

Ethics for a Whole World



A STUDY GUIDE

For use with

BEYOND RELIGION:

Ethics for a Whole World

by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

With deep gratitude to His Holiness the Dalai Lama,
whose life and work are a timeless example for all beings

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USING THE STUDY GUIDE

There are two applications for the Ethics for a Whole World Study Guide: for group and for individual study. This guide is meant for study groups in criminal justice, education, health care, churches, finance and for any study group using *Beyond Religion* as a text. The course can also be taken by correspondence.

There are two different types of study groups: prison and “free world,” meaning anywhere outside of a prison. For a prison study group, it is usually necessary to have a volunteer sponsor that is willing to come into the prison at least once a week. Starting a class in a prison can begin with a phone call to the facility administration or chaplain; most rehabilitation classes are coordinated through the chaplain’s office or the education department. For resource materials and any additional assistance with this process, please see the contact information inside the back cover.

An Ethics Correspondence Course should be of benefit to incarcerated participants and to anyone else who is not in a situation where he or she can participate as part of an organized study group. Through Project Clear Light and The Foundation for Active Compassion, there is a corps of mentors willing to sponsor either a prison or free-world study group or to work the course by correspondence.

Please see the Appendices for more information on using the Study Guide.



INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has had a front row seat on global events ever since he was forced to escape from his homeland of Tibet in 1959. He remains in exile. Both drastic and dramatic changes have happened in the world in the last half-century, but despite tremendous advances in so many fields, there is still great suffering, and humanity continues to face enormous difficulties and challenges that threaten our very existence.

The Dalai Lama feels that the fundamental problem we face in the twenty-first century is that we give too much attention to the external, material aspects of life while neglecting moral ethics and inner values. Throughout history, we can witness the interplay of peace and power, of material wealth and spiritual well-being. Today, the general level of access to material goods has never been greater. World-wide instant communication via very sophisticated technologies is culturally transforming the way we do business and relate to each other. Yet old attitudes of prejudice and greed continue, and social, religious and political institutions have not kept pace with the issues facing our rapidly changing world. The real source and force of change must come from each of us; we must learn how to take responsibility for our individual parts in what is happening around us. An excellent place to begin is with our sense of ethics.

Ethics is a conversation that has been going on throughout the world for thousands of years. Every culture, every religious and spiritual tradition has contributed to this conversation about morals in an attempt to

understand the role of law and morality in social harmony and justice. The desire to balance the responsibility of individual free will with the role of political and religious institutions has been a theme of Vedic literature, the Buddha's teachings, classical Greek philosophy, the Age of Enlightenment and modern philosophy,

The Dalai Lama is offering us an approach to ethics that does not rely upon cultural- or religious-based morals and yet can be equally acceptable to those with or without religious faith. He is offering us a system of secular ethics based on the inherent human value of compassion that is shared by every person on earth. We have within our grasp a means of grounding inner values without contradicting any religion and without depending on religion.

Due to the diversity of religious beliefs and social morals throughout the world, it is both impractical and of no benefit to attempt to dictate moral values. We must find a way of thinking about spirituality and ethics that is beyond religion, a way of thinking, relating, and being that can include everyone.



PART I A New Vision of Secular Ethics

CHAPTER I ■ RETHINKING SECULARISM

The Dalai Lama believes that both science and religion can influence the development of a system of ethics. He chooses to use the word “secular” to describe such a system but carefully explains exactly what that means. He points out that, both in the small world around us and in the larger world outside, we are brought together with people who do not share culture, language and religion, so we must rely instead on basic human values and our common, interdependent human condition in order to develop an ethical awareness that will benefit all.

INNER VALUES IN AN AGE OF SCIENCE

Scientific research, particularly that which focuses on exploring the nature of experience, consciousness and the effects of contemplative practices, may offer evidence for the benefits of cultivating qualities such as compassion, loving-kindness, attention and a calm mind. When this information is coupled with our own personal experience and simple common sense, a strong case can be made for recognizing that basic human values do not necessarily rely upon religious principles or faith.

- 1.1 How do you understand what the Dalai Lama means by “basic human values”?

APPROACHING SECULARISM

In the context of this discussion, “secular,” far from implying antagonism toward religion or toward people of faith, actually conveys a profound

respect for and tolerance toward all religions and an inclusive and impartial attitude which includes nonbelievers. In order to be truly universal, a system of ethics must include both believers and nonbelievers.

- 1.2 How do you understand the term “secular ethics”?
- 1.3 Why would a secular approach to ethics be more effective than a religious approach?
- 1.4 And conversely, how is the idea of secular ethics acceptable to those who are deeply religious?

SECULARISM IN INDIA

It is a tremendous achievement from which other countries in the world can learn that India, despite its great diversity, by and large maintains a peaceful and harmonious society.

- 1.5 How does the principle of *ahimsa*—nonviolence—form the foundation of India’s success in maintaining its diverse, peaceful and harmonious society?

TOLERANCE IN AN AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

A genuinely sustainable and universal approach to ethics can emerge simply as a natural and rational response to our very humanity and our common human condition.

- 1.6 As you look around the world, what do you feel is the major cause of the social tensions that have become so common?

RELIGION AND ETHICS

Although the cultivation and practice of inner values and ethical behavior play key roles in both theistic and non-theistic religious traditions, religion is not the only lens through which to view human spirituality. More fundamental are our basic human qualities of goodness and compassion and our underlying disposition toward love, kindness and affection.

- 1.7 What are the similarities and differences between religion and spirituality?

- 1.8 Are there any benefits that religion provides that could not be derived from a secular approach to ethics? Are there any values in a secular approach to ethics that are not offered in religion?
- 1.9 Write out your definition of ethics.

GROUNDING ETHICS IN HUMAN NATURE

History offers us plenty of evidence that human beings can be violent and destructive. However, if we look to the aspects of our personal lives that are the most endearing and satisfying, we see love, kindness and compassion. Our nature is to nurture, to care for the ones we love and to share our happiness. As Mother Teresa once said, “The problem with the world is that we draw the circle of our family too small.” The fullest expression of our shared human virtues is our capacity to make close friendships, to come together for a common cause, and to offer ourselves in service to others.

- 1.10 In what way does your life experience affirm or contradict the Dalai Lama’s view of human nature?
- 1.11 How does our habitual behavior obscure basic human values?

TWO PILLARS FOR SECULAR ETHICS

The Dalai Lama explains the two basic principles on which he believes a universal system of ethics must be based: shared humanity and interdependence.

- 1.12 How do you understand the term “shared humanity”?
- 1.13 How do you understand interdependence as a key feature of human reality?

For Correspondence Course: Part A: Write a short summary of what you feel are the most important concepts the Dalai Lama is putting forth in this chapter. Part B: What insights, comments or questions came up for you in your study of this chapter?



CHAPTER 2 ■ OUR COMMON HUMANITY

Although we appear to be quite different in how we look, how we speak and how we act, it is important to have a clear understanding of what we all have in common. We share certain things with all sentient beings, like the ability to feel pain and experience pleasure, but as humans we are also endowed with consciousness, empathy, and the power of rational thinking.

- 2.1 How do you understand what is meant by “sentient beings”?
- 2.2 It’s easy to see all the ways that we are different from one another. In what ways are we the same?

HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS AND EMPATHY

Humans have a capacity for memory that allows us to project our thoughts into the past and the future. We have powerful imaginations and a highly developed capacity for communication through symbolic language. We have the capacity for rational thought—the ability to critically evaluate and compare different outcomes in both real and imaginary situations. Also fundamental to human nature is the capacity for empathy: we feel others’ joys and sorrows as if they were our own.

- 2.3 How would you define empathy?
- 2.4 Can you offer examples of situations in which you have felt empathy?
- 2.5 How is empathy key to our survival?

HAPPINESS AND SUFFERING

The never-ending human quest for happiness and the desire to avoid suffering account for many of humankind's greatest achievements and the evolution of the complex human brain. As humans, we are very impressionable, we learn rapidly, but we also develop attachments to what we "like" and aversions to what we don't. We are drawn to what is familiar and tend to avoid what is foreign. In doing so, we develop judgments that can lead to prejudice and intolerance based solely on conditioned mental habits that are negative and cause us to suffer.

- 2.6 What are some examples of negative mental habits and how do they cause us to suffer?
- 2.7 How does acting ethically interrupt the conditioned power of our negative mental habits?
- 2.8 How does acting ethically maximize our sense of genuine happiness for ourselves and for others at the same time?

FUNDAMENTAL EQUALITY

Despite all the characteristics that differentiate us—race, language, religion, gender, wealth and many others—we are all equal in terms of our basic humanity. In our quest for happiness and desire to avoid suffering, we are all essentially the same.

- 2.9 Do you feel that there are any groups of people that do not have the equal right to happiness that you do?
- 2.10 What kind of judgments do you notice when you look at the other members of the group or the people that live or work around you?
- 2.11 What kinds of expectations do you have of others with whom you work or live?

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CHAPTER 3 ■ THE QUEST FOR HAPPINESS

The happiness the Dalai Lama speaks of in this chapter is, as he says, “the simple joy we all understand in an ordinary, everyday sense.” Though most people will agree that wealth, health and friendship contribute significantly to human well-being, he points out that when they are examined, they are not the ultimate source of happiness. The satisfactions they bring are temporary and may even cause suffering. Genuine happiness requires more—peace of mind, a sense of purpose and a sense of connection.

WEALTH, HEALTH, AND FRIENDSHIP

Much more important than money, possessions or status is our inner state of being. Although financial security, good health and loving friendship appear important for happiness, they are always changing and cannot be the source of ultimate happiness.

- 3.1 Write out your definition of genuine happiness?
- 3.2 Why does striving for greater wealth appear to contribute to happiness yet can lead to greater suffering?

TWO LEVELS OF SATISFACTION

Pleasurable feelings are derived at some point from the satisfaction of a craving or attachment to some external stimulus. This level of satisfaction can eventually turn into a kind of suffering. Peace of mind, mental composure and inner resilience exist on an inner level of satisfaction.

- 3.3 What is the difference between pleasure and happiness?
- 3.4 What gives you a sense of purpose in life, and how does it contribute to your happiness?



CHAPTER 4 ■ COMPASSION, THE FOUNDATION OF WELL-BEING

At every stage of our lives, we depend upon a loving connection with those around us. When our actions are inspired by compassion, we strengthen this connection; we also gain the conditions for well-being, health and genuine happiness. The Dalai Lama uses a mother's love as an example of the quality of compassion he believes to be the very source of our shared ethical values. However, he points out that compassion only for those close to us can cause us to forget that all beings share in our desire to gain happiness and avoid suffering. He believes that, with training, we can extend this unconditionally to include all sentient beings, transforming our relationships with others from "us" and "them" to "we."

- 4.1 Is compassion something fundamental to our human nature or is it something that needs to be cultivated? Or both?
- 4.2 How does compassion create the conditions for true happiness?

THE LOVE OF A MOTHER

Mothers constantly demonstrate to all who see them the self-sacrificing, unconditional love they feel for their children.

- 4.3 Bring to mind someone that you feel expresses unconditional love. Is it realistic to think that we can have the same kind of unconfined compassion as this person?

LEVELS OF COMPASSION

By recognizing that all human beings, just like ourselves, aspire to happiness and wish to be free from suffering, we can make compassion universal.

- 4.4 How do you understand the difference between empathy and compassion?
- 4.5 Can you describe why you might be inclined to feel greater compassion for one person than for another?

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CHAPTER 5 ■ COMPASSION AND THE QUESTION OF JUSTICE

Some may argue that there is a conflict between compassion and the principles of justice. The Dalai Lama suggests that the very concept of justice—fairness and redress based on the recognition of human equality—is grounded in compassion. He describes compassionate activity as a strong though nonviolent force that challenges wrongdoers yet distinguishes between the actor and the action. Because everyone has the capacity to change, punishment for wrongdoing must offer an opportunity for restoration, not just retribution, especially since a desire for revenge has so many negative consequences. Forgiveness, the ability to recognize that due to conditioned negativity we all distort reality to some degree, leads to peace of mind. Forgiveness reflects the inner motivation of compassionate concern for the welfare of all beings.

THE QUESTION OF JUSTICE

There are those who say that the ethic of compassion amounts to an ethic of victimhood under which aggression will triumph, wrongdoing is forgiven, and the weak are left defenseless. Far from promoting weakness or passivity, compassion requires great fortitude and strength of character and by no means implies surrender in the face of wrongdoing or injustice. Maintaining an attitude of calmness and nonviolence is an indication of strength. It bears the confidence that comes from recognizing that the innate goodness of our human virtue is merely obscured by thoughts and actions that stem from negative mental habits.

- 5.1 Who would you add to the Dalai Lama's list of fighters against injustice that have been motivated by universal compassion? Why? (They don't have to be important or well-known people. A friend or relative could be such a fighter in his or her own quiet way.)

- 5.2 Describe a situation in your life in which an attitude of calmness and nonviolence saved the day. Why did it work?

BROAD AND NARROW CONCEPTS OF JUSTICE

The broad sense of justice is a universal precept of fairness and redress based on the recognition of human equality. The narrower understanding of justice is the exercise of the law within any given legal framework (the rule of law). Legal systems can often reflect a very limited conception of justice. For the law to genuinely uphold justice, it must protect universal human rights.

- 5.3 Do you agree with the Dalai Lama's definition of justice? Why or why not?
- 5.4 Who suffers more from a narrow concept of justice and why?

THE ROLE OF PUNISHMENT

From a secular point of view, we must ask: Is punishment about making wrongdoers suffer as an end in itself or is it about preventing further wrongdoing? Punishment has an important role to play in the regulation of human affairs, both as a deterrent to crime and to give people a sense of security and confidence in the law. The mark of a civilized society is the recognition that all human beings have the capacity for change, that revenge has negative consequences, and that forgiveness has great value. When it comes to justice, compassion and mercy should not be brushed aside.

- 5.5 What kind of punishment does the Dalai Lama recommend for wrongdoers?
- 5.6 How can the exercise of justice be made more complete by a compassionate approach?
- 5.7 Why would leaving violent crimes unpunished not be in the best interests of the perpetrator?

DISTINGUISHING THE ACTION FROM THE ACTOR

Compassion is directed toward the actor, not his or her actions. Compassion allows us to condemn wrong actions while holding an attitude of kindness toward the perpetrators of those actions. We must bear in mind that acceptance, kindness and understanding are not the same as approval.

- 5.8 What is meant by restorative justice, and how does it further a person's ability and willingness to become a law-abiding citizen?
- 5.9 Do you believe that human beings have the capacity to change? How have you experienced this?

ALTRUISTIC PUNISHMENT

Punishment can be exacted in a way that benefits everyone, including wrongdoers themselves. Punishment that does not exact revenge but rather corrects the wrongdoer is in everyone's interest.

- 5.10 What would a model for altruistic punishment look like?

FORGIVENESS

What's done is done. The past is beyond our control, but the way we respond to past wrongdoing is something we can work with today by recognizing the tendency to make judgments based on negative attitudes or reactive habits. Forgiving does not mean forgetting; when we separate the doer from the deed, we can be free of the angry and resentful state of mind that causes more conflict.

- 5.11 How does clinging to memories of past injustices get in the way of forgiveness?
- 5.12 How can the concept of justice be based on compassionate concern for both the victim and the perpetrator?

THE SCOPE OF ETHICS

Ethics can't be divorced from motivation. When our inner motivation is pure, genuinely directed toward the benefit of others, our outer actions will naturally tend to be ethically sound. It is from compassion that all our ethical values and principles arise.

- 5.13 How do you feel about the Dalai Lama's statement "...when our motivation is pure, genuinely directed toward the welfare of others, our action will naturally tend to be ethically sound"?
- 5.14 If, as the Dalai Lama says, inner motivation is essential to an ethical system, why is compassion the core principle on which to base such a system?

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CHAPTER 6 ■ THE ROLE OF DISCERNMENT

While intention is the most important factor in guiding ethical behavior, it is discernment that will ensure that the choices we make are realistic and that our good intentions are not lost. If compassionate motivation forms the basis of a system of secular ethics, the Dalai Lama believes that it must be complemented by discernment, so that the choices we make are grounded in a clear-sighted understanding of the world we live in. It's important here to contemplate the principle of interdependence—that every situation is the result of countless different causes and conditions, many of which are beyond anyone's control. Discernment can aid us in looking at problems from this broader perspective. Since we are only human and will never see the whole picture, we must rely upon a compassionate motivation tempered by critical thinking. We can nurture our inner values to help us make ethical choices by reflecting on whether our actions are harmful or beneficial to ourselves and others.

- 6.1 How would you define discernment?
- 6.2 Give an example of how you used discernment recently.

ESTABLISHING INNER VALUES

It is good to have internalized general principles to guide our actions for those occasions when we do not have time to work things out in detail. In this globalized world in which religious moral guidelines are not universally accepted, we use discernment to understand the implications of our actions.

- 6.3 Are there general “rules” that you follow when making everyday choices? How would these “rules” change if compassion were your constant motivation?
- 6.4 When there is no time for discernment, what do you do?

- 6.5 Are there other actions you would add to the Dalai Lama's list of those universally considered harmful? What inner values might cause people to take these actions?

DEALING WITH DILEMMAS

There are exceptional circumstances in which our internalized general principles are inadequate. Ethical matters are often not black and white; we must weigh the pros and the cons of the various paths open to us and then let ourselves be guided by a natural sense of responsibility.

- 6.6 Recall a situation in which you had to make a difficult decision. Then analyze this decision using the method the Dalai Lama outlines ("Do I truly have at heart the well being of others?"). If you had used this approach, would your decision have been different?

TAKING A HOLISTIC VIEW

It is not enough to look at any given situation or problem from only one perspective, because the situations in life arise from the convergence of a great number of contributing factors. Our responses will be more in tune with reality if we look with a broader, more holistic view. We limit our ability to solve a problem if we are too narrowly focused on it.

- 6.7 How do you understand the principle of interdependence? Why is this important to acting ethically?
- 6.8 Why does reacting to a difficult situation with accusations and blame often make things worse? What would be a better approach?

INEVITABLE UNCERTAINTY

We will never be certain that we know all the causes or all the consequences of the ethical problems we face, and often they are not even under our control. Nevertheless, we do have control at the level of motivation and in using discernment before speaking or taking action.

- 6.9 What does the Dalai Lama mean when he says that ethics must be grounded at the level of motivation, not consequences?
- 6.10 How can admitting that we don't know the answer be beneficial?
- 6.11 Can you offer an example of when the best action is no action?

THE FRUITS OF DISCERNMENT

Compassion and discernment joined together create the calm mind and clear judgment that are key to a workable approach to ethics and well-being.

- 6.12 How does discernment strengthen the ability to trust that our actions will be compassionate?

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CHAPTER 7 ■ ETHICS IN OUR SHARED WORLD

The Dalai Lama believes that the major challenges facing us today require an approach based on shared ethical values and mutual cooperation. These values must be grounded in global responsibility that recognizes the irrationality of using violence or unjust methods to solve human problems. Identifying and cultivating universal ethical principles will contribute to the possibility for us to live more peacefully and to preserve our environment and cultural diversity. Although parents and churches offer some training in moral behavior, we can no longer assume that a broad understanding of ethics will be learned at home or through religious instruction.

OUR GLOBAL CHALLENGES

The problems we face in the world today, with their complex causes and conditions, are almost always related to issues of ethics.

- 7.1 Create a graphic chain showing the interconnected causes and conditions for a current global issue.

GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY

The ethics of individuals can affect the lives of many others in our interconnected world. Therefore, it is critical for us to realize that our behavior has a global dimension.

- 7.2 How can our individual interests serve what is in the best interests of the wider human community?
- 7.3 Why is apathy or indifference a form of selfishness?

THE CHALLENGE OF TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS

The knowledge and power we now hold due to scientific and technological advances raise serious concerns. Is it possible that our responsibilities are now growing too fast for our natural capacity for moral discernment to keep pace? Can we trust ourselves with this power?

- 7.4 Offer an example of a current global problem caused or exacerbated by technology? What ethical solution would you propose?

THE FUTILITY OF WAR

Violence begets violence. Since all regions and all people are connected environmentally, economically, and politically in our interdependent world, disarmament is compassion in practice.

- 7.5 How would you practice inner disarmament?
- 7.6 Why is nonviolence also “compassion in action”?
- 7.7 How is it possible that we can change the world by taking greater responsibility for our own actions?

THE ENVIRONMENT

It is clear that the current patterns of consumption that we consider “advanced” are unsustainable for our natural resources. Genuine cooperation to face this issue cannot be imposed by force; it can only emerge from mutual trust and respect among the parties involved and the recognition of the problems we face collectively.

- 7.8 Discuss examples of ways that ethical responsibility will serve to protect and preserve the environment.
- 7.9 How can the “developed” world become a model of sustainability for countries and cultures that aspire to be more like us?

THE PROBLEM OF GREED VERSUS THE JOYS OF PHILANTHROPY

Wealth should serve humanity, and not vice versa. The stark economic inequalities of today's world are not only morally wrong but sources of many practical problems, including war, sectarian violence and the social tensions created by large-scale economic migration.

- 7.10 What does the Dalai Lama mean when he says that he considers himself “half Marxist”?
- 7.11 What would be the effect of greater financial equity among people and nations?

NEW CHALLENGES FROM SCIENCE

Advances in science raise many difficult choices, especially in the fields of genetics and biotechnology. It is important that we meet our new areas of responsibility with sound motivation and discernment.

- 7.12 What ethical problems can arise from advances in science?

EDUCATING FUTURE GENERATIONS

To use a single religious perspective in education would be inadequate. In a secular approach to ethics in education, it is crucial that the basic principles be genuinely universal.

- 7.13 Discuss a lesson you would teach to a classroom of students on the cultivation of inner values.
- 7.14 How could a system of ethics based on compassion and moral discernment help teachers solve discipline problems in the schools?

THE NEED FOR PERSEVERANCE

If the goal is noble, it does not matter if it is realized within our lifetimes. We must strive and persevere and never give up.

- 7.15 Even if a universal ethical system is not fully possible in the near future, what are some of the benefits of moving in that direction?

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PART II Educating the Heart through Training the Mind

CHAPTER 8 ■ ETHICAL MINDFULNESS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Ethics is not simply a matter of knowing beneficial from harmful; it's about doing. The Dalai Lama suggests that three stages are necessary in order to put ethics into practice in our everyday life: an ethic of restraint, not harming others; an ethic of virtue, the cultivation of inner values; and an ethic of altruism, dedicating ourselves to the welfare of others. Restraint allows us to uphold the foundation principle: do no harm either through violent or nonviolent actions. The ethic of virtue is the recognition that all beings have in common basic human values; and the ethic of altruism is the cultivation of selflessness and humility for the benefit of all. The means to this end are the natural mindfulness and awareness that allow us to act in ways that are consistent with our basic human values.

- 8.1 How do you understand the importance of mindfulness in terms of your actions and what you say?

THE ETHIC OF RESTRAINT

The most important thing we can do to minimize the harm we might inflict in our everyday lives is to apply discernment in our behavior.

- 8.2 Offer an example of a negative mental habit or attitude that you have. How can you remind yourself to not identify with this attitude?

- 8.3 How have your past actions caused harm to others that was intentional or unintentional or impulsive? How would the ethic of restraint have changed your behavior?

HARM CAUSED BY NONVIOLENT MEANS

Our words alone have tremendous potential to harm others, often unintentionally.

- 8.4 Think of a difficult person that you think or talk about in a negative way and express your feelings about him or her in other terms.
- 8.5 How does right livelihood help prevent causing harm by non-violent means?

HEEDFULNESS, MINDFULNESS, AND AWARENESS

Heedfulness—adopting an overall sense of caution involves the attitude of being careful and attentive

Mindfulness—the ability to gather oneself mentally and thereby recall one’s core values and motivation before speaking or taking action

Awareness—being witness to whatever is displaying in mind as experience

Self-respect and consideration of others—two mental qualities that give us an added level of caution about doing wrong

- 8.6 Have you ever done something that you knew was wrong at the time? Why did knowing it was wrong not stop you from saying or doing it?
- 8.7 If mindfulness is about remembering our core values, motivation and how our negative mental habits are affecting our happiness, describe how being more mindful would be useful in a real-life situation you are facing.

THE ETHIC OF VIRTUE

We can benefit others (and ourselves) through words and actions by being caring and thoughtful toward them and by being charitable and helping those in need.

- 8.8 Offer an example of when you learned an important life lesson from making a mistake. How did that change the way you look at others who are making the same mistake?
- 8.9 How does an attitude of sympathetic joy in others' achievements and good fortune actually improve your life? If your first response is envy, can you notice this and flip it to joy for the other?

THE ETHIC OF ALTRUISM

The third level of mind training is altruism, the highest form of ethical practice.

- 8.10 How is it possible for acts of altruism to meet and outweigh moral wrongs? Think of times when your own selfless acts changed the situation, even for a short time.
- 8.11 Is it possible to experience complete and selfless dedication to others? When have you experienced this? Who serves as an example in your life of someone who really embodies this spirit of selfless dedication?

