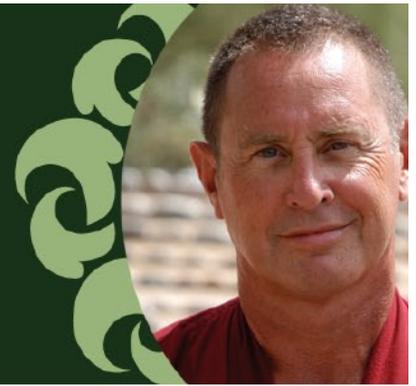


# GREAT AWAKENING TOUR

LAMA MARUT.ORG



The Mahasukha Center Presents

## AN EXERCISE BOOK FOR FORGIVENESS AND HEALING

A Five Week Program



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## EXERCISE ONE:

### “YOU CAN’T HEAL UNTIL YOU FEEL”

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#### CONTEMPLATIONS

Forgiveness is not the misguided act of condoning irresponsible, hurtful behavior. Nor is it a superficial turning of the other cheek that leaves us feeling victimized and martyred. Rather it is the finishing of old business that allows us to experience the present, free of contamination from the past.

(Joan Borysenko)

“The stupid neither forgive nor forget; the naïve forgive and forget; the wise forgive but do not forget.”

(Thomas Szasz)

“Holding a grudge takes mental, emotional, and physical energy. It makes you obsessive, angry, and depressed. There’s a strong connection between anger and a wide spectrum of health miseries - chronic stomach upset, heart problems, and skin conditions among them. Without question, the more anger we experience within, the more stress we’re under.”

(Barry Lubetkin)

“If you hold to the sharp pain  
Of thoughts of anger, your mind  
Can know no peace;  
You find no happiness,  
No pleasure. Sleep stays away,  
And the mind remains unsettled.

No matter what happens  
I will never allow  
My joy to be disturbed.  
Feeling upset cannot accomplish  
My hopes, and only makes me lose  
The goodness that I have.”

(*Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life* 6.3, 9)

## JOURNALING ASSIGNMENT

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At the beginning of the first week **make a list of the people who really hurt or betrayed or really let you down.** Each day for that week **concentrate on one or more of these people and how you feel about what they did to you.** Be brutally honest both about what happened and about **your true feelings about what happened,** and write it all down in your journal.

## ACTION PLAN

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As you go through your day this week, pay attention to your feelings of irritation, resentment, anger, disappointment, and sadness. At the end of each day, **write down your reflections on what sorts of negative feelings you had, under what circumstances they arose, and how they made you feel** about yourself, the people around you, and about life in general.

## DAILY MEDITATION (15-20 MINUTES EACH DAY):

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Sit down in a quiet place, straighten the spine so you are sitting upright and alert, and calm your mind. Bring your full attention to the present moment. Be here, now.

When you feel fully present and concentrated, bring to mind the image of one of people on your list. (Each day visualize different ones, one by one, so that by the end of the week you have gone through all of them – or, if you are “stuck” on one, work with them for three days and then move on) Think about how this person hurt or angered you. Relive your memories of what they did or said and how you felt, and how you still feel about it.

Get fully in touch with your feelings of resentment, sadness, anger, betrayal. . . whatever feelings arise as you meditate on this person and what they did to you. Be conscious of these feelings and the fact that you have them and resolve to stop denying that they are there.

End the meditation with an evaluation of these feelings. Are they pleasant or painful? Are they conducive to your own happiness or not? Be really honest with yourself here: are these feelings you have ones you wish to nurture and foster, or would your life be better if you didn't have them.







ACTION PLAN CONTINUED...

DATE AND TIME:

DATE AND TIME:

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## DAILY MEDITATION (15-20 MINUTES EACH DAY):

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DAILY MEDITATION CONTINUED...

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DATE AND TIME:

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DATE AND TIME:

## EXERCISE TWO:

### “LETTING GO OF THE COAL THAT’S BURNING YOU”

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#### CONTEMPLATIONS

“The desire for happiness is essential to man. It is the motivator of all our acts. The most venerable, clearly understood, enlightened, and reliable constant in the world is not only that we want to be happy, but that we want only to be so. Our very nature requires it of us.”

(Saint Augustine)

It is a simple but sometimes forgotten truth that the greatest enemy to present joy and high hopes is the cultivation of retrospective bitterness.

(Robert G. Menzies)

“It leaves your friends and family  
Tired of being with you;  
They refuse to stay on even though  
You may entice them with gifts.  
To put it simply,  
There is no one with anger  
Who can be happy.

Anger our enemy  
Brings us these  
And other pains as well.  
Anyone who can learn to focus  
And destroy their anger achieves  
Happiness, in the present and in the future as well.”  
(*Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life*, 6.6-7)

“The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.”  
(Mahatma Gandhi)

## JOURNALING ASSIGNMENT

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Each day this week spend 15-20 minutes thinking and writing about **the disadvantages of anger and resentment, and the advantages of forgiveness**. Is it in your self-interest to be holding onto these grudges? Forgiveness and compassion begin with yourself: Do you really want to go through life feeling victimized by what happened in the past? Do you truly believe that you can ever be happy *without* letting go of all this anger and resentment?

## ACTION PLAN

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This week, observe the times during each day when you feel happiest – relaxed, contented, at peace, and comfortable with life. Don't just space out on the times during the day when you feel good! At the end of the day, **make a list of your happiest moments of the day**. Notice them and really appreciate and value them, and each day develop a strong resolution to live a life in which those happy moments increase in number.

## DAILY MEDITATION (15-20 MINUTES EACH DAY):

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Assume your meditation posture, relax and take a few deep breaths to release all the tension. Bring your mind into the here and now. Concentrate on what's happening in the present – the sounds and smells of the room, your thoughts and feelings as they arise, last for a bit, and then fade away.

When you are ready, focus on how you feel when you feel happiest. Really feel those happy feelings as you relive them. Revel in the joy! Develop a strong wish to feel this way more and more in your life, realizing that when you're happy you're a much a better person to be around. When you're happy, you are interested in others and their happiness. Really want this; cultivate the desire to be happy.

End the meditation with a brief reflection on whether you can really ever achieve your goal of being happy without letting go of the anger and resentment about the past you are carrying. Resolve to do the difficult thing: to forgive out of a strong wish to be happy.







ACTION PLAN CONTINUED...

DATE AND TIME:

DATE AND TIME:

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DATE AND TIME:

DAILY MEDITATION (15-20 MINUTES EACH DAY):

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Assume your meditation posture, relax and take a few deep breaths to release all the tension. Bring your mind into the here and now. Concentrate on what's happening in the present – the sounds and smells of the room, your thoughts and feelings as they arise, last for a bit, and then fade away.

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DAILY MEDITATION CONTINUED...

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## EXERCISE THREE:

### “YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW”

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#### CONTEMPLATIONS

“Don’t be misled, you cannot mock the justice of God. As you sow, so shall you reap.”

(Jesus, *The Book of Galatians* 6:7)

“There is a connection of cause and effect. The seeds ripen into experiences refreshingly pleasant or painful in their torment, depending on whether you have done good to others, or done them wrong instead.”

(*Yoga Sutra* 2.14)

“Therefore, whatever you want others to do to you, do to them.” This is the essence of the Law and the prophets.”

(Jesus, *The Book of Matthew* 7.12)

“I myself in days gone by  
Perpetuated this very harm  
On other living beings,  
And so it’s right that now the one  
Who did the harm, myself,  
Should have this hurt come to him.

Children want no suffering  
But at the same time then they thirst  
For the things that bring them pain.  
If suffering comes to you because  
Of some fault of your own,  
Why feel hate for others?

Where did it come from? What was it  
That I did before that makes others  
Do this deed of hurting me now?  
If everything that happens now  
Depends on the deeds I did before,  
How can I be angry at them?”

