

Tricycle Talks

“Practical Tools for Uprooting Anger”

Episode #107 with Thubten Chodron

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Thubten Chodron: When people are upset and they take that out on others, they want to harm others either verbally or physically or however they do it, are those people happy? Clearly not. They're not seeing things clearly. They're miserable. They think that harming somebody else will alleviate their misery. And I think somebody who's unhappy and confused like that, they're not an object of anger. They are an object of compassion, because compassion is the mind that wants somebody to be free of suffering and its causes. And there's somebody who's suffering, who has the cause of suffering. I want them to be free of it, because if that person were happy, they would be behaving in a totally different way.

James Shaheen: Hello, and welcome to *Tricycle Talks*. I'm James Shaheen, and you just heard Venerable Thubten Chodron. Venerable Chodron has been a nun in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition since 1977, and she is the founder and abbess of Sravasti Abbey in Washington State. In her book, *Working with Anger: Buddhist Teachings on Patience, Acceptance, and Transforming Negativity*, she draws from the teachings of the 8th-century Buddhist philosopher Shantideva to offer practical tools for uprooting anger and cultivating patience and compassion. In my conversation with Venerable Chodron, we talk about how anger distorts our perception of reality, why the ultimate root of anger is ignorance of our interconnectedness, how we can learn to abandon negative emotions without suppressing them, and how the wisdom of emptiness can help us eradicate anger entirely. So here's my conversation with Venerable Thubten Chodron.

James Shaheen: So I'm here with Venerable Thubten Chodron. Hi, Venerable Chodron. It's great to be with you.

Thubten Chodron: Thank you.



James Shaheen: So we're here to talk about your book, *Working with Anger: Buddhist Teachings on Patience, Acceptance, and Transforming Negativity*, which is being reissued by Shambhala next month. So to start, can you tell us a bit about the book and what originally inspired you to write it?

Thubten Chodron: What originally inspired me to write it? Well, when I first encountered Buddhism, I thought I didn't have a problem with anger. I didn't yell and scream. I didn't throw things. I just withdrew from the situation, and if my teacher had said, “Oh, you have a problem with anger,” I would've thought, “No, they don't know me very well.” So since I'm a bit hard-headed, they had to put me in a situation where I would explode with anger so that it would dawn on my hard head that I had a problem with anger. So they sent me to Italy to be the disciplinarian, the *gegu*, of macho Italian monks. So that is a perfect combination of a group of macho Italian monks and an independent woman who has authority over them, and so every day I would get so mad and upset at some outrageous thing they did, because I'm sweet and innocent. I had no idea why they were making so many problems for me. I had to go back at night, and in my room, I pulled out Shantideva's text, *Engaging in the Deeds of the Bodhisattva*. I looked at chapter six, and I would practice chapter six, get myself calmed down, go back into my office. The next day, another thing would happen, and I would get furious and that evening go back and study Shantideva. So I finally realized I had a problem with anger and that Shantideva was the one who was going to pull me through this. So this is what motivated me to write the book. It was something that I was working on myself.

James Shaheen: So how would you define anger from a Buddhist perspective?

Thubten Chodron: It's a mental factor that exaggerates the bad qualities of something, or the negative effects of something, and therefore wants to destroy or get away from it totally. So fight or flight.



James Shaheen: So you say anger is a type of mind. What do you mean by this?

Thubten Chodron: We say it's a mental factor. In other words, the main consciousness that's working when we have anger is our mental consciousness. And what makes it an angry mental state is that mental factor of anger that has arisen due to our habits very often and due to what we call inappropriate attention, how we describe a situation to ourselves.

James Shaheen: Could you say something more about inappropriate attention as a mental factor and as a forerunner to anger?

Thubten Chodron: Sure. Let's give some examples and you'll see. It's a mental factor that understands, that interprets something in an erroneous way. OK, so I see two of my friends talking in low voices in another part of the room and I walk near and they stop talking. So my mind goes, “They're talking about me, they're gossiping about me, I know it.” Actually, I don't know it. Who knows what they were talking about? Being ego sensitive, I see that situation, I impute something on it, I interpret it incorrectly, and then I get upset.

