

1. Setting Intention, Clarifying Motivation:

Our actions can be dedicated to the benefit and awakening of all beings. Keeping this intention in mind helps our actions to go beyond mere “do-gooding,” fighting so-called oppression, or just “getting things done,” into the realm of dharma practice.

2. Interbeing and Co-Responsibility:

We look at our tendencies to separate “us” and “them,” and “inner” and “outer.” We see in ourselves the same structures of greed, hatred, and delusion that we seek to change. We realize that there is ultimately no “other” to fight against, yet we also recognize that some are indeed in positions of greater responsibility for suffering and oppression.

3. Not Knowing, But Keep Going:

Our work is to remain open to what is unknown, mysterious, and confusing, and to avoid easy answers and habitual views. Maybe we’re wrong or incomplete. We cultivate the ability to listen openly, to hold the multiple questions and perspectives that arise, and to be present with whatever is coming up.

4. Opening to Suffering:

In our meditation practice, we learn to be present in the face of suffering, working through out reactivity, denial, avoidance, and fears, and exploring and transforming the roots of suffering. We bring this skill outward, not turning away from the suffering and injustice that we find in our families, communities, work, society, and world. Our action comes increasingly out of our compassion.

5. Acting from Equanimity:

Can we bring equanimity—the state of even-mindedness and balance—to all our actions, balancing acceptance and understanding of the present moment and its causes and conditions with compassion and the intention to respond to suffering?

6. Being Peace:

Thich Nhat Hanh says that “peace is every step.” We are careful in balancing task- and process-orientation, ends and means. Beyond ideological differences, we share a commitment to be in ourselves that which we are trying to bring about in the world—peace and freedom.

7. Mindfulness and Presence in Action:

Open, mindful awareness is the fundamental nature of our being. How can we cultivate this presence in our actions in any domain, and cut through tendencies to be distracted, to be caught in fixed views and habitual patterns of thought, body, and emotion?

8. Embracing Paradox:

How can we hold in creative tension what often seem to be contradictory perspectives—that all is “as it needs to be” and that we feel deeply moved to respond to suffering, that we are both personal and universal, that nothing needs to happen and that everything needs to happen?

9. Devotedly Do... Without Attachment:

In our practice, we learn of the roots of suffering in compulsive attachment to objects, experiences, ways of doing things, views, and outcomes. Yet non-attachment does not mean complacency, passivity, separation from life, lack of commitment, or non-doing. We have to act. Action that comes from clear seeing and an open heart can be deeply committed, yet without attachment.

10. Loving Kindness: Taking Care of Ourselves, We Take Care of the World:

Like the parent who uses the mask in an airplane emergency first, before helping the child, we need to attend to our long-range well-being. We need to attend to the signs of burnout of resentment. Cultivating our own awakening and joy, we may truly be of use, and naturally seek the well-being of others.

DEDICATION PRAYER
from Guide to a Bodhisattva 's Way of Life by Shantideva

May all beings everywhere
Plagued by sufferings of body and mind,
Obtain an ocean of happiness and joy
By virtue of my merits

May no living creature suffer
Commit evil or ever fall ill.
May no one be afraid or belittled,
With a mind weighed down by depression.

May the blind see forms,
And the deaf hear sounds.
May those whose bodies are worn with toil
Be restored on finding repose.

May the naked find clothing,
The hungry find food;
May the thirsty find water
And delicious drinks.

May the poor find wealth
Those weak with sorrow find joy;
May the forlorn find hope,
Constant happiness and prosperity.

May there be timely rains
And bountiful harvests;
May all medicines be effective
And wholesome prayers bear fruit.

May all who are sick and ill
Quickly be freed from their ailments.
Whatever diseases there are in the world
May they never occur again.

May the frightened cease to be afraid
And those bound be freed;
May the powerless find power
And may people think of benefiting each other.