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good conditions. It is just a matter for us to start taking advantage of those good conditions.

Thus as we familiarise ourselves with our positive state of mind and adopt a positive attitude, our mind naturally becomes happier and more content. In fact, we will begin to feel a true sense of satisfaction with whatever situation we are in; we will be more accepting of our circumstances. Of course, satisfaction starts from our mental level, from having a positive state of mind and having a positive attitude. When we have a positive attitude we gain satisfaction first on the mental level, then we're also happier with our external circumstances. We begin to appreciate what we have and feel genuinely content and happy with that. We begin to experience a sense of joy inside ourselves because we don't feel that we are deprived, that we are lacking. This is something that I can share from my own experience in life. If you have a sense of satisfaction and joy inside your mind, then your sense of wellbeing is increased and you won't worry so much about any perceived lack in your external conditions. Achieving this state of mind is definitely possible. I can say this from my own experience.

When we begin to adopt a meditation practice in our everyday life, then we slowly begin to recognise that the real conditions for our happiness and wellbeing lie within us—not outside, but within ourselves. This is contrary to what we might have believed. Prior to meditation, we might have believed that our happiness and wellbeing is related to our external circumstances. And that happiness comes from outside. And likewise with totally believing that those who harm us lie in the external world. Whereas with this technique, when we begin to look within, sincerely and honestly, then we begin to realise that our happiness depends on our inner conditions, on our own state of mind and attitudes. Likewise, what harms us is also depends on the state of mind within. This is a significant discovery for our wellbeing.

The main point that I'm trying to share with you is that when we familiarise ourselves with a positive state of mind, then that will contribute to our mind being happy, more content and satisfied. But if we allow our mind to be influenced by our negative states of mind, and if we associate with those negative states of mind and continue down that path, then this only brings us more harm. The more we familiarise ourselves with positive states of mind, the more we establish positive attitudes, which help lessen negative states of mind such as anger, which we can all recognise as being destructive. The moment anger arises, we don't feel happy in our minds. Likewise, we feel happy with other negative states of mind such as attachment, jealousy or a sense of pride, or a sense of competitiveness, feeling that we have to compete with others all the time. These are states of mind that are classified as negative, because they harm our mind; they are also known as afflictions. When we are affected by these negative states of mind, they cause us great distress. When the influence of these negative states of mind lessens within ourselves, then we will be a happier, more peaceful person. This is how we need to understand it in simple terms.

While we have a happy mind, we have the full potential to have a happy mind. When we do experience a happy mind, it's relatively calm and there is nothing that troubles us. While we are in that happy state of mind, things are great, but the moment a negative state of mind such as anger arises, then our calm mind is suddenly destroyed. Our mind

is agitated because of anger. We can see the effects of anger immediately.

But other more subtle negative states of mind such as jealousy may be less obvious right away. We may be feeling content and happy, but then we notice that someone else doing well, particularly if they are someone close. Immediately, our mind becomes disturbed and agitated again. And that is because of jealousy. It has disturbed our mind. Jealousy disturbs an otherwise calm and peaceful mind. Other negative states of mind such as attachment are also subtle. Attachment is the least obvious for us to see how it harms us. We might not immediately notice the harm in attachment. And that is because it is very deceiving. Attachment seems to bring some joy and happiness, but because the harm that attachment brings is in disguise, it is one of the worst of the afflictions. Because we run after things we are attached to, we think that they are giving us some pleasure. That is why, rather than seeing attachment as destructive, we actually embrace it. We try to feed our attachment. That is why, in fact, in the long run it causes much more destruction, and much more harm than other negative states of mind. Attachment is one of the worst afflictions, because of its deceiving nature. We don't recognise the harm right away. However, with sincere investigation we would be able to recognise that as well.

The point is that if we take the initiative to protect our own mind, then that becomes invaluable, something that no one else can take away from us. When we have a strongly established positive state of mind, then no-one can destroy that. It becomes our best asset. Furthermore, others cause us harm to the extent that we allow them to harm us. But if we protect our mind, we will not be harmed. This is how we need to understand the qualities of our mind.

We need to understand how to apply the meditation technique to its full capacity, with a proper understanding of how it serves as an antidote for overcoming negative states of mind. We need to understand that the meditation technique presented here is not just a technique to focus on some object and just feel calm for a while. We shouldn't just leave it at that and feel satisfied with that as our meditation practice. Because if we resort to our meditation practice just to focus on some object and try to maintain some calmness during the meditation, then we have not applied the real method for overcoming our mental disturbances. When we come out of a meditation session, then we will find that we have the same reaction towards things that aggravate us, and trigger our negative states of mind. Emotions such as anger, attachments and so forth will arise rapidly and spontaneously again. Our meditation is not helping us properly.

