

# The 4 Immeasurables



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## I. Introduction

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### A. Suffering and Its Causes

1. Self-Cherishing: स्वार्थ svārtha
2. Belief in Self-Existence: स्वभाव svabhāva

### B. Reasons for Overcoming Self-Cherishing

1. Self-interest (the benefits *to you* of cherishing others):
2. Repay the kindness others have shown you
3. Realize your ultimate destiny

### C. Methods for Overcoming Self-Cherishing

1. “Exchanging Self for Others”
2. Introduction to and Meaning of the Term “*lo jong*”
3. Relation to the cultivation of *bodhicitta* (*sem jong*)

### D. Introduction to the “Four Immeasurables”

चतुर् अप्रमाणाः catur apramāṇāḥ

ब्रह्म विहार brahma vihāra

मैत्री करुणा मुदिता उपेक्षा

maitrī karuṇā muditā upekṣā

## **The Four Immeasurables and The Development of a Good Heart**

**“May all living beings be freed from attachment to those who are close to them and dislike for those who are far.**

**May they escape from the unbearable sea of pain.**

**And then may they find exceptional happiness,**

**And never be without the highest happiness, the happiness of freedom.”**

### **E. Four Levels of Intention**

1. “How wonderful it would be if...”
2. “I pray that this will happen.”
3. “I will see to it that this happens, even if no one else ever helps me or even thinks it’s a good thing to do.”
4. “I ask my Teacher and every holy being who ever lived, throughout the universe, to grant me the power to make this happen.”

### **F. What’s “Immeasurable” about the Four Immeasurables?**

1. “Immeasurable” because they are thoughts that we feel towards an immeasurable number of beings.
2. “Immeasurable” in what they want for those innumerable beings.
3. They also produce a result in the practitioner which is immeasurable.

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### G. Three Ways to Meditate on the Four Immeasurables

1. Start with self, then move to loved ones, then to neutral persons, and finally to those you don't like.
2. "Spatial expansion" – start with those in one's immediate environment such as one's family, then extend to the neighboring houses, to the whole street, the town, country, other countries and the entire world.
3. "Pervasion of the directions" – direct the thought first to the east, then to the west, north, south, the intermediate directions, the zenith and nadir.

## II. Immeasurable Equanimity

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The wish and decision to see that all living beings on all worlds reach a state where they no longer possess the bias of wishing well to relatives and friends and others that they feel close to, while ignoring those that they don't feel so close to.

### A. What it *doesn't* mean:

1. Not caring about anyone or anything ("Near enemy" of equanimity = sheer indifference)
2. "There is no real difference between good deeds and bad deeds and I should not be attached to the outcome or fruits of my actions."

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### B. What immeasurable equanimity *does* mean:

1. Maintaining the equanimity where we can see past the apparent, immediate results of our actions, and feel a calm certainty that the good which we do can never lead to anything less than good.
2. Love and feel compassion for all beings **equally or impartially** (loved ones, neutral ones, and ones we dislike)
3. The wish and decision to see to it that all living beings on all worlds reach a state where they no longer possess the bias of wishing well to relatives and friends and others that they feel close to, while ignoring those that they don't feel so close to, and disliking those they find irritating.

C. **“Far enemy”** = ignorant attraction and repulsion.

D. **Equanimity** as the antidote to partiality and favoritism, indifference, and prejudice; and also pride and discrimination based on ignorance.

E. **The precondition for and application of** the other “immeasurables”

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F. **First two verses of the *Eight Versed Lojong***  
by Geshe Langri Tangpa (Dorje Sengge):

**May I always cherish all sentient beings  
By thinking of them as more precious  
Than a wish-fulfilling jewel,  
And by aspiring to achieve the supreme goal.**

**Wherever I am and whomever I'm with,  
May I view myself as lowest of all;  
And from the bottom of my heart,  
May I cherish others and consider them supreme.**

G. **Ways to Generate Equanimity**

1. Think of the impermanence and relativity of the categories “likable,” “neutral,” “unlikable”
2. Try to identify likable qualities in those you find neutral or dislikable
3. See them as all equal in wanting to be happy and avoid suffering
4. See their qualities as coming not from them but imposed on them by you.
5. Reflect on the emptiness of “me” and “mine.”

### **III. Immeasurable Compassion:**

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The wish and decision to see to it that all beings in all worlds attain freedom from pain and suffering.

- A. **“Close enemy”** = grief or mere pity
- B. **“Far enemy”** = cruelty (wanting others to suffer)
- C. **The antidote** to ill will and violence; and also selfish desire (only interested in our own needs and always wanting more)
- D. **Verses three and four of the *Eight Verse Lojong***

Watching my mind in all that I do,  
With force may I immediately drive out  
Any mental afflictions as soon as they arise,  
For they ruin both myself and others.

When I see beings with a bad nature,  
Overwhelmed by their heavy misdeeds or suffering,  
May I care for them as if I had discovered  
A jewel treasure, for they are so hard to find.

### **IV. Immeasurable Loving-kindness:**

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The wish and decision to see to it that all beings in all worlds achieve happiness.

- A. **“Near enemy”** = conditional or selfish love (“ignorant desire,” “attachment”)
- B. **“Far enemy”** = enmity or hatred (wanting others to be unhappy)
- C. **The antidote** to envy and resentment, aggression, hostility, malice, contempt, and anger

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### D. Verses five and six of the *Eight Verse Lojong*

May I accept any loss from such unfair treatment  
As being attacked and belittled  
By those who are jealous of me; and  
May I give every gain to others.