(Shantideva, *Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life* 6.42, 45, 68)

## JOURNALING ASSIGNMENT

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At the beginning of this week, sit down and **make a list of the people in your life that you know you've hurt.**

Then each day this week, go through some part of your list – one or two people – and **spend some time journaling about what, exactly, you did or said to these folks.** Be honest and be specific, lingering a bit with each name and incident to **imagine and then write down how they felt about what you did or said to them.**

Get in touch also with your feelings about how *you* feel about hurting others like this. Perhaps at first you will want to justify your actions and make excuses for yourself. Notice and acknowledge this tendency and spend a few minutes each day reviewing the three worldviews for why things happen, especially linking these worldviews to the hurtful things you have done to others:

- things are just random, so there are and will be no consequences of my hurting others
- everything is just “God’s will,” so I have *no responsibility* for my actions and their effects on others
- everything is in the web of causality, and therefore *what goes around, comes around.*

## ACTION PLAN

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This week, be very, very observant and careful to not get irritated, angry, or hurtful in any way with others. When you are tempted, make a special effort to exercise patience and lovingkindness, remembering also that it is not in your enlightened self-interest. If you don't want people to harm you, you must restrain yourself from harming them. At the end of the day, **make an entry in your journal in which you review and evaluate the challenging incidents of the day.**

## DAILY MEDITATION (15-20 MINUTES EACH DAY):

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Sit down in a comfortable position with your back straight. Stop thinking about what will happen next or what already happened. Put your mind in the present moment and concentrate on your breath. Count your breaths, beginning with the exhalation as the first “one” and the inhalation as the second “one,” etc. Try to reach “ten” without seriously losing focus. (*continued next page*)

## DAILY MEDITATION (CONTINUED)

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After a few moments and when your mind is concentrated, bring to mind someone on your list of people you have hurt. Visualize him or her in the place you usually encounter them – at the workplace, at home, wherever. Concentrate especially on their face and eyes. Think about what you did or said that hurt them. Stop your mind from trying to justify yourself or rationalize your harmful act. Admit that you did it and generate a deep regret, knowing that it is because of acts like this on your part that you experience others harming you.

Look the person directly in the eyes and apologize to them and sincerely ask for their forgiveness. Do this over and over again in your meditation session until you truly and sincerely feel the desire and need for forgiveness. Make a promise to this person that you will restrain yourself from doing or saying such a hurtful thing to them ever again. Then visualizing them forgiving you and feel very grateful and happy.

Each day ask forgiveness of a different person on your list. If you have time, go through several people on your list in any given meditation. By the end of the week, you should have gone through the whole list in your meditation sessions.







ACTION PLAN CONTINUED...

DATE AND TIME:

DATE AND TIME:

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DATE AND TIME:

## DAILY MEDITATION (15-20 MINUTES EACH DAY):

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Sit down in a comfortable position with your back straight. Stop thinking about what will happen next or what already happened. Put your mind in the present moment and concentrate on your breath. Count your breaths, beginning with the exhalation as the first “one” and the inhalation as the second “one,” etc. Try to reach “ten” without seriously losing focus.

After a few moments and when your mind is concentrated, bring to mind someone on your list of people you have hurt. Visualize him or her in the place you usually encounter them – at the workplace, at home, wherever. Concentrate especially on their face and eyes. Think about what you did or said that hurt them. Stop your mind from trying to justify yourself or rationalize your harmful act. Admit that you did it and generate a deep regret, knowing that it is because of acts like this on your part that you experience others harming you.

Look the person directly in the eyes and apologize to them and sincerely ask for their forgiveness. Do this over and over again in your meditation session until you truly and sincerely feel the desire and need for forgiveness. Make a promise to this person that you will restrain yourself from doing or saying such a hurtful thing to them ever again. Then visualizing them forgiving you and feel very grateful and happy.

Each day ask forgiveness of a different person on your list. If you have time, go through several people on your list in any given meditation. By the end of the week, you should have gone through the whole list in your meditation sessions.

DATE AND TIME:
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DAILY MEDITATION CONTINUED...

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## EXERCISE FOUR:

### “HAPPY PEOPLE DON’T HURT OTHERS: CULTIVATING COMPASSION”

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#### CONTEMPLATIONS

“If people driven to it because  
Of their mental afflictions even kill  
Their own dear selves, then what  
Surprise could it ever be to see  
That they also act in ways that harm  
The bodies of other people?

If it is the very nature  
Of those who are children  
To do harm to others,  
Then being angry with them  
Is wrong, as wrong as hating  
Fire for the fact it burns.

And if the nature of living beings  
Is to be thoughtful, then all their faults  
Are occasional, and being angry with them  
Is wrong too, wrong as hating  
A puff of smoke in the sky.

