

A Concise Set of
Buddhist Healing Prayers and Practices

5th edition

by Jason Espada

“It is said that whenever we practice Dharma it should always be pervaded by compassion at all times – in the beginning, in the middle and at the end of our practice. Compassion is the source, the real essence of the entire path.”

- Khenpo Appey Rinpoche

*We are each a part of healing across generations,
and there are the resources available in spiritual traditions
that we can use to accomplish our aims...*

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Preface to the third edition

From the mid-summer of 2012, to mid 2013, I had the opportunity to go on a retreat where I focussed on healing practice. This had many benefits for me personally, among them being that I was able to see more clearly just what is essential for me in these practices. Engaging any form of meditation over time is certainly an evolving process of experimentation and discovery, and finding ways to stabilize and integrate what we experience in formal practice. This edition, then, reflects where I am now (May of 2014) with this manner of learning and practice. May it bring benefit to others, peace, joy, and health.

Jason Espada
San Francisco,
May 29th, 2014

A Concise Set of Buddhist Healing Prayers and Practices – Preface to the first edition

In April of 2009, I was able to complete the first edition of A Collection of Buddhist Healing Prayers and Practices. That work contains background essays on the foundation of healing in Buddhism, as I understand it, as well as a good deal of supplementary material, such as Tibetan Buddhist Sadhanas (practice texts, or ‘methods of accomplishment’). I felt it was necessary to set the practices that are used for healing in their proper context, as part of Buddhist Tradition, and also to show how they can be used by someone today, in 21st century American culture.

Over the last two years, I’ve written a few more essays, and some more poetry that I plan to include in later editions of that book. I’ve also continued to practice with a concise set of reflections, prayers and visualizations, that is relatively just a few pages. Almost as soon as I finished the first work I thought it would be good to have a brief text that can be used for daily practice, or that can be taken as a suggestion for another person who wants to draw together various prayers and practices for their own personal use.

In updated versions of the larger book, I’ve removed some of the repetition that was put there to avoid too much page turning. The concise set of prayers and practices that I would like to offer here will also be included the later editions of A Collection. Hopefully the revisions to that larger work will make it easier to use. At the same time, *I hope to offer here a brief set of Buddhist healing prayers and practices, containing all of the essential practical points.* Those who want to know more about the underlying theory, and have more resources to bring into their practice are referred to the larger work.

Why the Buddha is regarded as the Supreme Healer

{and how this all fits together}

To my mind, there are two reasons why the Buddha has been regarded throughout time as the Supreme Healer:

The first is that the Buddha saw not only suffering, but its causes as well, rooted in ignorance, and, from his very first talk, proposed a remedy to *all suffering*. By developing the wisdom of insight into our own nature, the Buddha taught that we can become free from all karma and delusions, and all harm. This is a radical proposition that, over two millennia, many have investigated and verified.

If a person goes to an ordinary doctor, with one problem or illness, that is what they will be treated for. By comparison, it is said that this profound remedy goes to the cause of the entire range of our sufferings. Next to a medical model that treats only one symptom, or a few symptoms, this is vastly different, as it goes unimaginably further. It aims to cure all the oceans of samsaric sufferings, over countless lifetimes, that living beings experience.

A second reason why the Buddha has been thought of as the Supreme Healer is the scope of the enlightened person's concern, which includes every aspect of our life, health and well being, from the material and psychological, to the most subtle, spiritual levels. It is care that is comprehensive, all inclusive, and it is for all living beings. It is this range, the depth as well as this breadth of love and compassion, that distinguishes the Buddha.

Over two millennia, then, born of wisdom and compassion, many Skillful Means have been developed by the followers of the Buddha, and those with realizations, to meet the needs of beings.

These methods are what are offered in the Traditions.

There are many ways for the Divine Light and Healing Energy to pour into this world. If we feel we have an affinity with these teachings, we are invited to try these methods and see if they work for us. When we do, we may have the experience that we are supported as well by all the great pure energy of the Saints and Noble practitioners of the Lineages.

All of this has its source in the life of wisdom and compassion of the Founder. All of these teachings and practices can be seen as the continuation of activity of that realized life. And so I join my voice with those of the past and present, and sing with them, as part of one traditional verse of praise:

*Homage to the Completely Perfected, Fully Awakened Being,
the Supreme Guide*

*Homage to the Fully Awakened One, The Glorious Conqueror,
the Subduer from the Shakya Clan*

And, from the Seventh Dalai Lama:

*Honor to Buddha, the supreme sage,
the cosmic overlord who awakens
all beings from drunken ignorance
by manifesting the hundredfold light
of truth's brilliant door.*

May all the benefit that can come from healing practice
be received by all living beings,
each according to their need,
and, in whatever way I can, may I be the cause of that

A few words here on contemplation, prayer, and mantra practice

As Thrangu Rinpoche taught, the shortest form of a sadhana, or 'method of accomplishment', is the mantra itself. Anything more than that is just to improve our sense of what we are doing, and the effectiveness of a particular practice. How many or how few reflections and prayers are used by a person is purely an individual matter. We should do whatever works best for us.

Any one of the selections offered here can be used by itself alone as a basis for reflection, prayer, or mantra practice. However we make use of material such as this, we should know that right from the beginning reflections, we are already doing the practice – of generating positive, helpful, healing qualities. That is always the aim.

Traditionally, practicing a sadhana includes visualization and the recitation of mantra, however, for most people, most of the time, these are not the only components of an effective practice. The recitation of mantra and the element of quiet meditation are presented here, of course, and a part of the practice should be given to them. The proportion is up to each individual,

and what works best for them. The reason I would like to present the practice in the following way is because of the importance of contemplation as a basis for the rest of whatever practice we do.

Over the long term, contemplation that produces a response from our deeper nature, is, in fact, absolutely necessary for prayer and mantra practice to have any meaning or energy behind it. This doesn't mean we have to spend a lot of time on the level of thinking. Sometimes thinking too much can keep things on the surface. But what it does mean is that our deeper resources need to be brought to bear in our life. When this happens, everything flows naturally, in prayer and various kinds of meditation practice that we do.

With our fundamental humanity, our deep nature as a basis, it can happen that we are continually generating positive energies. This is how the main reflections offered here, such as 'I live in this world' should be read – with this aim in mind – to produce a response from our deeper nature. Thoughts such as these can be used to this end. Reflections, and either our own writings or those we've collected, can orient and empower the mind. Then, everything follows from this.

This, essentially, is what is referred to in Tibetan Buddhism as 'thought training'. By engaging some difficult or suffering situation with a positive motivation, we can turn it into a cause of benefit in our own lives and in the lives of the world. Instead of being overwhelmed or depressed by it, we can be made clear by it, and strengthened to live and act in the world with greater wisdom and compassion.

In his book 'Becoming Enlightened', His Holiness the Dalai Lama compared the Dharma, or Buddhist teachings, to a medicine that needs to be used skillfully to get the best result. So experiment and see for yourself what works best with all of this for you. Sometimes, without reading anything at all, you might like to try 'informal', semi formal, or less conceptual practice. Then, at other times, try reading texts, or poetry, and practicing with some consistency, and see what happens.

Over the past two years, I've found it helpful to periodically go through this set of reflections and prayers, slowly, from the opening, 'O My ten

directions three times family...’ through the mantra recitation, quiet meditation, and dedication prayers.

Then, if a sense of perspective is already there, I’ve seen that the practice offered here can work also just using the short section called ‘A Healing Buddha Practice, with notes’, beginning on page 44, which is only about 20 pages, or less, if only the sections in bold type are read. Even that much can be effective for guiding the mind in a positive direction. In fact, sometimes just reading and reflecting on one or two pages is enough.

Getting a positive result is really all that matters.

These are practices that can heal, and that can work to prevent illness, or to shorten their duration.

There is one application of these teachings that has proven itself for me, that I would like to mention: I’ve noticed that if I’m beginning to feel unwell in some way, or an imbalance of the elements, then practicing in the following way always helps. I’ll wake early and, half asleep, I’ll do a brief form of the practice, just reciting the mantra, and visualizing light, followed by some quiet meditation. Then I’ll go back to sleep. I’ve noticed that whatever positive energy I can begin to cultivate will then continue in my sleep, and that I’ll wake up feeling much better. Experiment and see what works best for you.

Here is another simple device that can benefit: along with having an image of the Healing Buddha, and my main teacher, I’ve found to be useful as well to write the names of a few teachers I have a good connection with on a piece of paper and set that to one side, within view, while practicing. When I glance at these names I do feel genuinely supported by them. For my own purposes I’ve been calling this ‘the power of the name’. If approached with devotion and creativity, we make the practices more our own. This is my thought, at least.

I’ve also taken to keeping a list of specific people and situations that I want to pray for. I review this list from time to time, and add to it. Then, at times before practicing, I think of these people and their needs, and after recitation and meditation, when making dedication prayers, at a certain point I can

read through this list again. This is something that is done in healing circles and at meditation centers, and I find it to be very helpful.

When using the following material for formal practice, sections with titles such as 'On Tonglen', or 'On the Refuge Tree' need only be read through the first time, or as needed after that to improve one's understanding.

It's my wish that anyone that this finds its way to - use this in whatever way is most helpful. Feel free to use whatever you like, to use it as it is, or to add, subtract, borrow or change what is here to suit your purpose. It's a work in progress for me as well, and if I'm blessed with more years on this earth, I'll certainly be revising and improving it myself, and sharing that. For now, here is what I've found to be most useful.

Nine Bows

Homage to all that is healing
in a person's life,
in Traditions,
and in the world

Homage to all that is healing
in the lives of Saints and Sages,
in this practice,
and in my own mind

and

Homage to all that is healing
in the Stream of Ancestral Teachers,
in the immediate Community of support,
and in our positive motivations

Many many bright blessings on you and yours. A table of contents follows.

May all beings benefit.

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Homage to all the ten directions and three times

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas!

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - I

O, All my ten directions three times family,
near and distant relations,

May I make a gift of my life

May my life, and this practice benefit us all,
all living beings
pervading all existences

every mind,
every body, every cell
earth and sky

May this practice surely benefit us all, extensively

May all my past, present and future selves benefit from this
and may all the past, present and future selves of all beings
benefit from this

By this practice, may we all be completely free from all illness,
spirit harm, and from all the painful, hallucinated afflictive emotions forever

May we all be free from all samsaric states forever

May all beings completely realize the Dharmakaya

May this practice be the medicine that frees everyone from suffering¹

May this bring health wherever it is needed

May this bring about the firm establishment of true health and well being,
long life, and happiness for us all

¹ a prayer inspired by the Noble Spiritual Friend Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - II

All my family
in all the world
All my relations

All my African brothers and sisters,
aunts and uncles,
grandmothers, grandfathers,
little ones,

All my family in Central Asia, and in East Asia,
All my family in the Americas
North, Central and South,
All my Caribbean family,

And in Europe, North, East, and West
and in the Mediterranean,
and in the Middle East

Mothers, fathers, children,
brothers, sisters,
elders,

Island Peoples,
and all my family in the far North and far South,

All my Native family,
All my family here in the USA

Mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers,
aunts, uncles, young children, dear friends...

All my relations

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - III
I live in this world

I live in this world
of joy, and sorrow

of comfort and ease,
and of struggle, and pain

of friendship, and community
and of loneliness and isolation

I live in this world of riches and poverty
of abundance and of hunger

I live in this world where there is health
and there is illness

Where some people can only try to care for themselves,
while others are at the point where, more and more, they have thinking about
and caring for others as the aim and activities of their life
Bless them all
Bless them all
O, Bless them all

There are people serving others in this world -
there are people taking joy in that
and again and again I celebrate all those good actions
May they blessed

I live in this world
where many are in need of a protector,
where many are in need of an advocate

where many people do not have even a basic education...

