

## Always Abide by the Three Basic Principles

The three basic principles are also described as [1] keeping the two vows, [2] refraining from outrageous action, and [3] developing patience.

The first is keeping the promises you made when you took the refuge and [Bodhisattva](#) vows, keeping them completely. This one is quite straightforward.

Number two is refraining from outrageous action. When you begin to practice [lojong](#), you realize that you shouldn't have any consideration for yourself; therefore, you try to act in a self-sacrificing manner. But often your attempt to manifest selflessness becomes exhibitionism. You let yourself be thrown in jail or crucified on the cross... Many of our American friends have done such things. However, that approach should be regarded as pure exhibitionism rather than as the accomplishment of [Bodhisattva](#) action.

Number three is developing patience. Usually, there is extreme confusion about patience. That is to say, you can be patient with your friends but not with your enemies; you can be patient with people whom you are trying to cultivate or your particular proteges, but you cannot be patient with people who are outside of your protege-ism. That kind of extreme is actually a form of personality cult, the cult of yourself, which is not such a good idea. In fact, it has been said that it is absolutely NOT a good idea.

From [Training the Mind & Cultivating Loving-Kindness](#) by [Chogyam Trungpa](#)

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### Keeping the Vows You Have Taken

The refuge vow is basically about making a commitment to become a refugee, which in essence means that rather than always wanting security, you begin to develop an attitude of wanting to step into uncharted territory. It's a vow that you take because you feel that the way to health and becoming a complete human being is to no longer hold so tightly to yourself. You can become a refugee because when you aren't afraid of yourself, you don't feel that you need a protected place to hide in.

### Refraining from Outrageous Conduct

If you have this idea of yourself as a hero or helper or doctor and everyone else as the victim, the patient, the deprived, the underdog, you are continuing to create the notion of separateness. In the seventies there was a famous photograph in which the National Guard were all lined up with their guns at an antiwar rally. A young woman had walked up and put a flower in the end of one of the guns, and the photo appeared in all the newspapers. I read a report in which the soldier who had been holding the gun - who later became a strong peace activist - said that he had never before experienced anything as aggressive as that young woman coming with her flower and making this big display. Most of the young guys in the National Guard were already questioning how they got on that particular side of the fence anyway. And then along came this flower child. She never looked at his eyes; she never had any sense of him as person. It was all for display, and that hurt. So that's part of

the point of this slogan. You have to question what's behind your action, especially if it's making a big splash.

### Cultivating Patience

Patience and nonaggression are basically encouragement to wait. Sometimes I think of [tonglen](#) that way. You learn to pause, learn to wait, learn to listen, and learn to look, allowing yourself and others some space - just slowing down the camera instead of speeding it up.

From [Start Where You Are : A Guide to Compassionate Living](#) by [Pema Chodron](#)

## Always Practice the Three General Principles

Of the three general principles, the first is not to break the promises you have made in mind training, that is, not to be tarnished by any fault or failing in any vow you have taken, including even the most minor precepts of individual liberation, [Bodhisattva](#), or [Vajrayana](#) ordinations.

The second principle is not to act scandalously,, that is, to refrain from scandalous acts such as destroying shrines, disturbing trees and other plants, polluting streams or rivers, associating with lepers and beggars, and other ways you might behave in the hope that others will think that you have no ego-clinging. Instead, make your way of life and practice utterly pure and faultless.

The third principle is to avoid being one-sided. For instance, although you may be patient with the trouble people cause, you may not be patient with the trouble caused by gods or demons, or vice versa. Or you may be able to handle those situations but be impatient with such sufferings as illness or disease. Maybe you can be patient in all sorts of difficult situations but let your practice of [dharma](#) lapse when you are happy and comfortable. The commitment is to avoid any bias or one-sidedness in mind training, so always practice that.

## Always Practice the Three Principles

1. NOT TO CONTRAVENE ANY COMMITMENTS WE HAVE ALREADY MADE IN OUR SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: If we are following the Buddhist path for spiritual growth, we make commitments as a consequence of taking refuge in the Buddha, the [dharma](#), and the [Sangha](#). Many of us have taken the five lay precepts, and possibly [Bodhisattva](#) and [tantric](#) precepts as well, if we have received tantric initiation. There are also the ten wholesome actions to be followed and ten unwholesome actions to be avoided. The author here emphasizes that, even if the Mind Training becomes the central core of our practice, it does not substitute for other commitments that we have taken upon ourselves, or allow us to ignore them.

Essentially this concerns ethics and morality, which are said to be the basis on which all spiritual practice is founded. Without a morally wholesome way of life, nothing we do can

lead to awakening - not [yoga](#), or [pranayama](#), or [samadhi](#), or high tantric practice. Let's not try to build a house on sand. Whatever commitments we make, let us keep them for our own sake and for that of others.

2. NOT TO ALLOW OUR MIND TRAINING TO BECOME OSTENTATIOUS: As we develop greater courage in this practice and become skilled at transforming unfavorable circumstances, we may as a result become overconfident, ostentatiously seeking out dangerous situations. Is it the power of our compassion that leads us to risk contagious disease in order to be of service, for example, or is it the desire to show off the superiority of our attainment? Avoid this false sense of invulnerability.

