

## Don't Ponder Others

One of the problems that we have generally is that when somebody does something to us or violates our principles, we keep picking on that particular thing... For instance, because you have labored through your [tonglen](#) practice and have worked so hard, you develop tremendous arrogance. You feel as though you have gone through so much and that your effort makes you a worthy person. So when you meet somebody who has not accomplished what you have, you would like to put them down. This slogan is very simple: don't do that.

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

## Don't Ponder Others

It's talking about putting others down to build yourself up. Maybe you only do it mentally... in your mind you talk a lot about Mortimer: how you hate the way he dresses and how he walks and how he stares coldly at you when you smile.

You say "Now this is enough. I've been criticizing Mortimer since the day I arrived here. I'm going to try to make friends," but Mortimer just meets your sunny false smile with an icy stare. So you continue to ponder Mortimer's awful ways as you sit here on the cushion, and you very seldom label it "thinking" or breathe it in. It doesn't occur to you to exchange yourself for Mortimer, and you certainly don't feel grateful to him.

From [Start Where You Are : A Guide to Compassionate Living](#) by [Pema Chodron](#), Copyright 1994, Shambhala Publications.

## Don't Think About the Affairs of Others

Do not think about other people's affairs: in general, the faults of any sentient being, but in particular, the faults of anyone who has entered the practice of [dharma](#). Rather, think:

Seeing this fault is due to the impurity in my own outlook. Such a fault is not in this person. I am like those people who saw faults in Buddha, the enlightened one.

Thus, terminate this faulty attitude in your own mind.

From [The Great Path of Awakening : An Easily Accessible Introduction for Ordinary People](#) by [Jamgon Kongtrul](#), translated by [Ken McLeod](#)

## Think Nothing About the Other Side

This next pledge takes the preceding text a step further, moving to an even more subtle level of practice. What does it mean not to think about the other side? We are encouraged

here not to dwell mentally on the faults of sentient beings in general, and more specifically, not to dwell upon the faults of those engaging in spiritual practice. Even more specifically, do not dwell on the faults of [dharma](#) friends.

As we enter into spiritual practice and become more sensitive to our own faults, it is probably inevitable that we also become more sensitive to the faults of others. As many of us have experienced, this can be quite an unpleasant phase of practice. We simply seem to be slogging through our own and other people's shortcomings. We set ourselves ideals and we see how we fail to live up to them, and also how other people fail—at least in our own eyes. Now we are being told not to even think of anyone's faults, and particularly not those of [dharma](#) practitioners and our own companions on the path. It is tremendously refreshing for the mind to simply drop this habit.

When we do observe a fault, what should we do? Regardless of whether we are hunting for faults, they can simply present themselves, as if from the other person's side. An intelligent response is immediately to check the extent to which we are projecting our own faults and past conditioning onto the other person. This is especially effective if we are imputing some mental fault, such as pride, arrogance, or thoughtlessness, upon this person.

When we see faults in others, especially mental faults, let us first simply acknowledge that we are making an assumption rather than a necessary inference. It may be accurate, and it may not. Even such ostensibly unwholesome actions as slander, lying, or harming others physically may in fact be appropriate if the motivation is compassion. A parent, for example, may need to punish an unruly child in order to teach a lesson that will prevent the child from coming to grief later on. The word here is caution. Stand back from judgment, and certainly do not dwell on the faults of others. Doing so is a very unpleasant affliction of our own minds.

This applies also to our relationship with a spiritual mentor. The great scriptures of the [Bodhisattva](#) path encourage us to look upon our teacher as if he or she were a Buddha. Note the precise phrasing, which underlines the difference between this [sutra](#) practice and [tantra](#): Look upon the spiritual mentor as if he or she were a Buddha. A Buddha has no faults, no obscurations, no distortions, no afflictions. In practice, this means that whenever we see a fault in our spiritual mentor, we should be willing to consider that what we see may actually be a projection of our own mind.

To realize this is a tremendous boon requiring continual practice, and we should apply it to ourselves as well as others. When we start to belittle ourselves for our own faults, recognize that they are simply afflictions obscuring our own essential purity and our capacity for full awakening. These temporary distortions are not who we are, and we do have the means for overcoming them. This is what [Buddhadharma](#) is all about: the dispelling of distortions and obscurations. If we can develop a sympathy and gentleness towards ourselves - not complacency but self-love in the best sense of the term - then, when we see faults in others we can transfer to them the wisdom we have acquired internally. Even if a fault seems quite blatant, instead of responding with agitation and intolerance, we can recognize it sympathetically as an affliction similar to those we suffer ourselves. Rather than disparagin

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## Think Not About Whatever is Seen in Others.

We should cease intentionally watching and waiting for faults in others, but instead be aware and ready to judge whether our own deeds are correct or incorrect. Then we walk along a dangerous cliff, we do not pay attention to what is happening around us but watch our step in case we fall. In the same way, we should focus our attention inwardly: even if we accidentally notice bad attributes in others, we immediately should think that such a judgment is based upon a mistaken visual or auditory perception of negativities.

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## Do Not Have Opinions on Other People's Actions

When we see defects in others, people in general but particularly those who have entered the Dharma, who are disciples of the same Teacher, or who, being clothed in the banner of the monastic robes, are the support for the offerings of gods and men alike, we should understand that it is the impurity of our perception which is at fault. When we look into a mirror, we see a dirty face because our own face is dirty. In the same way, the defects of others are nothing but our impure way of seeing them. By thinking in this way, we should try to rid ourselves of this perception of the faults of others, and cultivate the attitude whereby the whole of existence, all appearances, are experienced as pure.

*From [Enlightened Courage](#), by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche*