



THE
DALAI LAMA
FOUNDATION™

*An International Organization
for Ethics and Peace*

STUDY GUIDE
FOR
BEYOND RELIGION

May 2014

Study Guide for Beyond Religion

*It is my hope that this will be a century of peace, a century of dialogue —
a century when a more caring, responsible, and compassionate humanity
will emerge.*

– His Holiness the Dalai Lama,
Beyond Religion, p. 188

Study Guide for Beyond Religion

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PREFACE

This study guide is designed to be used in conjunction with the book *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World* by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 215 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003.

The Beyond Religion project was sponsored by the Dalai Lama Foundation, www.dalailamafoundation.org, Darlene Markovich, President, with generous support from the Tan Teo Charitable Foundation and other donors to whom we are most grateful.

We deeply appreciate the participation of more than 100 people, ranging in age from 16 to 80 years old, who eagerly participated in study circles ranging from 5 to 30 people in the United States and Nigeria. This study guide draws on the reflections of these pilot study circles, and was edited by Tony Hoerber, a Dalai Lama Foundation co-founder, and Kay Sandberg, a consultant who organized the pilot circles.

We especially appreciate the visionary work of Terry Conrad and his colleagues at Project Clear Light (www.projectclearlight.org; terry@conradnet.net) in Galveston, Texas, who published a study guide of their own primarily for the incarcerated entitled, “*Ethics for a Whole World*” (2013). This is also available to download from the Dalai Lama Foundation website: www.dalailamafoundation.org/programs/beyond-religion.

For further individual or group study, we highly recommend the Dalai Lama’s previous book on global ethics, *Ethics for a New Millennium*. A study guide for this book is available in six languages, and can be downloaded from: www.dalailamafoundation.org/programs/study-circles/study-guides.

Feel free to contact the Dalai Lama Foundation to share your experiences and questions: 61 Renato Court, Ste. 24, Redwood City, CA 94061; info@dlfound.org.

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INTRODUCTION

In *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World*, The Dalai Lama further develops his lifelong body of work on the critical need for universal ethics and values. The book's basic premise is that:

In today's secular world religion alone is no longer adequate as a basis for ethics... What we need today is an approach to ethics which makes no recourse to religion and can be equally acceptable to those with faith and those without: a secular ethics. (pp. xiii-xiv)

This is a remarkable stand indeed for the leader of a major world religion.

A Vision and a Map for Practice

In Part I, A NEW VISION OF SECULAR ETHICS, the Dalai Lama expresses confidence in the possibility of cultivating a universal system of ethics that recognizes and honors our common humanity. Focusing our attention on global oneness, when combined with respect for each unique cultural and religious tradition, is extremely beneficial in resolving the daunting challenges facing the human family in the 21st century. The Dalai Lama's hope for the future rests in the basic goodness of people, and the universal values of love and compassion.

In Part II, EDUCATING THE HEART THROUGH TRAINING THE MIND, the Dalai Lama offers guidelines for the application of the book's teachings through various meditations, including some of his own regular practices.

A Message, a Journey

Running through all of the Dalai Lama's teachings is this core message:

I call for each of us to come to our own understanding of the importance of human values. (p. xv)

This call to action may be couched in simple words, but responding to it can lead us on a journey that is profoundly meaningful.

May this study guide serve as a support for any and all who seek to bring forth patience, kindness, forgiveness, compassion, love, and all the beautiful virtues that are the birthright of humanity.

CHAPTER 1 > Rethinking Secularism

Summary

The Dalai Lama begins to outline what he calls “*the project of secular ethics*”, the search for a sustainable, universal approach to human values and ethical actions based on one’s personal values, an approach that transcends culture, religion, and beliefs about the world grounded in science.

The two pillars for developing secular ethics are: to embrace our common humanity, including everyone’s desire to avoid suffering and to be happy; and, to understand the importance of interdependence with others. The value to individuals and society as a whole cannot be underestimated: “*It is through such values that we gain a sense of connection with others, and it is by moving beyond narrow self-interest that we find meaning, purpose, and satisfaction in life.*” (p.19)

Illustration: Tea and Water

“*To my mind, although humans can manage without religion, they cannot manage without inner values.*” (p. 16) Using the analogy of tea vs. water, the Dalai Lama states we cannot exist without water—i.e., a sense of inner values and ethical behavior. However, we *can* go on living without tea—i.e., ethics and values coming from religion. No matter what kind of tea or how it is brewed, the main ingredient is still water. Therefore, “*we are born free of religion, but we are not born free of the need for compassion.*” (p. 17)

Conversation Questions

1. What is meant by basic human values? Why are they so important in today’s world? In our personal lives?
2. What makes us human, and what defines our shared humanity?
3. What is your definition of ethics? How do you understand the term “secular ethics”? Do you agree with the Dalai Lama’s definition of secularism?
4. Why could a secular, non-religious approach to ethics be more effective than a religious approach? Conversely, how could secular ethics be acceptable and useful to people who are deeply religious?
5. What do you feel are the major causes of social conflicts and violence in our world?
6. What are the similarities and differences between religion and spirituality?

Practices

The Tea and Water Ritual

Your study circle may want to explore or invent a ritual to honor the role of water in our survival, and notice water's transformative power through what happens when making tea. What can your group add to the water that reflects the individuals in your study circle? What ingredients do you need, and what does each person bring? What about tea that tastes bitter but is good for your health, and may even be considered medicine?

To contemplate: Is it really impossible to survive without inner values?

Keeping Inner Values Present Throughout Our Lives

Envision what it would be like to maintain our own values throughout the day. Recall inner values with a relaxed and focused mind, both during meditation and while taking actions or making decisions in daily life. Commit to taking on this inquiry until the next study circle.

Cultivating Inner Values

Choose one positive quality you want to further cultivate based on your inner values--for example, compassion, kindness, or generosity. Commit to practicing it consistently until the next study circle. Report back on your experiences, highlighting examples and stories of what you discovered when practicing the value.