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CHAPTER 9 ■ DEALING WITH DESTRUCTIVE EMOTIONS

The Dalai Lama suggests that the most useful way of considering emotions is to see if the actions which arise from them are beneficial or harmful. He points out that even those feelings we consider pleasurable can cause harm when they distort reality. In order to reduce harmful behavior, we must recognize any destructive urges or tendencies; be determined to cancel the negative by the positive; and become convinced that our reactions are produced by our habitual emotional patterns rather than by any outside force. Both religion and modern neuroscience affirm that with conscious effort we can change patterns of behavior based on emotional states of mind. This chapter offers a method—using emotional awareness—to observe the arising of afflictive emotions at increasingly deeper levels of consciousness. Awareness of the causes of our emotions will allow us to apply restraint and to keep these emotions from erupting into harmful behavior.

THE POSSIBILITY OF SELF-IMPROVEMENT

Advances in neuroscience have prompted many scientists to give serious attention to the idea that through conscious effort we can train our emotional instincts by literally altering the physical patterns of the brain.

- 9.1 Have you recognized destructive behavior in yourself that has changed? Are you aware of what caused the change?

THE WORLD OF OUR EMOTIONS

Destructive emotions are those states that undermine our well-being by creating inner turmoil. Within this group of emotions, it is possible to distinguish between two subcategories: those emotional states that are destructive in themselves, like greed, hatred or malice; and those states, such as attachment (desire), anger or fear, which only become destructive

when their intensity is excessive and disproportionate to the situation in which they arise.

- 9.2 How do you understand the difference between an emotion that is afflictive and one that is simply unpleasant?
- 9.3 How do you understand emotions that are unpleasant but yet beneficial?
- 9.4 Why is anger sometimes useful, but hatred always destructive?

SHARED FEATURES OF DESTRUCTIVE EMOTIONS

Destructive emotions distort our perception of reality by narrowing our view of a situation, causing us to lose our capacity for discernment and rational judgment, thus blinding us to the short- and long-term consequences of our actions.

- 9.5 How do extreme emotional states prevent you from exercising clear judgment?
- 9.6 Discuss the destructive and beneficial qualities of each of these emotions: anger, attachment, envy, pride, and doubt.

THE EMOTION FAMILIES

Almost all of our destructive emotions can be seen as either in a family of attraction or a family of aversion—liking or disliking, desire or hatred.

- 9.7 Choose a destructive emotion that causes you trouble and analyze it in terms of the state of mind that is typically present when it occurs. How is such an analysis helpful?

TAKING A STANCE

A key element in generating an effective stance toward negative emotions is a deep recognition of their destructive nature and the conviction that we can overcome them.

- 9.8 Reflect on a negative emotion that is strong in you. What personal problems does it cause? How does it affect those around you?
- 9.9 How can your empathetic nature be the source of your greatest happiness?

UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES OF AFFLICTION

The real troublemaker in our life is within us. The true enemy of innate goodness is not external conditions but negative mental habits. Destructive emotions are habit, and the more we rely on them, the stronger they become.

- 9.10 What disturbing emotions recur over and over again for you? Describe how you react to similar situations in the same negative way?
- 9.11 How do you typically respond when someone provokes you? Does this behavior remedy the situation or does it cause you more mental discomfort?

EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

Emotional awareness—careful attention to how a destructive emotion arises and our tendency to react or tell a story—will gradually help bring afflictive emotions under control.

- 9.12 Which of the three aspects of emotional awareness—body, speech and mind—are the most helpful to you in restraining negative impulses? Why?

ATTENTIVENESS

Paying attention to our behavior is a way to begin to develop emotional awareness. We can analyze the arising of destructive emotions by tracing our behavior back through a chain of events, the causal chain.

- 9.13 Offer an example of something that triggers your most frequent destructive emotion?

- 9.14 When you find yourself reacting in a negative way, try to trace this response back through its causal chain from outer trigger to inner cause. What part does an assumption or expectation play in this chain?

CATCHING ONESELF

Paying attention to the way that our emotions reveal themselves through our bodies and our thoughts can give us early warning signs and helpful hints as we try to catch destructive behaviors earlier and earlier in the causal chain.

- 9.15 Bring to mind a difficulty in your life right now? Can you observe your difficulty without trying to push it away? How does it feel when you think of your difficulty? How do you language it? Can you locate it in your body?

THE QUESTION OF MOODS

Moods are deeper levels of thought and feelings that provide insight into our overall attitude about our self and our situation. A mood is like a background theme that can carry over for days, even years, and affects how we will respond to both internal and external events.

- 9.16 How would you describe your overall mood?

- 9.17 How fixed is this self image?

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CHAPTER 10 ■ CULTIVATING KEY INNER VALUES

The second part of the Dalai Lama's two-pronged approach to living an ethical life is to cultivate positive inner qualities. In this chapter, he points out those qualities needed besides compassion and forgiveness: patience, contentment, self-discipline and generosity. Patience, the antidote to anger and frustration, allows us to stay calm and exercise discernment when faced with everyday difficulties. Contentment helps us avoid the suffering of dissatisfaction and frustration caused by greed. Through self-discipline of body, speech, and mind, we can develop the confidence, integrity, and dignity that give us the ability to resist the temptations of harmful behavior and instead act in ways that display our positive qualities. Generosity provides us with opportunities to experience the joy of giving and to strengthen our connection to others through sharing in their joy. All of these key inner values can lead us to actions which are beneficial to ourselves and to others; they are the foundation of a system of secular ethics.

PATIENCE AND FORBEARANCE

Patience is a key component of the ethic of restraint discussed in an earlier chapter. There are three aspects of patience to consider: forbearance toward those who harm us (not returning harm for harm), acceptance of suffering, and acceptance of reality.

- 10.1 Distinguish between tolerance, forbearance, and forgiveness. Why does the Tibetan word “soe pa” include them as part of the virtue of patience?
- 10.2 How can the virtue of patience work in a volatile situation, with a troublemaker, or in response to an out-and-out moral wrong?

PATIENCE TOWARD THE PERPETRATORS OF HARM helps us distinguish between the actor and the action.

- 10.3 Can you recall a time when someone acted aggressively or disrespectfully toward you? Why do you think he or she acted that way? How would you react in a similar situation today? Are any of the reasons the same? Does this change the way you feel about the other person?
- 10.4 If anger is involuntary, how could you control it?
- 10.5 Why does it seem natural to return harm when we are harmed? How would the reaction change if discernment were applied to the situation?

PATIENCE THROUGH THE ACCEPTANCE OF SUFFERING recognizes that suffering is an unavoidable part of our existence. Accepting our own discomfort will make it easier to see our part in the cause.

- 10.6 How will I benefit from understanding that you are a lot like me when it comes to suffering?

