

Taking the Leap Meditation Book Group Meeting 3
Saturday, February 18, 2012

Welcome to our exploration of movement, meditation & Pema Chodron's Taking the Leap: Freeing Ourselves from Old Habits & Fears. You are welcome to visit my web-site <http://dharmaworks.net/DharmaTouch/> to review a summary of what we cover in each class, find the home work suggestions and other resources you might find helpful. Please try to realize the benefit of mindfulness by practicing some or all of these steps every day.

1. Homework Suggestions

- a. *Meditate for 10 minutes or more in the morning & evening*
- b. *Continue to use your form of mindfulness bell or anchor that will remind you to pause and take 3 conscious breaths.*
- c. *Reflect & consider journaling on this week's reflection questions & try some or all of the exercises*
- d. *Suggested reading: Taking the Leap, Chapter 8, 9 & 10*

2. Reflection Questions & Exercises

a. Chapter 5 Getting Unstuck

- i. *Recall a life situation where you got hooked and reacted with a familiar pattern. Consider the three elements Pema ascribes to shenpa. How did your "storyline" (your thoughts beyond direct experience) fuel the charge? How did you experience the "undertow" (the urge to act)? What were the consequences? Did you experience self-recrimination?*
- ii. *Can you recall a time you were able to abide with the uneasy feeling of the undertow? Did you experience its magnetic force pulling you in a familiar direction? Consider the habits you have with a strong undertow. Choose one you wish to drop and experiment by abiding with the pull without acting. (Now try adding humor!)*
- iii. *Pema describes a formal transmutation practice for learning to stay with the energy of uncomfortable emotions. The next time you're hooked try:*
 1. *Acknowledging you're hooked!*
 2. *Pausing for 3 conscious breaths. Lean in. Experience the energy fully.*
 3. *Relax & let go.*

- iv. *Look for behaviors that you can laugh at. Can you replace judgment with humor and compassion? (Walk through the doorway to a more expansive connection to our shared humanity.)*
- v. *What little cares (irritations, habits, etc.) can you work with in order to prepare for great adversity?*
- b. Chapter 6 We Have What We Need
 - i. *Observe yourself through out the day and notice when and how you remove your self from a direct experience by embellishing it with thought. Return to the experience and take 3 conscious breaths.*
 - ii. *Pema says that our suffering comes from rejecting our own energy when it comes in the form we don't like. We do this by strengthening habits of grasping, aversion and distancing ourselves. What are the common situations and ways you strengthen these habits? (Greatest Hits)*
 - iii. *Distancing often stems from our internal conversations involving judgments, exaggerations and labels. Listen to your inner dialog and notice the occasions you judge, embellish and label.*
 - iv. *Pema says we can experience our unlimited potential. Look for occasions when the clouds part and you can recognize your natural intelligence, warmth and openness. Abide with the experience, take 3 conscious breaths. Take in the good! Move on. Then repeat every day.*
 - v. *Our main tool for living a conscious life is meditation: returning again and again to the immediacy of experience without conceptual padding. Pema advises that our attitude toward meditation should be one of relaxing. What is your attitude when you enter meditation practice? Can you let go of your attachment to outcome? Reflect whether you are treating yourself as an improvement project. Feel the weight of this attachment. Is it another preoccupation distancing you from direct experience?*
- c. Chapter 7 Rejoicing with Things as They Are
 - i. *Look for opportunities to connect with and affirm your basic goodness this week both with regard to your self and others.*

- ii. *Pema encourages us to take joy in self-reflection and befriend ourselves by knowing all our parts without prejudice. Reflect on the many dimensions of your being. How do you relate to each one? Can you befriend them with honesty, without prejudice?*
- iii. *Learning to stay is the basis for love and compassion. Can you manage to stay with certain aspects of yourself you wish to avoid? Just keep them company for a while in curiosity and openness.*
- iv. *Try the practice of One at the Beginning and One at the End. In the morning make an aspiration for the day. In the evening review how it went. Try this out for a week and see what happens. Did your natural intelligence arise? Can you practice identifying with your ability to recognize what you are doing rather than identifying with mistakes?
(Compassionate self-reflection)*
- v. *Observe your self in the process of acknowledging and attempting to refrain. Be curious about the whole cycle. Let it go. Then try it again.*
- vi. *Pema says in the most ordinary day we have moments we can take joy in. Try taking in the good on a daily basis. Pause. Recognize it. Abide with the experience over 3 conscious breaths. Move on to the next experience!*
- vii. *Consider the ways you may be obstructing your ability to see your self clearly, to recognize where you're hooked and to remain present. Penetrate the nature of these obstructions by exploring them fully. Then let them go and acknowledge your self for the effort. Rejoice in any insight that may arise.*
- viii. *Can you connect with the feeling of regret and begin to sense this as a shared experience common to us all? Reflect on the last situation in which you experienced regret. Imagine others sharing this experience. Can you relate to the shared experience with compassion?*