation of a good heart. Through acts of kindness, affection, honesty and justice we not only help others but ensure our own benefit as well. By contrast the more our hearts and minds are afflicted with ill-will, the more miserable we become. We cannot escape the need for love and compassion.

There is no need for religious places or complicated philosophy or dogma for us to practice compassion. Our own heart and mind are the temple. Whether we are religious or not, as long as we have compassion towards others and conduct ourselves with restraint out of a sense of responsibility, there is no doubt we will be happy.

Despair from focusing on the mundane and material. But we are not always happy, even though it should be simple. Why? We shrink from confronting our negative thoughts and emotions. We waste so much of our time on meaningless activity and feel deep regret over trivial matters. We use our abilities too often to deceive our neighbors, take advantage of them and better ourselves at their expense. We take our pleasures where we can and shrink from considering others' well being on the grounds we are too busy. Inevitably, by being inattentive to the needs of others, we end up harming them. When things don't work out, full of self-righteousness, we blame others for our difficulties.

Making your life meaningful. Lasting satisfaction and a stable sense of meaning in life come from helping others, not from acquiring objects and sensual pleasure. The Dalai Lama offers these suggestions to be happy and make life meaningful:

- 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
- Treat everyone as if they were a close friend
- 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 never to think of them as inferior to yourself.

Discussion Questions

1. "In the present moment, conduct ourselves responsibly and with compassion for others" is perhaps a summary of the simple faith the Dalai Lama presents in this book. How does this summarize what you have learned and integrated from your time in studying *Ethics for the New Millennium*? What would you add or say differently?
2. What practices have helped you to make your own heart and mind a temple, a real home, for this simple faith, the doctrine of compassion? What will you continue as this study circle ends?
3. Why, if it is so simple to be happy, do you and I find it so hard? What are the ways of being that bring despair and unhappiness into your life?
4. Why does the Dalai Lama say that when we are inattentive to the needs of others, we end up harming them? Have you ever experienced this?
5. Describe a time when you could have helped someone and did not do so, because you were too busy, you were uncomfortable in the face of the person's appearance, or for some other reason.
6. Describe a time someone could have helped you but did not do so because he or she was too busy. How did you feel?
7. The Dalai Lama offers a short prayer that offers him inspiration in his quest to benefit others. What has inspired you? How will you continue to inspire yourself in the midst of your busy life over the coming months and years?

Practice Exercises

1. At the end of each day, recall one way in which you helped someone else.
2. At least once a week, recite the short prayer at the end of this chapter or engage in any ritual of your choice that reminds and inspires you to help others.

The Dalai Lama closes by quoting this short prayer he says brings him inspiration 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 bridge for those with rivers 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

Ideas for Closing Practices

1. Go around the circle and say what this study circle has meant to you.
2. Acknowledge others in the circle for their unique gifts and whatever they have shared to make the circle meaningful for you.
3. Has this exploration of ethics changed you? How?
4. Share your wishes and intentions for the future that stem from the learning and growth you have experienced by delving into the concepts from *Ethics for the New Millennium*.
5. In some way that feels comfortable, dedicate the energy and goodwill generated by your effort together to the benefit of others. What gift would you give the world out of this experience?

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