

When the World is Filled With Evil, Transform All Mishaps Into the Path of Bodhi

You might feel inadequate because you have a sick father and a crazy mother and you have to take care of them, or because you have a distorted life and money problems... A lot of these situations could be regarded as expressions of your own timidity and cowardice. They could all be regarded as expression of your poverty mentality.

...

You should also begin to build up confidence and joy in your own richness... Even if you are abandoned in the middle of the desert and you want a pillow, you can find a piece of rock with moss on it that is quite comfortable to put your head on.

We have found that a lot of people complain that they are involved in intense domestic situations; they relate with everything in their lives purely on the level of pennies, tiny stitches, drops of water, grains of rice. But we do not have to do that - we can expand our vision by means of generosity. We can give something to others. We don't always have to receive something first in order to give something away... The nature of generosity is to be free from desire, free from attachment, able to let go of anything.

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

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This is the precious gift of the lojong teachings, that whatever occurs isn't considered an interruption or an obstacle but a way to wake up. This slogan is very well suited to our busy lives and difficult times. In fact, it's designed for that: if there were no difficulties, there would be no need for lojong or tonglen.

The path includes all experiences, both serene and chaotic. We delight in the beauty of the snow falling outside the windows or the light reflecting off the floor. But when the fire alarm rings and confusion erupts, we feel irritated and upset... we've done something wrong, or more usually someone ELSE has done something to ruin our beautiful meditation. As someone once said about a loud, bossy woman, "What is that woman doing in my sacred world?"

How can we help? The way that we can help is by making friends with our own feelings of hatred, bewilderment, and so forth. Then we can accept them in others. With this practice you begin to realize that you're capable of playing all the parts. It's not just them, it's 'us' AND 'them.' I used to feel outrage when I read about parents abusing their children, particularly physically. I used to get righteously indignant - until I became a mother. I remember very clearly one day, when my six-month-old son was screaming and crying and covered in oatmeal and my two-and-a-half-year-old daughter was pulling on me and knocking things off the table, thinking "I understand why mothers hurt their children... I'm not going to do it. But at this moment, everything in me want to eradicate completely those two sweet little children."

So lest you find yourself condescendingly doing tonglen for the other one who's SO confused, you could remember that this is a practice where compassion begins to arise in you because you yourself have been there. You've been angry, jealous and lonely. You know what it's like and you know how sometimes you do strange things. Because you're lonely, you say cruel words: because you want someone to love you, you insult them. Exchanging yourself for others...doesn't happen because you're better than they are but because human beings share the same stuff. The more you understand your own, the more you're going to understand others. *From Start Where You Are : A Guide to Compassionate Living by Pema Chodron*

When Evil Fills the World and its Inhabitants, Change Adverse Conditions Into the Path of Awakening

When your world is full of the pain and suffering that are the fruition of evil - when prosperity and wealth are diminishing, troublesome people create difficulties, and so on - you must change the adverse conditions in which you find yourself into the path of awakening. There are three ways to make this transformation: by relying on relative bodhicitta ('Drive All Blames into One', 'Be Grateful to Everyone'), on ultimate bodhicitta ('To See Confusion as the Four Kayas, the Protection of Emptiness in Unsurpassable'), and on special practices ('The Four Practices are the Best Method'). *From The Great Path of Awakening*

When the Environment and its Inhabitants are Enslaved by Evil, Turn Unfavorable Circumstances Into the Path of Awakening

When Sechibuwa finished his notes on Chekawa's discourses, he commented that the environment of his own day and age really fit the bill: an evil time when unwholesome thoughts and deeds were rampant. He was writing in the twelfth century in Tibet, but his words are equally pertinent to our experience in the twentieth century.

But those who have truly entered the door of dharma will begin to respond actively to unfavorable circumstances in a way that transforms them. How? By cultivating the attitude that whatever misfortune may arise is a blessing of the spiritual mentor and the Triple Gem of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. This is not to say that your teacher is throwing you curve balls in an effort to mess up your life, or that the Buddhas are out to get you. Buddhism does not attribute the vicissitudes of life to the whims of an ultimate being.

Instead, bear in mind that this teaching assumes that we have begun to cultivate ultimate bodhicitta, and to understand the lack of intrinsic identity of phenomena. Misfortunes and obstacles to practice do not exist intrinsically. For something to be a misfortune for me, I must identify it as such. If I refuse to identify something as an obstacle but say instead, "I accept this illness as a blessing of my spiritual guide and of the Buddha," then it becomes so. It takes much courage and knowledge of dharma to say that, to mean it, and to act accordingly, but it is extremely potent. We can then rebound from these calamities with courage and understanding, instead of wilting under their pressure; and this is necessary for a deep and fruitful practice.

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.

When the Container and its Contents are Filled With Evil, Change This Adverse Circumstance Into the Path to Full Awakening.

In this age of degeneration, both the environment and its inhabitants, or the container and its contents, are filled with the effects of unskillful actions committed in the past. Both natural turmoils and ignorance, the cause of suffering, now flourish. Famine, drought, floods, and ecological calamities abound in many parts of this globe, and the beings living here are afflicted with numerous problems and dangers stemming from greed, hatred, and aggression. These problems are conducive to all types of sickness, mental anguish, physical conflict, and so forth. Yet all such unfortunate occurrences result from a deep reason and cause, for we are directly receiving the fruition of unwholesome deeds that we, in this and previous lifetimes, have collectively committed. The result is that we are born into this specific era and these conditions of life and are all suffering together.

