

Dawa Tarchin Phillips
Teachings for Uncertain Times
February 15, 2017



Hi. I'm Dawa Tarchin Phillips, and welcome to the teaching series on "Teachings for Uncertain Times." The teaching that I want to share with you today is a teaching called "The Eight Principles for Uncertain Times," and I want to start with the context for the teaching, which is an appreciation for our basic wholeness.

We live in times when many people are led to believe that they are incomplete and that they don't share in the basic wholeness, in the basic equality of our human species, of our human family. Whether that is because you feel disadvantaged due to the gender, race, sexual orientation, or class that you are born into, our culture makes it easy to believe that somehow you are less than. The premise for the teaching that I want to share with you is based on the fact that all healing starts in an appreciation for our basic wholeness.

Let me maybe lay out to you the eight principles. The eight principles are: number one, serve the light; number two, break with the norm; number three, love with abandon; number four, own your own shit; number five, fear no one; number six, dance in the fire; number seven, invest trust; and number eight, stand on truths.

Now, let me explain a little bit more what I mean with these eight principles. The first of these principles, serve the light, is about becoming clear with your intention. Some of the best dharma teachings that I've heard in my life all started with an understanding that we have to become aware of our intentions, and that it's no longer about what we do. It's so much more about why we do it in the first place. It's very important to become aware of the fact that our intentions influence everything we do and influence the results that we get from all of our hard work.

I want to share with you a short story that illustrates that. There are two neighbors, and for the sake of this story, let's say they're both women, they live next to each other, and they both decide to plant a tree, a fruit tree, to be exact. The first neighbor plants the tree right in front of the house. She nurtures it, grows it, and protects it, all the while thinking that when the tree is fully



grown, she will get to enjoy its sweet fruit. The second neighbor also plants a tree, but she plants it all the way up to the fence in the front yard, and she waters, grows, nurtures, and protects it, all the while thinking that when the tree is fully grown, everyone that passes by, including herself, will get to enjoy the sweet fruit of the tree.

Now, while they both have exactly the same work, they get very different results. To some degree, even though it is invisible, our intention, the intention with which we undergo something, influences how vastly different the results can be.

So, that's the first thing, serve the light. That means serve your own highest intention, and connect with your own integrity and your own congruence. Number two is about breaking with the norm, and when I say breaking with the norm, I mean break out of your own conditioning. Become aware of your own conditioning. Become aware of your own comfort zone. There is a teaching by the Buddha that says, "By leaving your homeland, half the path is accomplished," and that is because when you are around people that see things differently and that view the world differently and that experience the world differently, you yourself are made to see some of your own preconditions, some of your own dispositions, and some of your own prejudices. In doing that, you become aware of how you can bring greater freedom, greater tolerance, and greater acceptance into the world.

So break with the norm, get outside of your comfort zone. Whether that is walking over to your neighbor and asking how he or she is doing, or whether it is traveling to a foreign country to see where the products that you enjoy every day are being made. Get outside of your comfort zone. See yourself through someone else's eyes.

The third principle is love with abandon. That is about not just waiting for love to come into your life, but actually taking an active role in the cultivation and development of love and compassion. Love comes from being grateful, from recognizing that your existence and the quality of your life every single day depends, to a large extent, on the generosity of other people.

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Every day, people get up in the morning so that you can eat, so that you can wear your clothes, so that you can watch through this screen a teaching that is coming to you through the internet. You see we're all interconnected. We're living in an interconnected world. The more we are willing to acknowledge the people that put time and labor into bringing quality into our lives everyday, then we are willing to acknowledge their needs, their wishes, and their well-being as well. And through that our love grows.

The fourth principle, own your shit, is one of my favorites because it's really about coming clean with where you have experienced or caused harm. It's about acknowledging your own woundedness, because if you don't, there is no way to heal it. Acknowledging your woundedness actually starts with revealing yourself to yourself. It's not so much about revealing yourself to other people as it is about being honest with the suffering that you have experienced and that you have caused in your own mind. There's a four-step process by which you can actually own and also overcome the owned shit that you have accumulated in your life and that you're carrying through life as baggage.

The first one of these steps is what I just mentioned, is what we call revealing, laying open all the places where you've hurt other people or you have been hurt. The next step that naturally arises out of that is a sense of regret. Regret is not something you have to create artificially. Actually, when you truly reveal your own woundedness and other people's woundedness, regret arises quite naturally.

The third step is to reconnect, and that means to get in touch with your own wisdom nature. Whether you call that nature buddhanature, or you call it your true nature, or you call it your divine self, or you call it your higher self, that doesn't really matter. What it means is that you connect with the wisdom that lies within you and that you develop a willingness to stay connected to that wisdom and to actually ask for that wisdom to help you, to assist you, to be with you, and to help guide you throughout your life.



The fourth step in this four-step process, then, is to redirect, to actually make a decision that from today forward, you're going to conduct yourself differently. You're going to develop different mindsets. You're going to develop different attitudes. You're going to speak differently, both to yourself and to other people, and you're going to adopt different behavior. So, in these four steps: revealing, regretting, reconnecting, and redirecting your behavior, you're able to completely transform the different types of baggage and woundedness that you may have accumulated through your own life and through your own actions.