CHAPTER 2 > Our Common Humanity

How people treat their fellow human beings, and indeed the world around them, largely depends on how they conceive of themselves. (p. 21)

The time has come, I believe, for each one of us to start thinking and acting on the basis of an identity rooted in the phrase “we human beings.” (p. 29)

Chapter Summary

The Dalai Lama invites us to consider what truly makes us human and what we share with other sentient beings (beings that are able to feel pleasure and pain, and move themselves from place to place). Using our senses as data, we experience the world subjectively in terms of pleasure, pain, or neutral feelings.

What differentiates humans from other animals is the complexity of our thinking and feeling about our experiences, our ability to remember, to project into the future, communicate symbolically, and evaluate situations from a variety of perspectives. We also have an instinctive capacity for empathy, which allows us to feel “sympathetic joy”—the joy that another person is experiencing, and being truly happy for him/her.

Despite individual and group differences, we are equal and essentially the same in our desire for happiness and to avoid suffering. This desire has led to many of humanity’s greatest achievements and to the evolution of the brain toward complex thinking. The same mental abilities have also led to avoiding people and things that are different from ourselves, and to conflict based on unexamined judgments and conditioned beliefs about individuals and groups that are “different”.

In developing a universal approach to living an ethical life, we must understand and focus on our common humanity, which unites us all.

Illustration

High school students in one pilot circle wondered why no one ever asked them what makes them genuinely happy and why they aren’t talking about this topic in school. When they asked peers for help, the peers had an attitude of, “What’s in it for me?” Circle participants flipped this response around to an attitude of, “Why wouldn’t I help you?”

Conversation Questions

1. Who are we “human beings”, and why is now the time for us to start acting and thinking from this common identity?
2. In what ways does the Dalai Lama describe that we are all the same?
3. If mental complexity prevents us from feeling the effects of emotions in our bodies and yet we meet each other primarily on the level of feeling, how can we overcome this? How do you feel in your body as you contemplate this dilemma?
4. Is there someone in your life you simply cannot relate to even on a level of common humanity? If so, what could you do or have you done in the past?
5. What are some examples of unpleasant or painful situations that you couldn't avoid? How did you handle them? What might you do differently in the future?
6. Identify situations or examples where you have felt empathy. How did you express it or act on this feeling? Do you agree with the Dalai Lama that empathy is instinctual?
7. Do you agree we are all equal *and* the same in our basic humanity, and in our desire to pursue happiness and avoid suffering? What judgments of other people or cultures do you still have?
8. Do you agree with the Dalai Lama that, “*this body of ours is meant for a happy life?*” What is a “happy life” for you?

Practices

1. Contemplate what brings you pleasure vs. what makes you genuinely happy.
2. Envision a future of true happiness and well-being for yourself and in your relationships with others. Discuss what you discover—for example, being happier by giving to the world, not taking from it. Actively cultivate happiness on a daily basis, and decide how to expand it by sharing happiness with others.

CHAPTER 3 > The Quest for Happiness

The real source of happiness once again involves our state of mind, outlook, and motivation, and our level of warmheartedness toward others. (p. 35)

Summary

Sources of Happiness

Everyone wants fundamentally to be free of suffering and to be happy. “Happy” in the secular (vs. religious or spiritual) context of this book means enjoying the simple joys of everyday life. The sources of this level of human happiness are wealth or prosperity, health, and friendship or companionship. The taproot underlying them all is our inner mindset of compassion, which also connects us to each other.

Levels of Satisfaction

There are two level of satisfaction, according to the Dalai Lama:

1. Pleasurable feelings derived from positive sensory experiences in the external world; and,
2. Our inner state of being—having peace of mind, a purpose to our lives beyond our own wellbeing, and a connection to others through a feeling of community.

“The root of both of these, I believe, is compassion or warmheartedness.” (p. 39)

Illustration

A study circle member told the story of going to an organizational meeting for a new school. There was much confusion and suffering related to different opinions about decisions they faced. She spoke with clarity, and in a way that validated others and nurtured a sense of community based on common purpose. The relief in the room was palpable. She left the meeting with peace of mind, a fulfilled sense of purpose and deeper connection to other parents and administrators. The glow stayed with her for several days.

Conversation Questions

1. How do you envision genuine happiness or define it for yourself? Describe how genuine happiness is different from feelings of pleasure.
2. Why are there few opportunities in daily life to share thoughts, feelings, and experiences regarding the source of true happiness?

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3. What habitual actions or frustrations take you away from being fully aware of the joys of daily life or feelings of compassion?
4. How could studying this chapter transform your habits to be more productive and compassionate toward yourself and others?
5. Where do you feel compassion in your body? What is the difference between compassion and empathy?
6. What gives you a sense of life purpose, and how does it contribute to your happiness? Why does trying to accumulate greater wealth often lead to greater suffering?

Practices

1. Envision a future of happiness and wellbeing for yourself and in relationship to others. Describe that future to at least one person.
2. Meditate on how to extend happiness and compassion to all beings everywhere. Identify and sit with any feelings to the contrary or “unfriendly” attitudes or actions toward others.
3. Choose a physical object on which to concentrate. Once you are aware of it, experiment with giving the object different names or labels, some ‘positive’ and others ‘negative’. How does this change your felt sense of the object? How does it affect your state of mind? Now do the same with labels of another person, then of yourself.

CHAPTER 4 > Compassion, The Foundation of Well-Being

Even more important than the warmth and affection we receive are the warmth and affection we give. It through giving warmth and affection, through being genuinely concerned for others—in other words, through compassion—that we gain the conditions for genuine happiness. For this reason, loving is of even greater importance than being loved. (pp. 44-45)

Compassion is a marvel of human nature, a precious inner resource, and the foundation of our well-being and harmony of our societies. If therefore, we seek happiness for ourselves, we should practice compassion; and if we seek happiness for others, we should also practice compassion! (p.48)

Chapter Summary

We are biologically “hard-wired” for affection, due to the strong need to depend on caregivers as infants and young children. Medical research has recently demonstrated the profound effect physical touch and other aspects of care have on the physical and emotional maturation of infants and children. It is impossible to separate the impact of a person’s mental and emotional states on her/his health and well-being.

