

Living Beautifully with Uncertainty and Change by Pema Chodron
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Overview Chapters 3, 4, and 5 Erika Wilton Module 23

First Commitment: Do Not Cause Harm

refraining but not repressing
contemplating our personal experience of being caught,
acknowledging our triggers
the non-violent practice of simmering

Chapter 3, Laying the Foundation

is foundational for next two commitments:

- 2 to help others,
- 3 embrace the world as it is

What is a commitment, in this process?

REFRAINING...from speech and actions that are harmful to ourselves and others. “The narrow way”

REFRAIN in a spirit of compassionate self-reflection: we trust our basic goodness

- setting an intention: acting vs not acting
- “thinking twice” before responding, etc
- not acting out, but beyond that
- starts loosening up our habitual responses

Outer commitment vs inner commitment

How? Notice when we behave in habitual ways to zone out or protect ourselves from or escape from discomfort or uncertainty. Activities, (TV, shopping, eating) But also talking, SPEECH gossiping.

Not just external chatter, but INTERNAL as well: “One of the reasons I appreciate meditation retreats is that I can get a really close look at how even in total silence I still keep myself busy with my mind.”

Precepts: Thich Nhat Hanh pg 32-33

- 1 to protect life
- 2 to not steal
- 3 not to harm others with our sexual activity
- 4 mindful speech: to not lie, gossip, create division or hatred
- 5 protecting body and mind: drugs/alcohol...*what does this mean for us?*

This is not repression, more like observation of one's own impulses.
When acting out of aggression, craving, jealousy, envy pride you can see the wave or reactions. Does this happen even when not motivated by these strong emotions?
Pg 34, Shantideva:

When the mind is wild with mockery
And filled with pride and haughty arrogance,
And when you want to show the hidden faults of others,
to bring up old dissections or to act deceitfully,
And when you want to fish for praise
Or criticize and spoil another's name
Or use harsh language, spoiling for fight,
It's then that like a dog you should remain.

How does this work for us?

***Pg 35, Refraining exercise:**

notice how you feel: in the body
notice your thinking..what feelings are generated?
notice your actions: how do you treat yourself and others when you feel this way?

***Pg 36, Refraining exercise**

refrain from a habitual escapist activity for a week. Observe yourself...what comes up?

"The detox period"...How do you deal with feelings of discomfort, groundlessness?
This is "INNER RENUNCIATION"

pg 37 **Sojong**

reflecting over past 2 weeks:

what have I done with my body? Speech? Mind?
honest self-assessment and shared insights..allows you to begin again, fresh start.

Chapter 4: Be fully Present, Feel your Heart, and Leap

can be done any time, not only on the cushion

chapter on meditation instruction

*pg 50, “contemplate your intention for this practice session...” meditation”

“By cultivating non-judgmental openness to ourselves and to whatever arises, to our surprise and delight, we will find ourselves genuinely welcoming the never-pin-downable quality of life, experiencing it as a friend, a teacher, and a support, and no longer as an enemy.”

what is meant by “Leap”?

Chapter 5: Staying in the Middle

“Not acting on our habitual patterns is only the first step toward not harming others or ourselves. The transformative process begins at a deeper level when we contact the rawness we’re left with whenever we refrain.

Dzigar Kongtrül:

pg 51 Simmering

- wait
- sit patiently with the urge to act or speak in our usual ways
- feel the full force of that urge without turning away or giving in
- neither repressing nor rejecting, stay in the middle between extremes of
- yes/no, right/wrong, true/false

builds inner strength, embracing totality of one’s experience rather than running away from our embarrassing selves, our shameful selves, our unpleasant aspects, putting on a false face to ourselves and others. We are not rejectable, we must be our own best friends;

*****pg 55: exercise, contemplation:**

- Sit quietly for a few minutes, become mindful of your breath as it goes in and out.
- Then contemplate what you do when you are unhappy or dissatisfied and want to feel better. Even make a list if you want to.
- Then ask yourself: does it work? Has it ever worked? Does it soothe the pain? Does it escalate the pain?

If you’re really honest you’ll come up with some pretty interesting observations.

Why don't our strategies work? Are we still holding on to anything that feels good, reassuring, and rejecting anything that makes us uncomfortable or reminds us of the basic groundlessness of being alive? That everything changes?

Eight Worldly Concerns:

Pleasure/Pain

Gain/Loss

Fame/Disgrace

Praise/Blame

First Commitment is to know your triggers, a vow that whatever it takes, you'll compassionately acknowledge when you're hooked by the eight worldly concerns, or by anything. SHENPA