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might still crave excitement, but we will not be able to physically keep up! [*Geshe-la laughs.*]

If the mind craves excitement, but the body cannot cope with the excitement, the mind might be agonised because what the mind wants cannot be achieved physically. And so, while we might get some temporary enjoyment through excitement in our early age, if we looked at the long-term benefits, particularly in regards to the future when we are older, excitement will not help us to secure a calm and happy state of mind. What will secure a calm and happy state of mind is practising meditation. Therefore, training our minds now through meditation is something to take advantage of because it is a way to secure a genuinely happy state of mind and protect our internal happiness. If we meditate now, we will derive the benefits immediately, and, more importantly, we will derive the benefits for the future. Since we all want to have a happy life and we don't want to experience misery or unhappiness, taking the initiative to adopt this training is worthwhile.

Securing a happy state of mind is the optimal way of bringing about good health and a good physical condition. This is something now confirmed by scientists. Scientists have conducted research and found that those who are able to maintain a happy state of mind are more likely to also experience good health. This has been proven through scientific measures in the medical field. Similarly, the Buddhist tradition explains that adopting a happy state of mind can definitely have a positive effect on the body because the body and mind are related and interconnected. Since there is a close relationship between the body and mind, a happy mind can contribute to having good physical health. This is something we need to understand on a practical level.

Our physical health is essential for our wellbeing, so we need to make every effort to protect it. For the younger generation, this means to be mindful of not abusing your physical body with various substances that clearly harm your health. If, in your youth, you make a concerted effort to avoid negative substances, then that avoidance can become a good habit – you will not resort to those substances. Otherwise, if you resort to using substances and are not very mindful, then you could become addicted to those substances, which would be very, very difficult to overcome. Therefore, protecting yourself from the start of your life is good.

I am emphasising these points as a way to encourage and remind the younger generation to be mindful of not using substances because they are a way of abusing your body and state of mind. In your youth you naturally have good faculties. Your intelligence is sharp and you are physically capable. Your younger years are the prime of your life because you have the capacity to do things mentally and physically, and consequently a great potential to achieve great things. If you resort to substances that ruin your physical health and clarity of mind, it would be a great shame and pity.

You may not experience the immediate effects of taking substances, but, as others have confided in me, the effects of smoking and drinking alcohol will catch up with you. You might take the initiative later on to overcome what you use in your teenage years, but your body will have already suffered a certain amount of damage. Someone has confided in me that although he gave up smoking, when he was older and had a health check-up, the doctors found he had a weak

lung. This indicates that the damage had been done, and he no longer has a strong, good lung because he smoked in his youth. So, this is something to remember and use to refrain from resorting to substances that seem fine because there is no immediate damage. The fact is that substance abuse can become the cause to ruin your physical health and clarity of mind later in your life, and that would be a pity. No one but you would experience that ill health and mental unease. So, while others may influence us to engage in harmful activities and we might share that fun with others, the ill effects of the abuse of your body will be experienced entirely by yourself. Therefore, we need to take responsibility for our health. Just as you cannot share your ill health and difficulties with others, you cannot share your good health and joyous mind with others because that also can only be experienced by yourself. No one else can rob you of these things. We might want to share them with others, but it cannot be shared and can only be secured for ourselves. As this is the case, we really need to take responsibility for our own personal wellbeing.

Having explained a little bit about the purpose and need for the practice of meditation, we can now spend a few minutes meditating. So, for that purpose, we can readjust our physical postures to be in a comfortable and upright position, and mentally generate a positive intention for doing the practice. The best motivation we can adopt is to think: may whatever time and energy I spend meditating now become a cause to benefit and bring happiness to others, and to help alleviate their suffering. If we can set this intention in our mind – for our practice to be a means to help others, and to bring them joy and happiness – then, the practice will be highly valuable. Since the motivation to meditate involves a complete dedication to benefit others, the time and energy used in meditating becomes very purposeful. Securing this noble intention in our minds would be really good. For the meditation practice itself, we will use our breath as a medium to focus on. We need to develop a commitment that for that next few moments we will not allow our minds to be distracted by any other thoughts, but instead we will bring our entire focus and attention to our breathing. In this way we will engage in the practice of meditation for the next few minutes. [*Pause for meditation.*]