The Dalai Lama pays tribute to his first teacher of unconditional love, his mother. The force of a mother’s affection and warmth is the very foundation of compassion. *“It is this kind of unconditional loving attitude—that of a mother for her newborn—that I mean when I talk about compassion as the source of all our shared ethical or spiritual values.” (p.50)*

Levels of Compassion

The two levels of compassion are:

1. Biological level
2. Extended level, which is consciously cultivated using our understanding and commitment to extend compassion to all beings that, like oneself, want to be happy and avoid suffering. We must be free from attachment to certain groups or individuals in order to extend warm-heartedness to all people and other beings. It’s not necessary, however, to embrace a religious or spiritual path to grasp the value of universal compassion. What is needed is constant, conscious practice to expand compassion to eventually include the entire human family. This is where the value of compassion training comes into play. Science has demonstrated the positive impact of educating the heart on our health and well-being.

Illustrations

1. The Dalai Lama developed a severe stomach infection once while traveling. He forgot his own excruciating pain when he looked out the car window and witnessed the tremendous suffering of people on the streets in India.
2. The human family continues to respond with an outpouring of love and resources each time there is a natural disaster, even when there is no personal connection to those affected.

Conversation Questions

1. Do you believe compassion is part of our human nature or that it must be cultivated? Or a mix of both?
2. What is the difference between empathy and compassion?
3. Who embodies unconditional love to you? Describe that person and how you are similar to him/her.
4. Share an example of someone who makes the world a better place through the power of loving kindness and compassion in action.
5. Is there any person or group for whom you cannot find a place in your heart or be compassionate toward? Why might you be more inclined to feel compassion for one person over another?
6. What methods of cultivating compassion have worked best for you? What approaches have been least effective?
7. How do kindness and compassion contribute to genuine happiness? Examples?
8. What is the role of women, particularly mothers in fostering unconditional love and compassion? How is this reflected in *Beyond Religion*? What is left out or underemphasized in the book regarding the contributions of women scientists, spiritual teachers, religious leaders, political leaders, mothers, and grandmothers?

Practices

1. Send kindness out into the world. Keep extending the boundaries of warmth and affection to finally include the whole world and all beings, remembering to include yourself.
2. Keep a journal of random *and* planned acts of kindness, including actions that “pay it forward” to someone else. What happened for you in practicing compassion in action?
3. Look for daily opportunities to practice compassion in action and having compassionate thoughts. Also notice times when compassion is lacking, noting the effects of a lack of compassion or kindness on yourself and those around you.
4. Observe women and men practicing acts of kindness and compassion. What similarities and differences do you notice?

CHAPTER 5 > Compassion and the Question of Justice

It is from a compassionate concern for the welfare of others that all our ethical values and principles arise, including that of justice. (p. 71)

In reality there is no conflict between the principle of justice and the practice of compassion and forgiveness...the very concept of justice is itself based on compassion. (p.70)

The only way to change a person's mind is with concern, not with anger or hatred. (p.59)

Chapter Summary

In considering both broad and narrow concepts of justice, the Dalai Lama encourages us to clarify our thinking and actions regarding the purpose of punishing wrongdoing, the role of compassion in punishment vs. revenge, distinguishing the action from the actor/perpetrator, the nature of forgiveness, and the scope of ethics.

The Dalai Lama suggests that the most important aspect of ethics is a person's internal motivation, not the behavior itself or its consequences. Punishment should be to deter the perpetrator of a crime and others from repeating the action, not to bring revenge on the person.

Illustrations: Compassion in Action

1. South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission established by Nelson Mandela's African National Congress helped greatly to ensure that white South Africans did not experience acts of revenge after apartheid was dismantled.
2. The Tibetan people have largely avoided vengeful acts toward the Chinese since Tibet was invaded, choosing rather to forgive from a sense of compassion. Once the Dalai Lama received a sincere apology from a former Chinese soldier. He forgave the man and also stressed the need to take a strong stand against injustice.
3. The Dalai Lama considers Richard Moore from Northern Ireland his personal hero. Moore forgave the soldier who had blinded him at age 10. He found the soldier in order to express complete forgiveness. Rather than being angry or withdrawing, Richard Moore founded an organization to help at-risk children around the world.
4. The Dalai Lama defines justice as a "*universal precept of fairness and redress based on the recognition of human equality.*" How do you define it? Do you agree that, "*For the law genuinely to uphold justice, it must protect universal human rights*"? (p. 60)

Conversation Questions

1. Do you agree with the Dalai Lama's definition of "justice"? Why or why not?
2. Do you believe all human beings have the capacity to change?
3. Call to mind a situation you feel was unjust. How did you respond? How did your personal system of ethics and motivations help or hinder your ability to navigate the situation?
4. Who are your personal heroes or heroines who have stood up to injustice and not met violence with violence? Who would you add to the Dalai Lama's list of people that fought for justice out of deep sense of compassion?
5. What has held you back from forgiving a person or a group? What would have to occur or change to let go of this wounding?
6. What type of punishment does the Dalai Lama suggest for those who have committed an offense? How can justice be better carried out through compassion?
7. What is "restorative justice"?
8. Give examples of "altruistic punishment", where everyone benefits from the interaction including the perpetrator, because the focus is on correcting the wrongdoer, not on punishment.

Practices

1. Describe a situation in your life where staying calm and being nonviolent worked well. Why did it work well?
2. Decide each day to practice acts of kindness and compassion toward others, and acknowledge times when others are being compassionate toward you.
3. Consciously appreciate everyday heroes of compassion and those who have the courage to change.
4. Make it a practice to notice and acknowledge people who forgive others. Witness your own willingness to forgive in different situations, and to forgive individual people or groups. What situations or people are difficult if not impossible for you to forgive?
5. Envision extending loving kindness in difficult relationships.

CHAPTER 6 > The Role of Discernment

While intention is the first and most important factor in guaranteeing that our behavior is ethical, we also need discernment to ensure that the choices we make are realistic and that our good intentions do not go to waste. (p. 73)

The fact is, the consequences of our actions are often not within our control. Where we do have control is at the level of motivation and in deploying our critical faculties, our discernment. When we combine these two elements, we can ensure that we are doing our best. (p. 80)

Summary

Our values only go so far in helping to navigate the dilemmas and difficult decisions of life. Complementing compassionate intention is the quality of discernment, the ability to see a situation from multiple or all perspectives. Before acting, by taking into account what is most likely to benefit oneself and others, or “ethical awareness”, we can use intelligent understanding and reason to arrive at the optimal course of action. The “magic formula” in working through life’s challenges is therefore, a combination of compassion and discernment, while taking into account the interdependent relationships among the parties involved.

The Dalai Lama asks himself the following questions when faced with a difficult decision:

1. Do I truly have others’ well-being at heart (checking motivation)?
2. Am I being influenced by disturbing emotions (anger, hostility, impatience, etc.)?
3. What are the deeper conditions and causes of the dilemma?
4. What choices do I have, and what are their probable outcomes?
5. Which actions are likely to yield the biggest benefit for others in the long run?

Illustration

When leaders responsible for deciding whether to take their country to war do so without considering all probable consequences, history has shown the results to be disastrous for one or all parties. What are some examples?

Conversation Questions

1. How do you define “discernment”? Give an example of having used the power of discernment recently.
2. What does the Dalai Lama mean re: ethics needing to come from inner motivations rather than consequences? What are some examples from your own life or those around you?
3. When you don’t have time to exercise discernment, what do you do instead? What have been the results? How about in a business, community, or civic group to which you belong? Or your nation?
4. Give a personal example of a time when no action was better than acting in terms of outcomes and how you felt about the decision.
5. How does discernment reinforce our ability to know that we are acting with compassion?
6. What is the practical role of discernment and holistic thinking in creating a better world for all?
7. “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.” How can we use discernment to help ensure a positive outcome?
8. Are our decisions, especially at the global level, too complicated now and growing too fast for moral discernment to keep pace? If so, what are the costs to the human family and what can be done?
9. What are historical examples of compassionate discernment and avoidance of revenge or retribution that lead to a peaceful and productive result?

Practices

1. Apply the Dalai Lama’s discernment questions above to a dilemma you are currently facing and observe the result with an open mind. Then compare the process to past difficult decisions you had to make. Would your decisions have likely been different if you had used his approach? Share your thoughts with a partner.
2. At the beginning of a meditation, commit to using the power of discernment to strengthen loving kindness to benefit yourself and others.
3. Engage a group to which you belong in a process of compassionate discernment to make an upcoming decision. Include all viewpoints if possible. Then reflect on the experience.

CHAPTER 7 > Ethics In Our Shared World

If human action can create these problems in the first place, then surely we humans must have the capacity as well as the responsibility to find their solutions. The only way we can put them right is by changing our outlook and our ways, and by taking action. (p. 84)

If the goal is noble, whether or not it is realized in our lifetimes is largely irrelevant. What we must do, therefore, is to strive and persevere and never give up. (p. 97)

Summary

The principle of global responsibility is integral to the Dalai Lama's approach to secular ethics. Key global challenges facing our interdependent world include: environmental degradation and climate change; overpopulation; technological progress devoid of universal human values and a commitment to use technology for the greater good; war, violence and terrorism; greed, income inequality and excessive materialism; and political corruption and narrow self interest on the part of nations and ethnic groups. All of these problems arise from a *"failure of moral ethics and inner values, (of) discernment,"* and *"a lack of self-discipline."* (p. 83)

The Dalai Lama offers realistic optimism for our collective future if we take global responsibility, foster international cooperation, espouse universal human values, educate the heart as well as the mind, and persevere from a commitment to global ethics that work for all.

Illustrations

The global financial crisis of 2008 exemplifies unchecked greed, with no sense of responsibility for the impact on millions of people or regard for the interdependence of our world. Similarly, when nations fail to cooperate or consider broader interests beyond their own on such global issues as climate change (ex.: failure of the 2009 Copenhagen Summit on the global environment), life on the planet is threatened.

In contrast, the global community has continued to respond generously to people in various nations and groups affected by natural disasters and war.

Conversation Questions

1. The Dalai Lama believes that "apathy is a form of selfishness." Why? Do you agree or disagree? Give an example either way.
2. How may we set boundaries so that we advance global values, yet maintain respect for other people and their values?

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3. On a typical day, how much of your awareness is focused on the global dimension of your behavior? How does shifting your focus toward global awareness affect you and those around you? How does this relate to the global dimension of your personal actions?
4. In what ways could taking greater responsibility for your actions, especially regarding use of resources, affect the well-being of the Earth in your lifetime? For future generations? Give examples.
5. How can the “developed world” become a model of sustainability for countries and cultures that aspire to be more like it? What lessons can the “developed world” learn from the “developing world” regarding sustainability and caretaking our planet?
6. What does the Dalai Lama mean when he says thinks of himself as “half-Marxist”? Do you agree that, “*Capitalism is clearly inadequate as any kind of social ideal, since it is only motivated by profit, without any ethical principle guiding it*”? (p.91)
7. What ethical dilemmas must global society resolve now regarding scientific advances? What is the first step, and what can you personally do?
8. How could a system of ethics based on compassion and moral discernment help teachers solve discipline problems in schools?

Practices

1. Taking specific global issues, map out major causes and effects. Consider possible solutions and how specifically outcomes could be different with increased cooperation and compassion in action.
2. Develop a lesson plan and teach classes or individuals how to cultivate inner values and mindfulness.
3. Practice the Buddhist loving kindness meditation or its equivalent, encompassing the entire world in your wish that all beings be happy, free of suffering, and at peace.
4. Meditate on “inner disarmament” and its impact on “outer disarmament”.
5. Note choices you make on a daily basis regarding use of money, natural resources, time, etc., and the impact on your community.
6. Contemplate alternate futures regarding financial equity within and among countries, an end to mass destruction through war, and the use of technology for the good of all.

CHAPTER 8 > Ethical Mindfulness In Everyday Life

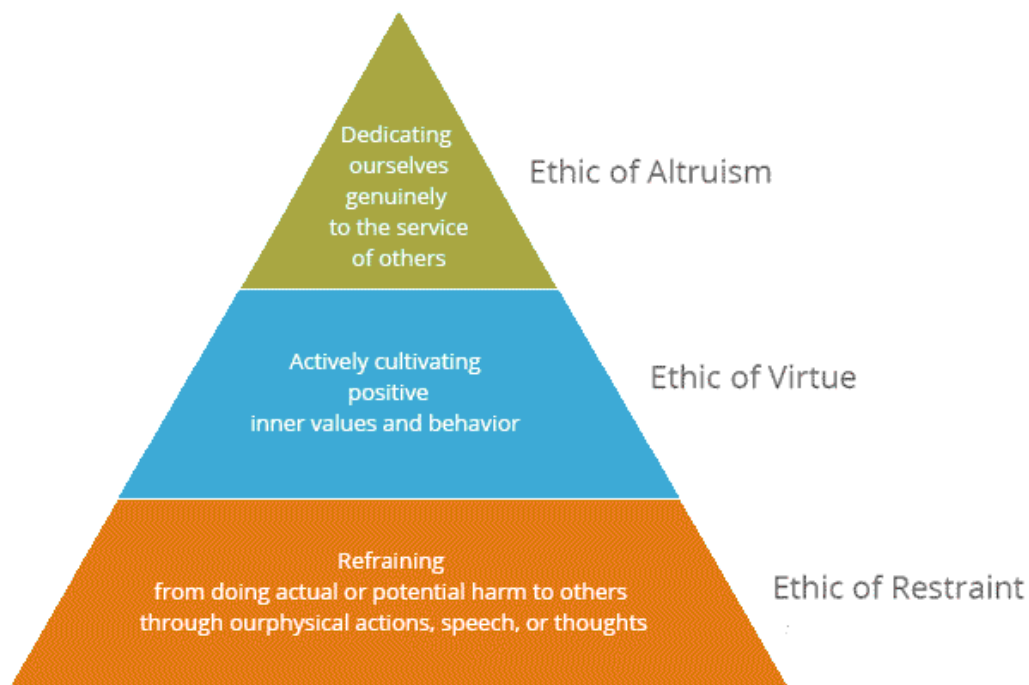
We need to observe the “golden rule” found in all of the world’s ethical systems: “Treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself.” (p. 106)

Stages of Ethical Development

The Dalai Lama offers guidance on putting the ethical concepts from the first part of the book into action in our daily lives. He distinguishes three stages of cultivating ethical mindfulness:

1. **Restraint** – “deliberately refraining from doing actual or potential harm to others” (p. 103), which requires that we learn to discern what the effects of our actions are likely to be, and refrain from harmful thoughts, words and actions.
2. **Virtue** – positively affecting others with our thoughts, words and deeds; helping those in need; and, taking delight in other people’s successes;
3. **Altruism** or “a genuinely selfless dedication of one’s actions and words to the benefit of others...the highest form of ethical practice, and...the main avenue to liberation or to unity with God.” (p. 111) We accomplish this by making service to others our priority.

As we develop these stages we build the foundation for our own health and happiness.



Illustration

Nelson Mandela embodied restraint, virtue and altruism in the way he helped South Africa transition, largely peacefully, after apartheid.

Conversation Questions

1. How have your past actions harmed others, either intentionally or unintentionally? How would exercising the ethic of restraint have yielded a different outcome?
2. What does the Dalai Lama mean by “right livelihood” and how can it keep us from causing harm?
3. Consider a situation you are now facing. In what practical ways does being more mindful assist you in resolving or better handling the situation?
4. Is it really possible to be completely and selflessly committed to others’ well-being? What are examples from your own life or those you know? Who benefits most—you or the other person?

Practices

1. Contemplate a real situation that will be helped by practicing mindfulness--the ability to be present to one’s ethical values and motivations in the moment. Observe how the situation or relationship may shift as a result.
2. Practice charitable acts, both random and planned, as an expression of your core values in action.
3. Apply “sympathetic joy” to how you hold the achievements and good fortune of people around you. Stay present to how *you* feel in the process.
4. Practice flipping feelings of envy into feelings of joy for the other person (“sympathetic joy”). Be with the challenges of doing this and the benefits to oneself.

CHAPTER 9 > Dealing With Destructive Emotions

The key to human happiness lies in our own state of mind; so too do the primary obstacles to that happiness...Such (destructive or afflictive) emotions are the real enemies of human happiness and the ultimate source of all destructive human behavior. Tackling these negative emotions is an important goal of ethical and spiritual practice. (p. 113)

Summary

The chapter focuses on the main obstacles to happiness: destructive or afflictive emotions and moods, and their connection to our actions. The Dalai Lama shares his perspectives on the various types of destructive emotions, why they occur, the possibility of changing our minds to change our experiences, and antidotes to negative emotions—i.e., how to work with negative habits of mind and emotional patterns through emotional awareness, restraint to avoid harmful behavior, and cancelling negative emotions with positive ones.

Conversation Questions

1. Why is anger sometimes useful, whereas hatred is always destructive? Share examples of each. Does anger feel different in your body than hatred? If so, in what way?
2. Which of the destructive emotions in the chapter is your “Achilles heel” or biggest challenge, and what triggers have you identified? Give some examples.
3. What destructive behaviors have changed for you? What caused the change?
4. Emotional awareness (paying attention to how negative emotions originate and our reactions to them) will over time keep harmful emotions in check. Are you most influenced by body, mind, or words to restrain yourself and shift your behavior?
5. How would you characterize your overall emotional mood, and how malleable do you believe it to be? What factors can influence your mood, either in beneficial or harmful ways?
6. Talk about the beneficial and destructive aspects of the following negative emotions: anger, attachment, envy, pride, and doubt.

