

How to Overcome Depression

A student wrote to Lama Zopa Rinpoche saying that they had stopped doing their Buddhist practices and became depressed. Rinpoche responded:

“My most kind, most dear, most precious wishfulfilling one,

I know that being in the West in such a society with different concepts can lead to depression, and all these kinds of things happen. Many of the people in the West have this. They go through so much depression and take heavy medicine and the medicine destroys their healthy body and mind.

So the essence, my advice, is to read the section of lam-rim on perfect human rebirth. Read about the three types of usefulness; how it is most difficult to find again; and what you have now won't last forever because there is death. Not only is there death, but death can happen so easily, at any time. After death, the body and mind separate. The mind continues. Even after enlightenment the mind continues. Even after nirvana and after enlightenment the mind continues, and even in your samsara the mind continues. So you must read that section in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* well.

That and think about the clear light nature of mind. Geshe Sopa Rinpoche said that is related to the absolute truth and the sunyata nature of the mind, which is Buddha nature. So because the nature of mind is clear, that's why no matter how much suffering there is it is temporary, and why the cause of suffering, delusion and karma, is temporary. It is not oneness with the clear light nature of mind. It is not oneness with the mind. The mind is temporarily obscured due to the wrong causes and conditions. Due to the right causes and conditions negative karma can be purified - because of Buddha nature. The ultimate nature of the mind is only emptiness. Just like a dirty towel that can be washed with water and soap and even the gross dirt gets removed, and then the subtle smell can be removed by washing with soap again, so too not only the gross delusions but also the subtle obscurations can be purified by actualizing the path. The mind can be totally cleaned. So that's why the mind can become enlightened. Our mind can become enlightened because all the gross and subtle obscurations can be purified. All the qualities are there. There's nothing more to gain, so once the gross and subtle obscurations are purified you become *sanggye*, you become Buddha. That's why all sentient beings can become enlightened. No matter how great the suffering may be, you can be liberated, even from the suffering of hell. These things are only temporary and can be ceased, you can be liberated from all the sufferings.

So it all depends on what you do with your mind. Therefore, the mind can be kept totally in great happiness by reading the lam-rim, by meditating, and by thinking about what I said. Mainly that. You do that for a few months. On the basis of what I'm saying now about the nature of mind, meditate on Buddha nature. You can even be free from the hell sufferings. It's just temporary. It's not forever. It's impermanent. Compared to the hell suffering no matter how heavy the human suffering may appear to be, it's great peace. It's like nirvana. You have to understand that.

Don't worry about what happened in the past, that you couldn't do this and you couldn't do that - these things happen because we are human beings and have strong delusions. But now put in effort and do your best.

My idea is you follow universal education, the seven things that are the basis - from being kind day and night to others; then the sixteen human dharmas. Follow that. Then the ten divine dharma after that. So those seven things at the beginning bring so much happiness in life, good luck.

Recite more Thirty-five Buddhas but without a distracted mind. It is the Thirty-five Buddhas but it's the Guru sending light to you and purifying your negative karma and obscurations collected since beginningless rebirth. The other thing is you need to do tsog, Lama Chopa tsog. On the tsog day, you can ask to do more number of the tsog verses *ting dzin ngag dang...* and you offer numberless oceans of nectar tsog to the Guru-Buddha. After each *om ah hung* generate great bliss and light is sent to you purifying all the negative karma and imprints collected since beginningless rebirth.

With much love and prayers,
Lama Zopa

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