It’s the stick or whatever  
That delivers directly; if you’re angry  
At what impels it,  
Then get mad if you really must  
At anger itself, since it’s the force  
That sets the other into motion.  
(Shantideva, *Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life* 6.37, 39-41)

“It is lack of love for ourselves that inhibits our compassion toward others. If we make friends with ourselves, then there is no obstacle to opening our hearts and minds to others.”  
(Unknown)

“By compassion we make others’ misery our own, and so, by relieving them, we relieve ourselves.”  
(Thomas Browne, Sr.)

“If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.”  
(H.H. the Dalai Lama)

## JOURNALING ASSIGNMENT

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Return to the list of people that hurt you that you made at the beginning of week one. Each day this week, go through the people on this list and **think and write about what they must have been feeling in order to be able to do what they did to you.** Try to put yourself in their shoes and be empathetic. How must they have felt at the time? Angry? Resentful? Jealous? Insecure? Realize that in every case they acted out of deep unhappiness and ignorance, and probably also out of a sense that you provoked them to the hurtful act.

## ACTION PLAN

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Observe the behavior of others you encounter this week carefully, and notice when people act in a way obviously designed to cause more suffering to themselves. Pay attention during the course of the day, and then at the end of the day **sit down with your journal and note down a few of the incidents you observed of people harming themselves by harming others.**

## DAILY MEDITATION (15-20 MINUTES EACH DAY):

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Take your meditation position and concentrate your mind by watching and counting your exhalations and inhalations. After a couple of minutes, begin the main meditation.

Visualize one of the people on your list who really hurt you. See them in the place where you usually associate them (home, office, family gathering, etc.) and visualize them clearly, again concentrating particularly on their face and eyes. Review briefly what they did or said to you in the past and then think about whether that's the kind of thing a happy, contented person would do or say. No. This person hurt you because they were ignorant and unhappy.

As you look at them now in your mind's eye, think about them a suffering human being, who out of ignorance and mental afflictions continually reproduces the causes for their own suffering by hurting others, like you. Try to feel compassion for them, and out of this feeling as well as a strong understanding that it is not in your self-interest to be holding onto the grudge, look them in the eye and say to them, "I forgive you." Say this over and over until you really feel it and believe it.

Each day this week forgive one or more of the people on the list you made at the beginning of week one. Try to get through everyone on your list by the end of this week.







ACTION PLAN CONTINUED...

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DATE AND TIME:



DAILY MEDITATION CONTINUED...

DATE AND TIME:

DATE AND TIME:

DATE AND TIME:

DATE AND TIME:

## EXERCISE FIVE:

### “TRANSFORMING PAIN INTO HAPPINESS: CULTIVATING GRATITUDE”

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#### CONTEMPLATIONS

“In our daily lives, we must see that it is not happiness that makes us grateful, but the gratefulness that makes us happy.”

(Albert Clarke)

“It’s a little known law of nature: The more gratitude you have, the more you have to be grateful for.”

(Elaine St. James)

“If the only prayer you ever say in your life is thank you, it will be enough.”

(Meister Eckhardt)

“Besides, suffering possesses  
Certain good qualities:  
It brings sadness,  
Which removes my arrogance;  
It brings compassion for those  
Caught in the cycle of pain;  
It brings fear of doing harm,  
And a mastery of virtue.