Practices

1. When a destructive tendency or reaction comes up, trace it from the external trigger to the internal state of mind. See how quickly you can catch it and then restrain yourself from acting in harmful ways by exercising the “muscle” of restraint. Find an ally with whom to share your challenges and successes.
2. Identify a current obstacle to your personal happiness. Write or share about our experience with a partner and the emotions that arise, including the effects on body, mind and spirit. Do your best to welcome the experience, not resist it, and stay open to a resolution. Continue to practice emotional awareness each time you notice afflictive emotions and interrupt habitual patterns of dealing with them.
3. Practice not being provoked by the triggers of life, aiming to catch yourself sooner each time. Do what it takes to create a space between the trigger and your response to avoid reacting. Practice forgiving yourself; simply let it go.
4. Practice turning a negative experience into a neutral or positive one until this becomes your habitual or ‘normal’ response. Remember to be gentle with yourself and avoid self-judgment as much as possible.

CHAPTER 10 > Cultivating Key Inner Values

The great thing about giving is that it not only benefits the recipient but also brings profound benefits to the giver. And the more one gives, the more one enjoys giving. (p.153)

The sooner we accept that riches alone do not bring happiness, and the sooner we learn to live with a sense of modesty, the better off we will be, especially with respect to our happiness...When it comes to acquiring mental riches, the potential is limitless. (pp. 146-147)

Summary

Along with restraining our afflictive emotions we benefit from cultivating the following positive inner values:

1. Compassion
2. Forgiveness in the context of justice
3. Patience—restraint based on mental discipline; patience includes the ability to endure suffering and accept reality, and is a primary antidote to anger and frustration
4. Contentment—an absence of greed; knowing what is enough
5. Self-discipline—the way to master positive qualities and gain control over negative ones
6. Generosity—generosity of heart and action by taking joy in giving material items, the gift of freedom from fear, providing emotional support, and giving love. It is the *“most natural outward expression of an inner attitude of compassion and loving-kindness.”* (p. 149)

The chapter focuses on the last four inner qualities and how to cultivate them in daily life.

Illustrations

1. The Dalai Lama shared his challenges with contentment when he first visited western countries' shopping malls, particularly stores with mechanical objects. He overcame what he called “instinctive greed” by asking himself if he really needed an object, i.e., by taking a realistic view and deciding whether to buy on that basis.
2. The world financial crisis was generated by unbridled greed, shortsightedness, arrogance, and a lack of transparency, resulting in great harm to millions of

people. The Dalai Lama suggests that the “*only effective antidote to greed is moderation and contentment.*” (p. 146)

3. In contrast to illustration #2 is the remarkable charitable giving by philanthropists, from billionaires with their own foundations to everyday people giving what they can, particularly when they give with joy.

Conversation Questions

1. Give an example of a time when someone was aggressive or acted disrespectfully toward you. How did you handle the situation at the time, and what was your attitude toward the perpetrator? How might you react in a similar situation now?
2. What has been the value of patience or forbearance in dealing with difficult situations and emotions?
3. What personal benefits can accrue by practicing patience?
4. Has there ever been a time when being patient was actually harmful to you or someone else? Describe the situation and its outcome from your perspective. What other perspective are possible?
5. Share a time when giving generously actually did unintended harm to one or more beings. How did you handle the personal consequences? What might you do differently in the future?
6. How has a desire for more of something had negative effects on others? In retrospect, was it possible to exercise self-discipline and be contented with what you already had in that situation?
7. Describe how contentment has felt in your body. Do the same with generosity.
8. What is the role of self-discipline for you personally in developing the positive qualities the Dalai Lama outlines? What are the benefits of practicing patience?
9. Describe your experience of joy through giving to others. Now describe how it felt to receive someone else’s generosity. Which felt more satisfying? Do you agree that contentment can’t be practiced, but rather, has to be arrived at? (p. 144)

Practices

1. Practice anonymous acts of generosity *and* acknowledged acts of generosity (when the person or group was aware of your gift). Reflect on your experiences of both. Be creative in practicing generosity--all four kinds of giving, including having a generous spirit or attitude toward people and toward difficult situations.
2. Meditate on the value of self-discipline in practicing the other positive values. Decide how to be more self-disciplined regarding the cultivation of one particular positive inner value. Then choose one destructive emotion or habit to refrain from feeling or doing.
3. Experiment with your own experience of “enough” regarding material possessions. For example, decide to purchase *only* necessities for survival for a certain period of time. Or give away a prized possession. Do you still feel you have “enough”?
4. Consciously practice using patience or forbearance in a challenging situation at work or in your personal life. Also practice forgiving yourself if your thoughts, words and actions don’t measure up to your intentions.

CHAPTER 11 > Meditation as Mental Cultivation

Essentially, the purpose of the mental training exercises that I have been describing is, especially from the perspective of secular ethics, to make ourselves calmer, more compassionate, and more discerning human beings. (p. 182)

For myself, such cultivation is an indispensable part of daily life. (p. 155)

Summary

The Dalai Lama shares a number of universally beneficial contemplative practices, regardless of religion, spiritual background or belief system. They are tremendously helpful to the practitioner and those with whom he/she interacts, and can result in inner transformation.

These formal practices include:

- Focused Attention (pp. 166-169)
- Present-Moment Awareness (pp. 169-170)
- Training in Compassion and Loving-Kindness (pp. 170-172)
- Cultivating Equanimity (pp. 172-174)
- Rejoicing in the Example of Others (p. 175)
- Dealing with Afflictive Attitudes and Emotions (pp. 176-177).