James Shaheen: But what if they are dissing you?

Thubten Chodron: Well, that's their problem. If they're dissing me, they're the ones creating the karma. My thing is how am I perceiving it? And if I made a mistake, and they're talking about my mistake, if I have a bad quality, and they're talking about that, and I find out, well, what do I do? What they're saying is true. It's like saying I have a nose on my face. Everybody knows that. So if I made a mistake or have a fault, the world knows it. There's no reason for me to get angry if somebody points it out. On the other hand, if what they say is erroneous, there's also no reason for me to get angry because they don't have all the information needed to come to understand the situation. So that would be like somebody saying you have horns on your head. I've checked, big ears, no horns, so I don't get angry if somebody says you have horns because it's not true.



James Shaheen: So theoretically from a Buddhist perspective there's no real reason to be angry.

Thubten Chodron: Yeah.

James Shaheen: OK, so while Western culture tends to distinguish between positive and negative emotions based on how they make us feel, from a Buddhist perspective the difference lies in whether they lead to liberation or cyclic existence. So can you walk us through this distinction between this Western view and this Buddhist view?

Thubten Chodron: Well, the Buddhist view is really thinking long term. It's not just thinking about this life and the effects on this life; it's thinking long term. And so from a Buddhist viewpoint, we care more about creating virtuous karma than non-virtuous karma, and virtuous karma, of course, is going to have a positive motivation, so there has to be a virtuous mental factor in play there. So the distinction for Buddhists is really thinking about the effect. Because we are creating our future by what we do now and why we do it. And so we're looking in that long-term way. The usual society way is looking at the short term: Am I going to have a good reputation? Do people like me? Am I better than other people? Do I get recognition for everything I contribute? Are my ideas always right? So you can see that view is very much focused on ourselves and on the immediate benefit or harm that we're receiving. In that way, emotions that make us feel good are termed positive. But just because something feels good doesn't mean it's leading to virtue. Example: Let's say I'm very attached to money. My whole self-esteem is involved with how much money I have and being perceived as successful because I've made a lot of money. So there's attachment there. We're creating a lot of negative karma because there's the attachment there, and that attachment also motivated us to fudge a little bit on our business dealings so that we would make more money. So the attachment gives you this excited feeling of my life is looking up, but we're lying, we're cheating people, and so it's creating that kind of non-virtuous karma, which is going to result in our own suffering in the future.



James Shaheen: So you say that enlightenment means letting go of the habitual emotions that keep us trapped. So how can we learn to abandon negative emotions without suppressing or repressing them?

Thubten Chodron: So enlightenment is more than just abandoning those. There's a lot more to enlightenment. You have to really generate a lot of virtuous qualities, as well as get rid of the negative ones. So how do we do something about the negative ones? Well, the first step is to acknowledge we have them. If we are not very in touch with what is going on in our mind, if we don't have mindfulness of our own mental practices, and if we don't have another mental factor called appropriate attention, then we don't monitor what's going on in our mind. So being able to do that and see, “Oh, okay, I got angry here. I was very greedy over there. I was resentful,” and then to really see how that is causing us problems in our life right now and how it is making us create a lot of negative karma, which will result in unpleasant situations for ourselves in the future. And we're creating a lot of havoc in other people's lives when we don't behave appropriately, so we have to recognize the mental factor and admit that it's a problem. And then the wonderful thing about Buddhist teachings is that the Buddha taught so many antidotes on how to look at a situation in a more realistic way so that we don't get angry to start with. So in the situation about the people talking softly at the other side of the room, inappropriate attention imputes something that isn't there. But if I recognize that, “Oh, look, I'm imputing that, but on what basis? There's no evidence to show that they're gossiping about me and criticizing me behind my back.” So I let go of my judgment about that, and it's just people talking to each other.