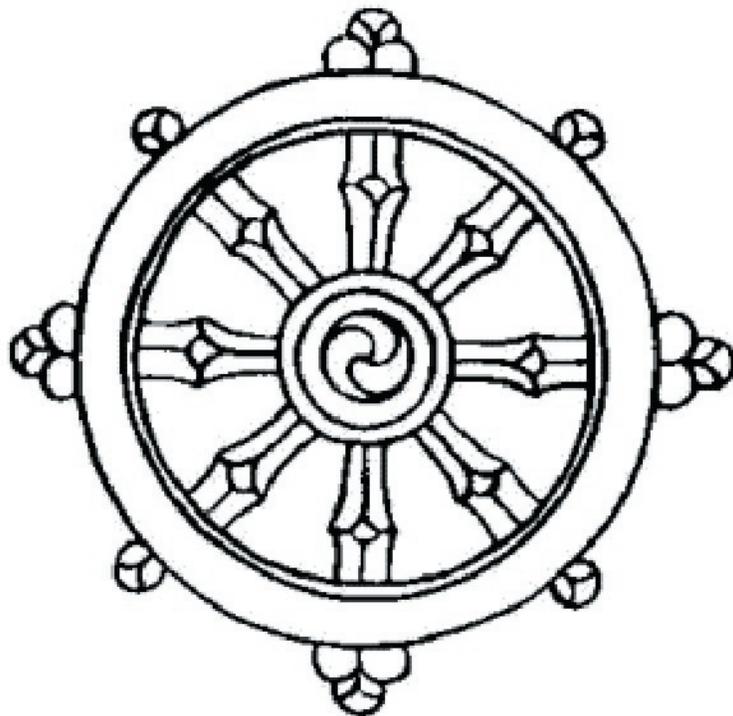
Praise and the rest distract me,  
And also function to destroy  
My feelings of dismay with life.  
They make me feel envy towards  
Those who possess high qualities,  
And obliterate everything excellent.

Can't we say then that it's the case  
That anyone who devotes themselves  
To destroying the praise I get and such  
Is actually engaged in the act  
Of protecting me from falling  
Into the births of misery?

Suppose that without an ounce  
Of effort you came across  
A treasure chest hidden in your house;  
You should thus feel grateful for  
Your enemies, who aid you in  
Your bodhisattva practice.  
(Shantideva, *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* 6.21, 98-99, 107)

*“Let us rise up and be thankful,  
for if we didn’t learn a lot today,  
at least we learned a little,  
and if we didn’t learn a little,  
at least we didn’t get sick,  
and if we got sick,  
at least we didn’t die;  
so, let us all be thankful.”*

(LORD BUDDHA)



## JOURNALING ASSIGNMENT

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Return once more to the list of people that hurt you and that you now have forgiven. This week, each day go through the people on this list, one by one, and **write about what you can be grateful to that person for** – the things you have learned as a result of your interactions with them, the way you have grown personally, the virtues and strengths you have developed as a result of your encounters with them. If nothing else, you can **reflect on how these people made it possible for you to generate and develop forgiveness**. If they hadn't hurt you, who would there be to forgive?

## ACTION PLAN

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In addition, begin this week with an exercise you can continue after our five week exercise. Keep a “gratitude journal.” **At the beginning of each day, write in your journal:**

**Today I am grateful for** \_\_\_\_\_

**And at the end of the day, write:**

**Today I was grateful for** \_\_\_\_\_

**Also, each day make individual entries for people in your life, with resolutions to tell them about how grateful you are for them in your life, and why.**

## DAILY MEDITATION (15-20 MINUTES EACH DAY):

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Assume the meditation position, focus on the here and now, watch and count your breath until you're calm and focused.

Once more, go through the people on your list who really hurt you. Again, visualize each one separately locating them in the place you most often encounter them. Get a clear image of each person's face in your mind. Reflect a bit on how much you've learned from this person, how much you've grown as a result of your interactions with them, how you could never have identified things in yourself that need fixing had this person not pushed your buttons.

Look each person in the eye, generate a deep sense of gratitude, and say over and over, “Thank you.” Repeat this sentiment until you really feel it.





## ACTION PLAN

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**And at the end of the day, write:**

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DATE AND TIME:
TODAY I AM GRATEFUL FOR:
TODAY I WAS GRATEFUL FOR:
DATE AND TIME:
TODAY I AM GRATEFUL FOR:
TODAY I WAS GRATEFUL FOR:
DATE AND TIME:
TODAY I AM GRATEFUL FOR:
TODAY I WAS GRATEFUL FOR:

ACTION PLAN CONTINUED...

DATE AND TIME:

TODAY I AM GRATEFUL FOR:

TODAY I WAS GRATEFUL FOR:

DATE AND TIME:

TODAY I AM GRATEFUL FOR:

TODAY I WAS GRATEFUL FOR:

DATE AND TIME:

TODAY I AM GRATEFUL FOR:

TODAY I WAS GRATEFUL FOR:

DATE AND TIME:

TODAY I AM GRATEFUL FOR:

TODAY I WAS GRATEFUL FOR:



DAILY MEDITATION CONTINUED...

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