



### ☸ *For Practice and General Reading*

Tulku Sangak Rinpoche. *The Way to Practice Tranquil Abiding*. Missoula, MT: Namchak Publishing, in press. Most books on Shiney/Shamata are coming from the slightly different presentation of the Theravada or Mahayana traditions. This is by my lama, a Vajrayana master, so it's a great preparation for anyone who is thinking of continuing on with the Vajrayana path. You can purchase this through our website: [namchak.org](http://namchak.org).

Matthieu Ricard. *Happiness*. New York: Little Brown & Co. English language edition, 2006. This book does a beautiful job of answering the question, "Tibetan Buddhism—why bother?" Ricard was at Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's side since before Tulku Sangak Rinpoche arrived, and he is still at Khyentse Rinpoche's monastery. He is one of the monks the scientists have conducted experiments on, so he's certified as a good meditator! The book is simply a joy to read and a perfect one to hand out to friends and family with whom you'd like to begin sharing all this.

In 2010 he followed *Happiness* with a book called *Why Meditate?* which includes a CD. I think this could be a very helpful aid for anyone who would actually like to give meditation a go. Again, he's a Vajrayana master, so his would be an excellent preparation for those who like this path.

David R. Loy. *The World Is Made of Stories*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2010.

In this pithy book, Loy poetically shows us JUST how much our experience is a movie of our own making.

Dacher Keltner, Jason Marsh, and Jeremy Adam Smith. *The Compassionate Instinct*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2010. Through stories and studies, the authors reveal the Buddha Nature in us all, ready to come forth at any time, often at surprising times.

Stephen Post, Ph.D., and Jill Neimark. *Why Good Things Happen to Good People*. New York: Broadway Books, 2008. This scientifically grounded book is an accessible, enjoyable read. Inspiring. The main study they refer to is a longitudinal study that involves in-depth annual interviews of the subjects over their entire adult lives.

Shantideva. Trans. Padmakara Translation Group. *The Way of the Bodhisattva*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2006. This is the all-time classic for advice on how to bring Bodhicitta into your life. Lots of helpful, grounded metaphors and reframes.

Sharon Salzberg and Joseph Goldstein. *Insight Meditation: A Step-by-Step Course on How to Meditate*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2001. This is a complete multimedia kit that is the best, most accessible introduction that I know of, for Westerners just starting to meditate. I find it helpful too! It's not Vajrayana style, though, so you might want to keep your eyes and mouth open, etc., as I've instructed you in this book. Joseph Goldstein has written other books with the same title, but I thought you might want this kit, put out by Sounds True. Interestingly, both authors are also Dzogchen (Vajrayana) meditators. They have been involved in the Mind and Life group (scientists and the Dalai Lama) for many years.

Sangharakshita. *What Is the Sangha?: The Nature of the Spiritual Community*. Cambridge, UK: Windhorse Publications, 2004. Sangharakshita is a Westerner, deeply steeped in Buddhism, who can explain those understandings to the Western mind in a way that we can relate to. He's very much done it for us here with the concept of Jewel of the Sangha—not just as an understanding but as a practice.

Sangharakshita has also written *Who Is the Buddha?* (2008) and *What Is the Dharma?* (2004), so he's covered all Three Jewels!

Patrul Rinpoche. Trans. by the Padmakara Translation Group. *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*. Boston: Shambhala, 1998. This is the all-time classic text for Ngöndro. It's VERY Tibetan, but if you approach it like an anthropologist, with an open, scientific mind, you're bound to find many helpful elements, including lots of stories. If you're going to practice Ngöndro, it's your textbook. If you're going to practice the Four Thoughts, it will give you plenty of, well, food for Thought.

Just about anything by Pema Chödrön, especially *Start Where You Are*. Boston: Shambhala, 2001. And, that same book turned into a beautiful little kit called *The Compassion Box*. This is an ancient course on how to bring Bodhicitta into your life, and use your life for growing your Bodhicitta. It's been popular all these years because it works. Pema Chödrön really tells it like it is, as a modern American, and at the same time is a highly qualified teacher of Vajrayana.

Anam Thubten. *No Self, No Problem*. Point Richmond, CA: Dharmata Press, 2006. This is a great little book written by a true lama, but very accessible to a Westerner. It's pithy, and full of great little gems that guide our minds in the direction we'd like them to go. He teaches Shamata regularly. He and Tulku Sangak Rinpoche are close, and teach at each other's sanghas.

Any book by Mingyur Rinpoche. He also teaches Shamata regularly, as do an increasing number of his advanced, highly qualified students. They teach Ngöndro and other practices too. You can check all of this out on his website, [www.tergar.org](http://www.tergar.org).

Michael Talbot. *The Holographic Universe*. New York: Harper Perennial Reprint Edition, 2011. I've said enough about this one for you to know it's packed with one thing after another that can really alter your viewing lens, so once again I recommend you take it in sips.

Daniel Siegel. *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007. This one you'd also want to take in sips. By the end you'll have a whole different understanding of your mind and your brain—more full and more detailed, but most important, more true.