3. NOT TO LET THE MIND TRAINING BECOME LOPSIDED: Imagine a very strong [dharma](#) practitioner who, when strangers insult her, cheat her, or harm her in any way, practices the essence of the Mind Training very well. She easily transforms these unfavorable circumstances by cultivating patience, loving kindness, and compassion. On the other hand, she has less inclination to practice [dharma](#) with those with whom she comes into frequent contact. For her husband, children, and immediate relatives, she has less tolerance, feeling, "I am in charge here and I won't take any nonsense." Alternatively, one may practice very well within a supportive environment, surrounded by [dharma](#) friends or a spouse who is also a practitioner, but fall apart in the company of others who have no interest in [dharma](#).

Some of us may find it easy to train our minds with regard to harm from non-human sources, but more difficult where people are concerned. If lightning strikes, if a tile comes through the roof, if you stumble and sprain an ankle, there is no culprit to point a finger at. We may be able to integrate a thunderstorm calmly into our practice as we meditate on mental stabilization, but a truck goes rumbling by and we think, "This is terrible! What a lousy retreat facility!" If the wind whistles through the house, there is no problem; but if a person walks by whistling, the thought arises, "Doesn't this guy know that I'm meditating? This is private property. Why can't he be more sensitive when I'm trying to develop bodhicitta?" Our conceptual conditioning is at work here.

Others may have patience for the harm brought on by human beings, but not for animals. We can handle a child's noise, for instance, but a mouse gnawing on tin foil makes us really uptight. An insect bites a person: slap! One sentient being has been mashed. We may feel certain we would never kill a deer or a cat, or even kick a dog.

*Excerpted from: [The Seven-Point Mind Training](#) (first published as *A Passage from Solitude : Training the Mind in a Life Embracing the World*), by [B. Alan Wallace](#).*

## **Always Practice the Three General Points.**

1. The first of these general points is that we should not contradict any pledges we have made. There are many major and minor obligations concerning thought transformation, and if we consider the infraction of one to be insignificant we are contradicting our precept. If, for example, after having learned to cherish all other beings we casually kill a small ant and think that it does not matter, we are breaking

a rule of our practice. These precepts are beneficial for all and, like the directions on a bottle of medicine that tell us the quantity and manner of taking it, these commitments clarify what assists and what opposes our practice. We should know them well, keep them strictly, and apply them exactly.

2. The second general point is that we should never allow thought transformation to become a cause for developing arrogance. The text actually says that we should not become a 'supernatural force' (*tho-cho*); this is explained in the following manner. Often near trees and water there live Spirits which, if disturbed, can be harmful. People who are aware of this, therefore, exercise care not to interfere with them, and avoid cutting down trees and digging the ground at such places. We might consider that such precautions are only for superstitious people and that strong practitioners like ourselves need not observe them. As a result, we might cut down trees that should not be cut, agitate and pollute water that should remain tranquil, enter an area of plague, or even eat food that is contaminated. This would be a grave mistake. All such arrogant deeds committed with the conceited thought that the strength of our practice renders us invulnerable to the consequences of such actions are contradictory to the practice. We should never be like a person who not out of compassion but out of arrogance visits someone with a contagious disease, thinking, "I'm immune to this because of the force of my mental development." Actions like this are a contradiction to the training.
3. The last of the three general points is that we should not fall into one-sidedness. We should not accept some beings into our practice and exclude others. For example we should not discriminate between a human being and a dog who both try to harm us, practicing patience only toward the human and retaliating against the dog. We should not make distinctions between human beings, favoring assailants who are wealthy and socially important over those who are poor and miserable. In short, we should practice equanimity toward all beings of the six realms of existence.

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## **Always Train in Three Common Points**

These general points are: to be consistent in the pledges of the Mind Training, not to be affected and theatrical and not to have double standards.

*Consistency in the Mind Training.* We should give happiness without regret and attribute all good things and qualities to others. We should take upon ourselves all their sorrow and unwanted situations, accepting suffering with joy. We should strive to free others from their pain, offering them happiness, great or small, sincerely and without second thoughts, in particular towards those who do us harm. And we should not neglect the lesser commitments with the excuse that 'we are practicing the Mind Training.' Never forgetting the Mind Training, we should nevertheless respect and practice all the commitments that we have promised, drawing them all together into a single way of life.

*Not being affected.* In our daily lives, our words should correspond with the actual way we practice Dharma. Moreover, we should avoid doing things in front of others in order to give the impression that we are renunciates and which therefore redound to our advantage. And we should refrain from actions calculated to make others think that we are free from ego-

clinging, such as a cavalier attitude with regard to traditional religious sensibilities, or ostentatiously touching lepers or others suffering from contagious diseases.

*No double standards.* For example, we might be patient with the harm that human beings inflict on us but intolerant when it comes to the attacks of spirits and demons. We should be courteous to the poor as well as to the powerful. We should avoid attachment to relatives and animosity toward enemies, ridding ourselves of all partiality. But let us be especially respectful towards poor, humble people of no importance. Do not be partial! Love and compassion should be universal toward all beings. <scri

From *Enlightened Courage*, by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. </scri