Today, in this world, there are many who are kept back from doing good
things because of some illness of body or mind

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - III
I live in this world

Today there are many who are broken-hearted
Today there are many who have been hurt in relationships

May there be an abundance of heart medicine,
an abundance of earth and sky medicine today
for all of those who need it
as much as is ever necessary

Today, there are many who have had their families broken
Today, there are many who are grieving

Today there are many who have experienced an unexpected death
in the family
May they all be comforted

Every day in this world
there are people who are facing illness, and who are experiencing pain:
children, teenagers, adults, the middle-aged, the elderly;
those who are alone, and those with problems of the mind

I live in this world where there are people who are disturbed to some extent,
or who suffer from depression
This is the truth

I live in this world where some people don't love themselves,
they don't cherish their lives,
where people even hate themselves,
and where they despair,
even to the point of wanting to take their own lives...

I live in this world where there are so many people who are in need
of some form of human contact,

I live in this world where there are so many people who are experiencing
the absence of love
and we can do something truly beautiful, truly substantial,
truly meaningful for each other,
every single one of us

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - III
I live in this world

May it be this way for me now –
may I offer something truly meaningful

I live in this world where many sensitive people are overwhelmed
and use drugs, or drink, or food, or sex,
tv, computers, shopping,
or gambling
to the point of becoming addicted -
They do this to self-medicate, to escape,
but it leads to even more dullness and obscuration,
and to more, and even worse problems
May they all be completely healed

I live in this world where many are without peace,
without control, without any freedom of mind

The root of all these sufferings, we should all know,
is the untrained mind,
self-grasping ignorance
and the afflictive emotions

And what we all need to experience
is the fruit of a practice that leads to the disbanding of stress,
to the knowledge of freedom,
and genuine happiness,
enlightenment as to our own true nature
the single liberating essence of Great Compassion

Ah...

Right now, there are people who are trapped by their addictions,
overwhelmed by their delusions, lost

I live in this world where some people are in danger of falling,
where some are in danger of slipping - and the result can be severe for
them...

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - III
I live in this world

There are many people right now
who are in need of forgiveness, absolution,
inclusion,
their being welcomed back into the community;
who are in need of purification,

who are in need of the nectar of ethics in their lives,
the medicine of ethics,
the food of ethics,
their vows restored,
the attainment of coolness,
strength, self control
light, and peace,
wisdom, purity,
transformation, and release

I live in this world where we have all done wrong,
some worse than others
Some are in prisons of their own making,
Some have done terrible things
out of ignorance, affliction,
or fear, desperation, despair;
out of weakness and limitation -
not seeing any other way
not being able to reach any other way

I live in this world where some people suffer because of
their own past actions, and regret, and shame
They identify with their delusions and wrong actions,
and believe themselves to be wrong, lacking, innately sinful,
when nothing could be further from the truth –
They are all innately whole, perfect, and pure

I live in this world where many people feel unworthy of love

I live in this world where there are many people who are obscured,
lonely,
or numb,

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - III
I live in this world

self-absorbed,
superficial,
greedy,
distracted,
afraid, or sad,
where there are those who are feeling ugly,
or feeling hopeless
or who are caught in self-pity

They are all capable of awakening to perfection, but they don't yet know it
They are all capable of liberation,
They are all capable of freedom from suffering,
and they are all capable of happiness, but they don't yet know it

I live in this world where the sense of self arises again and again for people,
and feels fragmented, and isolated – even though this is not true, not even
for a moment

This is a great loss to us all –
it is to all our detriment

May we all know,
be supported by,
and celebrate our connection
to each other!

I live in this world where many people are experiencing stress
and need comfort, love, light,
and the peaceful joy that is nourishing

May people receive such peace
everywhere it is needed
East, West, North, and South,
May it be so
and may I be the cause of that

This is the truth
and it's better that I realize it -

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - III
I live in this world

I live in this world where most people
are without any sense at all of the sacred dimension in life

I live in this world where the deluded the band together
and increase ignorance and suffering

I live in this world where, even though there are those with the motivation to
learn,
many people are misled by false teachers,
themselves ignorant

In these times, especially, it seems,
wrong views are supported, in hundreds of ways,
and wisdom is not;
greed is encouraged, and non-attachment and generosity is not;
war and aggression are supported,
and the values of peace,
sanity, respect, kindness, and helping one another
are not supported nearly enough

I live in this world where many people's
experience is only that of a lower-realm being-
the realm of hell beings,
the realm of hungry ghosts,
and the realm of animals

I live in this world where there are people
who don't experience even a moment of peace;
where there are those who feel they don't have any space, light
or joy in their lives at all,
tormented, they feel they don't have any happiness, not even a little bit

For as long as this is true
I say, for as long as this is true
may I respond to it
in a way that eases their sufferings
and may they all have every happiness
may they have every happiness

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - III
I live in this world

oceans of happiness
skies of happiness

Every day in this world there are people with no perspective on their life,
coarse, dissatisfied, lacking in gratitude, indulgent

I live in this world where people don't think about death
or haven't fully integrated that truth, of impermanence

Every day, all around, there are people wasting precious time,
not seeing what they have,
not taking advantage
of the great opportunities they have
for all of our sake
while they still can

I live in this world where the vast majority of people are completely without
any Dharma

Dharma:
deep Buddhist teaching, or contemplative teaching;
the result of deep Buddhist practice or contemplative practice;
the experience of freedom,
light, and wisdom –
that can alleviate and can bring about
the complete cessation of suffering
for one and all,
true medicine for the ills of the world

East, West, North and South,
in the ten directions,
May people receive the Dharma,
And, without grasping or clinging to anything at all,
may I be the cause of that

I live in this world where few people have received instructions in
meditation, and, of these few, most are still unclear about the essential points
that:

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - III
I live in this world

whatever meditation we do
we should aim our minds
in the direction of clarity
and the calm continuity of mindfulness,
cut through the undercurrent of thought,
and continually generate positive energies

I live in this world where few people know the value and necessity of
samadhi—
the stillness and silence of the mind,
the peace that restores and strengthens the mind,

making it capable
of connecting with virtues
and being nourished by them,
of deep and clear understanding,
transformation and healing,
and freedom

I live in this world, where, though we may do some good,
though we may improve our lives,
those who *have* listened to essential teachings, *and understood*,
many times don't practice
and, of those who do practice, often they are not able
to overcome the obstacles to meditation,
and practice in a way that they progress...

Oh, what a loss! - There's no way to measure it, really...

I live in this world where even those people who have received, and
practiced, and accomplished a great deal of Dharma still suffer
they still fall into experiences that are like the lower realms

and I live in this world where some of the people who have become stable in
realization don't share the Dharma as much as they could

I live in this world where though we *can* help ourselves and others
much too often we don't

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - III
I live in this world

where though *can* remove our own and others suffering,
to some extent at least
and produce happiness, to some extent at least
far too often we don't

I live in this world
where people don't live in the present
Where people don't know their own worth, or the worth of others,
where people don't know their own potential...

On Tonglen – Taking and Sending

The practice called ‘Tonglen’, or ‘Taking and Sending’ in Tibetan Buddhism, is usually described sequentially. If practicing for one’s self, in self tonglen, one imagines or sees with the mind’s eye a part of one’s self as perfect, whole, and loving. That self is visualized as viewing and removing the suffering and pain we have, and replacing it with peace, happiness, well being and strength, and whatever we need.

When practicing directly for others, one first imagines taking or removing the sufferings or difficulties of others, and then giving them peace, happiness, health, and whatever is needed.

The thought of others’ suffering is said to be ‘aimed’ at one’s self-centeredness or insensitivity, destroying it, so to speak. Then, the imagined giving that follows is a practice of kindness, compassion, and generosity.

These are meditations that are considered to have the power to heal.

After reflecting on the traditional teachings about tonglen for some time, I came to connect them to a few thoughts I have had also about symbols in general, and stories that communicate with vivid imagery.

The first idea is that a true symbol is a manifestation of a state of consciousness; second, a sequence of images can be a symbol (as in a dream, or a story, or myth); and third, that mediation on a symbol can produce the same consciousness as the source of the symbol, or story.

As it regards tonglen practice, after meditating for a time on the visualizations as happening one after the other, I came to realize that what is called tonglen practice is actually aimed at producing *a single state of consciousness* that at once removes suffering, and gives happiness. Even though traditionally it is expressed sequentially, to demonstrate its nature,

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections
On Tonglen

tonglen is another name for the single state of consciousness we call compassion, or active compassion.

Tonglen is a creative or magical state of consciousness, in as much as every state of consciousness is creative, producing extensive effects, but with this difference - with the practice of tonglen, or the mind of compassion, the creative nature of our consciousness is brought out, and made abundantly clear.

For more on this wonderful practice, see the essay 'Regarding Tonglen', in the third edition of *A Collection of Buddhist Healing Prayers and Practices*, or available online at <http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com>, on Jason's page.

Here follows a taking and sending prayer, a vow, and another prayer.
May all beings benefit.

Taking and Giving prayer - I

May I have the actual knowledge
of the sufferings and needs that exist
in other beings' lives everywhere
and may that knowledge completely destroy
whatever deluded self preoccupation I have
and may it never arise again

May I then have a compassionate mind,
and respond to them in a way that frees all of them
from all of their suffering forever,
May they have every happiness
and the cause of happiness,
and may that happiness last forever

Vow

From this point forward,
I dedicate myself to removing the suffering of all living beings,
and to bringing them happiness

I dedicate myself fully to their healing and awakening;
to their all having comfort,
strength of body, mind, and spirit,
most excellent nourishment, health, longevity
every level of protection,
a good home, delicious food, beautiful clothing,
the best of all medicines, education,
joy and wisdom

In order to accomplish the needs of living beings
in the most effective way,
I will develop my wisdom and compassion
just as my teachers have done
I aim to become free of all faults, and complete in all qualities
and, day by day, hour by hour
always offer as much help as I can

In this way, I will make a gift of my life
In this way, my own life will be fulfilled

I dedicate myself fully, leaving nothing out,
to the complete healing, fulfillment and enlightenment
of all living beings

No matter how long it takes
no matter how difficult it may be
no matter what it costs

With all my heart and with all my strength,
I vow to always serve all living beings
in every way that is necessary for them

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - V

and in every way that will bring each and every one of them
true and lasting health and happiness

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - VI

Taking and Giving prayer - II – in order to transform my own consciousness into something positive

Whatever difficulties living beings experience everywhere, I pray, may I, and others, and the environment lift them all from them

by myself becoming able, and then,
like opening a dungeon door
and carrying them out
or encouraging them,
welcoming them to walk

Through all forms of prayer,
May I myself be cure for whatever ails them
or conduit for a cure
or a help for a cure to come to them,
whatever it takes

Like the sun shining through the clouds,
dispersing them,
May I myself become a capable being,
and then like the fully rising sun
instantly
or if time is needed,
then over time,
without grasping or clinging to anything at all,
May I completely remove the suffering that all these beings experience

May the Gurus, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas bless me to be able to do this

like the sun
drying up a pool of stagnant water
so that fresh and fragrant things can grow,

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - VI

or,
easing pain,
'like removing a thorn from flesh',
mending bones
mending broken hearts
binding up wounds
and restoring them

For them, may I and others and the environment
be to them
bring to them
pray to them

a cooling rain, a healing balm
if that's what's needed

a desert chapel,
a well-funded schoolroom,
a well stocked and staffed clinic

As needed, may I *be* these things –
and may I work to bring these things
absolutely, clearly and definitely
to those who need them
here, and everywhere

For those who ache,
experience trials, or fears,
may I be
a gentle warm sun after their long winter
that, in an instant, completely dispels all their suffering
and the causes of suffering

Wherever there are suffering beings,
as much as needed,
may I be a fresh breeze, renewing them,

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - VI

rain washing away
whatever of the thousands of sorrows these people have

May I be music, space and light for them, for their world
pure water, nourishing food and drink

or like the full noon-day sun,
the pure land of light,
destroyer of sorrow

For them, may I be
medicine clearing the way,
friendship, land, virtue, peace,
arriving when its needed most
solid, firm, stable
all of one meaning

May I have a mind of compassion,
and of love

May I, in that same single moment, develop and increase
the causes for all people to be richly blessed, in every way
May they have all joys
every happiness
and may the causes be established for
these blessings to remain for them,
stable, firm

For them, surely, may I be to them
bring to them
pray to them
wealth eliminating every type of poverty,
and the illusory perception of poverty

like gently waking someone from a bad dream
and reassuring them

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - VI

outside, inside

May I replace ignorance with wisdom
and replace all wrong views, discomfort, and dis-ease
with knowledge, comfort, health and strength

*“May our intentions equally penetrate
every being and place
with the true merit of Buddha’s Way”*

I pray that whatever hardships I have experienced or know about, whatever
lack whatsoever, may others not experience any of those
I pray they will have it easier than I’ve had

May they not experience any privation or difficulty at all-
not even the slightest

and should they meet with any difficulties,
may they have the means to cope, to overcome these,
and to heal

and from now on,
May they experience only an abundance of health and happiness

I pray that whatever good things I have known in this life, or even just heard
about, may they all experience these, and more,
knowing the love and support of teachers, family and friends...

