

# Finding Calm in the Storm

## Weekend Course Readings

### Readings, Part 1: Investigating Anger and Patience

#### 1. Regarding the nature of anger

**From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, p.16:**

*In Buddhism, anger is a mental factor that, being unable to bear a person, object, situation, or idea, harbors ill will towards it or wishes to harm it. Anger covers a range of emotions including annoyance, irritation, frustration, spite, belligerence, resentment, hatred, and rage. Although the English word “anger” may very occasionally be used in a positive sense, here, as one of the root disturbing emotions, it has only a negative meaning.*

**From *Healing Anger* by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, p.7:**

*The Tibetan word for it [i.e., hatred] is “zhe dang” which can be translated as either “anger” or “hatred” in English. However, I feel that it should be translated as “hatred,” because “anger,” as it is understood in English, can be positive in very special circumstances. These occur when anger is motivated by compassion or when it acts as an impetus or a catalyst for a positive action. In such rare circumstances anger can be positive whereas hatred can never be positive. It is totally negative.*

#### 2. Regarding the nature of patience

**From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, pp.27-28:**

*Patience is an alternative [to either expressing or suppressing anger]. It is the ability to remain internally calm and undisturbed in the face of harm or difficulties. The Sanskrit word “kshanti” has no suitable equivalent in English. Here we use “patience,” but “kshanti” also includes tolerance, internal calm, and endurance. Thus, “patience,” as it is used here, also includes these qualities.*

**From *Path to Enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism* by Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden:**

*Patience is the opponent to anger. It eliminates your anger and malicious thoughts and reduces the anger of those wishing to harm you. (p.420)*

*Patience is a virtuous mind that can remain indifferent to any form of harm inflicted by others, can voluntarily endure any form of suffering, and remain definitely thinking about the Dharma. ... Patience guards your mind from being disturbed by any harm or difficulty. (p.704)*

#### 3. Regarding mind in Buddhism

**From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, pp.15-16:**

*The term “mind” refers to the experiential, cognitive, intellectual, perceptual, and feeling part of us. It is non-material in nature, while our body, made of atoms, is material. Within the broad category of mind, we find many types of mind. Among these are sense consciousnesses – which perceive external objects such as sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches – and our mental consciousness, which thinks, dreams, sleeps, and can experience spiritual realizations.*

*Anger, like all emotions, is a type of mind. It is a mental factor that accompanies our mental consciousness. Thus, it may be affected – either subdued or inflamed – at the mental level. Patience, love, compassion and joy are similarly mental factors that accompany our mental consciousness, albeit not at the same time as anger. They too, can be enhanced or diminished at the mental level. For this reason, the Buddha emphasized that our mind is the source of our suffering and happiness.*

*The word “mind” may also be translated as “heart,” as in “that person has a kind heart.” Here we see that Buddhism does not make the distinction between thinking and feeling that we make in the West, where we believe that thought is conceptual and emotions are not. Indeed, Sanskrit, Pali, and Tibetan – all languages in which Buddhist texts are written – have no word which a direct translation of “emotion.” From a Buddhist perspective, many emotions, such as anger, have a feeling component but are conceptual, for they know their objects by means of a mental image. For example, we can be angry when the person at whom we are mad isn’t even in the room. At that time, we are not perceiving the person with our eyes, but we are thinking about him in that a mental image of him appears in our mind.*

**4. Regarding factors involved in the arising of anger**

**From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, p.16:**

*The forerunner to anger is a mental factor called inappropriate attention that, in this case, exaggerates the negative qualities of a person, object, situation, or idea and projects onto it negative qualities that are not there, thus creating an incorrect story about it. For example, Dave walks into the office one morning and his colleague, who is preoccupied, doesn’t greet him. He thinks, “This person is unfriendly and rude,” and based on this inappropriate attention that projected meaning and motivation onto the other’s action, he becomes irritated. His internal irritation leads to external action, and Dave makes a sarcastic remark, which hurts his colleague, and she, in turn, snaps back at him. We can easily see how one instant of inappropriate attention and anger can set off a chain reaction of events causing ourselves and others misery.*

**From “American Buddhist” website (regarding “the two arrows” :**

*There is a classic Buddhist parable of the two arrows. In brief, the idea is that most people, when hurt, add to the hurt. If shot with an arrow, we spend a lot of effort focused on wondering why we got shot, how we didn’t deserve that, how the person who shot the arrow is a jerk, what we are going to say when we get in front of him/her, etc. It’s like being struck by a second arrow – the first one is physical and the second is mental. In contrast, if we are able to maintain our mindfulness and not spin off into a story about our pain, we only get struck by one arrow. I might even go further than this – once we start down*

*the story road we not only make ourselves feel worse (the second arrow), but then we are more likely to do something that makes the situation worse. This is the third arrow.*

## **5. More regarding the arising of anger**

### **From *Healing Anger* by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, p.9:**

*If we examine how anger or hateful thoughts arise in us, we will find that, generally speaking, they arise when we feel hurt, when we feel that we have been unfairly treated by someone against our expectations. If in that instant we examine carefully the way anger arises, there is a sense that it comes as a protector, comes as a friend that would help our battle or in taking revenge against the person who has afflicted harm on us. So the anger or hateful thought that arises appears to come as a shield or a protector. But in reality that is an illusion. It is a very delusory state of mind.*

### **From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, pp.21-22:**

*Anger is inaccurate in its assessment of reality because, by definition, it is based on exaggeration or superimposition of negative qualities. However, when we are angry, we don't feel that we're exaggerating or superimposing anything. We feel that we're right! In fact the angry mind seems to be very clear: "I'm right. You're wrong. You need to change."*

*Under the influence of anger, we select a few negative details and form a limited view that we are reluctant to change. For example, Diana worked in the same organization as Harry, and although she didn't know him very well, they supported the same goals. One day he canceled a workshop she was scheduled to give, and feeling that his action had been unfair, she was angry. For months, every time she saw him or heard his name, something tightened inside her. Then it occurred to her that, based on a half-hour of this person's forty-five year life, she had formed an opinion of who he was that she was certain was correct. "Surely," she realized, "he is much more than this one unfortunate encounter we had." Seeing that her anger was inaccurate, she let go of her fixed opinion of him. Since Diana no longer scowled at him, Harry became friendlier to her and eventually they were able to discuss and resolve the cancellation of her workshop.*

*Holding onto and nurturing a fixed, inaccurate opinion of someone breeds suspicion and continual unhappiness. When we are mad at someone, everything he does appears wrong, and we take even the simplest act as more evidence that our negative view of him is correct. In the above example, every time Harry made eye contact with Diana and greeted her, she thought he was ridiculing her, taunting her because he had more power. In fact, he knew she was upset and was trying to create a friendly space in which he could talk with her about what had happened.*

*Psychologists speak of a refractory period that accompanies an emotion. During this time, we are closed to any advice or reasonable interpretation that contradicts our view. We can neither think clearly about a situation nor accept other interpretations of it that well-meaning people offer. The refractory period may be short – just a few seconds – or it may last years and even decades. When the emotion subsides and we are able to look at the event more clearly, we readily see, as Diana did, that anger's interpretation was inaccurate.*

*Anger is also inaccurate in its assessment of reality in that it does not perceive a situation in a balanced way, but views it through the distorted filter of "me, I, my, and mine." Although we think that the way*

*a situation appears to us is how it really exists out there objectively, when we are angry, we are, in fact, viewing it through the filter of our self-centeredness.*

**From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, p.23:**

*Due to this ingrained, self-centered view, anything that happens in relation to me seems incredibly important. I spend my time thinking about my problems, not anyone else's (that is, unless I'm attached to that person). People could be starving in the world, my neighbor could be undergoing a horrible divorce, and another colleague could be diagnosed with cancer, but after cursorily acknowledging their misfortune, I get down to the real crisis: the criticism I received. This may initially seem a trite or flippant description, but if we observe what we spend our time thinking about, we'll see that our problems, our life – everything related in one way or another to me – takes first place.*

## Readings, Part 2A: Recalling the Disadvantages of Anger and Using Meditation and Mindfulness to Observe Anger

### 1. Regarding the disadvantages of anger

From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, p.21:

*Anger may give us a tremendous sense of power, but at the same time it undermines the happiness of ourselves and others. As Gedundrup, the First Dalai Lama, said in a prayer the female Buddha, Tara:*

*Driven by the wind of inappropriate attention,  
Amidst a tumult of smoke-clouds of misconduct,  
It has the power to burn down forests of positive potential,  
The fire of anger – save us from this danger!*

From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, pp.23-24:

*Is anger beneficial? We generally consider something beneficial if it promotes happiness. But when we ask ourselves, “Am I happy when I’m angry?” the answer is undoubtedly no. We may feel a surge of physical energy due to physiological reasons, but emotionally we feel miserable. Thus, from our own experience, we can see that anger does not promote happiness.*

*In addition, we don’t communicate well when we’re angry. We may speak loudly as if the other person were hard of hearing or repeat what we say as if he had a bad memory, but this is not communication. Good communication involves expressing ourselves in a way that the other person understands. It is not simply dumping our feelings on the other. If we scream, others tune us out in the same way that we block out the meaning of words when someone yells at us. Good communication also includes expressing our feelings and thoughts with words, gestures, and examples that make sense to the other person. Under the sway of anger, however, we neither express ourselves as calmly nor think as clearly as usual.*

*Under the influence of anger, we also say and do things that we later regret. Years of trust built with great effort can be quickly damaged by a few moments of uncontrolled anger. In a bout of anger, we treat the people we love most in a way that we would never treat a stranger, saying horribly cruel things or even physically striking those dearest to us. This harms not only our loved ones, but also ourselves, as we sit aghast as the family we cherish disintegrates. This, in turn, breeds guilt and self-hatred, which immobilize us and further harm our relationships and ourselves. If we could tame our anger, such painful consequences could be avoided.*

*Further, anger can result in people shunning us. Here, thinking back to a situation in which we were angry can be helpful. When we step out of our shoes and look at ourselves from the other person’s viewpoint, our words and actions appear differently. We can understand why the other was hurt by what we said. While we need not feel guilty about such incidents, we do need to recognize the harmful effects of our uncontrolled hostility and, for the sake of ourselves and others, apply antidotes to calm it.*

*In addition, maintaining anger over a long time fosters resentment and bitterness within us. Sometimes we meet old people who have stockpiled their grudges over many years, carrying hatred and disappointment with them wherever they go. None of us wants to grow old like that, but by not counteracting our anger, we allow this to happen.*

**From *Path to Enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism* by Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden, pp.707-708:**

*The manifest faults of anger are the endless suffering and agitation that it brings. Anger causes you to hurt someone; this stimulates that person's anger and he retaliates. Because he has hurt you, your anger is increased and your angry response escalates. Your anger inflames the hatred of others and whole races can be caught up in a tide of anger. Civil war illustrates this fault of anger. Racial tensions from centuries of conflict cause neighbors to hurt each other in increasingly vile ways. Each attack causes further retaliation as one group tries to right the "injustices" and avenge the cruelty inflicted by the other. The lives of everyone in the area are negatively affected, the economy is ruined, many are made homeless and medical facilities become hopelessly inadequate. These are manifest results of anger.*

*Isolation or loneliness is another manifest fault of anger. The bad-tempered, violent, angry person is shunned and has no friends or companions. Even his only family avoid him! Also, with anger you have no peace. Your mind is extremely agitated when angry, and gives no sense of tranquility to either yourself or to those around you. As your mind is agitated, your responses are reactive and out of control. You lose all capacity for good judgment or rational decisions, and your anger drives you to places that a rational mind would never go. Anger has the power to force you to kill your own child in a rage, something you would never contemplate in a calm and rational state. When other delusions such as jealousy or attachment arise strongly, you do not totally lose control, and are able to retain some capacity to discriminate between right and wrong. But in the case of an angry rage you lose all control and any sense of judgment or discrimination. For this reason anger is the most dangerous of delusions.*

*The delusion of anger takes your mind completely out of control and forces you to manufacture your own future suffering. When your anger subsides it is replaced by embarrassment, guilt and regret. Sometimes people get so angry that they destroy their wealth and possessions. They throw a brick through the television, hurl a Ming vase at the wall, kick their car, beat their head against a brick wall, or take a suicide dive from the roof. Not the preferred recreational activity of a sane and relaxed human being! But anger is a disease that infects your body and mind, destroys your sanity, steals your peace, destroys your happiness and degrades your person. It is the worst kind of delusion.*

*Another fault of anger is that it distorts your appearance, making you ugly, repulsive and unattractive. ... Even an otherwise beautiful looking person will totally change in appearance when under the influence of anger. His face, speech and actions become like that of another person. He feels no peace and gives none to others, his judgment is impaired, he makes irrational decisions and loses control of his behavior. When you first met such a person you may have found him pleasant. When you see how he appears while angry your opinion changes rapidly.*

## **2. Regarding the role of meditation in applying these techniques**

**From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, pp.53-54:**

*The general strategy for working with anger is first to learn and correctly understand the techniques, which often involve reframing a situation so that we view it from a new perspective. Then we begin to practice these techniques in the peaceful environment of a meditation session or reflection time. This familiarizes*

*our mind with and increases our confidence in a repertoire of alternative ways to look at situations that used to make us angry.*

*Training ourselves in these techniques when we are not upset or in a tense situation is important. Just as we drive around an empty parking lot in drivers' training to get used to the accelerator, brakes, and steering wheel before going on the highway, so we begin practicing patience in a tranquil environment, not a conflict situation. While sitting quietly, we first remember a situation in which we exploded in anger or an event that brings back feelings of hurt or hostility. Then we apply the techniques to it. For example, we might rerun a mental video of the event, but practice thinking differently within it. By viewing the situation from a new perspective in our meditation, we can decrease our anger and then envision ourselves responding to other people differently. This kind of practice not only helps us dissolve past hurt and grudges, it also familiarizes us with techniques that we can apply in similar situations in the future.*

*One key to applying the various techniques is to focus on our mental attitude and emotions, not on what to say or do. In our American "fix-it" culture, when we have a conflict, it is all too easy to think, "What should I do?" We instantly want to fix the problem by changing factors in the external situation. This tendency comes from the ingrained view that the problem exists "outside," independent of us. However, as discussed before, since the problem begins with the way our mind interprets and reacts to the situation, the solution begins inside our mind as well. Therefore, instead of going around in circles trying to decide what to do, for the time being, we should shelve the urgency to fix the problem and focus on transforming our emotions and attitudes. Once that is done, what to say or do is not so difficult to decide.*

### **3. Regarding the technique of observing anger**

**From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, pp.54-55:**

*As said, to be sufficiently skilled to apply the techniques for subduing anger in our daily life, we must first familiarize ourselves with them during times of quiet meditation. However, although the word "meditation" is used, we do not need to sit with legs crossed and closed eyes to familiarize ourselves with the techniques in this book. We can simply lean back in a comfortable chair and reflect. The Buddha taught a variety of types of meditations that subdue anger and cultivate patience, for example, observing the anger, reframing the situation, cultivating opposite emotions such as love and compassion, and generating the wisdom realizing reality.*

*The meditation of observing our anger involves sitting quietly and instead of paying attention to the storyline behind the anger, simply noting the various physical and mental sensations that arise and pass as the anger flows through us. We may note the emotional pain of hurt feelings, disappointment, and unfulfilled expectations. Simply observing these, but not reacting to them by clinging to them or pushing them away, we experience them as they are in the present. In doing so, we watch them arise and cease of their own accord.*

*A hospice nurse once commented to me that she has noticed that even if people try, they cannot sustain a negative emotion for very long. Whatever grief, anger, despair, or resentment may arise in the mind, its nature is impermanent and it will pass. If we observe closely, we can even note our emotions and thoughts changing moment by moment. Such mindfulness can be very effective in letting go of negative emotions.*

## Readings, Part 2B: Accepting the Nature of Things and Recognizing our Limited Control

### 1. Regarding acceptance of situations

**From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, p.87:**

*Underneath our anger, we often find a refusal to accept the reality of a situation and a feeling of powerlessness in its face. These feelings are related, because the confusion that arises from fighting the reality of an event makes us feel helpless and unable to influence it. Once we accept what is happening, we can determine more clearly the parameters of possible action and feel empowered to act.*

*Often, we become angry because we think that someone shouldn't think, do, or say what they are or that things shouldn't happen the way that they are. In other words, our mind does not accept the reality of whatever is happening and wants it to be different, but that doesn't change the reality of what they are.*

**From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, p.88:**

*Some people think that acceptance means not trying to change the situation and fear that such an attitude could be used to support abuse or oppression. However, this is not the case. Acceptance simply means fully accepting that what is happening now is indeed happening, even if we do not like what it is. We stop fighting the reality of the present moment and let go of our anger. Nevertheless, we can still aspire and work towards improving the situation in the future. In fact, acceptance of the present enables us to think more clearly about effective means for influencing what occurs in the future.*

*The great Indian sage Shantideva said:*

*Why be unhappy about something*

*If it can be remedied?*

*And what is the use of being unhappy about something*

*If it cannot be remedied?*

*If we face an unpleasant situation and can change it, why get angry? We can act and either extricate ourselves or improve the situation. On the other hand, if we cannot alter the situation, why get angry? There's nothing effective we can do, so we are better off relaxing. Becoming agitated only compounds our suffering.*

### 2. Regarding acceptance of change and impermanence

**From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, p.114:**

*Although change is universal, we typically know this only intellectually. In the recesses of our mind, we grasp at permanence and predictability and feel that our trust has been betrayed when change that we did not predict and sanction happens. For example, we understand that our relationships are impermanent by their very nature. Everything that arises also changes. Thus, from the very beginning, any relationship by its nature is bound to change. There is no way around this. Yet unless we deeply accept this, we will be surprised when it does so.*

**From *Open Mind, Clear Heart* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, p.138:**

*The meditation on impermanence involves recollecting that all the people, objects and situations change each moment. They don't stay the same. Remembering impermanence helps us to avoid exaggerating the importance of what happens to us. For example, if we're attached to our new car and are angry because someone dented it, we can think, "This car is always changing. It won't last forever. Since the day it was made, it's been deteriorating. I can enjoy it while it's here. But I don't need to be upset when it's dented, for the nature of the car is that it changes."*

**3. Regarding acceptance of the nature of existence**

**From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, p.115:**

*It is helpful to recognize that being let down is part of the very nature of cyclic existence. Suffering and disappointment are bound to happen because we are under the influence of disturbing attitudes, negative emotions, and karma. Why be surprised when they do? Being aware of the nature of cyclic existence in this way will propel us to eliminate its causes by practicing the Dharma.*

*Meanwhile, we can recognize that others are under the influence of disturbing attitudes and negative emotions just as we are. Why should we expect ordinary sentient beings similar to ourselves to be continuously kind and clear in their motivation and actions? They, as we, are frequently overpowered by prejudice, misjudgment, fear, and greed. When they do or say things that hurt us, they are doing so because they are unhappy.*

**4. Regarding looking at things from a wider perspective**

**From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, p.116:**

*We need to put our suffering in perspective. We generally feel that the betrayal of our trust is unfair. "The world should treat me better!" says our self-centered attitude. However, if we compare the injustice we experience with the injustice that others in the world experience, ours is likely to be relatively minor. Most of us are not refugees due to political circumstances beyond our control. We are not on death row for crimes we did not commit. We are not being lynched or put in a concentration camp. Looking at our situation from this wider perspective, our mind becomes stronger and more capable of bearing the suffering. Of course, we must still oppose injustice, but we can do so with compassion free from self-centered anger.*

*Considering the unpleasant and unwished for situation we are experiencing as a result of our own karma helps our mind remain calm. Blaming others for our suffering is a dead end, for we can never control others' behavior. Instead of giving our power away by thinking our happiness depends on the other person, we can regard our own previously created actions to be the real reason for our being in this situation. People betray our trust and hurt us because we did the same to others either in this or previous lives. At first we may not like to hear this, but when we think about it, who among us has not deliberately hurt someone else's feelings? Since we all have, why are we so surprised when we receive back what we have given to others? This point of view empowers us, because if our past harmful actions have resulted in our difficult present situations, then our present actions – which we can choose to make positive – can result in a happy future.*

*From the wider perspective that includes previous lives, we may even come to be glad that the present difficulty has happened, for now the negative karmic imprint causing it has been expended and no longer obscures our mind. We can rejoice that this karmic imprint didn't ripen in an even more severe result.*

## **5. Regarding our control being limited**

**From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, pp.92-93:**

*Expecting to be happy and to be treated fairly, we feel that we have control or should have control over all that happens to us. But in fact, our control is limited. On the most basic level although we can control some bodily functions, most of them are outside of our control. We become old, sick, and die without choice. Similarly, we have little control over our minds. Five minutes of trying to focus on our breath quickly reveals that our mind instead wanders here and there, and we are able to control it very little. If we cannot control the most basic elements of our experience – our body and mind – how can we possibly control what other people say and do? Yet we falsely think we should be able to. ...*

*Our assumption that we should be able to control others is exposed as incorrect also when a relative or close friend has a substance-abuse problem. We feel that we should be able to confront the person with his self-destructive behavior and cause him to change. That, sadly, is not the case. We have to be there and help in a wise way however we can, but we cannot crawl inside another person and pull a few switches to alter his behavior and the attitudes motivating it.*

## Readings, Part 2C: Seeing Things from the Other Person's Point of View and Observing How We Co-Create Situations

### 1. Regarding seeing things from the other person's point of view:

#### From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, pp.57-58:

*Two parties in conflict often talk past each other. Each one is certain that what he thinks the main issue is, the motivation he has attributed to the other person, and the way the situation appears to him are accurate. However, often these interpretations are flawed. A few examples will clarify this point.*

*At age seventeen, Sarah was sure her parents were over-protective. They always wanted to know exactly where she was, whom she was with, and what time she would be home. If she was going to be even ten minutes late, she had to phone her parents so they wouldn't worry that she had been in a car accident. Her parents, on the other hand, loved Sarah and wanted to make sure she was safe. They were concerned that she may not yet be able to assess and handle potentially difficult situations. Sarah and her parents fought regularly over this, making all of their lives unpleasant. The more Sarah tried to assert that she was capable of making decisions, the more her parents seemed to try to restrict her movements, and the more her parents did that, the more she asserted herself. They were caught in a vicious circle.*

*Several years later Sarah encountered the Dharma and began to meditate. When the situation with her parents kept distracting her during her meditation, she knew she had to look at it more closely. In doing so, Sarah saw that she and her parents were talking past each other and quarreling over two different issues. For her, the conflict was about autonomy and independence. She felt like she was an adult and knew how to make wise decisions. She resented what she perceived to be her parents' lack of trust, their interference in her life, and their trying to control her. She then realized that for her parents, the conflict was about safety. Looking at the situation from their viewpoint, she began to see that her parents were not trying to control her life. Rather, because they loved her, they wanted her to be safe. Once she saw this, Sarah was able to let go of her resentment and stop quarreling with her parents. Once one partner in an argument has resigned, the argument can no longer occur, so her parents also relaxed.*

#### From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, pp.59-60:

*Due to misunderstanding each other's needs and concerns, miscommunication occurs on the international level as well. During the Gulf War, I was in Malaysia, which is a predominantly Muslim country. There I heard the BBC news and read the English-language paper published in Kuala Lumpur. After the war, I returned to the USA and at my parents' house watched the news reviewing the war. They seemed to be discussing two different wars. From the American viewpoint, the war was about one matter and from the viewpoint of many Islamic nations, it was about another. I had a similar experience visiting the Gaza Strip in the late 1990s. The Palestinians there had one view of Arafat as a negotiator and the Americans had a different one.*

*In all these situations – personal and international – freeing ourselves from our narrow understanding of a situation by seeing it from the other's viewpoint is an effective remedy for anger. We can ask*

ourselves, “If I had grown up in that person’s family, society, time in history, and cultural conditions, what would my needs and concerns be in this situation?”

When we look at the situation from the other person’s viewpoint, sometimes we see that she perceives it differently than we thought she did. Other times, we realize that we have little idea of how a situation appears to another person or what her needs and concerns are. Therefore, we need to ask her; and when she responds, we need to listen, without interrupting. It is all too easy, when someone explains her view to us, to correct her or tell her that she should not feel the way she does. This only inflames the other person, and convinces her, with good reason, that we don’t understand. Rather, we need to listen from our heart to what she says. After she has fully expressed herself, we can share our perspectives, and generally, a productive discussion will ensue.

## 2. Regarding observing how we co-create situations:

### From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, pp.73-75:

Another technique to counteract anger is to examine how we became involved in difficult situations. Often we feel we are the innocent victim of unfair people or circumstances. “Poor me! I’m innocent! I didn’t do anything, and now this nasty person is taking advantage of me!”

Other people don’t make us into a victim. By getting angry, we make ourselves into one. We may be the object of another’s anger or abuse, but we needn’t be the victim of it. Someone else may blame or harm us, but we become a victim and become trapped in a victim mentality only when we conceive of the situation in a certain way and get angry. The meaning of this is quite profound. Let’s look at it in more depth, first using an example of two adults in conflict.

Suppose our partner is upset with our behavior and lashes out at us. We often react by feeling, “I didn’t do anything. I’m getting dumped on unfairly.” Is this interpretation of the experience accurate? Instead of immediately losing our temper and blaming the other person, let’s recognize that the existence of this situation depends on many factors, including both the other person and ourselves.

First, let’s look at what we might have done in this life that resulted in our being mistreated. How might we have co-created this situation? Did we do something that aggravated or hurt the other person and made his acting this way toward us more likely? Looking inside, we must be honest with ourselves. Maybe we really weren’t so innocent. Maybe we were trying to manipulate the other person and he didn’t fall for it. Instead he got upset, and then we acted hurt and offended. But, in fact, our own behavior contributed to the situation.

Some people may be concerned that this is blaming the victim and encouraging people to take responsibility for others’ behavior. It isn’t. For example, a woman may have done something innocently or intentionally that annoyed her husband, but it isn’t her fault if he beats her. His unacceptable and cruel behavior is his responsibility. However, if she can look at the situation from a wide perspective, she may notice that in some instances, her behaviors trigger his. This empowers her to avoid those behaviors and thus to avoid finding herself in similar unpleasant situations in the future. In many instances, the husband may react violently no matter what she does. In these cases, she may recognize that her own emotional attachment and dependency keep her in a harmful situation. This empowers her to counteract them and free herself from an injurious relationship. By acknowledging her misdirected motivations, she

*will be more aware when forming relationships and, to the best of her ability, will create healthier ones in the future.*

*Examining the role our behavior played in the evolution of a bad situation doesn't mean blaming ourselves for things that aren't our responsibility and feeling guilty as a result. Getting down on ourselves is actually another trick of the self-centered attitude. It exaggerates our own importance by thinking, "If I'm not the best, then at least I'm the worst."*

*We generally frame unfortunate or painful circumstances in terms of blame. Either we or the other party is to blame. "Fault" and "blame" are very harsh words in our culture: they imply being evil and guilty. This way of conceiving situations leads to a dead-end. If we blame the other, we become angry, outraged, and vindictive. If we blame ourselves, we become depressed and self-destructive. It's impossible to heal when we're caught up in blaming.*

*In addition, blaming oversimplifies a complex situation. While every situation arises from a multiplicity of causes and conditions, blaming makes it look like only one cause exists. If we blame the other person, we give him more power than he actually has, for by himself alone, he cannot cause such damage. He can so only in the context of a situation in which many other people, ourselves included, participate. Similarly, if we blame ourselves, we make ourselves more important than we actually are. People often do this, by saying, for example, "The marriage ended because I wasn't loving enough," or "The project failed because I botched it up." Unfortunately, we have to realize that we aren't so powerful that we can cause everything to go wrong all by ourselves!*

*Framing situations in terms of blame is both inaccurate and useless. Rather, in each situation, we need to evaluate which factors are our responsibility and which are others' responsibility. This involves clearly reflecting on the situation, without exaggerating either our own or others' power or importance. In this way, we will observe the factors that we contributed, make amends for them, and try to avoid them in the future. We will also discern which factors others contributed, and although we may not condone their actions, we can feel compassion for their confusion.*

*Such reflection reveals to us the complexity of a situation, for we recognize that the factors contributing to it come from many sources. For example, we want to spend more time with a friend, but she is preoccupied with other affairs. Feeling ignored, we grumble about it. That irritates our friend who then avoids us. In this case, we needn't blame ourselves for complaining or blame our friend for being insensitive. Instead, we can realize that the situation is dependently arising. Some of the causes came from us, some from our friend. Both of us were reacting in habitual patterns rather than discerning what we were feeling and trying to communicate in a kind and accurate way to the other. Recognizing this, we can have compassion for both ourselves and our friend. After becoming clearer about our own feelings, we can initiate discussion about the situation with her.*

## Readings, Part 2D: Examining the Nature of the Other Person and Generating Compassion and Responding with Kindness towards Others

### 1. Regarding examining the nature of the other person and generating compassion:

#### From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, pp.100-101:

*To prevent anger from rising in response to harm we can also ask ourselves, "Is it in this person's nature to harm us?" In one way, we can say it is human nature to mistreat others upon occasion. We're all sentient beings caught in the net of cyclic existence, so of course our minds are obscured by ignorance, anger, and attachment. If that's our present situation, why expect ourselves or others to be free of misconceptions and destructive emotions? If a person is harmful by nature, then getting angry at him is useless. It would be like getting angry at fire because its nature is to burn. That's just the way fire is; that's just the way this person is. Becoming upset about it is senseless because that cannot alter the cause of the injury.*

*On the other hand, if a person is not harmful by nature, there's no use getting angry at him. His inconsiderate behavior is extraneous; it's not his nature. From a Buddhist perspective, the deepest nature of even the people who have acted most horrendously is not harmful. They, too, have the pure Buddha potential, the pure nature of their mind, which is their real nature. Their destructive behavior is like a thundercloud temporarily obscuring the clear sky. That behavior is not intrinsic to them, so why make ourselves miserable by being angry at what is not really them? Thinking this way is extremely helpful.*

*We must separate the person from her behavior. We can say a particular behavior, such as cheating or lying is harmful, but we cannot say the person who does it is evil. That person, like everyone else, has the Buddha potential. She can, and one day will, become a fully enlightened being. Her negative action was motivated by disturbing attitudes and destructive emotions, which are like clouds obscuring the pure nature of her mind. They are not her nature; neither they nor her actions define who she is as a human being. Sometimes a part of us feels comfortable categorizing people: Adolf Hitler was evil. End of discussion. But how do we feel inside when we label another living being as inherently evil? And what does that say for us when we err and harm others? Do we also then become irredeemably evil?*

#### From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, pp.101-102:

*While compassion does not approve of or condone harmful actions, it does have a kind attitude towards the sentient beings who mistakenly commit them. It doesn't omit any sentient being from its scope, no matter what he does, because underneath his pain and confusion, each sentient being is just like us – he wants only to be happy and be free from suffering. Furthermore, compassion is optimistic. It knows that because people are not inherently evil, they can improve and their dreadful actions can stop.*

### 2. Regarding responding to hostility with kindness:

#### From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, pp.102-103:

*Another way to deal with our anger at an enemy is to do the reverse of what we feel like doing. While our angry mind generally wants to retaliate by harming the other, changing our attitude and showing*

*kindness is more beneficial for ourselves and for others. We can be kind without capitulating to others' unreasonable demands.*

*Once upon a time, a monster asked to see the emperor. Rebuked by the emperor's secretaries, the monster forced his way into the emperor's reception room, where the ministers were assembled, waiting for the emperor. The ministers panicked and begin to hurl abuse at the monster in an attempt to force him to leave. "You're ugly!" ridiculed one. "You're useless," insulted another. "You're evil," condemned a third. With each insult, the monster grew bigger and meaner, until his repulsive body and negative energy filled the room, terrifying the ministers.*

*At that point, the emperor walked in. A wise person, he knew that using verbal abuse fuels one's own anger and seldom intimidates the other; indeed it usually inflames him. Speaking in a soothing voice to the monster, then, the emperor said, "You're welcome here, friend. Please sit down and have a cup of tea. Would you like some cookies too?" With each kind remark, the monster grew smaller and less threatening, until he was quite docile and sweet. At that point, the emperor asked him, "What did you come here to speak to me about?" and they had a friendly chat. The ministers meanwhile stood by, surprised by the transformation in the monster and remorseful due to their own stupidity for antagonizing him.*

*We too need to speak kindly to those we fear or find repulsive. As it says in The Eight Verses of Thought Transformation:*

*Whenever I meet a person of bad nature,  
Who is overwhelmed by negative energy and suffering,  
I will hold such a rare one dear,  
As if I had found a precious treasure.*

**From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, p.108:**

*We needn't like everyone; people have different dispositions and personalities and we may have more shared interests with some or feel closer to them than to others. However, we need to explore why we block some people out of our heart, feeling distaste, jealousy, or unease around them, all the while attributing it to the way they are, as if it had nothing to do with us and how we view them.*

**From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, p.109:**

*Remembering that everyone without exception wants happiness and seeks to be free of suffering enables us to care about others whether we like them or not. When we look into others' hearts with this awareness, the petty dislikes and prejudices disappear. Instead, we feel an important common bond with them, for we understand something essential about them.*

*In addition, by remembering that our happiness depends on the kindness of others, our petty grievances evaporate. More than any other time in human history, we are dependent on others for everything we use and all that we know. We are not independent, isolated units, but live in relationship to everyone on the planet. For this reason, affection for others, simply because they are part of the world that sustains us is appropriate.*

## Readings, Part 2E: Using the Wisdom of Emptiness

### 1. Regarding examining the nature of reality at the ultimate level:

**From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, p.151:**

*As noted previously, anger and other destructive emotions are based on false projections of the mind. While the inappropriate attention that nourishes anger projects or exaggerates negative qualities, our ignorance projects an even deeper distortion: independent or inherent existence. While at one level we know that things exist dependently – sprouts grow from seeds, a table depends on its parts – things appear to our mind in the opposite way, as if they had their own essence and existed under their own power, independent from everything else. When we are upset, our “self” or “I” similarly appears to be solid and to exist inherently.*

**From *Working with Anger* by Ven. Thubten Chodron, pp.152-153:**

*How do we apply this understanding to our daily lives and especially to situations in which we are vexed or even infuriated? Let’s consider, as an example, a situation in which we are angry because others have betrayed our trust or been prejudiced against us. Underneath the anger is hurt, and together with the anger and hurt, we feel a strong sense of “self” – there is a solid “I” that is hurt and infuriated. We sit quietly and ask ourselves, “Who is this ‘I’ that hurts so much?” or “Who is this ‘I’ that should be respected and treated better?” In other words, we try to find the “I,” the person that is feeling those strong emotions. If such a solid, concrete “I” exists, it should be findable under investigation. We should be able to locate exactly who it is that feels hurt, that deserves to be treated better, that wants to be respected.*

*Then, we undertake an investigation of the sort described in detail in Buddhist books on wisdom: Am “I” my body? Am “I” my mind? Am “I” totally separate from my body and mind? When we analyze deeply, we cannot find this self-sufficient “I.” We are left only with its absence, its non-existence. Abiding in this state of not finding, we experience freedom and peace. There is no solid person who hurts. There is no independently existing person that has to be defended. Our mind and heart rest in openness.*

*Another way to see the non-existence of the solid “I” that feels hurt is to ask ourselves, “How do I know I’m hurt?” When we investigate, we see that we know this only because the feeling of hurt exists. Dependent on that feeling, we generate the thought, “I’m hurt.” In other words, because either our body or our mind feels hurt, we think, “I am hurt.” Without taking our body and mind into consideration, we would not generate the thought “I.” Thus, the “I” arises dependently. It exists only in relationship to, in dependence upon, our body and mind. It does not stand on its own. Therefore, it does not exist from its own side, independently. It is empty of being solid or of existing under its own power. Thinking in this way, we arrive at an open state focused on the lack of a concrete “I” who needs to be defended and whose happiness is most important.*

## Appendix

### The Six Seconds EQ Model: Awareness, Waiting, and Deflection

<https://www.6seconds.org/2010/01/27/the-six-seconds-eq-model/>

## THE SIX SECONDS EQ MODEL

by [Joshua Freedman](#) | Jan 27, 2010 | [EQ Business](#), [EQ Education](#), [EQ Life](#), [EQ Parenting](#), [Six Seconds](#) |

The Six Seconds model turns emotional intelligence theory into practice for your personal and professional life.

Emotional intelligence is the capacity to blend thinking and feeling to make optimal decisions — which is key to having a successful relationship with yourself and others. To provide a practical and simple way to learn and practice emotional intelligence, Six Seconds developed a three-part model in 1997 as a process – an action plan for using emotional intelligence in daily life.

This model of EQ-in-Action begins with **three important pursuits**: to become more aware (noticing what you do), more intentional (doing what you mean), and more purposeful (doing it for a reason).

### **Know Yourself** *Clearly seeing what you feel and do*

Emotions are data, and these competencies allow you to accurately collect that information. **Know Yourself** gives you the “**what**” – when you Know Yourself, you know your strengths and challenges, you know what you are doing, what you want, and what to change.