The book also suggests practical ways to work with two inevitable obstacles to effective contemplation: distraction and mental “sinking”, when the mind becomes too relaxed. The goal is to contemplate with a settled, alert mind and to avoid becoming discouraged, using a mix of analytic (cognitive) and absorptive (affective) meditation practices as the Dalai Lama himself does.

Illustration

The Dalai Lama’s own life is a perfect illustration of the power of these practices in action. What are illustrations or stories from your own life?

Conversation Questions

1. What strategies do you use when faced with a negative force or situation?
2. When an object is beautiful and desirable, why put it down by thinking about its shadow aspects (i.e., by contemplating its imperfections)?
3. What is the most recent development in your meditation practice or the spiritual method you consciously practice?
4. What is the leading edge of your practice?
5. What motivates you to practice, and what kinds of support are helpful to you?
6. How do you work with your resistance to wishing a particular person or group happiness, freedom from suffering, and peace?
7. Share examples of how mindfulness has improved a situation or relationship.
8. What methods of dealing with procrastination work best for you?

APPENDIX > Publisher's Questions

These questions are generously provided by the publisher of *Beyond Religion*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, and their author, Je Banach.

1. What advancements does the Dalai Lama claim have been made in recent times and what problems or challenges remain? What does he propose is at the root of these problems? What does he cite as the biggest problem of our time?
2. The Dalai Lama suggests that we take a second look at how we define secularism. How has this term been interpreted in the past and what factors have been influential in determining how the term is understood? How do interpretations of the term differ in the United States and in India, for instance? How does he propose that we should define secularism?
3. Keeping this broader definition of secularism in mind, what reasons does the Dalai Lama provide for the need for secular ethics? What changes in the modern world have made this ethical system necessary while rendering past ethical systems ineffective or obsolete?
4. The Dalai Lama speaks throughout the book about the culture of India, where he has lived for many years as a refugee. What positive characteristics does he equate with Indian culture? How does Indian culture offer a model for a system of secular ethics? Alternatively, how does the story about Orissa, India, reveal one of the major obstacles to ethics in practice?
5. What does the Dalai Lama say is the foundation of well-being and the spiritual principle from which all other inner values emerge? Is this value something fundamental to our human nature or is it something that needs to be cultivated, or both? Is this principle only available to us through religion?
6. Does the Dalai Lama propose that readers should dispense with religion or convert to Buddhism? While he invites readers to move beyond religion towards secular ethics, what does he indicate are some of the benefits of religious faith and practice? What qualities does he say all religions share? Alternatively, what does he indicate are some of the “misuses of religion,” or the problems or inadequacies of an ethical system based on religion?
7. The Dalai Lama often speaks about science within the text. Do scientific findings support his beliefs and teachings or does science pose an obstacle to a secular system of ethics? According to the book, what does science tell us about compassion, equality, self-improvement, and emotion, for instance?

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8. What are the two pillars for secular ethics? How has globalization heightened awareness of these pillars? What other values does the Dalai Lama suggest are necessary within this system of secular ethics?
9. In considering our common humanity, what claims does the Dalai Lama make for what separates us as humans and what unites us?
10. What are the true sources of human happiness and what are the two levels of satisfaction? What message does the book contain about material desires and transient sources of satisfaction? What are some examples of transient sources of satisfaction? What is the major difference between happiness and contentment?
11. What is the difference between empathy and compassion?
12. Are the concepts of compassion and justice in opposition with one another? What does the Dalai Lama mean when he speaks of broad and narrow justice? How does he propose that we define justice? What kind of punishment does he recommend for wrongdoers? How does he suggest that we reach a place of forgiveness?
13. What is discernment? What role does discernment and interdependence play within a system of secular ethics? What does the Dalai Lama mean when he says that ethics must be grounded at the level of motivation, not consequence?
14. What message does the book contain about war and violence? About the environment? About economics? What does the Dalai Lama mean when he says that he considers himself “half Marxist”? What positive uses can there be for capitalism and material wealth?
15. The Dalai Lama clearly states that positive example and action are required in order for this system of secular ethics to succeed. What does he claim are the marks of a great teacher?
16. What are the three levels of the practice of ethical mindfulness? Which of the three is the highest form of ethical practice? Of body, speech, and mind, which is the most important in our efforts to cultivate ethical mindfulness, and why?
17. What does the book claim is the greatest obstacle to our well-being and what are the causes of this affliction? What does the Dalai Lama propose we can do to effectively counter this obstacle?

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18. What is the two-pronged approach to genuine ethical practice? What does the process of transformation entail and what positive qualities does the Dalai Lama suggest that we foster? What are the varieties of patience, for example, and what are the benefits of each?
19. What is the relationship of self-discipline and generosity within this system of ethical mindfulness? With respect to philanthropy, what does the book claim are the two most pressing areas of need?
20. What is meditation? What are the three levels of understanding in Buddhist theory that lead to mental transformation? How are absorptive and discursive meditation defined? What are the differences between the two? What general guidelines does the Dalai Lama offer with respect to all types of meditation and what are some of the major obstacles to proper meditation? What does the Dalai Lama say that we should cultivate equanimity? Finally, what are some of the benefits of meditative practice?

APPENDIX > Forming a Study Circle

Study Circle Guidelines

Starting a study circle can be as easy as inviting people to participate, finding a location, agreeing on basic participation guidelines, making *Beyond Religion* available to everyone, and downloading the study guide. Feel free to adapt the materials to your own cultural milieu, and the unique context and needs of your group.

We sincerely hope that the study circles will have a direct, positive effect on your daily lives and on your families, workplaces, and communities. Here are some guidelines to consider. We look forward to hearing about your experiences and welcome your questions.

Steps For Forming A Study Circle

Decide the minimum and maximum number of participants—in general, no fewer than three people and no more than 15. Also decide the number of times to meet and the interval in between. We recommend a minimum of six meetings (approximately two chapters per gathering). Some groups have found it effective to meet weekly for 12 weeks (one chapter per week plus an initial organizational meeting) or even over 24 weeks, six months, to more deeply integrate the learning into daily life. Pilot groups found that 2 hours per meeting is optimal. If food is served and you choose to socialize before or after, more time may be needed.

