

Two Activities: One at the Beginning, One at the End

The point of this slogan is to begin and end each day with twofold Bodhicitta. In the morning you should remember Bodhicitta and take the attitude of not separating yourself from it, and at the end of the day, you should examine what you have done. If you have not separated yourself from twofold Bodhicitta, you should be delighted and vow to take the same attitude again the next day. And if you were separated from Bodhicitta, you should vow to reconnect with it the next day.

When you get up in the morning, as soon as you get up, to start off your day you promise yourself that you will work on twofold Bodhicitta and develop a sense of gentleness toward yourself and others. You promise not to blame the world and other sentient beings and to take their pain on yourself. When you go to bed, you do the same thing. In that way both your sleep and the day that follows are influenced by that commitment.

From Training the Mind & Cultivating Loving-Kindness by Chogyam Trungpa

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At the beginning of your day when you wake up, express your aspiration: "May I practice the three difficulties. May I see what I do. When it happens, may I do something different, and may that be a way of life for me." At the beginning of your day, using your own language, you could encourage yourself to keep your heart open, to remain curious no matter how difficult things get. Then at the end of the day when you're just about to go to sleep, review the day. Rather than using what happened as ammunition for feeling bad about yourself, about how the whole day went by and you never once remembered what you had aspired to do in the morning, you can simply use it as an opportunity to get to know yourself better and to see all the funny ways in which you trick yourself, all the ways in which you're so good at zoning out and shutting down. If you feel like you don't want to practice the three difficulties anymore because it's like setting yourself up for failure, generate a kind heart toward yourself. Reflecting over just one day's activities can be painful, but you may end up respecting yourself more, because you see that a lot happened; you weren't just one way. As Carl Jung said at the end of his life, "I am astonished, disappointed, pleased with myself. I am distressed, depressed, rapturous. I am all these things at once and cannot add up the sum."

From Start Where You Are : A Guide to Compassionate Living by Pema Chodron,

At the Beginning and the End, Two Things to Be Done

At the beginning, as soon as you wake up in the morning, generate very strongly the impetus:

Today, I shall keep the two bodhicittas with me.

During the day, maintain them with continuous mindfulness. At the end, when you go to sleep in the evening, examine your thoughts and actions of the day. If there were infringements of bodhicitta, enumerate the instances and acknowledge them, and make a commitment that such will not occur in the future. If there have been no infringements, meditate joyfully and pray that you and all other beings may be able to engage in bodhicitta

even more effectively in the future. Practice these two activities regularly. Take the same approach to any infringements or violations of ordination.

From The Great Path of Awakening : An Easily Accessible Introduction for Ordinary People by Jamgon Kongtrul, translated by Ken McLeod.

There are Two Actions on Two Occasions, at the Beginning and End

The third of the practices listed here is one very frequently quoted by Tibetan lamas, and extremely important. The beginning occasion for each day is getting up in the morning. What is our first thought on waking up? We can all afford a couple of minutes in bed to prepare quietly for the day before jumping up and brushing our teeth. Sechibuwa suggests that an earnest practitioner of the Mind Training should at this point be setting motivation, resolving not be polluted by self-centeredness for the course of the day. It is important to understand exactly what is meant by self-centeredness, so that it is clearly demarcated when it arises in the mind during the day: "I recognize this; I was looking at something similar just this morning." And then the teaching of the Mind Training can come flooding in.

Again, don't be lenient with self-centeredness. Recognize this quality of mind that has brought us misery, discontent, anxiety, and frustration, year after every year of this lifetime, not to speak of lifetimes before this since time out of mind. Each morning, look at the day that is yet to unfold and really set up the aspiration not to succumb to the self-centeredness, not to value our own welfare as the priority in our daily activities. This is a perfectly feasible transformation of the mind. Anticipate responding to others with concern and sensitivity for their well-being, go into the day with this stance, and then be aware and introspectively alert in dealing with people during the day. Be aware of the quality of your mind as you work, drive, shop, take care of the children, watch TV. In other words, having set the resolve, carry through; not because the karmic results will injure us if we don't, but because we yearn to live a meaningful and contented life that opens up to greater and greater happiness for ourselves and others. Cherish that thought and motivation throughout the course of the day.

If we cannot cultivate introspective alertness, even during our busiest days, then we might as well discard that way of life, because it is guaranteed to be meaningless. Get rid of it and do something different. Obviously, I am not recommending suicide, but a change of lifestyle. Our children, spouse, and friends are not benefiting from it, and we certainly are not ourselves. What are we actually offering to our children in such a situation? The most emphatic lesson that children learn is not the words we say, but the substantial example that we demonstrate in the quality of our life. Those of us who claim to have no time for any kind of dharma practice, whether teachings, meditation, or transforming daily actions into dharma, have set for our children the poorest possible example; and unless they rebel, they will waste their own lives as we have encouraged them.

Employment in service, as a nurse, teacher, doctor, or monk, may sometimes substitute for living a truly meaningful life. There is still a karmic benefit: healing others is wholesome. But if the motivation is chiefly to earn a good living, the benefits are limited. We may enjoy the fruit of good health in a future life, for example, or meet with skilled doctors when we are sick ourselves, but meanwhile we remain mentally imbalanced and miserable. There is no substitute for internal spiritual practice.

At the end of the day, when we lie down ready to sleep, then again it is worth taking at least a few moments to look back and examine the events of the day. Remember the original resolve and recognize the occasions when self-centeredness and mental distortions arose and dominated our thoughts and perhaps our physical actions. Guilt has no place in this recognition. (Interestingly, guilt has no translation in Tibetan, although remorse does.) Simply recognize that we have engaged in actions motivated

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.

There are Two Duties: at the Beginning and the End.

Every morning when we rise, instead of planning pointless activities that waste our time we should resolve to turn all actions of our body, speech, and mind toward the cultivation of the unsurpassable awakening mind. At the end of the day, we should meditate on the actions we have performed and try to recollect them all. If we have benefited either ourselves or others, we should rejoice and dedicate any merit toward the ultimate benefit of all. If, on the contrary, we have spent the day in useless activities, we should take caution against repeating such actions and make the decision to work from now onward with more awareness and intelligence.

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Two Things to Be Done, at the Start and at the Finish

In the morning, on waking, we should make the following pledge: 'Throughout the whole of today, I will remember Bodhicitta. Eating, dressing, meditating, wherever I go, I will practice it constantly. Should it slip my mind, I will remind myself. Mindful of it, I will not allow myself to wander into states of anger, desire or ignorance.' We should make a concerted effort to keep this vow and at night, before going to sleep, we should examine ourselves as to how much we have been able to generate Bodhicitta, how much we have been able to help others and whether all our actions have been in accordance with the teachings, confessing the day's faults and resolving that, from the next day onwards, within 24 hours, or a month, or at least within a year, we will have some signs of improvement. We should steel ourselves so as not to be daunted by the work of abandoning defects. If during the day our actions have not been contrary to the teachings and we have maintained an altruistic attitude, then we should be happy, thinking, 'Today has been a useful day, I have remembered what my teacher has taught me and this is to accomplish his wishes. Tomorrow I will do better than today, and even better the day after.' This is how to ensure the growth of our Bodhicitta. *From Enlightened Courage, by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.*