May the force of goodness increase in me

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - VII

{ a 'sun prayer' – called so because it is a prayer to be as constant,
joyful and diligent as the sun }

I pray that
whatever suffering there is in peoples' lives
that I can remove completely and permanently
that I will do
I pray I will now, this instant, fulfill that task perfectly

and that whatever suffering I can't remove completely and permanently,
I will now at least remove temporarily

and I pray that whatever suffering I can't remove temporarily
I will now at least lessen greatly, by half or more

and that whatever suffering I can't lessen greatly, by half or more
I will now at least lessen even slightly

and that whatever suffering there is anywhere in peoples' lives
that I can't now at least lessen even slightly
I pray I will remember and keep that in mind
and work and study and continue trying to find ways
that will benefit
immediately, in this time,
and in the future
forever

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - VIII

{a thorough going prayer}

However much suffering there has been in our lives in the past

and however much latent potency there is still in our lives
to cause suffering in the future

and however extensive the causes and conditions
have been, are now, or can be in the future
to produce suffering

I pray,

May it all be healed now

May it all be healed now

May it all be healed now

By sila, samadhi, and prajna,
may it all be healed

By ethics, meditation, and wisdom,
may it all be healed

By prayer and mantra,
may it all be healed

By kindness and all the sources of virtue,
may it all be healed

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - IX

By this practice
may those who have perfect health
be firmly established in that perfect health
May those who do not yet have complete and perfect health
be brought to that level of health, well being and strength
and may those who suffer in any way
be it very slight, or with very great suffering
be healed
may they be brought to the highest level of health
and may they be firmly established in complete and perfect health

Such is the nature of this dependent arising:
perceiving the needs of living beings
produces the wish to benefit them as needed
naturally, spontaneously, wholeheartedly, abundantly

May the complete fulfillment of this wish be unobstructed,
without any hindrance at all, may it be immediately
and effortlessly be fulfilled
Absolutely and without question

May I myself become sure medicine for every pain.

By this prayer and practice,
May I bring to those in need,
whatever they need for health

Everywhere it is needed,
may there be a healing rain,
and may healing herbs grow
wherever they are needed

To all of you everywhere and in all times
who work to heal , I pray, may I *always* honor you
and may I always serve and support you
in whatever way is needed,
and for as long as is needed

And I pray to all healers
I pray to gather and share with all others who are in need
all that is life-giving, health giving
O, hear my prayer!
and please give me your blessing!
By your graces,
and all the sources of healing in the world,
and by my own efforts,

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - X

however much I can do,
May all beings benefit

May the force of caring
increase in me

May the power of love, compassion and wisdom
increase in me, and everywhere in the world

May my mind be healing
May my consciousness be healing
May my presence be healing

May my thoughts,
prayers,
and meditation be healing

May my words,
actions,
rest,
breath,
look,
touch,

sleep,
dreams,
and waking be healing

May everything I do be healing

May everything I do promote health and healing in this world
and in the lives of all living beings

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - X

May I hold as my delight
the removing of suffering of living beings
and giving them happiness

May I dedicate myself now more and more fully to all others' benefit

May I and others and the environment increase our ability to help others
in every way that is necessary
and for as long as is necessary

May virtue increase

At all times, may I produce, maintain and increase this life giving vision
for all

May whatever is good within me and in the world increase

May that which is beneficial increase

and may I be able to share more of the good that is in me
and in the world

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - XI

Why don't we
invoke the blessings
of billions of angels
the light of love
to pour down upon
everyone we see,
hear, or even think of

Why don't we settle thoroughly
that we all have it in our power
to feed each and every one
with the food that matches their deepest need and desire
and then do it

Why don't we do this?
It costs us nothing if we do
and costs us all so much if we don't

Why don't we
wash the feet of all weary travelers,
offer them humble sustaining fare
and a soft bed
for them to be able to continue
laden with gifts
on their way

Why not
spread lotus blossoms
on the ground for each person to walk on
every step of their way

Why don't we

Why don't we
wash away the murk
of our own confused thinking
and so stand resplendent
and as light for everyone's eyes

Why don't we pick up
in both our precious hands
that part of the wounded staggering world soul
we've each been given
to restore to health

In this, the briefest of moments,
this brief meeting,
our being here together,

O now,
Why don't we hold in our heart
the dreams of future generations
and heal all injury
as our gift to be passed forward in time

I say,
Why don't we
abide in perfect, overflowing fullness
with every gift passed around
from one house to another
no limit

all the broken
isolated
born but not able to be fully born –
this, plus the heart

and there is vow
this path made entirely of
somehow wanting,
needing to say
a mighty yes

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - XII

A reflection from ‘The Healing Buddha’, translated by Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

Excerpts are in quotes, the rest are my own notes, including those sections in brackets [].

“The purpose of my life is to free all living beings from all their problems and the causes of these problems, which are [first] in their minds, [as obscured consciousness, and ego- grasping, and then in their emotions, energy patterns, and bodies] and to bring all beings peace and happiness, especially the peerless happiness of full enlightenment, which they desperately need. For me to be able to do this, my [own] mind and body must be perfect, pure, and healthy.’

To you who can help, I pray: for all of our sake, help me to alleviate the effect, and bring about the complete end to the cause of my own suffering, and obtain true health and happiness.

I pray - May I become a fully capable being – fully capable of knowing and responding to the suffering in the world, and offering whatever will help the most, temporarily and permanently.

Moreover, all these beings, my dear family, friends, and all my dear relations everywhere and at all times need health to be able to even *hear* teachings on how to be truly and completely free from their sufferings and attain happiness; to be able to receive encouragement and to be able to practice and achieve realizations, and live well, they definitely need health, long life, and freedom from such overwhelming and distracting obscurations, affliction and distress.

‘Therefore to accomplish this purpose, [of benefiting myself and all others everywhere, in all situations and in all times,] I am going to do this practice.’

Part I: Introductory Prayers and Reflections - XII

With so much need in this world, and in these lives that I love, I pray that I will quickly, very quickly generate spontaneous great wisdom and compassion

‘To benefit living beings equal to the extent of space, I am going to practice this healing meditation.’

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

A Healing Buddha Practice, with notes

In this section I've included a way to practice a healing buddha meditation, in bold print, and a brief commentary in normal type. The root text alone can be found on pages 64 to 67.

A note on what follows: One can read as many or as few prayers as one likes and has time for. The essential points, as I've understood them are: the basis of refuge and a loving motivation that sees a way to greater freedom, the practice of visualization and the recitation of mantra, with Right View, and followed by meditation and dedication prayer. Anything more than that is just to help our practice. Please use whatever works best for you.

I have organized the following into four sections:

- 1., First there are introductory reflections, and passages on setting our motivation, bringing forward love and compassion, taking refuge, and making prayers of aspiration;
 - 2., Then there are requesting prayers;
 - 3., Instructions for visualization and mantra recitation;
- and,
4. Concluding practices, including meditation and dedication prayers.

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

A Healing Buddha Practice

1. Motivation

**O, my ten directions three times family,
all my beloved relations,
May I make a gift of my life**

**May my life, and this practice benefit us all completely.
May this bring health wherever it is needed,
the balance of the elements,
and the firm establishment of true health and well being,
long life, and happiness for us all**

Prayers of aspiration, bringing forward love and compassion

As to not leave out any steps, I think it's a good idea to meditate on the factor of having loving kindness, and compassion towards oneself early on, as this has a relationship to what we can then offer. What this means is a rich subject for reflection, as an essential part of the path. Being Westerners, we need this. One can use phrases, such as

**Contemplating the needs that exist...
May I know ultimate happiness,
the full cessation of all suffering,
and the complete realization of health and peace,
and share that with all...**

or, by simply resting in the clear sense of generating goodwill toward oneself.

Next, in order to highlight and bring out more of the quality of this as a being an inclusive practice, reflect on the following:

‘All others are exactly the same as me in wanting only happiness, and not even the slightest suffering...’

Metta practice can be done at this point, either briefly or more extensively.

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

{See the essays on metta in Living in Beauty for suggestions on how to cultivate this precious quality.}

Metta is cultivated step by step, through the different categories, understanding their purpose, and then all together, as taught, until one reaches the Four Brahma Viharas – the Four Limitless States, of Universal Love, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equality of View. We can do the metta practice separately, so that when we want to, we can lightly touch upon it, and then proceed to other meditations that have this as a basis.

Having cultivated loving kindness, here follow the Four Boundless Meditations, also called the Four Immeasurable Qualities, of Universal Love, Compassion, Rejoicing in Happiness and Virtue, and Inclusive Equality of View. Together with Wisdom, these are always the essential nature of every Vajrayana practice.

Recite and meditate on these verses three times, or as much as you wish, to bring the meaning clearly to your mind.

The Four Immeasurables, Bodhicitta and Refuge

**May all beings have happiness
and the causes of happiness flourishing...**

**May all beings be completely free of suffering
and the causes of suffering...**

**I rejoice in all that is beautiful and right in the world,
in all virtue and positive action,
and in all success, happiness and good fortune...**

and abide in stable, impartial love

These can be repeated and reflected on for as long as one wishes.

May all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness...

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

Following the Four Immeasurables, we then produce what is called the Special Intention. This is where one takes responsibility on oneself for removing the suffering of others, and bringing them all happiness.

In Mahayana Buddhism, this Special Intention becomes bodhicitta, the thought to become a Buddha in order to bring the greatest benefit to all sentient beings. The way to genuinely help others, in the Buddhist sense, is by ourselves becoming realized, developing freedom and all beneficial qualities. Then, that is what we offer to the world.

With an understanding of the Four Noble Truths, and the possibility of liberation, this love naturally becomes bodhicitta, the dedication to helping others through ones practice and accomplishment of the path.

This transition, which is implied before, involves realizing the equality of oneself and all others, and the exchange of oneself for others, however one arrives there.

This is altruism – putting others before oneself, thinking:

**May I always cherish all my family
with the determination to accomplish for them the highest good
that is more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel**

Ani Tenzin Palmo taught that the basis of lojong, or thought training, is the joy of putting others before ourselves. This is a special kind of joy, a mature joy. This is what love is all about.

This practice then is like eating, to that one can feed others; like stepping onto the shore of freedom, in order to help others to safety; taking medicine, and *becoming* medicine so that one can heal others. This is done with the aim to provide for them all that they need and wish for. *May this motivation, uncontrived, unfabricated, arise in my being...*

I know that using a phrase such as ‘all my family’, or ‘all my loved ones’ there’s the risk this will stray into partiality, which is the ‘near enemy’ of loving kindness’. The alternative however, was ‘all beings’, which can sound and feel abstract, and so, of the two, I’ve chosen this, ‘all my family’.

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

It's taught that bodhicitta only arises on the basis of an inclusive equality of view, and so, in any case, if it is genuine, there is the feeling that *all are* our loved ones, and *all are* included in our prayers. How wonderful!

**May the supreme jewel, bodhicitta²,
arise where it has not arisen,
Where it has arisen, may it not diminish,
May it ever grow and flourish**

Refuge and Bodhicitta

Traditionally, in practice texts, refuge comes before the Four Immeasurables and the bodhicitta motivation. I've chosen to place it here instead because I feel that different paths can achieve a supreme result, and the choice of a path is purely an individual matter, depending entirely on what works for us.

As for myself, I take refuge in the the Buddha, Dharma and Supreme Assembly, called 'The Three Jewels' in Buddhism. Other Traditions can adapt or recognize the same process in the language of their own faith. For example, in Christianity, I've heard Father John Mabry equate the Buddhist practice of taking refuge to his own tradition. He uses the terms, I take refuge in Jesus Christ, in the Word, and in the Church. Whatever religion we connect with most deeply, we will find that refuge is in fact universal. Although I'm using Buddhist language here, what follows will hopefully highlight this truth.

On Refuge

We are all refugees in Samsara – the unenlightened state of existence. How much we feel we need a safe and secure protection from harm, and how deeply we then turn to our source of safety and benefit depends on how much we've contemplated the dangers and miseries of this world, and begun to have some insight into the great blessing for us all that is our refuge.

² Bodhicitta is the strong, sustained motivation to awaken; to liberate oneself; in order to live a life of freedom, joy, and helpful action. Unenlightened living is suffering, and there is an end to suffering. Therefore:

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

For myself and all others, unenlightened living is suffering, and there is an end to suffering. Enlightened living is happiness, and there is a path...

We take refuge out of these two things: this sense of what the world, and our lives would be without it – terrifying, without a way out, and with the most profound gratitude and devotion, sensing the great source of safety and benefit of our Traditions and Guides.

A reflection from the Pali:

Sabba – dukkha, sabba – bhaya,
sabba – roga vinassantu

All sufferings, all dangers,
and all diseases can be destroyed
through the power of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

On The Refuge Tree

Sometimes when doing Vajrayana practice, what is called a Refuge Tree is visualized. All of this is seen to be in the nature of light. Around the central figure, whatever practice we are doing, one can visualize other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas or holy beings that we have a connection with.

For example, White Tara can have the wonderful effect of truly strengthening the constitution and the central nervous system. Among other qualities, I bring this quality of enlightened action to mind at times when doing the Medicine Buddha practice, and imagine that She is there in the retinue of the Healing Buddha, bestowing her blessings as well.

We can include any divine figures we have a connection with to the refuge tree, such as Maitreya, Jesus, Mary, Avalokiteshvara, Kuan Yin, Tara or Manjushri, Angels, and the Saints we have devotion to. These are all glowing, *‘overflowing with the energy of loving kindness’*, as Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche says.

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

We can add to a single visualization simply, or we can just have the sense that those other Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and holy beings are there, whatever brings the best results.

In this healing meditation, the central figure on the Refuge tree is the Medicine Buddha.

On the particular form of the Medicine Buddha

The Medicine Buddha, as ‘the manifestation of all the healing energy of all enlightened beings’ is seen as being in the nature of deep blue light. He sits in a cross legged position. In his right hand is the healing plant, the ‘arura’, and in his right hand, resting on his lap, is a bowl filled with long life nectars.

Here, the Ven. Thrangu Rinpoche discusses the position of the Healing Buddha's two hands:

‘His right hand is extended, palm outward, over his right knee in the gesture called supreme generosity. In it he holds the arura, or myrobalan, fruit.

This plant represents all the best medicines. The position of his right hand and the arura which he holds represent the eradication of suffering, especially the suffering of sickness, using the means of relative truth. Sickness can be alleviated by adjusting the functioning of interdependent causes and conditions by the use of relative means within the realm of relative truth, such as medical treatment and so on.

‘His left hand rests in his lap, palm upward, in the gesture of meditative stability or meditation, which represents the eradication of sickness and suffering— and, indeed, the very roots of samsara— through the realization of absolute truth. From the point of view of either relative truth or absolute truth, the fundamental cause of sickness and suffering is a lack of contentment and the addictive quality of samsara.

And therefore:

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

Refuge Prayers:

In some vajrayana practice texts, we reflect and meditate on taking refuge in the Three Jewels and the Three Roots, as follows:

I take refuge in all the Glorious Holy Lamas,
 I take refuge in all the Yidams, the Deities gathered in the mandalas,
 I take refuge in all the Buddhas, those who have conquered and gone beyond,
 I take refuge in all the Supreme Dharma,
 I take refuge in all the Noble Sangha,
 I take refuge in all the dakas, dakinis, protectors and defenders of the Dharma who possess the Eye of Transcending Awareness

We can take refuge however it suits us. Here we take refuge in the Three Jewels and bring to mind the Mahayana motivation:

**I take refuge in the the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Noble Sangha,
 generate the wish for liberation,
 and raise the thought of Enlightenment:**

The traditional verse is:

I take refuge,
 until I attain enlightenment,
 in the Buddha,
 the Dharma,
 and the Supreme Assembly

and it concludes:

**By the merit I have accumulated
 through Generosity and other Virtues,
 may I accomplish Buddhahood
 for the sake of all beings**

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

The phrase, “Generosity and other Virtues” refers to the Six Perfections, the Path of the Bodhisattva: Generosity, Ethics, Patience, Joyful Effort, Meditation, and Wisdom.

**Just as my teachers before me have done,
May I accomplish the realization of the healing buddha**

a liberated, completely healthy Buddha

**and help bring all others without a single exception
to that very same state**

This is the most important motivation to have – without it, problems are potentially endless. So, taking the long view, this is the ultimate aim. All the blessings and advantages we then receive, and share along the way, at their very best, are provisional. They serve this purpose.

As with other verses, we can repeat, and reflect on these as necessary, to produce a sense of what is spoken of here.

Reflecting on one’s motivation is thinking about the result, the aim, in order to develop energy and enthusiasm, and bringing the nature of the path of practice, the method, clearly to mind. This is how we will accomplish our aims.

Wisdom and Compassion:

From The Sadhana of the Medicine Buddha, by H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche :

‘As we are all the Primordial Buddha, we have the essence of Buddha Nature. Realizing this, *relaxing* in the natural state is the absolute way of taking refuge and generating Bodhicitta (the mind of enlightenment). When doing the practice, be free of subject, object, and action.’

On the meaning of this, Dilgo Khyentse says, ‘The twofold accumulation of merit and wisdom is indeed the way to buddhahood, but if it is adulterated with clinging, arrogance and condescension, it cannot bear fruit.’

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

‘More particularly, being free of attachments and concepts means being free of any clinging to whatever practice you may be doing as having some intrinsic reality.’

Deshung Rinpoche adds: ‘Do not cling to ordinary notions that tend to crystallize and reify the present moment. Instead, think of the teacher, yourself and the setting as illusion-like, neither existent nor non-existent, ineffable, and away from all conceptual extremes that the human mind likes to attribute to reality.’

(When visualizing) ‘We should see our surroundings, ourselves, and the merit we are accumulating through our efforts as illusion-like. We should see them not as inherently real by their very nature, but as non-dual emptiness and appearance, like the form of a rainbow or a mirage...

See them as being like the images and forms that appear to you when you dream.

‘Your form and all appearances should not be thought of as solid and tangible, but (as insubstantial) more like the mental forms that appear in dreams or magic shows. They have this nature of non-dual appearance and emptiness through interdependent origination.’

‘Through maintaining this perspective on yourself, your actions, and their results, you will be freed from the temptation to seize upon them as real, thus making them a source of bondage rather than liberation. Moreover, your virtue will be purified, made more effective, and will become a cause of attaining Buddhahood.’

To practice like this de-conditions grasping.

Dilgo Khentse concludes: ‘When a bodhisattva performs a beneficial action, he is totally free from clinging to the concepts of a subject who acts, an object who benefits from the action, and the action itself. That total absence of clinging makes the merit infinite.’

*Om swabhava shuddho sarva dharma
swabhava shuddho hum*

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

This is referred to as ‘the emptiness mantra’, and its meaning can be translated as, ‘all things are fundamentally free of mind created concepts of self, and I am that intrinsically free nature’. Or, ‘The nature of all existent phenomena is inherently pure, and I am that.’ Or, more simply, meditate on the syllable Ah, and the experience of not grasping at concepts, and of openness and clarity.

Whether or not we use concepts, the main point is to give rise to discriminating awareness, that is without grasping or clinging to anything at all.

Dilgo Khyentse taught: ‘Leave everything as it is in fundamental simplicity, and clarity will arise by itself. Only by doing nothing will you do all that is to be done.’

Patrul Rinpoche said, ‘Don’t prolong the past; don’t invite the future; don’t alter your innate wakefulness...’

Rest mind.

2. Requesting Prayers

**May the Great Healing Light of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas,
of all Holy Beings,
and of all that is sacred and pure in the universe
pacify, completely pacify, and then fully remove the suffering of living
beings,
and bring them all true and lasting health and happiness³**

**May real happiness, health, and peace awaken in us all!
May all beings benefit!**

‘*Pacify*’ refers to how by means of all relative methods, suffering is alleviated; *and completely pacify and remove* refers to helping us to realize

³ This way of practicing can include both theistic and non-theistic forms of prayer. Generally speaking, theistic prayer is where you view the source of benefit as existing outside of oneself, and non-theistic prayer regards the sources of benefit as existing in oneself, or both outside and inside oneself.

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

ultimate truth that heals the cause of sufferings; and *bring them all true and lasting health and happiness* expresses the positive side of the goal – that we are not just brought to a neutral state, but to one of peace, health, happiness, natural helpfulness, and joy.

Praying in this way, and practicing, without a doubt, we receive the blessings of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche has said: ‘You are not alone because all the time there are numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas surrounding you, loving you, guiding you, that is what they do.’

3. Instructions for visualization and mantra recitation

These can be read as one wishes, to clarify and strengthen the visualizations involved, or, if one is already familiar with instructions such as these, one can proceed directly to the recitation of mantra, on page 57.

It's traditionally taught that what's called 'self-generation' - where one visualizes oneself as the divine form - should only be done by those who have received the initiation of a particular Bodhisattva Divinity, but that 'front generation' - where one visualizes the divine form in space above and in front of oneself - can be done by anyone.

In front generation, we visualize (see with the mind's eye) above us, the Buddha or bodhisattva whose practice we are doing, and whose mantra we are reciting. It's helpful when doing this recitation and visualization, to see pure light and nectar streaming from the image we hold (that is also made entirely of pure light). These represent, or carry the blessings of the Buddha.

Traditionally, light goes out to the sources of benefit, making offerings out of respect, and prayerful requests, and then the light returns, bringing the blessings of these sources of healing benefit. These healing energies ‘fall upon us as light and nectar’, and dissolve into us. We then have the thought and image clearly in our mind that those we pray for receive this positive energy, and that they are completely healed by it, and made entirely well and

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

strong. This form of prayer is referred to in the Tibetan Tradition as ‘gathering and spreading’.

At this time, it’s taught that we should also see ourselves and others, not in an ordinary way, not as flesh and bone, but as also being translucent and made entirely of light.

Many teachers advise, too, when doing this kind of practice, that we see ourselves and others in a pure land, made of light, and to make the meditation as beautiful, peaceful, perfect, and pure as we can. This is helpful.

Venerable Jigme explained that when we are visualizing we’re working with our imagination... not only are we working with imagined sights, but we’re also working with imagined touch and smells and sounds, physical sensations and feelings.

Of course, all this can be as detailed or as simple as we like. We can also do the practice without any elaborate or detailed visualization. For example, we can just see a healing sun, with beautiful light streaming down from above us while reciting. Or without any visualization at all, we can just recite the mantra. We should do whatever works best for us.

As Lama Lodro teaches, even if you just practice for a short while, try and practice as purely and as perfectly as you can. This means concentrating on the visualizations, if any are used, and the sound of the mantra, without the mind wandering from that, doing the best we can.

The following is adapted from a teaching by Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche: During the practice itself we aim to maintain a particular state of mind. We aspire to a nonconceptually performed practice, free from grasping or clinging. This means that when we practice or meditate, we should not relate to our visualization as if it were our creation, or as if it were a solid object.

Our visualization must be experienced as a dynamic display of the true nature, like the transcendent wisdom rainbow body. We must understand that the visualization is totally empty of inherent existence, yet totally full of

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

dynamic energies of love, compassion, and wisdom. In this case, this dynamic display of the true nature appears in the form of the Healing Buddha.

{The body of the healing buddha is made of blue light, and is sitting peacefully, cross legged. He is wearing the robes of a monk, and he holds the stem of an arura plant in his right hand, and a bowl filled with healing nectar in his left.}

During the visualization, the most important thing is to feel the Healing Buddha's presence and to maintain our foundation, which is the motivation of closeness and loving-kindness directed towards all living beings.

From The Medicine Buddha Sadhana

As you recite the mantra, visualize as follows:

Purifying rays of light pour down from the Guru Medicine Buddha's heart and holy body, eliminating your sicknesses and afflictions due to spirits, and their causes, all your negative karma and mental obscurations. Your body is completely filled with light and becomes clean-clear like crystal. Then the rays radiate out in all directions, purifying the sicknesses and afflictions of all mother sentient beings.

Light goes out to all the sources of benefit, with reverent, and prayerful requests, and then the light returns, bringing the blessings of these sources of healing benefit.

From A Stream of Lapis Lazuli

Through radiating many-colored light rays, offerings are made to Menla in the pure realm appearing in the east as the color of lapis lazuli. These lights invoke his mind stream, whence Menla's bodies, large and small, his speech as the mantra garland, his mind as the hand symbols of the arura and the begging bowl filled with amrita, all falling like rain, dissolve into myself and the front visualization.

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

From The Healing Buddha, translated by Khyabje Zopa Rinpoche

Light rays of the appropriate color emanate from each of the five deities at your heart. Your heart and body are full of blissful light, which completely purifies all disease, spirit harms, and negative actions and their imprints.

Beams of five-colored light radiate from all the pores of your body, while nectar flows down from the Healing Buddha's begging bowl and the vases held by the four goddesses, completely filling your heart and body.

Generate the strong recognition that you have vanquished all disease forever and will never be sick again.

While concentrating single-pointedly on this visualization, recite the short or long Healing Buddha mantra seven, twenty-one, one hundred and eight, or more times.

From The Sadhana of the Medicine Buddha, by H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche (lightly edited)

When we recite the mantra, rays of light emanate from the heart of the Buddha, like a hundred rising suns, curing all the diseases and obscurations of beings, and their causes. By the power of this practice may all sufferings and problems be removed.

Recite while concentrating on the rays of light. At the end of the practice, by the power of these rays of light, sufferings are completely removed, like darkness is dispelled by light.

The long Healing Buddha mantra can be done if one wishes. It is:

**Om Namó Bhagavate Bekhandze / Guru Baidurya / Prabha Radzaya /
Tathagataya / Arhate/ Samyaksam Buddhaya //
Tadyatha / Om Bekhandzye Bekhandzye / Maha Bekhandzye
[Bekhandzye]* / Radza Samudgate Soha //**

** The syllables in the mantras in brackets [] are optional. The Medicine Buddha mantra can be recited both with and without the optional syllables.*

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

Here is the Healing Buddha mantra:

**Tayata Om Bekhandze Bekhandze Maha Bekhandze [Bekhandze]
Radza Samungate Soha**

At this point, any additional prayers or reflections can be read, as one wishes and as time allows. This can be done in any of these ways: reading first, then recitation; alternating reading and recitation a little at a time, or practice and then reading, in the manner or prayer.

4. Concluding practices

We follow this with the completion, or dissolving stage.

Dissolve the visualization, if any was used. First the Pure Lands, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas dissolve into all beings, giving them joy and peace. Then all beings in the form of pure light dissolve into you. Then we imagine that we dissolve, from the soles of the feet upwards, and from the crown of the head downwards, meeting at a point of light at the heart. Pause for a moment and see this vividly and precisely...

Then this dissolves into space, clear light, 'like a rainbow dissolving into the sky', and we rest our mind in that experience of clarity, free of concepts, and naturally awake, without grasping or clinging.

Or, more simply, from The Medicine Buddha Sadhana:

After you recite the mantra, visualize as follows:

The Guru Medicine Buddha melts into light and absorbs into your heart. Your mind becomes completely one with the dharmakaya, the essence of all buddhas.

Adapted from a teaching by Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche -

When we dissolve the visualization, we enter a state of fullness where there is no separation, no break or gap...

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

The Healing Buddha is no longer just a limited visualized image of the Healing Buddha; he becomes the pervasive Healing Buddha nature, subtle and profound, beyond any limitation, naturally embracing everything...

When we dissolve, we connect to this without any effort...

We embrace this reality without any separation...

This is the ultimate state of Healing Buddha practice, and it is important to maintain our awareness in this state for as long as we have time.

Meditation

To get the most out of any particular practice, at some point during the practice session, meditate quietly. This can be done either before or after the reflections and recitation, then dedicating the merit.

Or, read the dedication prayers, and then meditate quietly, with sitting and/or walking meditation, as you prefer. I begin with thoughts such as ‘my body is awake...my mind is awake... my heart is awake...’

Here are three gathas, or short meditation poems, by Thich Nhat Hanh, that can be used along with the whole body awareness and conscious breathing, breathing and smiling:

in - out (a few times) (and then)

deep - slow (a few times...)

calm - ease

smile - release, and

present moment - wonderful moment

(or, ‘present moment – there are wonderful things in this moment...)

The gathas are a means to direct and to quiet the mind. When the mind is calm, stable, and clear, we can choose to continue working with the gatha, reciting a line one or more times, and then letting go of words and just being with the inhalation and the exhalation for a few breaths. Or we can let go of the words completely, and just be with the experience of breathing in and out quietly, calmly and lucidly. See for yourself what works best for you.

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

As a general rule, we should keep our practice as simple as we can, and use only the minimum amount of method necessary to bring our mind to a settled, calm and clear state.

A second gatha, if you wish to use more than one, has both a long and a short version. After learning the longer meaning, if we wish, we can just use the shorter one. It goes like this:

Breathing in, I know that I am breathing in,
breathing out, I know that I am breathing out

(practice as described above) (and then)

Breathing in, I see myself as a flower,
breathing out, I feel fresh
Breathing in, I see myself as a mountain,
breathing out, I feel solid

Breathing in, I see myself as still water,
breathing out, I reflect things as they are, and,

Breathing in, I see myself as space,
breathing out, I feel free

The shorter version of this, then, would be:

In, out
Flower, fresh
Mountain, solid
Water, reflecting
Space, free

A third gatha is as follows. In this one, each line is said to oneself along with the exhalation:

I arrive
I am home
In the here
In the now

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

I feel solid
I feel free
In the Ultimate,
I dwell

Rejoicing and dedication

Fill yourself with a sense of delight in all the good you have done, and others have done, especially those who are a source of strength and blessings

in your life. Think and feel, ‘I rejoice in all this virtue!’ ... ‘How wonderful it is!... How wonderful it is...!’

Then dedicate.

Dedication I, simply:

May all beings benefit.

To draw out the meaning of dedication – the meaning of what is given as well as the activity of dedication itself, additional prayers can be read and meditated upon. When doing a more brief form of practice, you can use as many or as few of these, or any Traditional prayers that you like. You can also write your own, or make prayers from the heart in the moment, whatever brings the most benefit.

If you like now, additional prayers can be offered. Here are a few short dedication prayers that contain the complete meaning:

II.

**By this virtue,
together with all the virtue and all the blessings
of all the ten directions three times Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Great
Sangha,
Saints and Sages, Lamas, monks and nuns, and of all Holy Beings
May all beings benefit.**

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

**By all the blessings we have received,
and by the strength of our own awakened insight,
may all beings everywhere have lasting happiness
May we all experience complete liberation,
the calming, and the total and permanent cessation of all suffering,
nirvana, peace,
joy, true health, and happiness.**

**For myself and for all others,
May the supreme jewel, bodhicitta
arise where it has not yet arisen
Where it has arisen, may it not diminish
May it ever grow and flourish**

**May our intentions equally penetrate
every being and place
with the true merit of Buddha's Way.**

**May this bring health wherever it is needed,
the balance of the elements,
and the firm establishment of true health and well being,
long life, and happiness for us all**

**By all this virtue,
may we all accomplish the full realization of the Noble healing buddha,**

**By this merit,
Wherever I am, and wherever I may go,
may I further the work of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas,
the awakening of light, complete freedom and peace.**

**By all this virtue,
may all holy teachers live long, and guide us until samsara ends.
And may there be peace and joy in all the world.**

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

Tonglen

After the formal meditation session, we can practice tonglen, or taking and sending, to continue the energy of the practice. We do this by aiming, moment by moment, to remove as much suffering as we can, and to give as much happiness as we can.

Jubilation

After formal practice, it's good to celebrate by doing something that affirms the very best things in life, such as listening to uplifting music. This keeps the feeling of the positive energy going, and helps to bring it into the rest of our daily life.

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

A Healing Buddha Practice

O, my ten directions three times family,
all my beloved relations,
May I make a gift of my life

May my life, and this practice benefit us all completely.
May this bring health wherever it is needed,
the balance of the elements,
and the firm establishment of true health and well being,
long life, and happiness for us all

Contemplating the needs that exist...
May I know ultimate happiness,
the full cessation of all suffering,
and the complete realization of health and peace,
and share that with all...

May all beings have happiness
and the causes of happiness flourishing...
May all beings be completely free of suffering
and all the causes of suffering...
I rejoice in all that is beautiful and right in the world,
in all virtue and positive action,
and in all success, happiness and good fortune...
and abide in stable, impartial love

May I always cherish all my family
with the determination to myself accomplish for them all the highest good
that is more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel

May the supreme jewel, bodhicitta⁴,
arise where it has not yet arisen,
Where it has arisen, may it not diminish,
May it ever grow and flourish

⁴ Bodhicitta is the strong, sustained motivation to awaken; to liberate oneself; in order to live a life of freedom, joy, and the greatest possible helpful action.

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

For myself and all others, unenlightened living is suffering, and there is an end to suffering. Enlightened living is happiness, and there is a path.

And therefore:

I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Noble Sangha
and raise the thought of Enlightenment:

By the merit I have accumulated
through Generosity and other Virtues,
may I accomplish Buddhahood for the sake of all beings

Just as my teachers before me have done,
May I accomplish the full realization of the healing buddha,
and help bring all others without a single exception
to that very same state

May the Great Healing Light of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas,
of all Holy Beings,
and of all that is sacred and pure in the universe
pacify, completely pacify, and then fully remove all the sufferings of living
beings,
and bring them all true and lasting health and happiness⁵

May real happiness, health, and peace awaken in us all!
May all beings benefit!

{Om Namo Bhagavate Bekhandze / Guru Baidurya / Prabha Radzaya /
Tathagataya / Arhate/ Samyaksam Buddhaya //
Tadyatha / Om Bekhandzye Bekhandzye / Maha Bekhandzye [Bekhandzye]
/ Radza Samudgate Soha //}

Tayata Om Bekhandze Bekhandze Maha Bekhandze [Bekhandze]
Radza Samungate Soha

⁵ This way of practicing can include both theistic and non-theistic forms of prayer. Generally speaking, theistic prayer is where you view the source of benefit as existing outside of oneself, and non-theistic prayer regards the sources of benefit as existing in oneself, or both outside and inside oneself.

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

By this merit,
 together with all the virtue and all the blessings
 of all the ten directions three times Buddhas and Bodhisattvas,
 Great Sangha, Saints and Sages, Lamas, monks and nuns,
 and of all Holy Beings
 May all beings benefit.

By all the blessings we have received,
 and by the strength of our own awakened insight,
 may all beings everywhere have lasting happiness
 May we all experience complete liberation,
 the calming, and the total and permanent cessation of all suffering,
 nirvana, peace,
 joy, true health, and happiness.

For myself and all others,
 May the supreme jewel, bodhicitta
 arise where it has not yet arisen
 Where it has arisen, may it not diminish
 May it ever grow and flourish

May our intentions equally penetrate
 every being and place
 with the true merit of Buddha's Way.

May this bring health wherever it is needed,
 the balance of the elements,
 and the firm establishment of true health and well being,
 long life, and happiness for us all

By all this virtue
 may we all accomplish the full realization of the Noble healing buddha

By this merit,
 Wherever I am, and wherever I may go,
 may I further the work of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas,
 the awakening of light, complete freedom and peace.

Part II: A Healing Buddha Practice with a brief commentary

By all this virtue,
May all holy teachers live long, and guide us until samsara ends.
And may there be peace and joy in all the world.

A list of things that are healing

Beauty is healing
and love is healing
and peace is healing

and laughter,
and kindness is healing

the friendliness and warmth in a voice
and gratitude is healing

friendship is healing
and human touch, when there is love,
is healing

drawing on the strength of our ancestors is healing

natural light is healing
enjoying the peace, freshness
and joy of a new day

Our blue sky, and the oceans,
and the trees,
and flowering plants,
all the wonderful colors and scents of the earth,
these are healing

and all our family in the natural world,
mammal, bird, insect and fish-
these are healing...

fresh fruit, and vegetables, grains and bread, and homemade soup
give to our bodies and to our souls the power of the sun,
and the pure rain

all of these are
healthy and beautiful
and if needed, they are healing
food cooked with love is healthy, life giving

gifts given generously with love are divine,
they are health and life itself
and if need be, they are healing to us all,
the whole circle

children are healing
with their beauty, and purity,
and playfulness and wonder,
with their overflowing joy
they are angels among us...

Friends and family, kindred spirits,
beautiful souls, delight of the world, wherever they go
these are healing

Grandmothers and Grandfathers,
with their kindness and gentleness and wisdom are healing

Mothers and Fathers with us even now
these are healing

optimism, looking up,
and having a great aim
this is healing

patience and gentleness,
smiling to ourselves,
and to each other
this is healing

our dreams are healing
our visions, and our sacred songs,
our dances,

the awe and wonder we feel,

knowing the Divine
this is supremely beneficial,
this is supremely healing
and art is healing
need I say it? -
all of these gifts,
the loveliness of one thing done well,
with great care, and with boldness too...

drawing,
and
painting
what wonders!

sculpture
dance
photography,
poetry
architecture
needlepoint
dress
and on and on it goes...

music is healing

these and more
all of it,
all of it, healing

make your own lists today from these bright oceans...
from all this wonder and joy...

the artist's vision
is health
it is life
it is healing

sacred places, such as this one, healing

animal companions, and all the love they give, healing

angels and ancestors,
friendships,
now and recalled to mind
these are healing

learning about people of good will,
and stories of heroes and heroines,
famous or less known
these are healing
and how these gifts continue – oh!

Traditions are a source of healing
Saints and great teachers are healing
and our faith and devotion connects us to them

Oh Great Song!,
Ethics, meditation and wisdom,
prayer, mantra, and samadhi,
these are healing

wonder, joy and celebration,
and gratitude
these are healing

stillness, and quieting the mind,
and thinking, rightly used too
these are healing

honoring tremendous richness of oneself and others
this are healing

breathing in and out
and smiling
peacefully
with an awareness of our body and our feelings
with great gentleness,
and with love
this is healing

In the Healing Buddha's Pure Land

In the Healing Buddha's Pure Land, there is an amazing blue sky, just like this one. Multi-colored birds sing and take wing. The warm sun reaches everywhere, and brings us all life, health and strength. It brings joy to all it reaches, and helps us all to open and to share our unique gifts.

In the Healing Buddha's Pure Land, there is music played on divine instruments; music that is ever new lifts our hearts. There is a profusion of creativity, spilling everywhere, a cornucopia on every block. There are gardens and varieties of flowers growing, and there is painting and dance, poetry and prose, play and people's dreams unfolded for us all to see and delight in.

Here, friends and neighbors smile and greet each other, with and without words, and care and concern are naturally the rule, sharing in each others joys and trials. We may not know each other, but in this place we support and encourage one another.

And we are fed. Delicious healing herbs grow from the ground, amazing ripe fruits that grow everywhere are shared widely, and the baker's skill and love is handed directly to us; recipes from our grandmothers, bearing their love down through the generations are prepared, and the house is rich with the fragrance, nourishing our body and our heart most of all. We are fed by our family who love and look after us, even after their passing, as well as our spiritual ancestors, and the great benefactors of us all. We are all kept company on our paths, guarded, guided, and encouraged by them.

Here in the Healing Buddha's Pure Land, there is beauty all around, and streams of kindness are flowing everywhere. We are upheld by the light, by the courage and commitment of our brothers and sisters, the boldness of our parents and the heroes and heroines of these and other times.

The beauty of our children today, our dreams made manifest, delights and inspires us more and more, day by day. Here, we have loving pets that heal us, and ritual and remembrance, and traditions and sacred objects we call books that sing with healing energy.

Here in the Healing Buddha's Pure Land, we watch as our old afflictions fade away and a full day wakes in us, reaching from East to West. Here, therefore, every day is a celebration, a sacrament, a holy day.

We all live in this Pure Land right now, but only few actually see how this is so. For the most part, people don't appreciate the ways in which this place is already a paradise. The beauty, the rays of light, the ancestors and protectors, the food and love and friendship is here, but a person can shield themselves from these, cover themselves over and miss the joy of our being here. You can tell because they have no dance in their step, and the look on their face is not one of satisfied desire, but instead is pinched and sour. Tragically, they neither give nor receive much of the spirit food that really is everywhere.

It is remarkable, but in their abysmal confusion, people turn instead and become addicted to shadows that offer no sustenance. Barking like mad dogs, or building weapons and organizing armies to fight imagined enemies, they miss all the beauty, they arrive and depart empty handed from this isle of jewels. What's worse, deprived themselves, they harm others.

This brings me to the greatest joy of this divine place I call home, which is that it awakens in us compassion, and the resourcefulness to work to free others from their confusion, and help them to awaken to the pristine perfection that is all around and within them.

Here in the Healing Buddha's Pure Land, everywhere I see there are countless workers and teachers and spiritual friends teaching in ever evolving ways, at once speaking new languages as needed, engaging, struggling along side us, and celebrating with us every great and small victory. This work is ongoing and will be until all of us realize just what we have here now, just where we are, and what we are all heirs to. As they say in Zen, This very land is the Pure Land, and this very body is the Buddha.

Great Universal Healing Energy

O Great Universal Healing Energy,
may you manifest for us all now

Everywhere and in all times
people call on you
and draw from you to accomplish their aims
to restore health for themselves,
for their children,
for their parents, brothers and sisters,
friends, those they care for, animals and this earth
Those who pray for others call on you,
caregivers, doctors, nurses, healers
brothers and sisters
call on you
we call on you to heal
and to bring life energy to us

This goes beyond any one way of saying it

Everywhere and in all times
like when the roots of a tree go down into the earth far enough
and they reach universal water,
even so,
we all reach for you

O great universal healing life energy
bring us health and well being now,
heal our children now, and bring health to our parents,
brothers and sisters, friends, and all those we pray for
heal this earth
in every way that is needed

Manifest evenly, and throughout every place and time,
completely heal all that is broken among us,

all the addicted, all the lost,
 heal down to the very causes,
 again give strength and courage,
 joy and lasting peace in body and in mind
 revived fresh breath,
 solid peace,
 the stilling of distress of all kinds,
 and joyful vitality in abundance

Give us all here on earth
 loving, and long, and fulfilled lives
 give us faith in you in all your names and forms,
 in all your activities,
 let us all continually praise you as we should
 celebrate you in all your names and forms
 in all your activities
 everywhere and in all times
 let us praise you here and now,
 and invoke the complete fulfillment of your activities this hour for us all

You are the light in the flower
 and in a young child's eyes
 You are the passion in youth and the wisdom of maturity
 You purify dross,
 and smooth out those who are bowed down,
 May such great universal healing love shine in abundance on us all
 May such nectar reach us all as our daily food and drink
 May this breath be our own breath now and always
 May we and all our children, elders, brothers and sisters,
 friends, animals and this earth, and all we care and pray for
 now fully receive all healing grace and strength,
 have loving, long and fruitful lives,
 breath upon breath
 may we all be entirely well and at our ease,

May the perfection of great universal healing energy
 manifest again and again,
 may health and well being arrive fully now for us all
 everywhere and at all times I pray

in hospitals and in solitary rooms,
on highways and on back roads,
in the cities and in far off hamlets

May this sacred energy fully manifest for us all
in every place, now and always

Manifest in all forms of the divine we pray to
Manifest in all our peace and activity
come to us in our feelings and thoughts,
and in the words we say and sing out
manifest in all the forms of our prayers

Manifest as the very air we breathe
and as all the food we eat and the water we drink every day

Arrive, come to us in our relationships with friends and family,
with teachers and the ancestors,
come to us in all the connections we have with each other

Come to us clearly in the sun and rain,
and in music and in all the forms of beauty in this life

Surround us as friends, parents, teachers,
angels and ancestors,
and as our home and gardens

Great Universal Healing Life Energy,
manifest as peace, and as our zeal,
as our devotions in all their forms

Come to us and fill us all completely

May we all know you fully,
May we know our collective life as held by you
May we all know each other as all equally having you in us
and around us,
and before and after us,

May we all know what you give to us all

I pray,
Everywhere and at all times
may you always manifest completely and perfectly for us all

Part IV: Dedication

On Dedication Prayer

Dedication makes a bridge from our own practice to connect with people. The more we dedicate the merit of some positive activity, in our hearts and minds, the more we are sharing whatever positive creative energy we have produced by our practice with others. As with all acts of sincere generosity, this increases its value for us all even more, and makes it shine even more brightly within us.

On another level, since there is no separation between us in reality, this kind of orientation is also an affirmation. It says, in effect, 'this is who we are'. We are connected. It's right to always be as generous as we can, and our true nature *is* this active love and compassion.

If we are cultivating love and compassion, we are naturally producing what could be called 'continual dedication'. This quality of mind is naturally connected to others. This is the one quality of mind that most facilitates re-integration with others after meditation or retreat.

The final dedication prayers we make at the conclusion of any particular practice also affirm to our own mind this knowledge we have, that the practice we are doing has the power to work for us as we intend. It's a statement we make to ourselves of confidence in its effectiveness.

It's important to dedicate the positive energy we create not only to friends, family, those we feel we owe something, and to 'neutral' people, but also to those who give us problems, the people who we sometimes perceive as antagonistic towards us. This gives our practice an indestructible quality, and makes it truly extensive, without limitation and without obstruction. No one can keep us from wishing them well, regardless of their attitude toward us. This is the freedom of the mind that we have as human beings, and such wishes are sure to bear fruit in time.

In ‘The Heart of Compassion: The Thirty-seven Verses on the Practice of a Bodhisattva’, concerning the practice of dedication, Dilgo Khyentse says, ‘Dedicate all the merit and positive actions you have done or will do throughout the past, present and future so that all beings, especially your enemies, may achieve enlightenment. Try to dedicate the merit in the same way that the great bodhisattvas do.

‘Not a single prayer vanishes. Dedicating the merit of every positive action you do with a pure mind will continuously bear positive fruit until you attain enlightenment.

‘The attitude of a bodhisattva must be extremely vast, constantly keeping in mind the infinity of beings and the wish to establish them all in buddhahood. If your mind is vast, the power of your prayers is unlimited too. If your mind is narrow and rigid, your accumulation of merit and the purification of your obscurations will also be very limited.

‘Do not let yourself be discouraged by such thoughts as that it is not worth dedicating what you see as your miserable accumulation of merit because it could hardly benefit anyone; or by the idea that for you helping others is just talk since you will never really be able to benefit them. If you keep your mind open and vast, the effectiveness of your bodhicitta (the naturally enlightened aspect of the mind) will increase, and so too will the benefit and merit of all your words and deeds.

‘In your daily life and practice you must keep developing the excellent mind of enlightenment.’

Seen in one way, in the beginning we set our motivation. Then we do a particular practice, whatever works for us, and are attentive to just this. Then, at the conclusion, being as generous as we naturally know how to, we joyfully dedicate or give over whatever positive energy we have created through our practice to accomplishing our intention.

Sometimes dedication is referred to as ‘sealing’ our meditation. In this sense it does two related things: First, it keeps whatever positive energy we have produced from becoming, even unconsciously, a cause of the negative sort of separative pride, and second it concludes and integrates the formal practice on a most positive note – that of kind regard and abundant good wishes towards others.

One last note on the subject of dedication: It’s taught that the best way to dedicate merit, if we can, is with the right view, that is, without clinging to oneself, the action or the recipient of an action as having intrinsic reality, as it appears to our mind. This is called ‘sealing the dedication of merit with wisdom’, or emptiness. We can at least have this as an aim.

In The Thirty-seven Verses, the verse that refers to this says:

Dedicating to enlightenment

Through wisdom purified of the three concepts
all merit achieved by such endeavor,
to remove the suffering of numberless beings, is the practice
of a bodhisattva

This may not be easy to accomplish, and yet there is always much we can do. In the Traditional teachings on dedication, there are many ways to engage this wonderful practice. As expressed by Dilgo Khyentse: ‘To dedicate merit in the best possible way – a way entirely free from the three concepts of a subject, an object, and an action – is possible only for someone who has fully realized emptiness. How then should we ordinary beings dedicate the merit, (as yet) incapable as we are of such perfect dedication? We can do it by following in the footsteps of those who have that realization.

‘The bodhisattva Samantabhadra mastered the ocean-like infinitude of a bodhisattva’s aspirations, while Manjushri and Avalokiteshvara mastered the oceanlike infinitude of a bodhisattva’s activity to benefit beings.

When you dedicate merit, do it with the idea of emulating the way these great bodhisattvas dedicated merit.’

Feel free to use any or all of the following prayers if you like, substitute prayers or verses of your own choosing, or write, or spontaneously, from your heart, make your own prayers.

May all beings benefit.

A longer dedication prayer, with a preceding reflection from the teachings of Lama Zopa Rinpoche

‘All phenomena – including the I, the action of dedicating, the merits that are dedicated, the goal of enlightenment to which they are dedicated, and the sentient beings for whom they are dedicated – are completely empty of existing from their own side. With the continual awareness of this, I now impute labels, and dedicate...’

By the merit of this practice,
and by the merit of any other good I have done,

together with all the blessings and virtue
of all the ten-directions three times
Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Saints and Sages,
Yidams, Saviors, Great World Teachers,
Realized Beings, Lamas,
Jewel-like Monks and Nuns,
Yogis and Yoginis, Arhats and Ajaans,
Mahasiddhas, Togden and Togdenmas,
Kadampa Geshes, Contemplatives of all Traditions,
and all excellent practitioners,
by all these limitless skies of merit,

together with all the virtue and pure good wishes of family, friends,
and noble, kind hearted people everywhere,

along with all the great, wonderful, positive energy of the natural world,

and the blessings of celestial beings,
angels and ancestors, guardians and protectors,

by the merit and positive energy of *all* the good that exists,
by all the virtue of the Ultimate Nature,
Universal Goodness,

Universal Love and Compassion,

by all this merit,

May the benefit of beings everywhere effortlessly arise:

May all beings benefit.

May all beings everywhere have happiness,
and all of the fully actualized causes of true health and happiness.
May this bring healing wherever it is needed
on outer, inner, and secret levels

By the virtue of this practice, by *all* this merit,
and by our own awakened insight,
may we all be *completely* free from all illness, spirit harm,
and from all of the afflictive emotions forever

May we all be *completely* free from all samsaric states forever
May we all know freedom
May all beings completely realize the Dharmakaya, and,
May this be the medicine that frees everyone from suffering

(a prayer by the Noble Spiritual Friend Lama Zopa Rinpoche)

By this merit, may all those who are unhappy in any way,
(confused, angry, anxious, afraid, attached,
sad or depressed, with distorted views),
instantly
be completely freed from those states.
May they be comforted,
and may they have perfect peace,
wisdom, strength and lasting joy

By all merit and positive spiritual energy,
may all those who are suffering from pain or illness
immediately be totally freed from that pain,

may those who have been in an accident completely recover,
may they immediately be completely healed,

and may they all be firmly established in true and lasting health and happiness
 well being and strength,
 comfort and ease

May all beings be safe
 May they be healthy
 May they be happy, and,
 May they know they are loved

Young and old, rich and poor,
 male and female, realized and ordinary people,
 near and far away, already born or yet to be born -
 may they all enjoy happiness,
 health, and peace
 May they all be entirely well and at their ease

By all this merit,
 may all those who want to go on retreat
 have the opportunity to do so without delay;
 may they all have the resources they need,
 may they find all suitable conditions,
 and, without obstacles,
 may their retreat go exceedingly well
 may they have all excellent realizations

By *all* this virtue,
 May health increase everywhere
 May ethics, and meditation and wisdom increase in me and in the world
 May pure loving kindness and compassion increase, and
 May peace and harmony increase everywhere

By all this merit,
 may all those who work to heal receive all they need to work most
 effectively in this world
 May their healing qualities increase limitlessly,
 and may they remain without pride

By all this merit,

may all monasteries,
 monks, and nuns, and lay practitioners,
 Dharma Centers, hospitals, clinics,
 schools and social service centers
 have everything they need to serve beings most effectively

May monastics and the laity everywhere all keep completely pure ethics,
 develop the supreme good heart, and wisdom,
 and may all their good works effectively flourish forever

By all this merit,
 may all beings have all they need in their lives
 May those who need a job and resources find a good job,
 and may they prosper abundantly
 May those who need a place to live find a good place to live
 May those who need food and drink find good food and drink
 May those who need a friend find a friend

By all this virtue,
 May we all have everything we need to be truly happy

By all this merit,
 May everything we see, hear, think about and dream be auspicious

May all beings have happiness
 and the causes of happiness...
 May all beings be free of suffering and the causes of suffering...
 I rejoice in all that is beautiful and right in the world,
 in all virtue and positive action,
 and in all success, happiness and good fortune...
 and abide in stable, impartial love

By all this merit, may all the pure positive wishes we have for each other
 be completely fulfilled,
 instantly, and effortlessly,
 just as in a Pure Land

(the following two prayers I have heard and admired from Lama Zopa Rinpoche)

By all this virtue
 May those I hear about that are sick immediately be healed

May all those who have come to my attention
 who have any illness,
 or who are unhappy, or in need in any way
 be blessed
 May they be healed
 May they all benefit
 May they all have happiness
 and all the completely actualized causes of health and happiness

and

May those I have heard about who have passed away be reborn in a Pure
 Land, without taking birth any place else

May their families be comforted
 May they all know blessed peace

By all this merit,
 May those I hear about who are experiencing difficulties
 be free from those difficulties,
 and may all fortunate circumstances come to them right away

May the spiritual energy that arises
 from my devotion to the Enlightened Ones,
 be dedicated to dispelling the misery of living beings without exception

May all beings everywhere be safe
 May they all be healthy
 May they all be happy
 May they all know they are loved

May the supreme jewel, bodhicitta
 arise where it has not yet arisen
 Where it has arisen, may it not diminish
 May it ever grow and flourish

By this merit,
and by the merit of any other good I have done,

together with all the blessings and virtue
of all the ten-directions three times
Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Saints and Sages,
Yidams, Saviors, Great World Teachers,
Realized Beings, Lamas,
Jewel-like Monks and Nuns,
Yogis and Yoginis, Arhats and Ajaans,
Mahasiddhas, Togden and Togdenmas,
Kadampa Geshes, Contemplatives of all Traditions,
and all excellent practitioners,
by all these limitless skies of merit,

together with all the virtue and pure good wishes of family, friends,
and noble, kind hearted people everywhere,

along with all the great, wonderful, positive energy of the natural world,

and the blessings of celestial beings,
angels and ancestors, guardians and protectors,

by the merit and positive energy of *all* the good that exists,
by all the virtue of the Ultimate Nature,
Universal Goodness,
Universal Love and Compassion,

by all this merit,
and by our own awakened insight,

May warfare cease,
may all injury be healed,
and all danger pacified

May we all produce the conditions
for countless generations, starting now,
to experience genuine peace

May all poverty and hunger be alleviated

May this earth be protected,
honored and cared for

and may we all cherish one another
and this world we live in

May we all be supremely respectful, considerate,
kind, and gentle to ourselves
and to each other

May our intentions equally penetrate
every being and place
with the true merit of Buddha's Way.

without grasping or clinging to anything *at all*,
may it be this way

May all beings everywhere be safe
May they all be healthy
May they all be happy
May they all know they are loved

By all this merit,
may all those to whom I am connected
by good or bad karma,
have every happiness
May they all know freedom,
and may they be free of all suffering

May they receive all joys, and all good fortune,
and may they and their loved ones,
family, friends, and co-workers
all have good health, wisdom,
long life,

well being, and strength,
comfort and ease

By this merit,
may family members and friends who are estranged
be reconciled,
and may there always be peace between them, from now on

May all the prayers of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas
be completely realized now
and may all of my prayers succeed immediately

By this virtue,
May those who are in need in any way whatsoever
receive every benefit
May all have happiness
and all the actualized complete causes of health and happiness

{at this point, a review of the names and circumstances of those particular
individuals that you wish to pray for can be inserted here}

By all this virtue,
May those who are in need in any way whatsoever
receive every benefit
May all have happiness
and all the fully actualized complete causes of health and happiness

By all this merit,
and by following the example of my
Guides of Great Virtue,
may I not withhold any gift whatsoever
from any being in any place,
wishing them all a great abundance of joys!

By all the limitless good that exists,
may all the needs of all living beings everywhere be completely fulfilled

By all this merit, for every one of us,
when this life is over,
may we each be born immediately in a Pure Land,

and in all our lives

May we never be separate from qualified teachers,
and from conducive environments, with all the supportive conditions for
continuing our practice of the Dharma

May I always go without even the slightest hesitation
wherever I can bring the greatest benefit to others,

By all this virtue

May I attain the complete realization of all practice
that I may bring all others without a single exception to that same state

May we all individually attain the complete realization of our spiritual
practice,
freedom, genuine, stable happiness,
health and peace, and all good things,
wisdom, compassion, and ability

By all this merit,

May all holy teachers live long, and guide us until samsara ends.
And may there be peace and joy in all the world.

By this virtue
may all beings,
my dear family, friends,
and all my dear relations everywhere and at all times
have health,
long life,
clear minds,
peace and joy

A Dedication Prayer, by Shantideva

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

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

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

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

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

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

May all who are sick and ill
Quickly be freed from their ailments.

Whatever diseases there are in the world,
May they never occur again.

