

Kyabgön Phakchok Rinpoche
Week 1, *Mental Strength in the 21st Century*
December 1, 2014
“Discover Your Mind”
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Hello everybody. First, I'd like to explain that I think we all have different kinds of backgrounds, responsibilities and life stories from our past experiences. I just want to give you a bottom-line kind of experience. For me, as a practitioner, I want to practice however much I can in this age, in this time. For me, it's the most important thing. It's like proof. It gives me motivation. To be able to practice is to understand how important my mind is. The fundamental practices of meditation and spiritual dharma are to see what the mind actually is. The mind I'm talking about is sensing, judging, feeling, and remembering each moment—each moment changing—and each second. Each second there are different objects, different subjects and different places all going around. All these functions of consciousness make up what we call the mind. It seems like we have like a lot of minds, but it's not actually like that. It's mind works so fast in each place. When I look at a tree, for example, I can sense it's a tree. In that moment, in that split second, I hear a sound. So it seems like I have a lot of minds going through me but actually I have one consciousness—one mind—not many. In my eyes you can have eye consciousness, ear consciousness and so forth, all together comprising consciousness. Just understand that the mind is very important. Who feels the sad mind? Who feels the happy mind? Who feels the angry mind? Who feels the disappointed mind? The mind is very crucial.

Now, how is the mind? You need to understand how to experience—or how to see—what kinds of habits, emotions or patterns that you have on a daily basis. Everybody wants to be happy. That is a very traditional mind. Nobody wants suffering. Everybody knows that. But what does happiness mean? Who experiences happiness? How do we find happiness? What is suffering? What is the cause of suffering? All of those things are very important to understand. These are some of the fundamentals for practitioners.

For me, right now I cannot say that I'm very young. I am young in this 21st century. My cameraman here is young, but I am not that young compared to him. However, what I can explain to you is how to make meditation and these practices relevant. Think about being in New York, for example, or being in a big city. Imaging yourself in this daily life, this modern life. Is it really important to practice that? Why so? That's why we ask that question—is it relevant or not. But why do you just ask questions? If you don't, you don't discover if your mind is

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important or not. You don't discover if your mind is powerful or not. Your mind is a game changer. Is it really a game changer or not?

I'll give you an example. One time I was walking in New York City; actually, this was a few days ago. I saw a person and I told him, “Oh, you really look like Jesus Christ.” I thought that he was going to like that I expressed that he looked like Jesus Christ—you know, tall with a mustache. Of course, he was a little blonde and if Jesus Christ lived now, he would actually be darker. But it's fine. It doesn't matter. I said, “You look like Jesus Christ.” He said, “Oh yeah, really? Okay, I bless you.” He acted very unhappy. So, I didn't mind. I just walked by. I said, “Okay, fine.” Later, I was walking through Central Park. I was staying nearby there and was lying down. My mind kept going to the guy who wasn't happy. It wasn't so bad, but there were just short glimpses that were making my mood a little bit off. My mind was here and there for one or two minutes, and that set my mood off. Then I tried to say to myself, “I don't care. He's gone. He's talking with his girlfriend. He's gone.” But my mind kept bringing back that particular expression that I didn't like, even if I only disliked it a little bit. That little bit, though, is what gave me one minute of an off-mood. That is karma. That is habit. That is suffering and the cause of suffering. It shows that I didn't have any control of my mind. It also very clearly shows how crucial my mind is.

So now, check—are meditation and the practices relevant in the 21st century? Of course, yes. We have improved our food, clothes, going here and there, technologies, buildings, and health care. Everything has improved. However, we're already starting to forget about mental strength, mental calmness and understanding how powerful the mind is. This is why I'm saying that meditation and spiritual dharma are more relevant in the 21st century than ever before. I'm not saying this because of what the book says. I'm saying this because of my experiences. I hope all of you have the kinds of experiences that show you how your mind plays such a big role in your lives. At the same time, there are moments when we can enjoy our lives, but we don't. We complain and spend time trying to bring up all the disappointments of our past; we try to bring it all up into this moment and make our lives miserable. That whole package is what we call the mind. It is unbalanced and very weak. There is a lot of movement, but we don't have calmness. There's no time to meditate, no time to listen to meditation. You don't really give yourself time to meditate, either. When you see suffering, my friends, it's a little too late. So I like to say, “Please discover your mind.” It's very, very important.

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So now I just want to touch a little bit on this—how should I do the mind? What I want to tell you is to try and see your emotions and your mind on a daily basis. I want you to see how they’re evolving, how they’re changing in your life. You need to see this first, and if you don’t see it clearly, try to do a simple exercise in the morning. That exercise is called creating space. To create space, you sit calmly wherever your sitting position is. Then, try to think of the spaces surrounding your body and go beyond all the walls where you are staying. Go beyond. Imagine it like you are actually sitting on the middle of the sky and you have a completely spacious area in front of you, behind you, above you and below you. There is nothing around and it is completely spacious. You need to think of this spaciousness and maintain it. Think gently about the spaciousness. If you want to close your eyes, you can do that. Try to rest a little bit, too; rest and try to fill the very vast spaciousness around you. Whenever you feel like your chest and your heart are opening, try to rest there. A little bit of resting here, a little relaxing there. Enjoy a little bit and rest. You know, if you keep practicing like that, that helps you resolve a little bit of tension in your mind. It goes down a little. It makes your mind more spacious so you can see your life in a different way. You don’t see your problem as a major problem. Your problem starts to seem a little bit smaller because you have the spaciousness in your mind. This shows how five or ten minutes of practice—of exercises—can make significant changes in your mind. Significant changes in your mind actually impact your daily life. Now the amazing part—because of you are more positive, you are more calm and relaxed. Your family members, friends and loved ones can actually experience that which you are experiencing. They will say, “Oh, you look so happy today.” They’re going to smile at you and say that word. That is how your impact begins.

So, because of this reason, I like to ask you to please try to understand, try to experience this. You can do this. Ask the questions, “What is my mind? How important is my mind? Is my mind really powerful or not? Can my mind really change my life? How would it address the anger I have, or change my anger and ways of thinking?” Oh yes, it does. When you’re really angry, or when you really hate something very strongly, you’re almost going to hate everybody who comes into sight. You’re not going to like when you’re feeling really angry or when you’re feeling disappointed. Similarly, when you’re really happy, when you have a girlfriend or boyfriend—whatever that relationship is that you’re having—you’re going to be so happy. When you’re having a really nice moment in time, I’m telling you, you’re going to be so happy. You will almost feel like you’re flying, like you’re floating on the sky. That is how mind power works. However,

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when you think that the condition is powerful, that’s the problem. Condition is the gift that changes in your mind. But who is really experiencing—and who is really changing—is the mind. Whose mind? Your mind. So, because of that reason, please keep your mind healthy. Try to stay happy. Try to stay positive. Try to remind yourself—every day—how important your mind is. Your life is busy, yes. But that is an excuse. An excuse for whom? For whom are you making excuses? For me? No. You’re making excuses for yourself. Don’t forget that.

I like to mention this to you because I want you to remind yourself about the mind and how important the mind’s role is in your life. Okay? And when you understand that, I’m telling you—the meditation, the spiritual dharma—it all becomes very important for you. Until you understand or experience that, the meditation and spiritual dharma become some kind of religion process that people do. For me, I’m not interested in that. That is the excuse, or those are just the experiences you go through. So I’d like to just remind all of you to meditate on this or practice the exercise of creating space yourself for five minutes each day. You’ll feel your heart open. Try to maintain it. You can actually teach this; after you feel okay, you can teach this to your friends, family members and anyone, really—whether they are believers or spiritual or not or religious or not.

Thank you very much, all of you. I hope you all enjoyed my simple and humble explanation. We will see you again. Thank you.