For those who are unfamiliar with the process of thought transformation, these difficult circumstances are a great burden and appear to be extremely unfavorable to the practice of spiritual development. However, for those transforming their outlook, especially by cultivating the awakening mind, these situations become an encouragement for the accomplishment of the practice. Whenever we face any problem or hardship, we should try to view it in the following manner: "These difficulties and ailments that I now have to endure have not arisen without any reason but are deeply rooted in my self-cherishing attitude. This has always been with me such that I have clutched at myself as if I were the most important and precious thing in the world. Because of this I have already committed many unskillful deeds, and now, when I experience obstacles, I am reaping the fruit of this non-virtue."

Just as when we throw a rock straight up, it falls back and hits us, so too when we encounter adverse circumstances, we are experiencing the results of past unwholesome actions done because of attachment. In another text on thought transformation (*The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*) it says that by committing unskillful deeds we create a sword that returns to cut us. Therefore, instead of being despondent, we should be grateful and joyous that the trouble has returned to attack and thereby demolish the self-cherishing attitude that was originally responsible for it.

Take, for example, an occasion when someone unjustly assails us for no apparent reason. Although most people would respond with anger, those who are cultivating the awakening mind would recollect thoroughly the assailant's kindness. He is neither harming nor abusing us but is helping us by demonstrating that the results of our past unskillful deeds are these very problems we are facing now. We should inwardly thank him for such kind teachings because now we shall know we must be careful not to create any further causes for such results. Those who harm us are like a teacher showing us the effects of our actions. His Holiness the Dalai Lama often says that our enemy is our greatest teacher, for not only does he provide us with a perfect opportunity to test the strength of our mental development, he also shows us clearly the faults of our past unwholesome actions.

Moreover, when confronted with such an interference, we should think that even though we are facing this great obstruction, many other beings must be enduring far worse. We should, therefore, produce the sincere wish to take upon ourselves their trials and sufferings. Then, although it may look to others that we are in difficulty, through our internal response to adverse circumstances, we shall in fact be pursuing a great practice of Dharma. *Copyright Brian Beresford, 1977, 1996. Excerpted from Advice from a Spiritual Friend*

When All the World is Filled With Evils, Place All Setbacks on the Path of Liberation

When a forest is on fire, a gale will only make it bigger, it certainly will not blow it out. Likewise, for a Bodhisattva who has received instruction, all such catastrophic situations may profitably be taken onto the path.

We might however think that in order to carry everything onto the path to enlightenment, we need to be someone like Guru Rinpoche, with high realization and miraculous power, qualities which, alas, we do not have. We should not discourage ourselves with thoughts of that kind! By following these instructions, we will be able to make use of every difficult situation in our spiritual training.

Bodhicitta in intention related to the relative truth

All suffering comes through not recognizing ego-clinging as our enemy. When we are hit by a stick or a stone, it hurts; when someone calls us a thief or a liar, we become angry. Why is this? It is because we feel great esteem and attachment for what we think of as our selves, and we think, 'I am being attacked.' Clinging to the 'I' is the real obstacle to the attainment of liberation and enlightenment. What we call obstacle-makers or evil influences, such as ghosts, gods, and so on, are not at all entities outside us. It is from within that the trouble comes. It is due to our fixation on 'I' that we think: 'I am so unhappy, I can't get anything to eat, I have no clothes, lots of people are against me and I don't have any friends.' It is thoughts like these that keep us so busy - and all so uselessly. This is the reason why we are not on the path to liberation and Buddhahood. Throughout the entire succession of our lives, from beginningless time until the present, we have been taking birth in one or another of the six realms. How long have we been laboring in the three worlds of samsara, slaves to our ego-clinging! This is why we cannot escape. When a man has borrowed a lot of money, he will never have a moment's peace until he has repaid his debt. So it is with all the work that our ego-clinging has given us to do; it has left negative imprints on the alaya similar to promissory notes. When our karma fructifies and 'payment' is demanded, we have no chance for happiness and enjoyment. All this is because, as it says in the teachings, we do not recognize ego-clinging as our real enemy.

It is also because we do not recognize the great kindness of beings. It was said by Buddha Shakyamuni that to work for beings with kindness and compassion and to make offerings to the Buddhas are of equal value for the attainment of enlightenment. Therefore to be generous to others, to free them from suffering and set them on the path of liberation is as good as making offerings to the Buddhas. We may think that it is better to give to a temple, or place offerings before an image of the Buddha. In fact, because the Buddhas are completely free from self cherishing, the more we can help beings, the happier they [the Buddhas] are. When the hordes of demons tried to obstruct the Buddha as he was on the point of attaining enlightenment, sending their armies and hurling their weapons, he meditated on kindness towards them, whereupon his great love overwhelmed their hatred, turning their weapons into flowers and their curses and war cries into praises and mantras. Other beings are in fact the best occasions for the accumulation of merit.

From Enlightened Courage, by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche