Dealing with Stress, Anxiety and Suffering - Geshe Tenzin Zopa - 22 August 2026

1. Recognising the full nature of suffering

- Settle the mind and establish bodhicitta motivation
  - Use breathing to bring body and mind into the present
  - Dedicate the teaching to the enlightenment of all beings
- Suffering includes anything contaminated by karma and delusion
- Three kinds of suffering
  - Suffering of pain
    - Obvious physical and emotional pain
    - Inconvenience and distress
  - Suffering of change
    - Ordinary minds mistake it for pleasure
    - Sensory pleasure and excitement cannot last
    - Fulfilled desires end through exhaustion or turn into pain
    - Status, beauty, health, power and longevity decline
  - Pervasive conditioned suffering
    - Having a body and mind produced by karma and delusion
    - Underlying vulnerability to ageing, illness and death
    - Present even when obvious pain is absent
- Recognition is not pessimism
  - The first noble truth: suffering is to be understood
  - Seeing samsara's limitations generates renunciation
  - Renunciation seeks genuine freedom rather than insecure conditions

2. Suffering has causes and can be overcome

- Suffering is dependently arisen
  - Not random
  - Not imposed by an outside creator
  - Changes when its causes and conditions change
- Causal sequence
  - Confusion about what is true and beneficial
  - Self-grasping ignorance
  - Anger, attachment, ego, jealousy and self-centredness
  - Karmic actions of body, speech and mind
  - Karmic potentials
  - Samsaric experiences, stress and suffering
- Second noble truth
  - The causes of suffering are to be abandoned
  - Karma and delusion must be opposed by their antidotes
- Transformation remains possible
  - Causes and habits are not fixed
  - Every being has buddha-potential
  - The Buddha's awakening demonstrates that the path works

3. The path combines method and wisdom

- Method transforms the emotional response
  - Love
  - Compassion and empathy
  - Patience
  - Generosity
  - Ethical discipline
  - Concentration
  - Bodhicitta
  - Service concerned with others' wellbeing
- Wisdom transforms mistaken perception
  - Impermanence
  - Selflessness
  - Dependent arising
  - Emptiness
- Take negative emotion onto the path
  - Do not expect a beginner to remove it instantly
  - Examine its disadvantages with reasoning
  - Reflect on the benefits of the antidote
  - Use each occurrence as an opportunity to train
- Buddhist mind training is Buddhist psychology
  - Transform problems through beneficial attitude
  - Understand problems through wisdom

4. Difficult people can become spiritual teachers

- Anger harms the angry person immediately
  - Like holding a burning coal to throw at an enemy
  - Whether or not it reaches them, your hand is already burning
- The disturbing person as a teacher in disguise
  - Pleasant people do not test our patience
  - Difficult people and times train the heart
  - Patience is essential to becoming a bodhisattva or buddha
- See the suffering behind harmful behaviour
  - Genuinely happy and compassionate people do not deliberately hurt others
  - People who harm reveal their own lack of wellbeing
  - They especially need care, prayer, forgiveness and understanding
- Compassion does not approve harmful conduct
  - It refuses to let another person's actions govern one's mind
  - It replaces retaliation with understanding and wise response
- Repeated training
  - Anger gradually gives way to patience
  - Hostility gradually gives way to compassion
  - Eventually difficulties accelerate progress on the path

5. Inner transformation provides real protection

- The leather and thorns analogy
  - We cannot cover the whole earth with leather
  - We can protect our feet with shoes
  - We cannot control everyone or remove every difficulty
  - We can train the mind that encounters them
- Compassion as protection
  - Reduces fear and suspicion
  - Relieves exhausting anxious restlessness
  - Makes peace less dependent on others behaving as desired
- Geshe-la's brother: an ordinary example of fearlessness
  - Does not waste life worrying about death
  - Lives harmlessly and does not obsess about attack
  - Helps people whom others neglect
  - Acts with humility, humanity and respect
  - Does good without seeking recognition
  - His protection from fear comes from compassionate living
- Compassion is universal
  - Does not depend on being religious
  - Can govern seeing, acting and experiencing

6. Compassionate nature is deeper than affliction

- Anger, fear and violence are temporary conditions
- They are not the fundamental identity of the person
- The confused mind magnifies a passing part
  - I am an angry person
  - I am an unhappy person
- Every being possesses
  - Compassionate nature
  - Buddha-potential
  - The capacity for peace and awakening
- Relate to difficult emotion skilfully
  - Not by violently rejecting it
  - Kindly
  - Gently
  - Peacefully
  - Wisely
  - Compassionately
- This gentle relationship begins transformation and freedom

7. A peaceful inner revolution

- The corrupt inner government
  - Self-grasping ignorance as misguided leader
  - Self-cherishing as a powerful minister
  - Attachment, anger, jealousy and ego as other ministers
  - They claim to protect us but produce insecurity and conflict
  - The 84,000 delusions as toxic officials
- Policies of the old government
  - Satisfy attachment
  - Retaliate when harmed
  - Defeat others and always win
  - Create safety through aggression
  - Result: less peace, less safety and more anxiety
- Dharma changes the government peacefully
  - Ignorance becomes wisdom
  - Self-centredness becomes compassion and cherishing others
  - Anger becomes patience
  - Jealousy becomes rejoicing
- Policies of the new government
  - Communicate through compassion and respect
  - Practise in family, work and relationship with oneself
  - Create both temporary wellbeing and ultimate happiness
- The attitude determines the experience
  - Another's success can become jealousy and pain
  - The same success can become shared joy through rejoicing

8. The solid suffering self cannot be found

- Investigate the person experiencing fear, stress and anxiety
- Past and future suffering involve mental projection
  - Painful memories are brought into the present
  - Anxiety projects uncertainty into the future
  - These projections appear more solid than they are
- Search within the five aggregates
  - Form
  - Feeling
  - Discrimination
  - Compositional factors
  - Consciousness
  - No part or collection can be found as an independent self
- Search outside the aggregates
  - No independently separate self can be found
- Avoid nihilism
  - The person conventionally exists and functions
  - Karma, liberation and enlightenment remain meaningful
  - The person exists through a valid basis and mental designation
- The name Tenzin Zopa as an example
  - Depends on parents, culture, place, language and convention
  - A merely designated name is real but not independently established
  - A label requires a valid basis
- Apply the insight to anxiety
  - A dependently existing person experiences dependently existing anxiety
  - Neither possesses the solidity it appears to have
  - Analysis loosens the reaction and power of emotion

9. Impermanence is immediate medicine

- The mind exaggerates a problem
  - This is enormous
  - This is solid
  - This is permanent
  - This will be with me forever
- Apply the wisdom of impermanence
  - This is painful, but it will change
  - It cannot remain forever
  - I can take it easy and respond clearly
- Immediate benefits
  - Reduces panic, fear and confusion
  - Creates mental space
  - Allows solutions to be seen more quickly
  - Loosens the deeper grasping at inherent existence
- Problems inevitably change
  - Either the problem gives up on us or we give up on it
- Apply impermanence to pleasure too
  - Enjoy pleasant experience without grasping
  - Relationships, health, business and outer conditions all change
- Immediate medicine is not necessarily the complete cure
  - It stabilises the mind for deeper compassion or emptiness practice

10. True happiness arises from virtue

- What true happiness is not
  - Mere excitement
  - Emotional elation
  - Sensory pleasure
  - Material success by itself
- Lottery example
  - Wealth may initially produce excitement
  - Without virtue it can create more stress and problems
- Sources of genuine fulfilment
  - Wisdom
  - Compassion
  - Virtue
  - Universal human values
  - Benefiting others
- Quiet joy can survive changing conditions
  - Its source is within
  - Illness and death need not destroy it
- Rejoicing renews happiness
  - Recognise and appreciate one's own good actions without boasting
  - Rejoice in the virtue and happiness of others
  - Each recollection strengthens joy and merit
  - Positive karma produces results similar to its cause

11. Guidance opens the way; practice transforms

- A buddha cannot simply
  - Remove another being's karma
  - Remove another being's suffering
  - Place compassion or wisdom into another mind
  - Force enlightenment upon anyone
- The Buddha benefits beings by revealing Dharma
  - Wisdom and methods he personally practised
  - Guidance adapted to different dispositions
  - His own awakening is proof of possibility
- Each person must
  - Receive correct guidance
  - Understand it
  - Apply it sincerely
  - Train repeatedly
- Responsibility and hope
  - Transformation lies in our own hands
  - Every being has the potential to become peaceful and awakened
  - If we train as the Buddha trained, we can reach the result he reached

12. Every experience can be taken onto the path

- Mind training does not wait for ideal circumstances
- Material for the path
  - Happiness
  - Suffering
  - Difficult people
  - Illness and emotional pain
  - Fear and uncertainty
- Meet experience with method
  - Live with bodhicitta
  - Experience suffering with compassion
  - Communicate compassionately with others
  - Relate compassionately to oneself
  - Enjoy happiness without grasping
- Meet experience with wisdom
  - Recognise impermanence
  - Investigate dependent arising
  - Examine the empty nature of self and emotion
- Taking suffering onto the path does not deny pain
  - It prevents pain from being spiritually wasted
  - Difficulty becomes training in compassion, patience and wisdom
- Core instruction
  - Understand suffering's causes, recognise its impermanent and empty nature, and transform the response through compassion, patience, wisdom and rejoicing.