Have a clear understanding about participation by generating norms as a group. The convener of the circle might ask what would make the study circle a meaningful and enjoyable experience for everyone. Guidelines might include: agreement to read the chapter(s) prior to each gathering, attend all sessions if possible, notify the group if you are going to miss a time, each person (co)facilitates at least one meeting, keep personal information and stories confidential, commit to consciously applying the book's teachings in group interactions, ensure that everyone gets a chance to be heard, be compassionate in circle interactions, etc. Having clear guidelines from the first meeting helps ensure a harmonious experience for everyone.

Facilitating A Circle

There are many ways to facilitate meaningful conversation, on a continuum from highly structured to unstructured gatherings. Most groups find it beneficial to keep the study circle structure and format simple and “user friendly”, choosing one or two facilitators from within the group. Their role is to select a few key questions to stimulate discussion, offer relevant examples or stories from their own lives, keep conversation flowing in a way that people feel free to contribute, and close the circle. Facilitators may also act as time-keepers and manage logistics—for example, sending a reminder notice about an upcoming circle.

Study Circle Flow

1. Open the circle. You may want to begin with a few minutes of silence or a meditation that comes from *Beyond Religion*, or is aligned with the book's intent. At the first gathering, spend time getting to know each other and each person's intention or goals for participating. Also hear people's concerns and questions.
2. The essence of the study circle experience is conversation and sharing of perspectives on the Dalai Lama's wisdom and how it applies to the way we lead our lives—both our “inner life” and its expression in the world. Facilitator(s) offer 2-4 discussion questions based on the week's reading and when useful, an illustration or dilemma from their own lives. You may want to generate your own questions or choose from questions in the chapter summaries. Additional questions from the book's publisher are referenced in the previous Appendix entry.
3. You may choose to use a talking stick or some other object to mark who “has the floor”. The basic idea is to respect each speaker by giving the time and space needed to fully participate (or an equal amount of time per person, decided in advance) without interruption.
4. To further ensure active participation by all, you may want to go around the circle once more, or simply open up the conversation.
5. Decide how you want to end each circle—for example, a final reflection from each person, a brief meditation, a moment of silence, a poem, etc.

Sample Study Circle Invitation

Dear Friends,

We wholeheartedly invite you to join us in extending the wisdom and teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama via an exciting new project based on his recent book, *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World*. There may never have been a greater receptivity to his messages or a deeper yearning for a feeling of connection to the Dalai Lama than now.

In *Beyond Religion*, His Holiness outlines a new vision of ethics beyond religious dogma, one founded on compassion and living a life consistent with personal values. The second section of the book, “Educating the Heart through Training the Mind”, offers practices to cultivate mindfulness and actions to extend well-being to oneself and others in everyday life. Who better than the Dalai Lama to encourage us to practice independent of any specific religious or cultural perspective—a revolutionary call to action!

As many of you know, The Dalai Lama Foundation developed a very successful study guide and study circle process for the Dalai Lama’s previous book, *Ethics for a New Millennium*. The study guide has been translated into seven languages and been used by thousands of people in hundreds of circles over the last 10 years.

We feel there is no time like the present to extend the learning with new, compelling learning materials based on *Beyond Religion*.

We envision six sessions over a 12-week period to cover the book’s 11 chapters. We truly hope you will join us on this adventure of creating a vibrant learning community and expanding the circle of compassion! We highly encourage widely diverse groups in terms of age, ethnicity, gender, spiritual and religious beliefs & practices (including no particular practices), and meditation experience. Feel free to bring a friend, colleague, or family member!

With gratitude,

APPENDIX > Additional Resources

1. *Ethics for a Whole World, A Study Guide*, Project Clear Light, 2013; available on the Dalai Lama Foundation website: <http://circles.dalailamafoundation.org/ethics-for-a-whole-world/>; for information on Project Clear Light's work in prisons: <http://projectclearlight.org>
2. Main website for His Holiness the Dalai Lama: <http://www.dalailama.com/>; the site lists his schedule of appearances, authored books, etc.
3. Talk by the Dalai Lama at Stanford University on the "Centrality of Compassion in Human Life and Society", October 14, 2010: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSL_xvokoF8
4. Book and Study Guide: *Ethics for the New Millennium* by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2001; Study Guide, 2004: <http://www.dalailamafoundation.org/dlf/en/documents/enm-study-guide-2007-09-07.pdf>
5. Book: *The Wisdom of Compassion, Stories of Remarkable Encounters and Timeless Insights* by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Victor Chan, 2012
6. Book (online only): *Sharing Values: A Hermeneutics for Global Ethics* by Ariane Hentsch Cisneros and Shanta Premawardhana, GlobalEthics.net Series No. 4, 2011; http://www.globethics.net/documents/4289936/13403236/GlobalSeries_4_SharingValues_text.pdf
7. Article on Compassion: "O.K., Google, Take a Deep Breath" by Caitlin Kelly, The New York Times, 4/28/12; http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/29/technology/google-course-asks-employees-to-take-a-deep-breath.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
8. Article: "Compassion: Our First Instinct" by Emma Seppala, Ph.D, Center for Compassion and Altruism Research at Stanford, 2013; <http://www.psychologytoday.com/em/125321>
9. Article: "Compassion Made Easy" by David DeSteno, The New York Times, 7/14/12; http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/15/opinion/sunday/the-science-of-compassion.html?_r=2
10. Article: "The Value of Suffering" by Pico Iyer, The New York Times, 9/7/13; <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/08/opinion/sunday/the-value-of-suffering.html>
11. Article: "What Is Ethics?" developed by Manuel Velasquez, Claire Andre, Thomas Shanks, and Michael J. Meyer, Santa Clara University, 2010 Revision; <http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/whatisethics3.html>