

This book is about the three vows. Can be understood from traditional Buddhist view.

1. Pratimoksha Vow (Sanskrit: Individual liberation [soso tharpa])

Five precepts: No killing, no stealing, no harmful sexual activity, no lying, no alcohol or drugs

2. Bodhisattva Vow (Awakened heart/mind being) Work with compassion in the world.

3. Samaya Vow (sacred word [damtsik]). To be open to all situations.

First vow: about working on yourself.

Second vow: about working compassionately with others.

Third vow: about seeing the whole world as sacred.

Here they are presented as three commitments. Will go into each of these in detail in subsequent classes.

1. Committing to Not Cause Harm

2. Committing to Take Care of One Another

3. Committing to Embrace the World Just as It Is.

Hinayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana.

Traditional 3 levels or 3 views. Narrower to wider to vast all encompassing. Like climbing up a mountain. More restricted view at ground level. Part way up the mountain can look out over the village, see people, activities of life. At top of mountain can see sky, gaze into the far distance. Each view is very important. Sequential and they do build on each other but we are also working with all levels at the same time.

**Gift from Pema:** Not just getting a list to memorize. Goes deeper into own experience. Gives practical tools to work with. Note what these tools are. Use and record experiences and thoughts.

**Chapter One:** The Fundamental Ambiguity of Being Human

What is the human predicament as Pema describes it?

“Moral ambiguity of the human dilemma.” P 4

**“How can we relax and have a genuine, passionate relationship with the fundamental uncertainty, the groundlessness of being human?”**

Buddha gave 3 instructions on this. 3 vows, 3 commitments.

Outer level: understanding the commitments

Inner level: working with our feelings, emotional attachment to escaping from the uncertainty.

Secret level: shifting our view. Seeing everything as a manifestation of awakened energy.

What does it **feel** like to be in this shifting state? We grab at pleasure and ward off pain. Resisting change is suffering. Embracing change is enlightenment. Or **freedom. Freedom from struggling against the fundamental ambiguity of being human.**

The root of this struggle is a **fixed identity. Ego equals fixed identity.** Gives rise to strong emotions. **Kleshas.**

**Shenpa** = attachment. Being hooked. Comes from wanting things to be a certain way. Tightening, closing down. The urge to find relief by clinging to pleasure.

Psychological mechanism behind emotion. **Lasts only 90 sec.**

Exercise p. 13 **Feel with full attention. Drop the story line.** Direct experience of the feeling. Where do you feel it in body? How long does it last? Training in being present. Stay.

## **Chapter Two:** Life without the Story Line

“It isn’t the current story line that is the root of our pain; it’s our propensity to be bothered in the first place.” P. 16

**Pause and stay present with the underlying energy.** This cuts the propensity.

**Interrupting thoughts.** Not repressing them. We train in not following the thoughts. We don’t try to get rid of them. Label them “thinking” or just let them go.

**Shift your focus to a wider perspective.**

**Feel the dynamic energy of the thoughts and emotions.**

**Experience the space around the thoughts: how they arise, dwell and return to space**

**Be fully present.**

**Feel your heart.**

**And engage the next moment without an agenda.** P. 21

Homework:

Get a notebook. Write down your experiences and the ways you are working with the practices described—successes and failures.

Write out the special instructions and contemplate them throughout day.

Bring your insights to class and share what you wish.

What is the most helpful instruction for you?

Exercises to work with during the week:

1. Contemplate the questions raised on page 3 and 4.
1. Apply lojong to some of the instructions.
2. Exercise on page 13
3. Exercise on page 21