

## **Don't Be Swayed by External Circumstances**

Although your external circumstances may vary, your practice should not be dependent on that. Whether you are sick or well, rich or poor, have a good reputation or a bad reputation, you should practice lojong. It is very simple: if your situation is right, breathe that out; if your situation is wrong, breathe that in.

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

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If something is glorious or even just slightly pleasant, you say, "Wow! I want that." If it's wretched or even just slightly irritating, you say, "I want out of it!" The point is that challenges don't cease, and if you wish to keep your heart open, the challenges will quickly increase rather than decrease. Harmony may seem a distant hope.

Lest you be hard on yourself about being swayed by external circumstances, keep in mind the story of Shakyamuni Buddha. Just before the moment of his enlightenment, all of the external circumstances came to try to sway him in the form of the daughters of Mara. (Mara symbolizes the ways we have of looking for alternatives to being where we are.)

Just before he was enlightened, every kind of idea occurred to the Buddha. It was as if every challenge in the book came up. On that evening what was different was that he simply held his seat, opened his heart to whatever might arise, didn't shut down, and was fully there. Lest you feel bad about yourself, not being swayed by external circumstances as a total experience is called enlightenment.

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

## **Don't Depend on External Conditions**

Have no regard for conducive or adverse conditions, strong or weak health, wealth or poverty, good or bad reputation, troubles or absence of troubles. If conducive conditions come about, train the mind right then. If conducive conditions are not present, then work on the two bodhicittas right then. In a word, don't be concerned with your situation or other factors; never let go of your practice of mind training.

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

## **Do Not Rely on Other Conditions**

The eleventh practice is especially rich. The commentator points out that we may need very specific conditions or external circumstances for other dharma practices. A paradigmatic example is the cultivation of meditative quiescence. Living in downtown New York, in an apartment full of kids and traffic noise, it is very, very hard to develop meditative

quiescence. If we are living an active life, or in poor health, or very discouraged, it is difficult to reach meditative quiescence. Many causes and conditions, internal and external, must be brought together in order effectively to develop mental stabilization, and this is true of other practices as well.

But not the Mind Training. This practice comes into its own under precisely such unfavorable conditions. The point, of course, is the transformation of unfavorable circumstances into the path, so that they become aids to our spiritual practice. We don't need to save up our money for a one-year retreat to do the Mind Training. We don't need a special retreat facility. We don't need a teacher on hand at all times. We don't even need good health, let alone abundant food, lovely surroundings, and companions. All these things help, but we can implement the Mind Training in the broadest spectrum of circumstances, without waiting. There is no ground for procrastination in this practice, no way to ever say, "I really want to practice Mind Training, but first of all I have to. . . ." All circumstances nurture this practice.

*Excerpted from: The Seven-Point Mind Training*

## **Depend Not Upon Other Circumstances.**

We should not wait for the time when circumstances are favorable and all our needs are satisfied before beginning our practice. Rather we should be able to continue inner cultivation in any situation, whether favorable or not. We should remember that within the flux of existence everything passes as quickly as a flash of lightning. If we wait, we may find that before our plans to meditate in the 'right' situation have been able to mature, our future life is upon us.

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## **Do Not Be Dependent on External Factors**

When we have enough food and clothes, enjoy good health, have whatever we need and are without troubles of any sort, we should not become attached to these benefits nor dependent on them. Conversely, when we do not enjoy such good conditions, and when everything is going badly, we should use such a situation as a trigger for our courage and take them as the Bodhisattva path. We should not give up when conditions are difficult; on the contrary, that is precisely when we should practice the twofold Bodhicitta, bringing all our experiences onto the path.

*From Enlightened Courage, by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.*