That will be sufficient for now. So, just as we attempted then, it would be worthwhile to adopt a regular meditation practice in our everyday lives. This would be better than spending our time and energy completely immersed in our thoughts, worries and distractions. If we can utilise a few minutes a day just to focus on our breathing and have a relaxed, calm state of mind, the practice will really help our minds to become settled. Also, most importantly, is generating the positive intention of doing the practice because we are concerned for others and want them to be happy. This sort of positive motivation can bring about a great sense of joy and wellbeing within you. Therefore, just focusing on this positive intention can be of great solace and it makes the practice significant. We can also begin to see that the joy we feel is dependent on generating a positive attitude. There are various ways of generating positive attitudes to bring a sense of purpose and joy in our lives. We all have access to these. We can begin by recognising that whether we a happy state of mind, or whether we have an unhappy state of mind, is very much dependent on the attitude we have developed. The state of our minds depends on the kind of attitudes we adopt, which affect our minds in

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either a negative or positive way. This is something we need to identify and recognise in ourselves.

We could spend some time now reading a few passages from the text, but if anyone has a relevant question, please raise your hand.

*Question:* I have two teenage girls and I would like to know how to get them interested in meditation.

*Geshe-la:* The practical answer to that is to inspire them to meditate. If you are interested in meditation yourself and adopt the practice in your life, your daughters will notice the significant and good changes in you, your attitude and ways of doing things. There would be a considerable difference between a mother who does not meditate and a mother who does. When children notice this difference, they might become interested in meditation themselves. Also, if you see the significant changes that meditation makes in yourself, then, when they are troubled, you could suggest that they try meditating to help them become calm. They might then take the initiative to try it out. One of the main purposes of being a parent seems to be to help youngsters to have a positive way of thinking in life.

I have encountered individuals who have lamented that they haven't learnt much from their parents; in terms of conducting themselves, patterns of thinking and interacting with others, they feel they haven't received much education from them. Of course, they acknowledge that their parents provided them with material sustenance, but in terms of communicating with others and the attitudes to have, it seems that their parents may have been negligent. If parents don't take the initiative to help train their children's minds, then, the children grow up and feel they lacked that guidance from their parents, which is a pity. This situation tends to occur when parents are not getting along well together and there is conflict; instead of the parents taking the initiative to educate their children together, and help them grow up and learn the important things in life, they engage in arguments. These quarrels are what children remember and it can bring them a sort of sadness, which can cause a despondent state of mind for them.

This relates to other concerns that parents have shared with me about their children. Some parents have complained that their children are not studying, or taking the initiative to work, and seem to be mindlessly going about their lives. These parents are very concerned, so much so that they seem to shake with anxiety. However, sometimes these parents are engaging in measures that restrict the child, or they are not really taking the initiative to understand what is bothering the child. My suggestion to these parents is always to take their time and to be easy with their children; rather than try to find an immediate solution, they need to view the situation at a deeper level. If the parents can calm down and really look at the situation so that they can understand what is causing their child's troubles, they will find the reason why their child is not studying or working.

Teenagers of seventeen or eighteen are at a time of their lives when parents particularly need to support them. Children of this age not only need material support, but moral support too. If parents calm themselves and really try to understand what worries are in their children's minds, and continuously give them support, then, with time, their children may take the initiative to study or work. When children are troubled, it is best not to add to their problems by complaining to them or scolding them, because that would make them more anxious and troubled. When someone is troubled, the least

we can do is not add to their troubles. I feel that when the appropriate measures are not taken, there is too much pressure on the child – peer pressure and pressure from the parents – and some teenagers leave home to later become homeless. I find that sometimes teenagers who become homeless were in a situation like this, and found they had no home to stay in.

Parents I have shared this advice with – to adopt a different approach and support their teenage children – have told me that it benefited them and was a helpful technique. I then often advise the parents that planning a vacation with their children would be good and something that their children will appreciate and remember. A vacation gives children time to forget worries and enjoy themselves. The holiday will be remembered well later in their life, as will the kindness of their parents. Anyone who is having a difficult time and receives help or genuine concern during a troubling period will appreciate the kindness. This is something we need to consider.

Thank you for the question; it gave me the opportunity to describe the kind of advice I normally share with parents.

Before we conclude the session for the evening, let us again take a few minutes to meditate. This time, as we sit in an appropriate posture and put our minds into a good frame, we can focus on Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra. As we hear the recitation we can place our full attention on its sound, and, as the recitation subsides, we can focus on the residue and absence of the mantra. Maintaining a focus on the mantra for a few minutes in this way will be our meditation.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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