PATIENCE THROUGH CONTEMPLATION OF REALITY can help prevent despair through understanding the causes and conditions of difficult parts of our lives. If we reflect on the inevitability of change, we will see that whatever situation we are in today is changing even as we're experiencing it. Things are not fixed in the way we imagine.

- 10.7 How does reflecting on old age and death lead us to a greater acceptance of reality?
- 10.8 What personal benefits can be realized through the practice of patience?

CONTENTMENT

Contentment takes its place among ethical values when it is defined as the Dalai Lama sees it: “a certain modesty of ambition or having limited desires.” In this context, contentment means being able to find satisfaction without looking for more, thus freeing us from incessant craving.

- 10.9 Discuss how the desire for more resulted in the recent world-wide financial crisis. What suffering was caused by this?
- 10.10 Has “how much is enough” changed over your life? What does this tell you about your former wants and desires?
- 10.11 How do you understand the peace and contentment of even the poorest people in India that the Dalai Lama describes?

SELF-DISCIPLINE

When voluntarily embraced, self-discipline allows us to benefit ourselves and others by resisting temptation in our lives and also assists us in practicing contentment.

- 10.12 How does discipline imposed by fear undermine attempts to develop self-discipline?
- 10.13 Explain why self-discipline must also include mindfulness of those whose welfare is intimately connected to our own.
- 10.14 Describe how self-discipline interacts with the other positive inner values.

GENEROSITY

Generosity is the most natural outer expression of an inner attitude of compassion and loving-kindness. The four kinds of giving offer us an opportunity to convey this inner attitude to those around us; they are material giving, offering security, offering spiritual counsel, and extending love.

- 10.15 Give examples of how you carry out any of the four kinds of giving.
- 10.16 Describe an instance when your generosity caused harm instead of creating benefit. What did you learn from this experience?

CHARITABLE GIVING AND PHILANTHROPY

Charitable giving benefits the donor as much as it does the recipient, and simply behaving with an attitude of generosity does not require material wealth.

- 10.17 What are some specific ways that you can include an attitude of generosity in your day-to-day dealings with those around you?

JOY IN GIVING

If the motivation for generosity is to benefit all beings, a giver can experience great joy through his or her actions.

- 10.18 What is the greatest joy you have experienced in giving?
- 10.19 Can you give an example of when your expectation got in the way of joy?

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CHAPTER 11 ■ MEDITATION AS MENTAL CULTIVATION

In this final chapter, we are called upon to practice the mental discipline that makes self-transformation possible. The benefit of these practices is to allow us to be calmer, more compassionate and more discerning human beings. This is a worthwhile endeavor in itself that will benefit both self and others. In our work so far, we have actually been using some of the techniques of mental cultivation as we reflect on the questions posed. Now, the Dalai Lama teaches specific methods that will allow us to deepen these practices. He recognizes that these practices may not always be easy, so he offers helpful tips on how to deal with problems that might arise.

- 11.1 Discuss how meditation can be beneficial to your well-being and the well-being of others.

A PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION

Transformation starts with an intellectual understanding. The next stage is contemplation or analysis of assumptions, expectations, thoughts and beliefs. The final stage is resting in awareness of the present moment.

- 11.2 What process have you used when you wanted to really understand something? How does it differ from the way the Dalai Lama breaks it down? Would the points he makes improve your own approach?

FORMS OF MENTAL CULTIVATION

Of the many different forms of mental cultivation, a combination of analytic meditation and absorptive meditation are central to the Dalai Lama's own daily practice.

- 11.3 Discuss in your own words how you understand analytic meditation and absorptive meditation.

DEALING WITH PROCRASTINATION

A strong commitment to practice can help to overcome the call of other obligations that might seem to be more important.

- 11.4 What motivates you to practice?

PLANNING OUR PRACTICE

When planning a practice, it is important to consider an appropriate place, the likelihood of distractions and how much time to allow.

- 11.5 What kinds of physical and emotional supports are helpful to you in your meditation practice?

- 11.6 What time, place and posture work best for you?

RELAXING AND SETTLING THE MIND

It is very helpful if a meditation session begins by taking steps to place the mind and body in a relaxed state so that you can concentrate on mental cultivation.

- 11.7 What works best for you to arrive and relax into meditation?

REFLECTING ON THE BENEFITS OF MENTAL TRAINING

When reflecting on the benefits of a meditative practice, it can also be helpful to consider what will happen if you neglect it.

- 11.8 Which of the points that the Dalai Lama makes is the most effective in helping you maintain your mental training?

SOME FORMAL PRACTICES

FOCUSED ATTENTION is scanning the body for any tension or tightness and observing the body relaxing and breathing itself. The body and breath are two readily available objects for meditation. Please refer to Appendix A for more instruction on relaxing and breathing.

PRESENT-MOMENT AWARENESS is simply observing whatever is arising in the mind as sensations, thoughts, images or feelings and noticing any tendency to label, tell a story or want anything to be different.

TRAINING IN COMPASSION AND LOVING-KINDNESS is an invitation to cultivate compassion and loving-kindness by thinking of someone close to you and making the wish for him or her to be happy and to have deepest well-being. Then extend this wish to someone you don't know very well; to someone you find to be difficult; to a group; and finally to all beings. See Appendix B for a guided meditation.

11.9 Do you sense any kind of shift within you when practicing with a benefactor?

11.10 What insights have you had about the benefit of these practices to yourself and others?

CULTIVATING EQUANIMITY can be practiced by noticing the tendency to like one person and not like another. We reinforce these mental habits of liking and disliking when we stereotype others into groups and overlook the essential equality that we share with others, the profound recognition of our shared aspirations.

11.11 Discuss any reluctance to making the wish of love for someone that is difficult.

11.12 Discuss the sameness of our self and so-called "friends," "enemies" and "strangers."

REJOICING IN THE EXAMPLE OF OTHERS invites us to reflect on the qualities of people we admire so that we can gain direct appreciation of a given quality.

11.13 Describe some of the good qualities in people that you admire. How have you recognized these good qualities in yourself?

11.14 What have you learned from this practice?

DEALING WITH AFFLICTIVE ATTITUDES AND EMOTIONS gives us the opportunity to closely examine the mental states caused by afflictive emotions.

11.15 The Dalai Lama notes the importance of using both analytic and absorptive meditation techniques in this practice. How are these practices helpful to you?