The fifth principle is to fear no one, and fearing no one is not only about not fearing yourself, it's also about the dignity and the acknowledgment of your equality. Because as long as you are not willing to acknowledge your equality, and as long as you are not willing to relate to yourself with dignity, it is going to be very difficult to actually allow others to do the same. And so, to fear no one means to recognize that you are the same as everybody else and that regardless of the opportunities or the privilege that you're born into, you have the ability to invest in yourself and to cultivate yourself, to learn more, to study more, and to train more in order to mature, in order to ripen, and in order to grow up. When you do that, you will become the one you've been waiting for. You will become the leader that is able to manifest the kind of vision you hold inside for a life for both yourself and others that is actually in congruence with your better nature or that's in congruence with your aspirations. So, fearing no one is about owning your potential, it's about resting in a dignity about that potential, and it's also about investing in that potential and cultivating that potential.

The sixth point is about dancing in the fire. That is when you practice some kind of contemplative practice, or you just practice mindfulness and [being] present, and you begin to realize the amount of emotions that are present in the mind, the different types of perceptions, the different types of feelings, thoughts, and experiences that arise every single moment. Many of those are pleasant, and some of them also are not pleasant, and dancing in the fire means that you're willing to experience the fullness of all of that without running away or giving up. And we all are sharing this experience, we are all human beings, and we all experience the intensity of

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being alive and our desire or temptation to turn our back on ourselves and on the intensity of the human experience.

So, dancing in the fire means showing up and being willing to recognize that even though this experience can be extremely intense, there's also a lot of space around that experience. No matter how intense the weather is, the nature of the sky remains unaltered. It remains as vast and as limitless as it always has been, and so, no matter the intensity of the experience arising in your mind, the awareness of that experience and the ability to view that experience from different angles remains unaltered.

The seventh principle is about investing trust. There's two ways that you can relate to trust. The first one is that trust has to be earned, and other people are always held accountable to live up to your expectation in order to warrant your trust. But because the world is not predictable enough and because other people are not consistent enough, your trust levels always remain very low. Now, this principle is about flipping that on its head and releasing the world and other people from the responsibility for your trust. Knowing that you're trusting because it's good for you, because when you are in a place of trust, your mind is more open, you have greater access to your mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual resources, and you're also able to think more clearly and make a better decision.

Now, I'm not saying that the fact that the world is uncertain and that people aren't predictable cannot be a good reason for having mistrust. Obviously, it can be and the world is full of mistrust, but it's not the right strategy for uncertain times. The better principle, actually, is to keep investing trust, both in you and in the wisdom and capacity of others so that together we can bring about a saner world. There's also something that I call the "what if" red flag, because whenever we get caught in worry and fear, it starts with "what if." What if things don't work out? What if I don't have enough money? What if I run out of time? What if I fail at what I'm doing? Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. What we don't realize is that everything we add after "what if" is a hundred percent pure imagination. But even though it is imagination, it's not without



consequence. You see, if you add something different after “what if,” for example: What if things do work out? What if we are able to change our behavior? What if humanity is able to learn from its mistakes? What if together we are able to bring about a better life on this planet? All of a sudden, you reconnect with your strength, you remain stable, you remain calm, and you remain discerning and you have clarity, and that is so much more valuable at actually directing your life.

So, the next time that you in your mind hear these words, what if, I want you to imagine that there is a large, strong Viking woman waving a big red flag and calling your attention to let you know that you're at a crossroads and that you need to choose wisely what you will add after what if. Because even though it is entirely your imagination, it is still affecting you on the level of your body, your speech, your mind, and your ability to make good decisions.

And lastly, we have this principle that says stand on truths, and that is about identifying self-evident truths over your opinion and over your righteousness. Because we all have different views, we all have opinions, and yet, they're a burden to carry around, and they're constantly confronted by the reality of lives. Now, to move from our opinions to self-evident truths is something that I call discovering the golden mountains. There are golden mountains, or self-evident truths in this world that, when we relate to them, begin to carry us, and we're able to drop the burden of our opinions and our views and actually discover things that are universal and shared by every other human being in this world.

So, as you move away from your own thoughts and opinions and to move more towards these golden mountains, and you're able to share these timeless principles and base your life on these timeless principles, you'll rediscover the strength of your own integrity. Also, as you connect with others around these timeless truths, they begin to resonate with those as well. Because one thing is for sure, everyone's heart is a very fine-tuned BS meter. It discovers bullshit and phonies from far away, and just as you're able to see whether someone that's sitting across from you is bullshitting you or is telling you the truth, so are other people able to feel and sense whether you

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are telling them the truth. And so, to move away from the opinion and to base yourself more on these timeless and tested self-evident truths, that is the eighth principle on standing on truths. You can either choose to live for something or die for nothing.

I'm Dawa Tarchin Phillips. These are "Teaching for Uncertain Times." I'll see you soon.