James Shaheen: You know, I just want to clarify something before we continue. You have been close to the Dalai Lama, and he himself says that he experiences anger or has experienced anger like all of us. But one question I have is can anger be uprooted altogether? Is there the possibility that a being does not experience the arising of anger?

Thubten Chodron: Yes, I mean, that's what attaining liberation and full awakening are all about. I mean, can you imagine an angry Buddha? Is a Buddha going to project, or even if there is



negativity on the part of the other people, is a Buddha going to take it as, you know, “Oh, my ego is getting destroyed”? Of course not. So that indicates that yes, anger can be completely uprooted from our mind.

James Shaheen: While anger may make us feel powerful, you suggest that it undermines the happiness of ourselves and others, because you do sometimes feel powerful when you're angry and it's a bit of a delusion and it usually gets you into trouble. So what are some of the dangers of anger, and how can anger distort our perception of reality?

Thubten Chodron: It distorts our perception by projecting things or misinterpreting things. Another problem with anger is that we react so suddenly and say things when we're angry that we would never say when we're calm. We say the most awful things when we're angry, and especially who do we say the most awful things to? The people we care about the most. Is this crazy or is it crazy? The people we care about the most, we lash out at in a way that we would and say things we would never say to strangers. So that anger destroys the trust in a relationship, and trust is what holds human relationships together and enables us to cooperate and work together. So once destroyed, trust takes a long time to be reestablished. But one moment of anger, wham! That trust is gone.

James Shaheen: Yeah, we may feel that our anger is justified, though, or even necessary, particularly in cases of injustice or harm. But you suggest from a Buddhist standpoint anger is never actually useful. So why is this the case? Why is anger never useful?

Thubten Chodron: I had an interesting experience years ago. I was invited to speak at a university, I think it was University of Michigan, to people in the field of mediation and conflict resolution. So in my talk, I mentioned the disadvantages of anger. Well, they got really angry at me for saying that. They said that anger is useful. Why? Because when you're angry, you know something is wrong. Anger gives you information. And many people say that in order to do



something about injustice, we need anger, and they call it righteous anger because we're revved up and we are willing to work for a better world.

What I have to say about that is back in the days of the Vietnam War, I was protesting, and at one protest, the protesters were on one side, the cops were on the other side, and the person next to me picked up a brick or a rock, something like that, and threw it at the cops. And I said, “Whoa,” because if you're protesting injustice and you become angry and biased and lump all the people you're protesting against into one group that you hate, then your mind has become exactly like the mind of the people that you are protesting. So what good does that do? Neither side is able to listen with a calm, rational mind to the other side. Communication is completely gone. And that's when people resort to physical violence, which is harmful. and they do that in the name of restoring justice.

James Shaheen: You say that before we can transform our anger, we have to be able to identify it, as in that moment. So how can we learn to recognize our anger and its causes and not throw that brick or a verbal brick?

Thubten Chodron: You know, to recognize the cause and then to do something about it, those are two different things, but to recognize that we're angry, Sometimes you can tell by your thoughts what's going through your mind. And there also, you can look physiologically. If your face is getting hot and red, if your heart is beating faster, if you find it more difficult to refrain from raising your voice or lunging at somebody, that indicates you're angry. So you can identify those things in the moment, but to do something about it has to start way before that. Because once we are revved up, psychologists say there's something called a refractory period, which means when you have an intense emotion for a certain period of time, you cannot take in any information that contradicts the story behind that emotion. So when we are angry, we can't take in any new information that disagrees with us. Everything is negative. So to remedy this, what I found in my own experience, due to the kindness of these macho Italians, and I really have to thank them, what I learned is that we have to apply the antidotes that the Buddha taught in our



meditation. When we are coming from a calm position, then we can think about these new ideas and try and familiarize our mind with them not in an intellectual way but by pulling out situations that we've been in where we've gotten angry and imagining being in that situation and applying one of the techniques the Buddha taught or that Shantideva taught. So you imagine being in that situation, and the way you are interpreting what's going on is totally different than the way you did it before when you got angry and either exploded or imploded. And so in that way, by doing this in a very consistent way for a period of time, it doesn't happen instantly. Then our mind begins to shift, and it becomes clearer and clearer how anger is an exaggerated emotion and misinterpreting things. And it also becomes clear how all we have to do is change how we look at the situation, and then we see there's no reason to get angry.