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

By this virtue:

May all beings be free of suffering
may they be instantly free of whatever suffering they may have

May they have happiness
and may that happiness be lasting for them

By this practice
may those who have perfect health
be firmly established in that perfect health
May those who do not yet have complete and perfect health
be brought to that level of health, well being and strength
and may those who suffer in any way
be it very slight, or with great suffering
be healed
may they be brought to the highest level of health
and may they be firmly established in complete and perfect health

O, All my ten directions three times family,
near and distant relations,

May my life and this practice benefit us all
pervading all existences

every mind,
every body, every cell
earth and sky

May this practice surely benefit us all

May all my past, present and future selves benefit from this
and may all the past, present and future selves of all beings
benefit from this

May this bring healing wherever it is needed.

May this bring about the flourishing of true health and happiness for us all

By this virtue
may those who do not have happiness
have happiness

May those who do not have confidence
have confidence

May those who do not have peace
have peace

May those who do not have knowledge and joy
have knowledge and joy

From Shantideva

As long as diseases afflict living beings
may I be the doctor
the medicine
and also the nurse
who restores them to health

May I fall as rain
to increase the harvests
that must feed living beings
and in times of dire famine
may I, myself, be food and drink

For as long as space remains,
and for as long as sentient beings remain,
until then, may I too remain,
to dispel the suffering of the world

Dedication, Aspiration and Benediction, by Tulku Thondup, from the audio cd 'Boundless Healing', lightly edited

So now let us dedicate, and make aspirations of this meditation.

Let us dedicate all these merits that we have created by this meditation to *all* mother beings, as a cause of happiness, peace and joy for them, and as a cause of their attainment of Healing Buddha's blessings, peace and joy.

By the power of the Buddhas,
 Healing Buddha,
 and by the power of the infinite Buddhas that we have prayed to in the sky
 and prayed to in our body,
 by the power of all these Buddhas,
 and by the power of all the Pure Lands,
 and by the power of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha,
 by the power of the meditation we have done,
 by the power of the merits that we have created,
 and by the power of the Ultimate Nature, Absolute Truth,
 by the power of interdependent causation,

May all mother beings have happiness, peace and joy
 May they always be with Healing Buddha's blessing light,
 blessing energy, and blessing sound, without separation

And may we always be with Healing Buddha's blessing light,
 blessing energy, and blessing sound, without separation,
 day and night, awake or asleep,
 good times and bad times

And may we always be the source of Healing Buddha's blessings
 for all mother beings
 especially those with whom we have close connections,
 we have special responsibilities

And by the power of all the Buddhas,
 May all our prayers be answered
 May all our wishes be fulfilled

(Benediction)

Now think and feel that Buddhas in the sky, and Buddhas in our body, give us their benediction. In one thunderous voice, filling the universe, they say to us:

‘May your prayers be answered
May your wishes be fulfilled

‘May you be healed of your old illness
ills of your mind, and your body

‘And may you always be with Healing Buddha’s
blessing light, blessing energies, and blessing sound’

Think and feel that we have accomplished the healing activities, the blessings of the Healing Buddha.

By this virtue

may all beings benefit

may all beings be happy and at peace
and may their hearts be filled with joy

Recommended reading

The reason for the following extended recommended reading list

With the decline of both chain and independent bookstores, most of us are left buying books almost exclusively online. Websites can produce computer generated suggestions but these cannot take the place of finding a book we didn't know we were looking for (and didn't know existed) in a bookstore. Nor can it take the place of an informed person, either a friend, or a kind and knowledgeable stranger recommending a book they have read and benefitted from.

The online market will only care about things that have sold before, and so have the potential to sell again. It is a soul-less process, more or less. There is very little knowledge behind it, and little human feeling or responsiveness, but like it or not, this is the way it is going, and will continue to go for some time.

Online markets (such as Amazon) will only deal in, or refer to books they know about. For this reason, and in order to do something to counter the loss of available information that the contraction of the book market represents, I think it's very important for people with knowledge in any area to make recommended reading lists, for those who would otherwise not encounter many of the best titles in any given subject. By offering a book list, there will at least be a greater chance that excellent titles will be sought out, and will remain available for generations to come.

That said, here is my extended recommended reading list in Buddhist studies:

Sutras

A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life, translated by Stephen Batchelor for chapters 1 through 8, and, translated by the Padmakara Translation Committee for chapter 9

The Dhammapada, P. Lal translation

The Prajna Paramita Sutra, in Eight Thousand Lines, translated by Edward Conze

The Platform Sutra (also called ‘The Sutra of the Sixth Zen Patriarch’, or ‘The Sutra of Hui-Neng’) translated by Wong Mou-Lam and A.F. Price

The Uttara Tantra – A Treatise on Buddha Nature; Attributed to Maitreya; translated by Ken and Katia Holmes

The Vimalakirti Nirdesa Sutra – translated by Charles Luk

An Anthology of Buddhist Prayer, edited by Jason Espada

Theravada Buddhism

Living Buddhist Masters (also published as Living Dharma), edited by Jack Kornfeld

Ajaan Chah: A Taste of Freedom; Food for the Heart; A Still Forest Pool;

Ajaan Lee: Keeping the Breath in Mind; Inner Strength

Bhikkhu Visuddhacara: Curbing Anger, Spreading Love

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu: The Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree

Shaila Catherine: Focused and Fearless; Wisdom Wide and Deep

Henepola Gunaratana: Mindfulness in Plain English; Beyond Mindfulness in Plain English

Joseph Goldstein: One Dharma; Seeking the Heart of Wisdom (with Jack Kornfeld); The Experience of Insight

Khantipalo Bhikkhu: Calm and Clear

Sayadaw U Pandita: In This Very Life

Venerable Weragoda Serada Maha Thero - Treasury of Truth -
A Commentary on the Dhammapada

On Metta:

Sharon Salzberg: Loving kindness

Venerable Sujiva: Loving kindness

Jason Espada: Living in Beauty - A Collection of Essays on Metta for Our
Times

Thich Nhat Hanh: Breathe!, You Are Alive! (also published at ‘The Sutra on
the Full Awareness of Breathing’); The Miracle of Mindfulness; The Heart
of Understanding; The Diamond that Cuts Through Illusion; Interbeing;
Being Peace; Transformation and Healing; A Guide to Walking Meditation;
The Energy of Prayer; For A Future to Be Possible; The Heart of the
Buddha’s Teaching

Zen Buddhism

Shikantaza - An Introduction to Zen, Shohaku Okamura, editor

Shodo Harada Roshi: The Path to Bodhidharma; Morning Dewdrops of the
Mind

Seikan Hasegawa: Cave of Poison Grass

The Tiger’s Cave - edited by Trevor Leggett

D.T. Suzuki: Essays in Zen Buddhism

Suzuki Roshi: Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind

Uchiyama Roshi: Opening the Hand of Thought; How to Cook Your Life – From the Zen Kitchen to Enlightenment

Thich Thien-An: Zen Philosophy, Zen Practice

Tibetan Buddhism

Teachings from Tibet: Guidance from Great Lamas, edited by Nicholas Ribush

Teachings of Tibetan Yoga, translated by Garma C.C. Chang

The Sublime Path of the Victorious Ones; A Book of Mahayana Prayers

Ani Tenzin Palmo: Reflections On A Mountain Lake; Into the Heart of Life

Bokar Rinpoche: Meditation: Advice to Beginners

Chagdud Tulku: Gates to Buddhist Practice; Lord of the Dance

Death and Dying in the Tibetan Tradition: introduced and translated by Glenn Mullin

Deshung Rinpoche: The Three Levels of Spiritual Perception

Dilgo Khyentse: The Heart Treasure of the Enlightened Ones; The Heart of Compassion

Gen Lamrimpa: Calming the mind (also published as ‘Samatha Meditation)

Geshe Wangyal: The Door of Liberation

His Holiness The Fourteenth Dalai Lama: The Way to Freedom; Becoming Enlightened; The Mind in Comfort and Ease; For the Benefit of All Beings - A Commentary on the Way of the Bodhisattva; The Meaning of Life from A Buddhist Perspective; Advice on Dying and Living a Better Life

Kathleen Macdonald: How to Meditate

Kenpo Kathar: Dharma Paths

Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche: Opening the Door to Inconceivable Wisdom and Compassion; and, Opening to Our Primordial Nature; Ceaseless Echoes of the Great Silence; Discovering Infinite Freedom; Lion's Gaze; Prajana Paramita - The Six Perfections

Lama Lodro Rinpoche: The Quintessence of the Animate and Inanimate; Bardo Teachings

Lama Yeshe: Wisdom Energy I and II; The Essence of Tibetan Buddhism; Make Your Mind an Ocean; Becoming Your Own Therapist; The Peaceful Stillness of the Silent Mind; Life, Death, and After Death; Freedom Through Understanding;; Ego, Attachment, and Liberation; Silent Mind, Holy Mind

Lama Zopa Rinpoche: The Door to Satisfaction; Transforming Problems into Happiness; Virtue and Reality; The Joy of Compassion; Making Life Meaningful; How Things Exist - Teachings on Emptiness; Kadampa Teachings; The Heart of the Path; Heart Sutra Practices and Instructions for Retreat; Heart Advice - The Bodhisattva Attitude

Matthieu Ricard: The Monk and the Philosopher; Why Meditate? – Working with Thoughts and Emotions; Happiness - A Guide to Developing Life's Most Important Skill

Mingyur Rinpoche: The Joy of Living; Joyful Wisdom

Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche: Natural Great Perfection; Rest in Natural Great Peace

Pabonkha Rinpoche: Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand; with Lama Zopa Rinpoche: Heart Advice for Retreat

Robert Thurman: Infinite Life; The Jewel Tree of Tibet

Sogyal Rinpoche: The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying

Tenzin Wangal Rinpoche: The Five Elements in Tibetan Shamanism, Tantra, and Dzongchen

The Seventh Dalai Lama: Songs of Spiritual Change, translated by Glenn Mullin

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama: The Path of the Bodhisattva Warrior

Tulku Urgyen: Rainbow Painting; Repeating the Words of the Buddha; As It Is, volumes I and II

On The Seven Point Mind Training teachings:

Geshe Rabten: Advice From A Spiritual Friend

Dilgo Khyentse: Enlightened Compassion

Jamgon Kongtrul: The Great Path of Awakening – A Commentary on the Seven-Point Mind Training

On the transition between the Middle Way View, and Buddha Nature teachings

Nagarjuna: In Praise of the Dharmadatu, with a commentary by Khenpo Tsultrim Gyatso

Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche: Opening the Wisdom Door of the Rangtong and Shentong Views: A Brief Explanation of the One Taste of the Second and Third Turnings of the Wheel of Dharma

On Vajrayana:

Lama Yeshe: An Introduction to Tantra;

Dilgo Khyentse: Pure Appearance

Gyatrul Rinpoche: Generating the Deity

His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama: Tantra in Tibet; Deity Yoga; Yoga
Tantra

Jamgon Kongtrul: Creation and Completion (with a commentary by Thrangu
Rinpoche)

Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche: Opening the Wisdom Door of the Outer
Tantras

On particular practices:

Bokar Rinpoche: Chenrezig, Lord of Love

Tulku Thondup: The Healing Power of Loving Kindness

Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche: Tara's Enlightened Activity

Lama Yeshe: Becoming the Compassion Buddha; Becoming Vajrasattva;
Universal Love - The Yoga Method of Buddha Maitreya

On healing practices:

Jason Espada: A Collection of Buddhist Healing Prayers and Practices

Khenpo Kathar Rinpoche: White Tara - the Wish Fulfilling Wheel

Lama Zopa Rinpoche: Ultimate Healing; Teachings from the Medicine
Buddha Retreat

Thrangu Rinpoche: Medicine Buddha Teachings

Tulku Thondup: The Healing Power of the Mind; Boundless Healing

Venerable Hsuan Hua: The Medicine Master Sutra, with commentary