May I view one whom  
I greatly hoped would help me, but  
Instead mistreats or even harms me  
As my greatest spiritual teacher.

### V. **Immeasurable Joy:**

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The wish and decision to see to it that all beings attain ultimate happiness. (Also included here is rejoicing about the happiness of others.)

- A. **“Close enemy”** = frivolity; or hypocrisy and affectation
- B. **“Far enemy”** = jealousy; or aversion and boredom
- C. **The antidote** to cynicism, despair, and depression; hatred; and also to being unhappy about others' happiness, jealousy, envy, and unhealthy competitiveness
- D. **Verses seven and eight of the *Eight Verse Lojong***

In brief, may I offer directly and indirectly  
Help and happiness to all mother beings.  
And may I secretly take upon myself  
All their harm and suffering.

May all of this be untainted by stains of the eight worldly attitudes,  
And may the wisdom that knows  
All existing things to be illusory  
Bring freedom from the bonds of attachment.



APPENDIX ONE

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The Four Immeasurables in Master Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*  
(*Yoga Sutra* 1.30-33)

व्याधिस्त्यानसंशयप्रमादालस्याविरतिभ्रान्तिदर्शनालब्ध

भूमिकत्वानवस्थितत्वानिचित्तविक्षेपास्तेऽन्तरायाः ॥ ३० ॥

*Vyadhi styana sanshaya pramada-alasya avirati bhranti darshana-alabdha  
bhumikatva-anavasthitatvani chitta vikshepas tentarayah.*

I.30 OBSTACLES OCCUR WHEN THE MIND IS DISTRACTED;  
AND THIS CAN BE CAUSED BY ILLNESS, FOGGINESS IN THE MIND, HAVING  
DOUBTS, CARELESSNESS, LAZINESS,  
MISTAKEN VIEWS OF THE WORLD WHICH ARE LEFT UNCORRECTED,  
FAILING TO REACH SPECIFIC LEVELS, OR NOT BEING ESTABLISHED IN THEM  
FIRMLY.

दुःखदौर्मनस्याङ्गमेजयत्वश्वासप्रश्वासा विक्षेपसहभुवः ॥ ३१ ॥

*Duhkha daurmanasya angam ejayatva shvasa prashvasavikshepa  
sahabhuvah.*

I.31 THE MIND FLIES OFF,  
AND WITH THAT COME PAIN IN THE BODY;  
UNHAPPY THOUGHTS; SHAKING IN THE HANDS  
AND OTHER PARTS OF YOUR BODY;  
THE BREATH FALLING OUT OF RHYTHM  
AS IT PASSES IN AND OUT.

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तत्प्रतिषेधार्थम् एकतत्त्वाभ्यासः ॥ ३२ ॥

*Tat pratisheda-artham eka tattva abhyasah.*

I.32 AND IF YOU WISH TO STOP THESE OBSTACLES,  
THERE IS ONE, AND ONLY ONE,  
CRUCIAL PRACTICE FOR DOING SO.

मैत्रीकरुणामुदितोपेक्षणां सुखदुःखपुण्यापुण्यविषयाणां

भावनातश्चित्तप्रसादनम् ॥ ३३ ॥

*Maitri karuna muditopekshanam sukha dukha punya-apunya vishayanam  
bhavanatash chitta prasadanam.*

I.33 YOU MUST USE KINDNESS, COMPASSION, JOY, AND EQUANIMITY.  
LEARN TO KEEP YOUR FEELINGS IN BALANCE, WHETHER SOMETHING FEELS  
GOOD, OR WHETHER IT HURTS; WHETHER SOMETHING IS ENJOYABLE, OR  
DISTASTEFUL. THIS PRACTICE MAKES THE MIND BRIGHT AND CLEAR AS PURE  
WATER.

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### APPENDIX TWO

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#### **THE *EIGHT VERSES FOR DEVELOPING THE GOOD HEART*, by the Diamond Lion (Dorje Senge) of Langri Tang (1054-1123)**

- 1) May I always cherish all sentient beings / By thinking of them as more precious, Than a wish-fulfilling jewel, / And by aspiring to achieve the supreme goal.
- 2) Wherever I am and whomever I'm with, / May I view myself as lowest of all; And from the bottom of my heart, / May I cherish others and consider them supreme.
- 3) Watching my mind in all that I do, / With force may I immediately drive out Any mental afflictions as soon as they arise, / For they ruin both myself and others.
- 4) When I see beings with a bad nature, / Overwhelmed by their heavy misdeeds or suffering, May I care for them as if I had discovered / A jewel treasures, for they are so hard to find.
- 5) May I accept any loss from such unfair treatment / As being attacked and belittled By those who are jealous of me; and / May I give every gain to others.
- 6) May I view one whom / I greatly hoped would help me, but Instead mistreats or evens harms me / As my greatest spiritual teacher.
- 7) In brief, may I offer directly and indirectly / Help and happiness to all mother beings; And may I secretly take upon myself / All their harm and suffering.
- 8) May all of this be untainted by stains of the eight worldly attitudes, / And may the wisdom that knows / All existing things to be illusory / Bring freedom from the bonds of attachment.