

Infinite Heart - A Lojong Teaching

By Gelek Rimpoche

Garrison NY 2004

Expanded Outline

I. Title & Setting

- **Title:** *Infinite Heart — A Lojong Teaching*
 - **Teacher:** Gelek Rimpoche
 - **Location:** Garrison Institute, New York
 - **Date:** 2004 retreat
 - **Community:** Jewel Heart practitioners
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II. Preliminary Orientation & Weekend Goals

- **Purpose:** Deepen understanding of compassion and love; train the mind (lojong) to develop bodhimind.
 - **Approach:** Tibetan Buddhist Mahayana perspective; accessible for lay practitioners.
 - **Expectation:** Not instant transformation — requires ongoing effort, reading, meditation.
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III. Foundations Before Lojong

A. Nature & Power of the Human Mind

- Unlimited capacity for growth and change; spiritual progress is possible because mind is impermanent and flexible.

B. Self-Compassion First

- Must feel and address personal suffering before authentic compassion for others.
- Identify negative emotions (anger, jealousy, obsession, ignorance) as sources of suffering.

C. Root of Suffering and Liberation

- End suffering by ending its causes — negative emotions and self-grasping.
- Wisdom and compassion are the two essential “wings.”

D. Spiritual Path Structure

- **Base – Path – Result:** practitioner’s own mind as the base; methodical training as path; enlightenment (bodhimind/Buddha state) as result.

E. Precious Human Life

- Rare, valuable opportunity; urgency because of impermanence and death.
- Avoid procrastination and “outsourcing” spiritual work to others.

IV. Core Practices Introduced (Friday Night)

- **Mantras and Refuge**
 - *TAYATHA GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SOHA* (perfection of wisdom)
 - Refuge in Guru, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha.
- **Seven Limb Practice** (short form for lay use)
- **Compassion & Healing Mantras**
 - OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNIYE SOHA
 - OM MANI PADME HUM
 - OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA
- **Four Immeasurables**
 - May all beings have happiness; be free from suffering; find joy beyond suffering; be free from attachment and hatred.
- **Dedication of Merit**

V. Death and Impermanence (Saturday)

- Death as separation of consciousness and body — but not end of existence.
- Karma drives continuation; present actions shape future states.
- Urgency to act now: “Tomorrow never comes.”
- Analogy of tailor and cloth — choices remain until death “cuts” life’s pattern.

VI. Development of Bodhimind (Pre-Lojong Methods)

A. Seven-Stage Cause & Effect Method

1. **Recognize all beings as mothers** — every sentient being once nurtured us
2. **Remember their kindness.**
3. **Wish to repay that kindness.**
4. **Develop love (wishing joy for them).**
5. **Develop great compassion (freeing all from suffering).**
6. **Develop special intention/commitment to help.**
7. **Arise the bodhimind** — altruistic wish for enlightenment for all

B. Exchange-of-Self-and-Other Approach

- Alternative method: imagine exchanging one's own self-interest with others' well-being to uproot self-cherishing.
- "Tonglen" — taking others' suffering, giving one's happiness.

VII. Seven Point Mind Training (Lojong)

(Drawn from Atisha's teaching and Tsongkhapa's tradition, as presented by Rimpoche)

1. **Preliminaries — the foundation for Dharma practice**
 - Reflect on precious human life, impermanence, karma, and suffering (samsara).
 - Motivation: benefit all beings.
2. **Training in Bodhimind**
 - Generate and sustain altruistic intention (through either cause/effect or exchange methods).
3. **Transforming Adversity into the Path**
 - Use suffering as fuel for compassion and wisdom.
 - Practice "giving and taking" (tonglen).
4. **Integrating Practice in One Lifetime**
 - Make practice continuous, not compartmentalized.
 - Bring all experiences — pleasant or painful — to the path.
5. **The Measure of a Trained Mind**
 - Combine all Dharma into one intention: oppose self-cherishing & self-grasping.
 - Two witnesses: inner conscience and outer accountability.
 - Maintain inner mental joy and stability.
 - Avoid regression; measure growth by resilience and spontaneous compassion.
6. **Commitments of Mind Training**
 - Specific behavioral commitments to maintain compassion and wisdom in everyday interactions.
 - Watch speech, avoid harming, remain humble, respect teachers and dharma.
7. **Precepts of Mind Training**
 - Practical do's and don'ts to safeguard mind training.
 - Guard against pride, blame, anger, or boasting; cultivate gratitude and awareness.

VIII. Supportive Practices for Lojong

The Five Powers (Especially at Death)

1. **Positive Potential** — build merit through generosity, ethics, prayers.
2. **Release Attachment** — loosen grasp on body, ego, possessions.
3. **Antidote** — remember faults of anger, ignorance, greed.
4. **Aspiration/Prayer** — vow never to part from bodhimind.
5. **Habitual Kindness** — reflexively recall compassion when challenges appear.

(At death: rely on these same five to stay calm, purposeful, and connected to bodhimind.)

- **Continuous Dedication of Merit**
 - **Maintaining Joyful Effort**
 - **Monitoring Motivation Daily**
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IX. Rimpoche's Practical Advice

- Study steadily; lojong requires time and repetition.
 - Meditation plus study plus application in daily life.
 - Avoid perfectionism; better to do a short, sincere practice than none.
 - Create motivation “for the benefit of all beings” but remember personal work comes first.
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Summary Takeaways

- **Lojong isn't just slogans:** It's a stepwise mind-training system, grounded in compassion and wisdom.
- **Two Main Gateways:** Seven-stage cause/effect and exchange-of-self-and-other; both lead to bodhimind.
- **Seven Points = Complete Roadmap:** from preparing mind to measuring progress to living commitments.
- **Death & Impermanence:** Vital motivators — act while opportunity exists.
- **Practicality:** Adapt prayers and mantras to daily life; keep motivation alive.