But when we apply the real method, where we apply the meditation with the goal to overcome our negative states of mind, then the benefit is that when we come out of that meditation session, we will be able to recognise when we have a negative mind. Due to our familiarity with negative states of mind, they will still arise. There will still be moments when we have anger, jealousy, or attachment. Even though we have meditated, these afflictions still arise. But the difference is that we are able to recognise them as harmful states of mind. And that very recognition reduces their intensity. We will be able to remind ourselves that anger is arising, and that if we aren't careful, if we give into it, then it'll distort our perception and cause myself and others harm. Therefore we need to be very careful. Just recognising that anger and attachment are harmful will help

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to reduce their strength. And then these negative states of mind will not harm us to any great extent.

If anger doesn't subside then it becomes stronger and stronger, and might lead us to retaliate and hurt the other person, animal or object. But when the anger subsides, we become a little bit calmer, and then we are not likely to engage in actions that are harmful.

Having shared these techniques many times, there have been some young students who've said that this advice is helpful, and it has been beneficial for their lives to think this way.

Some have honestly shared that the hardest thing seems to be overcoming attachments to their friends. That is a hard one to overcome.

Now having explained quite extensively the benefits of meditation, we can adopt a few minutes for a meditation session. Adopt a relaxed, comfortable posture. An upright posture is advisable. Also have a good motivation, which means being clear about your intention for doing the meditation practice. In order to adopt the meditation practice to its full extent, you need to make a commitment for the next few minutes to not allow your mind to wander off in every direction as it normally does. Instead, withdraw your focus from external distractions as well as internal distractions such as thoughts and memories of the past. Completely withdraw from all of that and bring your mind to focus within and then on the object of meditation, which in this case is our breath; focus on the natural breathing rhythm. Imagine seeing the breath coming in as we breathe into our nostrils, and when you breathe out, imagine that you see your breath going out. Just keep your mind focused on that for the next few minutes.

*[breathing meditation]*

Question: How do we anchor a happy state of mind?

The simple answer to that is familiarity with meditation. Meditation is a technique to help protect our mind. So the best way to anchor a happy state of mind is to protect it, and that protection comes with the familiarity of meditation practice.

In order to further understand how to anchor a mind when it's happy, we need to also reflect on what disturbs it. When we are in a happy state of mind, what is it that makes that go away? It's a negative state of mind, such as anger. When we are in a happy state of mind, everything seems fine and we are full of joy. But then it might just take the slightest remark of our companion that will suddenly make us agitated and then our earlier happy mind is gone. Or it could be jealousy. For example, we have a happy state of mind, but then we see someone else doing well, a relative, sibling, a friend or colleague. Immediately, our mind gets agitated and unhappy about that. The solution is to apply a meditation technique as an antidote to overcome negative states of mind such as anger, jealousy and so forth. As soon as an occasion arises that could upset our mind, or makes us angry, we should not give in to it. We should not allow our mind to be angry, to be affected by this upsetting situation, because if it does we will be completely out of control again, and we will lose our happy state of mind. We need to understand that meditation is an ongoing process, a constant vigilance of our state of mind. It is good to note here the difference between what is called protecting our mind and restraining our mind. Protecting our mind means, from the very beginning, not allowing our mind to be influenced by negativity. That is the

protection. Whereas restraint is when our mind is already disturbed. We need to immediately remind ourselves of the negative consequences of a disturbed mind, and the restraint part is to not allow ourselves to be swept up in it.

So in brief, negative discursive thoughts in our mind cause disturbances in our mind and affects our happiness.

Our discursive negative state of mind is like a superstitious mind. In English, superstitious has its own connotation. However, in Tibetan the word superstitious relates to discursive negative states of mind as well. His Holiness the Dalai Lama says that this sort of discursive negative state of mind, or the superstitious mind, causes us unwanted fear and anxiety. When he was young living in the Potala Palace there would be dark rooms, and people would say he shouldn't go there because there are ghosts and spirits when it's dark. Because of what others say, our own superstitious mind conjures up the possibility of spirits, and that brings a lot of fear when there might be nothing there.

We had some visitors here who were making dinner this evening and they have a young daughter who is afraid of mice. So as a way for her to not go to places where the parents do want her to go, they will tell her mice are there.

These are the same sorts of reasons they would have given to the Dalai Lama when he was a young child running around the Potala. They would have thought he might endanger himself or something would happen, so in order to prevent him in going into all the rooms they would have said ghosts are there, so you shouldn't go in there.

The Tibetan word *numdul* has all the connotations of a mind that is hyperactive, but also riddled with a lot of irrational fears and doubts. A hyperactive state of mind causes us a lot of unnecessary worries, fear, doubts, and anxiety. It is nothing more than an over reactive state of mind. That is good for us to recognise.

Before we conclude the session for the evening, let us again take an opportunity to spend a few minutes in meditation. This time the object we focus on can be the sound of the mantra to be recited, which is the name of Buddha Shakyamuni. So as we hear the sound of the mantra, we maintain our focus. We focus on the sound itself, and when the recitation subsides, we focus on the residue of that sound. We experience a nice feeling by focusing on the sound of the mantra for a few moments afterwards.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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*Edited Version*

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