James Shaheen: OK, well, that then brings us to its cause. Unlike you, Venerable Chodron, I knew I was angry from the start, but I was completely unaware of its cause, and you locate the cause in ignorance. Can you say something about that?

Thubten Chodron: Well, ignorance from a Buddhist perspective is a mind that misunderstands how things exist. And one of the fundamental misunderstandings is the idea of “I” or “self.” And so ignorance sees the self as some inherently existent autonomous entity that is in control or should be in control. And then, because we have the strong feeling of “I” and “mine,” because that has become concretized, then the idea of other comes. As soon as there is “I” and “other” with this concretized self, whose side do we take? Our own. The “I” becomes more important, others less important. So you're talking about attachment to “I,” “me,” “mine,” attachment to self, as something that directly fuels anger.

James Shaheen: Underneath our anger there's often a refusal to accept reality and a sense of powerlessness. So how are these two feelings related, and how can acceptance actually be empowering?



Thubten Chodron: Well, we got a Supreme Court decision yesterday. I disagree with it. That means they're wrong, I'm right. They're supposed to be people who abide by the law, who take the country into consideration and do what's right for the country instead of getting stuck in their own ideas and opinions, and I could go on and on about how wrong they are, how stupid they are, how negligent they are. Does that change anything? No. So I am powerless to change that decision. I have the power to vote, and I'm going to use that power to vote, but I cannot go to the Supreme Court and say, “OK guys, come on. You're changing that decision.” So if I got angry and stayed in that state of repeatedly in my own mind again and again playing that record of “How could they do this,” how stupid they are, how destructive it is, don't they know better, they should be this and they shouldn't be that and blah, blah, if I stay in that state of mind, what happens? I'm miserable. I'm in a bad mood. I talk to other people in a very disrespectful way. I accomplish absolutely nothing, and I waste a lot of time because I'm rejecting the reality of the situation, which is that I would love to be able to go in that building and snap my fingers and they all change their mind, and I can't do that. The anger accomplishes nothing, and I'm powerless. And so once I accepted that, then I wasn't angry, and I just thought, OK, we have to kind of look at the situation now, see, what can I do as an individual? And the thing I came to the conclusion of what I can do is I can talk. I can say things like what I'm saying to you right now about the disadvantages of anger. So I figure if I can at least say things that help people to be calm and to not fly off like that, that's a contribution I can make.

James Shaheen: One of the antidotes is acceptance, and you say that because anger is not our true nature or not the true nature of our mind we can diminish and eventually abandon it through cultivating its antidotes. So what are the antidotes to anger?

Thubten Chodron: There are two antidotes: the temporary one and the ultimate one. The ultimate one is the one that will uproot anger, and that is when we are able to realize the absence of this inherently existent person that we have made up and projected on ourselves and on others. So the wisdom that sees that things are empty of inherent existence, that can cut the root of



ignorance. And because that ignorance is one of the causes of anger, it can then stop anger from arising. So that's the ultimate way to eliminate anger. But that's going to take us a while. It's not like we sit down, close our eyes, and realize the true nature of reality. It takes a lot. You have to hear teachings and think about them and practice and meditate and so on.