11.16 Is it more effective for you to rest in awareness of an afflictive emotion or to apply an antidote?

OBSTACLES TO GOOD MENTAL CULTIVATION PRACTICE

Mental agitation occurs when the mind is too distracted by sensations, thoughts or feelings. Laxity is present when the mind is too relaxed and becomes dull or drowsy.

11.17 How are you able to “fine tune” your attention between agitation and laxity?

THE QUESTION OF PROGRESS

Whenever obstacles occur, we should maintain a non-judgmental attitude of patience and humility. The single measure of our progress is compassion.

11.18 Why does the Dalai Lama say that it’s the practice that’s important, not the rate of progress?

THE JOY OF MENTAL TRAINING

Judgmental attitudes and expectations are the display of the conditioned mind. We can take joy in the fact that we are learning little by little to recognize and deal with our negative mental habits.

- 11.19 Give examples of how a more joyful mind has deepened your meditation.

IMPACT ON DAILY LIFE

The benefit of spiritual practice is not how we feel while we are meditating, but to be more mindful and compassionate in what we are about to do or say throughout our day. Even moderate effort over time will have very beneficial results if we stay with it, if we are consistent and dedicated in our effort to reach our full human potential.

- 11.20 Give examples of times when you have experienced a greater mindfulness and how that has helped a situation.

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FINAL REFLECTIONS

1. Has your personal motivation in life changed as a result of taking this course?
2. Write a down a set of ethical principles that would make the world a better place for all the beings that share it.
3. What is the value of cultivating positive qualities as well as developing restraint when working with destructive emotions?
4. How would the inner values discussed in the book help you resolve a difficult situation that you are currently facing? Discuss the effects of applying compassion, forgiveness, patience, contentment, self-discipline, and generosity.
5. How have you found the mental training practices to be beneficial to you personally?
6. Have you noticed any changes in your compassion for others?

MY WISH

His Holiness the Dalai Lama concludes *Beyond Religion* with: “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. This is my prayer as well.” He invites us all, through our individual and communal efforts, to help make this prayer come true.

Write out your own prayers:

“May the future of humanity be...”

“May all beings be...”

“May human society be...”

“May my family be...”

What is your wish for yourself?

APPENDIX A ■ NATURAL AWARENESS MEDITATION

*Sit, either on the floor or a chair
With the back straight
The arms and hands resting in the lap
With eyes open or closed*

Turn the attention inward to the body breathing itself

Draw the breath in and down to the abdomen, slightly pushing out the lower belly. Experience the breath completely filling the body, like a balloon, until you feel the breath under your collar bones

Pause, for just a moment, and begin to exhale. Allow the exhale to lengthen, slightly tightening the diaphragm until the breath is completely exhausted...and pause...breath and attention are wide open without focusing on anything...

Allow the diaphragm to drop itself and initiate the next inhale.

Repeat this cycle as many times as you can without straining, forcing or getting dizzy

NATURAL BODY

Can you feel the weight of your body on your seat?

Can you feel your contact with the earth?

Can you feel your head balanced on your neck and shoulders?

Notice any tightness or tension in the body

Scan the body for any tension or tightness

Allow the body to relax itself

Natural Body—Just sitting, relaxing itself without having to do anything

NATURAL BREATH/ENERGY

Can you feel the way you are breathing?

Is there any tightness or resistance around the breath?

Notice the body relaxing itself on each out-breath

Natural Breath/Energy—The body breathing itself without our having to do anything

NATURAL MIND

Everything we experience is mind

Notice whatever is arising and dissolving in your experience

Notice the tendency to describe, label or tell a story about whatever is arising

Is there any space between thoughts?

Just sitting

Just breathing

Nothing to do or figure out

Honor what you feel without wanting to change anything

APPENDIX B ■ MEDITATION WITH A BENEFACTOR

We've heard it said that love is the most powerful force in the world, but what does this really mean? For many of us, love is something that comes and goes, the feeling we have about someone else, the memory of a moment we shared with someone or the fantasy we have about something in the future. If we look a little deeper, love is the sense of connection that we feel with the people and things that are dear to us. There is often a misunderstanding about love due to our tendency to use love in a self-ish way, to define ourselves by how others feel about us, or to manipulate others for our own sense of importance or self-worth. This abrogation of the power of love will only cause suffering.

Love is the lens through which we can view all of our relationships. What does this look like? What qualities do we experience as love? Love is understanding, patience, tolerance, fortitude, acceptance and a sense of openness and attentiveness. Love does not judge, criticize, have expectations or conditions. It holds no animosity or resentment but allows things to be just as they are. Love is interested, curious, joyful and compassionate. Love is both respectful and admiring, even in the face of adversity, difficulty, illness and death. If we are to allow love to be integral to our life, then it must begin with the relationship we have with ourselves.

Enlightened masters for thousands of years in all the great spiritual traditions have understood the importance and power of love. One of the oldest practices in the Buddhist tradition is the meditation on love. This practice has three parts; take your time with each part before moving on. This may take more than one session. Move on only when you feel you are ready.

THE BENEFACTOR

Begin by visualizing a person in your life that you feel has loved you unconditionally. This is someone that has cared for you, someone that you liked to be with. It doesn't matter if the person is living or not, whether you are still in touch with him or her or not; it is just someone that you know has loved you and wished you well. We call this person a benefactor. Feel the presence your benefactor sitting in front of you, looking and smiling at you.

THE WISH

Picture your benefactor sending you the wish of love. The wish of love is like a prayer; it goes:

“May you be happy, may you have deepest well-being.”

Experience him or her making this wish for you. The wish looks and feels like a warm, radiant beam of sunlight coming from the heart of your benefactor into your heart, your chest, your whole body. Without getting involved in any stories about your benefactor, focus on receiving the wish of love.

“May you be happy, may you have deepest well-being.”

RECEIVING THE WISH

Allow the warm radiance of the wish to enter into your being, to fill you with its nourishing, healing warmth. Your benefactor already loves you, so allow the radiant purity of this wish to bring light and warmth into every cell, every pore of your being. Is there any resistance or reluctance to your receiving the wish? Do not push this away or ignore it; instead hold any resistance up into the light of the wish; let it be illuminated and revealed by the wish. Ask yourself, “What is my reluctance?” “What is difficult about this?” “Is there any reason why wouldn't I want to receive the wish?”

MAKING THE WISH FOR OURSELVES

When you feel you have received the wish from your benefactor, begin to make the wish for yourself.

“May this one (myself) be happy, may this one have deepest well being.”

Allow yourself to receive the wish from yourself by picturing the warm radiance move down from the top of your head, filling your entire body. Notice any resistance or reluctance to your receiving the wish from yourself. Hold any resistance up into the illumination of the wish; allow it to be bathed in the light of the wish.