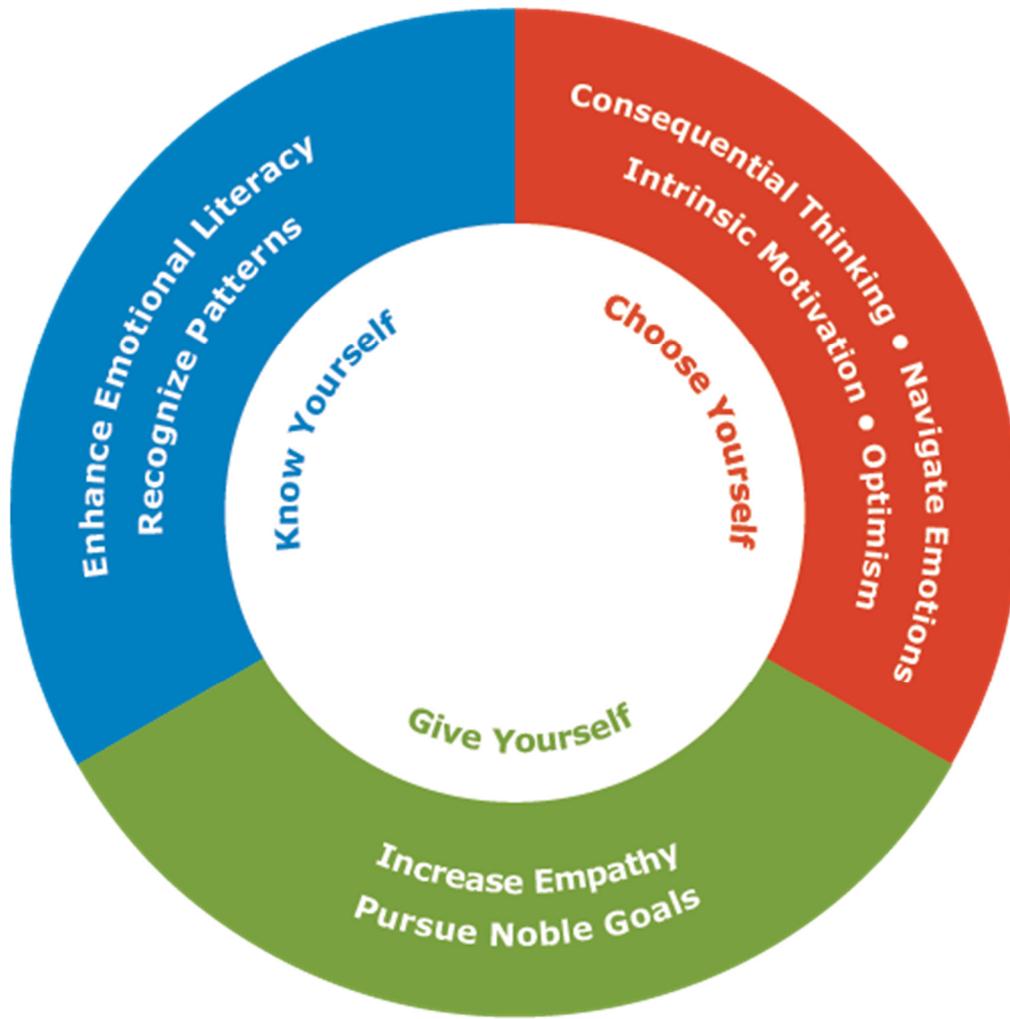
### **Choose Yourself** *Doing what you mean to do.*

Instead of reacting “on autopilot,” these competencies allow you to proactively respond. **Choose Yourself** provides the “**how**” – it shows you how to take action, how to influence yourself and others, how to “operationalize” these concepts.

### **Give Yourself** *Doing it for a reason.*

These competencies help you put your vision and mission into action so you lead on purpose and with full integrity. **Give Yourself** delivers the “**why**” – when you Give Yourself you are clear and full of energy so you stay focused on why to respond a certain way, why to move in a new direction, and why others should come on board.

You’ll notice we present the model in a CIRCLE – it’s not a list, it’s a process! The process works when you spin it, like a propeller moving a ship. As you move through these three pursuits you gain positive momentum!



Pursuit	Competency	Definition
<b>Know Yourself</b>	<b>Enhance Emotional Literacy</b>	Accurately identifying and interpreting both simple and compound feelings.
	<b>Recognize Patterns</b>	Acknowledging frequently recurring reactions and behaviors.
<b>Choose Yourself</b>	<b>Apply Consequential Thinking</b>	Evaluating the costs and benefits of your choices
	<b>Navigate Emotions</b>	Assessing, harnessing, and transforming emotions as a strategic resource.

	<b>Engage Intrinsic Motivation</b>	Gaining energy from personal values & commitments vs. being driven by external forces.
	<b>Exercise Optimism</b>	Taking a proactive perspective of hope and possibility.
<b>Give Yourself</b>	<b>Increase Empathy</b>	Recognizing and appropriately responding to others' emotions.
	<b>Pursue Noble Goals</b>	Connecting your daily choices with your overarching sense of purpose.

Try this exercise:

Think of a challenging situation you had this past week.

Practice the pursuit of Know Yourself (i.e., self-awareness) by asking yourself: What were your thoughts? Your feelings? Any patterns in these thoughts or feelings (can you recognize that you often have these)?

Reflect: How might Knowing Yourself help you with choices, decisions, and outcomes? What would it be like to be able to Know Yourself more?