So there's also a bunch of antidotes that are easier to apply now in the moment. So one was what I just said about that example of people talking. I just asked myself, “What's the factual basis for drawing this conclusion about what's happening?” So that's one thing. Another one is, you had asked what happened if that person does wish me harm and then they are trying to harm me. Well, I could get angry, but I know anger's not going to help the situation, and it'll probably even make it worse. So I want to reduce the anger, so I think about the person who is harming me or wanting to harm me or threatening me. And I think, why is somebody doing that? When people are upset and they take that out on others and they want to harm others either verbally or physically or however they do it, are those people happy? Clearly not. So here's an unhappy person. I have no idea why they're unhappy. Something happened to them or who knows what. They're unhappy, and they mistakenly think that harming somebody else is going to release their unhappiness. They just want to be happy and avoid suffering, just like me. They're not seeing things clearly. They're miserable. They think that harming somebody else will alleviate their misery when it will just harm them even more and harm me or whoever else. And I think somebody who's unhappy and confused like that, they're not an object of anger. They are an object of compassion, because compassion is the mind that wants somebody to be free of suffering and its causes. And there's somebody who's suffering, who has the cause of suffering. I want them to be free of it, because if that person were happy instead of miserable, first of all, they wouldn't be doing what I find objectionable. They wouldn't be threatening people. Somebody who's happy doesn't wake up in the morning and say, “The sun is shining, I feel so good, I'm going to go harm somebody.” Nobody thinks like that. So if this person were happy, they would be behaving in a totally different way. So compassion, not anger.



James Shaheen: Right, one technique you do mention is asking ourselves precisely that question: Is the person who is harming me happy? So how can this question transform our relationship to anger?

Thubten Chodron: Well, it's just as I described. I see they're unhappy, and unhappiness is the fuel for their anger. Unhappiness is the fuel for my anger. I understand what they're going through. Wouldn't it be wonderful if they were happy?

James Shaheen: Right, that makes sense. Another technique you say is to take a broader perspective, and you earlier talked about the long game, viewing the situation in the light of many lifetimes. So how can this shift our perception away from fault and blame?

Thubten Chodron: I'll give you another example. When we're very attached to our reputation and we're very attached to being in control of situations, when that is threatened, we get upset, we get angry. So there was a situation once where I was extremely angry at some people. We were working on a project together. They had put me in charge, and I did my job in a way that I thought was good and completed it on time, but they didn't like it because it didn't include their perspectives enough. So they were very upset, they interfered, they wanted to dismantle the whole project because of that, and they were saying all sorts of negative things about me. I thought, “Oh, how dare they! Don't they know that that's against the rules of my universe?” You know, I have rules of the universe. There are a few of them. One is that I'm always right. I don't have any faults. Whatever I say is correct and people should agree with it. Whatever advice I give, people should follow it. You know, these are my rules of the universe. Well, what's the problem here? Is the problem what they're doing, or is the problem my rules of the universe? If I didn't have those rules of the universe, nobody would be acting against them. Okay, so my reputation is being threatened. Usually we don't like our reputation to be threatened because our image, our status, and what other people think about us are very Important to us. So what I did is I realized that I'm kind of arrogant, and I want everybody to just see my good points. I want everybody to think I'm wonderful. I'm really not that wonderful, and my arrogance is a problem.



It's a defilement too. So here are these people, and they're criticizing me, and they're destroying my arrogance. Actually, this criticism is quite good because it's making me humble, and I need to be humble. When you're arrogant, you can't learn because you know everything already. If you're humble, you're receptive. You can learn. You can discuss, you can communicate, you can learn so many new things and experience new things that are totally off limits when arrogance rules.

James Shaheen: Well, let's take those people who want to take away your reputation. One thing you suggest is considering these people, these perceived enemies, as friends, and you go so far as to say that our enemy is kinder to us than the most compassionate being we can imagine, even the Buddha. So how can that be?

Thubten Chodron: Let's go back to the Italy situation. I just wanted to leave, but my teacher had sent me there. Finally I got permission to leave the center. I went back to India to visit my teacher there, and we're sitting on the top of the monastery roof. It was an open area with this beautiful view of a valley, and I'm sitting there with my teacher in the fresh air with the sunshine and a spacious view, and my teacher asked me, in the process of our discussion, “Who's kinder to you?” So let's take one of these macho men who was ridiculing me and making fun of me and interfering with my work. Let's call him Sam. That's not his name, but we'll call him Sam.

So Rinpoche asked me, “Who's kinder to you, the Buddha or Sam?” And I thought, huh? What kind of question is that? Clearly, the Buddha is kinder. So I said, “The Buddha leads me to awakening. He is so much kinder than Sam, who makes me angry, and he does these stupid things.” And Rinpoche looked at me and he said, “No, Sam is kinder to you than the Buddha.” Then he proceeded to explain that in order to become fully awakened, we need to practice the six paramitas, the six far-reaching practices, and one of them is patience, which I think a better translation is fortitude, the ability to be composed in the face of harm or danger. So he said to become a Buddha, you have to practice fortitude. You have to perfect your fortitude, and you



cannot do that with the Buddha who's kind to you. You need enemies in order to develop fortitude. So in that way, Sam is kinder to you than the Buddha.

James Shaheen: In fact, Sam is your supreme teacher.

Thubten Chodron: Yep, that's what he said. Well, it took me a while to absorb that because that wasn't what I wanted to hear. I wanted to hear, “Oh, I know he's such a difficult person, but you did a good job really completing your work and doing your best in the face of how awfully he treated you.” I wanted some sympathy. That's not what my teacher said. That's how he made me grow.

James Shaheen: You mentioned patience or fortitude, and one particularly potent antidote too is compassion, which you've already mentioned. So how can compassion counteract and prevent anger, and what are some of the methods for cultivating compassion?

Thubten Chodron: Compassion sees the opposite way that anger does. Anger sees in terms of “They are wrong, they are bad, they are harmful, they need to be stopped and punished and destroyed.” Compassion takes the opposite view. Compassion as defined by Buddhism is the wish for beings to be free of suffering and its causes. Compassion looks at that person and wishes them to be free of their suffering and the causes of their suffering. It's a total opposite way of viewing the person from anger. So of course it's going to be the antidote to anger. How do we cultivate compassion? Well, the Buddha gives several different ways of doing it. It's a huge topic in the scriptures. One of the ways I find very effective has two elements. One element is seeing that others and I are exactly the same in wanting happiness and not wanting suffering. Different things may bring us happiness and different things may cause us suffering, but just the fact of wanting happiness and not suffering, there's no difference between me and others. We're exactly the same. So that's one element, and it's especially effective when I think about the people who are my “enemies.” They're just like me. That's one element.



The second part is that other beings have been kind to me, so it's not just sufficient to see that we're exactly the same, but others have been kind. And if I look just even at this life, my ability to stay alive depends on so many living beings I've never met and don't know and will not be able to thank directly. For example, the people who grow the food that I eat, let alone the farm workers who planted it, the farm workers who harvested it, the people who transported it, who packaged it, who brought it to the grocery store, who put it on the shelves. Then, since at the abbey we only eat food that is offered to us, we don't buy any of our own food, I'm especially indebted to the people who offer it to us. And so if I look back, there's such a line of beings whose life energy has gone into producing even one noodle or one carrot that I eat.

Then if the mind says, “But they didn't do that directly for me,” that doesn't matter, because the bottom line is if they didn't do that, if they hadn't put their life's energy into the work they do, I would not be able to stay alive. So, actually, I am the recipient of a tremendous amount of kindness. When I train my mind to see that, then it is much harder to see enemies because you look and you see that everybody has affected me in one way or another, in a positive way. Even the enemies, like that example of Sam, who's kinder than the Buddha.