MAKING THE WISH FOR OTHERS

Once we have received the wish, from our benefactor and from ourselves, we then make the wish of love for others.

“May you be happy, may you have deepest well-being.”

Begin with your benefactor and send him or her the wish; picture a beam of light from you joining with the light coming from the benefactor. When you are ready, think of others close to you and send them the wish... move on to friends...people around you...people you don't know but know of...people in difficulty, sick, homeless. Think of others like you that are isolated from friends and family. Think of people you don't like. Make the wish for them all, for all beings. Why wouldn't we make the wish? Wouldn't the world be a better place if everyone made the wish for each other instead of holding on to petty negative attitudes, opinions and disagreements?

DEDICATION

Picture your benefactor dissolving into light...visualize all those for whom you made the wish dissolving into light...dissolve this light radiance into the radiance of your heart. End with the wish:

“May all beings be happy, may all beings have deepest well-being.”

APPENDIX C ■ SUGGESTIONS FOR A STUDY GROUP

For a study group, we have found that the best format is a group of no more than 30 people meeting once a week. At the first session, the group organizer can offer an introduction to the study, pass out the class materials, and discuss the class format.

It seems to work well to have all the class members sitting on chairs in a circle without any tables.

Begin each class with a short, silent meditation (three to five minutes), scanning the body, observing the breath and allowing each member to reflect on his or her intention for participating in the class. A class usually lasts for about two hours. Each week, either the lead facilitator or any member of the class can offer an introduction to the chapter under study. It is expected that every member of the class has read both the chapter and the Study Guide in preparation. Access to a black- or whiteboard is helpful. After the introduction and a brief discussion, the group then breaks up into small discussion groups of four to seven people with one person designated as the facilitator for each group. The role of the facilitator is to be prepared, keep the discussion on topic and give each member of the group the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. The group will go over the assigned key concept questions as they are presented in the Study Guide, taking from ten to twenty minutes for each key concept (heading) in the chapter under study. The facilitator should keep notes on the discussion. After the allotted time, the group comes together as a whole, and each facilitator reports on what was discussed in their group for each topic.

At the end of the class, it's helpful to take another two or three minutes of silence to allow the members to reflect on anything they said or heard that made an impression on them. Following this, the weekly leader, in his or her own words, sends out the power and merit of the collective effort of the class for the benefit of all beings.

For additional help in starting a study group please contact either The Dalai Lama Foundation at <http://www.dalailamafoundation.org/> or Project Clear Light at www.projectclearlight.org.

Appendix D ■ WORKING WITH CORRESPONDENTS

An Ethics for a Whole World Correspondence Course is a valuable offering to individuals that do not have access to a study group, either in prison or the “free world.” The process begins with a mentor that is willing to have up to a dozen written exchanges by mail or email. For those with access to a computer and/or email, the exchange will take place online. For those without access to email, the correspondence will mean writing a letter and sending it through the USPS.

GUIDELINES FOR CORRESPONDENTS

The correspondent is encouraged to keep a journal of all his or her course work. Please do not write in either the book or the Study Guide. Each week, thoroughly read a chapter in the textbook, taking notes if it is helpful. Go through the Study Guide for each chapter, reading each Key Concept. Go through the questions for discussion for each Key Concept and make notes in your journal on the questions that you feel offer you deeper insight into what the chapter is offering. Use your notes to complete Parts A and B below. Mail or email your work on Parts A and B to the mentor.

Part A: Write a short summary of what you feel are the most important concepts that the Dalai Lama is putting forth in this chapter.

Part B: What insights, comments or questions came up for you in your study of this chapter.

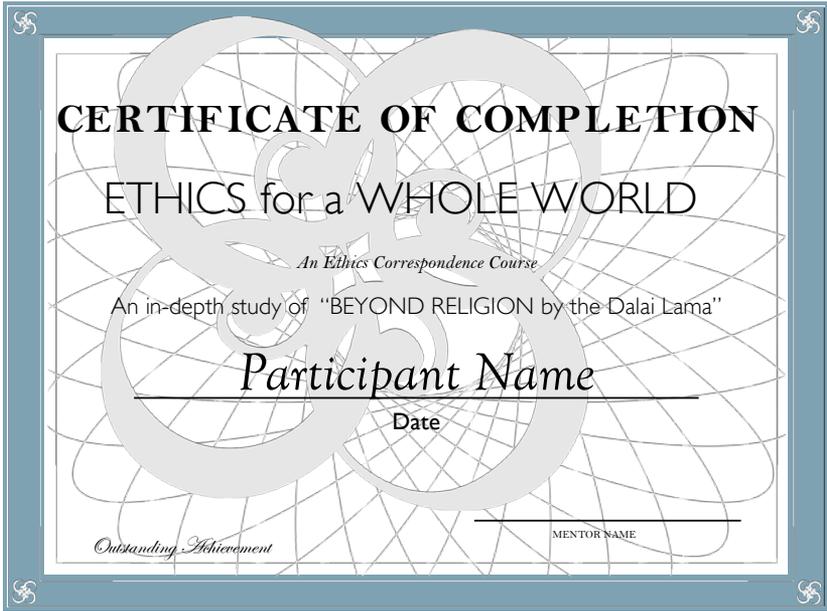
Please do not send answers to every question or give long examples. Respect that the mentor is volunteering his or her time. Try to keep your work for each chapter to no more than two double-sided pages.

It will work best to take the work a chapter at a time, so the commitment for the class will be to send up to a dozen mailings. In situations where an incarcerated participant is indigent, then no more than two chapters can be sent in a single mailing. Any more than this makes it difficult to get a thorough response to the work. Again, correspondents should be brief, summarize, and not give too many examples. This will save on how much the correspondent will have to write and the mentor to respond. Please note that this is a study opportunity, not an invitation to become a pen-pal.

Upon the completion of the course, if the participant makes a specific request, a Certificate of Completion will be issued by Project Clear Light.

COURSE MATERIALS

Through a small grant from The Dalai Lama Foundation, there are a limited number of books and study guides available for the correspondence course at no cost; please contact Project Clear Light for availability. Unless purchased, all course materials must be returned to the facilitator/mentor for use by other study groups or correspondents. A mentor should send an incarcerated participant a pre-addressed envelope with USPS printed postage (not stamps) to be used for returning the book and Study Guide. A Certificate of Completion will not be issued until all materials are returned.



Sample certificate of completion