



Hello everyone, welcome back. My name is Jampal Namgyel [Dungse Jampal Norbu], and it's my pleasure to welcome you to episode three of *Compassion in Polarizing Times*. In the last two episodes we covered the conditions of living in polarized environments, the search for happiness in materialism, and then the process of drawing that search in through self-reflection to find happiness within ourselves and our own minds. We covered how our search for happiness and solidarity in what seems to be an often chaotic and polarizing world is often mixed together with our experience of suffering. We also discussed how the pursuit of happiness is really the identification of suffering as a personal experience, the cause of suffering, and our ability to let go of that cause of suffering, which is an attachment to the sense of self.

Today I want to talk about how one develops the mind training, positive habits, and the practice of compassion and altruism which lets go of that attachment to the sense of self and opens one up to happiness, connection, and ultimately, enlightenment.

When one is engaged in deep self-reflection and we find the cause of our suffering, we personally find that attachment to the sense of self in a very visceral sense. We notice the subtle workings of our mind, our thoughts, how we hold onto thoughts of me and mine, and how we emphasize ourselves over others. This is not always a bad thing, but it is the cause of our painful emotions. It is the cause of the neurotic five negative emotions, and thus engaging with the attachment to the self is an important step in finding happiness.

These negative emotions and experiences of suffering are not permanent. They come and they go. They arise with the times, with different conditions, and in different situations. However, it is hard to break the cycle of negative emotions and attachment to the sense of self because it is our habit. It is a strongly ingrained habit, as if we have been smoking self-attachment since we were born, and over time that habit has solidified more and more into something we don't even register, something we barely notice.

To counter that attachment and that negative habit, it is important to have a consistent practice of positive altruism. A consistent regiment of altruistic practice allows us to let go of that attachment to self, in order to let go of those egoic tendencies. We can practice developing compassion, kindness, and equanimity, being kind to all people, being compassionate to all people and developing sympathy. This means putting ourselves in someone else's shoes, putting ourselves in someone else's conditions to understand their point of view, to rejoice when they're



happy, to take pride and to take joy in someone else's good fortune. These are the kinds of practices which gradually let go of attachment to the sense of self over time.

But it has to be a consistent practice. It has to be something that we take on like exercise, so we can break the habit and cycle of neurotic emotion and open ourselves up to a more natural way of being. It may seem as if we are our thoughts or we are our negative emotions: “We are angry,” “I am angry,” “I am jealous.” But these are just momentary experiences.

Undergoing a regiment of practice by making altruism a practice and making meditation an ongoing part of life, we gradually build positive habits to counter the negative habits and break the cycle. We open ourselves up to more choice, more possibility for happiness, and more connection with others. This is the cultivation of choice which dharma practice brings. This is the path of meditation and the path of dharma which at all times seeks to let go of attachment to the sense of self and develop altruism.

Because negative habits are so ingrained in us, we can lose our momentum and the positive experiences that we gain in the course of developing altruism. We may have moments of great compassion. We may have moments of great kindness where we let go of attachment and ego attachment, but we still fall back into those patterns and we lose our confidence in our ability to develop. We lose our confidence in the exercises and meditations that take us in the direction of happiness. So confidence is a key element.

Confidence only arises through personal experience. Confidence arises through consistent self-reflection and firsthand knowledge that this practice of compassion, this moment of kindness, liberated me from the suffering of neurotic self-concern. This practice of kindness opened me up from the intense heat of aggression and of anger. This moment of generosity helped me let go of the painful experience of stinginess and attachment.

These ongoing moments of success and consistent moments of practice build our confidence in altruism. They build our confidence in the path of meditation and the path of dharma, so that when we fall back into negative habits we have a guiding light. We have trail markers that we ourselves have set up. There are teachings, texts, thousands of years of resources, and other firsthand experiences of dharma practice and great meditators, but it is really our own trail markers and our own internal confidence which brings us back again and again to the path of meditation.



As the confidence develops more and more in that path, our ability to let go and become happy becomes greater. As confidence develops, freedom develops. We gain confidence through experience. There is no blind faith in meditation practice. It is openness which leads to confidence, and openness to experience.

Through developing confidence, our practice of compassion is able to extend further and further. Our sense of ease, kindness, and happiness is also able to reach new heights to the point where we can redefine our relationship with the world. We can redefine our relationship with people we may have had difficult encounters with in the past. We can redefine our relationship with friends, family, and enemies to the point where enemies are no longer enemies. We can heal relationships that have been broken, we can mend friendships, and consistently come back to a sense of ease and stability. Not vague, fortune cookie meditation or fortune cookie kindness where we might see a little snippet saying "Be kind to others," or "Respect the golden rule." But a firsthand cornerstone where practice, generosity, kindness, and compassion are no longer vague. It's no longer spiritual vagueness. It is a personal, direct experience and something which lifts us up just as confidence lifts us up in many other ways. It's confidence in our ability to perform.

For instance, in sports, a confident athlete performs better. In terms of business and success, confidence is an attractive quality in investors as well. Leaders who are confident are much more apt to lead than those who take charge without self-confidence and without confidence in their own ability. Confidence in the dharma, confidence in one's own experience, and confidence in altruism provides a strong base on which we can stand, especially when we are dealing with a world full of polarizing views and stepping into a landscape where argument is a national pastime. In this way, the dharma prepares us not only for meditation or enlightenment, but how to relate to the world itself, our culture, our environment, and how to live a good life.

I'll leave it here for today, but in the next and final episode, I would like to talk more about engaging in worldly life and carrying ourselves forward with confidence, and how that confidence translates into skillful means. Thank you.