James Shaheen: There's something else that you said. We're running short on time, but you talked about repaying hostility with kindness, and one of the things that occurred to me is something that happened when I was much younger. I had an upstairs neighbor who was much older, and she was always hostile to me. One day, I came home and there were a few boxes at the bottom of the stairs, and I thought, “Well, she'll just have to get somebody to carry them to her because I know she can't carry them up herself.” That was my first response. I went up a few steps, and I thought, I don't know what I thought, but I picked up those boxes and I walked up three flights of stairs and I knocked on her door and gave them to her, and she was stunned and I was stunned. And all of a sudden I felt no hostility or resentment or anger toward her at all because I had done her a favor. It was a conundrum, and I thought, How is this possible? I simply did her a favor, and all of a sudden I'm no longer hostile, and she was no longer hostile. Well,



some days, she was, but generally that's just who she was. But we became friendly neighbors after that. So I repaid her hostility with a kindness I hadn't really even intended. I don't know what came over me. I had a kindness lapse. You know, that was very interesting, and I wouldn't necessarily believe it, but it did happen. But I just wanted to hear about returning hostility with kindness.

Thubten Chodron: I've heard many examples of that kind of thing. Somebody just told me yesterday that they were in a car accident that was clearly somebody else's fault and that she got out of the car, and the guy who hit her was terrified. He's really afraid, because he's afraid of what's going to happen. You know, he might lose his visa. He might lose his job. She went over to talk to him, and he was still quite apprehensive. And then finally she said, “Do you pray?” And he said, “Yes, I'm a Catholic.” And she said, “Well, let's pray together. I'm a Buddhist, but I went to Catholic school, so I remember those prayers.” So they recited the Hail Mary together, and then they just prayed for a peaceful resolution for his insurance to help. And afterwards, she was calm, and his fear had gone, and they parted in a very good way, and that's a situation that could have been explosive,

James Shaheen: So I have one last question. You say that there are two principal types of wisdom in Buddhist thought: the wisdom of understanding karma and the relative world and the wisdom of understanding emptiness. So how can the wisdom of emptiness help diminish and eradicate anger?

Thubten Chodron: Well, I just described the distorted view of ignorance about who we are and how we exist and how other people and objects exist that is not how things exist. When we can develop the wisdom that sees that what ignorance is holding as true is not true, then ignorance collapses. When ignorance collapses, then its offshoots like anger, greed, hostility, arrogance, jealousy, these things all collapse. That's how when we realize the ultimate nature, which means how things really exist, then that works to diminish this anger on the conventional level. Causes bring results. Results come from causes. The whole law of karma and effect is a system of cause

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and effect on an ethical dimension. And so that ethical dimension, you know, if you create these causes, it brings these effects. If you create those causes, it creates those effects. And so when you understand that, it gives you a lot of power in your life because you can create the causes for what you want in the future. The results may not arise instantly. But remember in Buddhism, we have a long-term view, so we're content to create virtuous causes. They will ripen. We don't need to worry about that. So just creating virtuous causes and seeing the good effects now on yourself and other people now in this life makes you happy and knowing that you're creating the causes for progress along the path to Buddhahood, which is done for the benefit of all beings, and that also makes you happy. That kind of wisdom of the law of cause and effect really helps us in our lives.

James Shaheen: OK, Venerable Chodron, it's been a pleasure. For our listeners, be sure to pick up a copy of *Working with Anger*, available now Thanks again, Venerable Chodron.

Thubten Chodron: Thank you, James.

James Shaheen: You've been listening to *Tricycle Talks* with Venerable Thubten Chodron. Tricycle is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to making Buddhist teachings and practices broadly available, and we are pleased to offer our podcasts freely. If you would like to support the podcast, please consider subscribing to Tricycle or making a donation at tricycle.org/donate. We'd love to hear your thoughts about the podcast, so write us at feedback@tricycle.org to let us know what you think. If you enjoyed this episode, please consider leaving a review on Apple Podcasts. To keep up with the show, you can follow *Tricycle Talks* wherever you listen to podcasts. *Tricycle Talks* is produced by Sarah Fleming and the Podglomerate. I'm James Shaheen, editor-in-chief of *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*. Thanks for listening!