

Handout. The Book of Joy. Session 3. The Buddhist practices of Lojong and Tonglen. A Christian interpretation.

From <http://www.flamingrose.org/lojong/Info.html> and <http://spiritualpractice.ca/what/what-2/the-common-christian-practices/meditation/forms-of-meditation/tonglen-giving-and-taking/>

1. Lojong : **Lo** (mind, attitude, perspective, intelligence) and **jong** (train, purify, remedy, clear away). Thus it can be translated as attitudinal training, or more commonly mind training.

There have been many Lojong systems devised by various Tibetan lamas over the last thousand years, but the best known, and the one this set of virtual Lojong cards is based on, comes from ... Atisha Dipankara Shrijnana [about 1000 CE]. This virtual Lojong card set consist of 59 proverbs [or slogans].

The primary practice to accompany the slogans is called Tonglen or "giving and taking" — a technique of visualizing taking on the suffering of sentient beings (including yourself) as you breathe in and giving away your positive qualities (happiness, virtuous states of mind, positive energy, wisdom, compassion, etc.) to others as you breathe out.

2. Tonglen ("Giving and Taking"). Tonglen is a very ancient Buddhist practice, which is a subset of Lovingkindness practices. [59 in all]. The heart of the practice – which one reaches after a number of preliminary spiritual exercises – is the taking away – in imagination – of the pain and evil of someone, and replacing it with peace and warmth and compassion. Essentially, we imagine someone in front of us, and, as we breathe in, we imagine that we are literally sucking out of that person all the pain and evil, in the form of a black cloud of toxins. And, on the out breath, we breathe into the person all our love and our peace. We repeat this process of at least ten minutes.

For the Christian, it is acceptable to do this in company with Jesus; to imagine that we are able to turn over the toxins to him. Also, we can remember that in doing this, we are in fact practising the famous Christian prayer "Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world..." The difference from the traditional prayer is that we are actually doing ourselves what we have heretofore acknowledged Jesus alone did. This is simply part of the great shift in Christian spirituality from letting Jesus do all the salvific work, to recognizing that Jesus invites us to follow him – i.e., to do as he does – not adore him.

The Preliminaries

1. First, Train in the Preliminaries

Training in Absolute Bodhichitta

2. Regard all Dharmas as Dreams
3. Examine the Nature of Unborn Awareness
4. Self-Liberate Even the Antidote
5. Rest in the Nature of Alaya, the Essence
6. In Post-Meditation, be a Child of Illusion

Training in Relative Bodhichitta

7. Giving and Taking Should be Practiced Alternately
These Two Should Ride the Breath
8. Three Objects, Three Poisons, and Three Seeds of Virtue
9. In All Activities, Train with Slogans
10. Begin the Sequence of Giving and Taking with Yourself

Transforming Negative Circumstances into the Path of Enlightenment

11. When the World is Filled with Evil, Transform all Mishaps into the Path of Bodhi
12. Drive All Blame into Oneself
13. Be Grateful to Everyone
14. Seeing Confusion as the Four Kayas is Unsurpassable Shunyata Protection
15. The Four Practices are the Best Methods
16. Whatever You Meet with Unexpectedly, Join with Meditation

Utilizing the Practice in One's Life

17. Practice the Five Strengths
18. The Mahayana Instructions for the Ejection of Consciousness at Death

Evaluating Progress in Mind Training

19. All Dharmas Agree at One Point
20. Of the Two Witnesses, Hold the Principal One
21. Always Maintain Only a Joyful Mind
22. If You Can Practice Even When Distracted, You are Well-Trained

The Disciplines of Mind Training

23. Always Abide by the Three Basic Principles
24. Change Your Attitude, but Remain Natural
25. Don't Talk About Injured Limbs

26. Don't Ponder Others
27. Work with the Greatest Defilements First
28. Abandon any Hope of Fruition
29. Abandon Poisonous Food
30. Don't be so Predictable
31. Don't Malign Others
32. Don't Wait in Ambush
33. Don't Bring Things to a Painful Point
34. Don't Transfer the Ox's Load to the Cow
35. Don't Try to be the Fastest
36. Don't Act with a Twist
37. Don't Make Gods into Demons
38. Don't Seek Others' Pain as the Limbs to Your Own Happiness

Guidelines for Training the Mind

39. All Activities Should be Done with One Intention
40. Correct All Wrongs with One Intention
41. Two Activities: One in the Beginning and One in the End
42. Whichever of the Two Occurs, be Patient
43. Observe These Two Even at the Risk of Your Life
44. Train in the Three Difficulties
45. Take on the Three Principal Causes
46. Pay Heed That the Three Never Wane
47. Keep the Three Inseparable
48. Train Without Bias in All Areas
49. Always Meditate on Whatever Provokes Resentment
50. Don't be Swayed by External Circumstances
51. This Time, Practice the Three Points
52. Don't Misinterpret
53. Don't Vacillate
54. Train Whole-Heartedly
55. Liberate Yourself by Examining and Analyzing
56. Don't Wallow in Self-Pity
57. Don't be Jealous
58. Don't be Frivolous
59. Don't Expect Applause