Rick Hanson, Ph.D., with Richard Mendius, M.D. *Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love, and Wisdom*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2009. This is my favorite book on brain science in relationship

to Buddhist meditation techniques. It really gets into the parts of the brain, what they do, how they work together, how that relates to how we feel, and how Buddhist methods can help us to use the brain in a way that allows us to practice equanimity while still feeling fully alive.

Dzigar Kongtrül. *It's Up To You: The Practice of Self-Reflection on the Buddhist Path*. Boston and London: Shambhala, 2006. This is another pithy book, full of helpful thoughts and perspectives, from a genuine lama who also speaks English.

Sogyal Rinpoche. *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*. New York: HarperOne, 2002. Has come to be a classic introduction for Westerners. It gives you a feel for the Tibetan perspective.

Anything (and there's a lot of it) by B. Alan Wallace. He is highly qualified to speak about Buddhism, science, and Contemplative Science. He was a monk in the Vajrayana lineage, studied under many lamas, and has translated for many of them. He then went on to get a degree in physics. Now he is one of the scholars working with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in developing the new field they call Contemplative Science. He is one of the key people doing the Shamata Project, measuring the brains and bodies of novice meditators as they do three-month intensive Buddhist retreats.

### *Three Books by Thubten Chodron*

*Buddhism for Beginners*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2001.

*Don't Believe Everything You Think: Living with Wisdom and Compassion*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2013.

*Working With Anger*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2001.

Thubten Chodron is a Western Buddhist nun who speaks in a very down-to-earth way about the principles of Buddhism. Because she has applied these principles in her own life, she does a beautiful job of helping us apply them in our own.

### *Brain Science*

Richard J. Davidson, Ph.D., with Sharon Begley. *The Emotional Life of Your Brain: How Its Unique Patterns Affect the Way You Think, Feel, and Live—and How You Can*

*Change Them*. New York: Plume, reprint edition, 2013. A long subtitle, but truly descriptive. Dr. Davidson is among the top neuroscientists in the growing field of Contemplative Science, which studies the effects of meditation on the brain, with full scientific rigor. He works closely with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Given Dr. Davidson's accomplishments, we might expect to not be able to understand a thing—so it's a pleasant surprise to discover how readable and accessible this book is. Not one to leave it as an academic study, he has practiced meditation for many years. He is a living poster child of how richly we can cultivate positive habits of mind.

### *Seven Point Mind Training Books and Media*

Before you go on to Ngöndro, I highly recommend you check out *Lojong*, a.k.a. the Seven Point Mind Training teachings. Pema Chödrön often teaches it, so you could also attend a live teaching. There are probably others who teach it, but I haven't experienced their teachings so I can't speak with authority on them. Since there are many commentaries on this classic by Chekawa Yeshe Dorje, a website—[lojongmindtraining.com](http://lojongmindtraining.com)—offers commentaries from several masters on many of the maxims contained in the root text.

Traleq Kyabgon. *The Practice of Lojong: Cultivating Compassion Through Training the Mind*. Boston and London: Shambhala, 2007. This book is long but readable, and includes some of the relevant neuroscience.

There is video of His Holiness the Dalai Lama giving a teaching on Seven Point Mind Training.

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. Trans. Padmakara. *Enlightened Courage*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1993 and 2006. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche was one of the great scholars and practitioners of the twentieth century. He was the head of the Nyingma Lineage, historically the most populous in Vajrayana. He lived this text to the utmost. He was able to speak its true meaning in down-to-earth terms.

Pema Chödrön. *Start Where You Are*. Boston: Shambhala, 2001. This is the most accessible for Westerners. My one quibble is that she refers to the maxims as “slogans,” a term she got from Trungpa Rinpoche. If you looked up the definitions of both words, it would be “maxim,” not “slogan,” that would mean

“words to live by.” A slogan is a phrase you use to sell a car or a political candidate. Oh well, that’s a minor point. I still highly recommend this book!

Pema Chödrön also has MP3s of courses and talks she has given on this training.

Pema Chödrön. *The Compassion Box*. Boston and London: Shambhala, 2003. When in doubt, get this one. It includes the above, as well as beautiful cards, with a maxim on the front and her explanation on the back. There is a little stand, so you can have it on your desk or in your kitchen, reminding you of your theme for the day.

Jamgon Kongtrül. *The Great Path of Awakening: The Classic Guide to Lojong, a Tibetan Buddhist Practice for Cultivating the Heart of Compassion*. Trans. Ken McCleod. Boston and London: Shambhala, 2005. Jamgon Kongtrül “the Great” was among the most influential masters in the nineteenth century, in Tibet. This is his commentary, beautifully translated by Ken McCleod. I turn to this one at least as much as any of the others.

Chögyam Trungpa. *Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness*. Boston and London: Shambhala, 1993. My one quibble with this, again, is the use of “slogan” instead of “maxim.” Though his English was excellent, it wasn’t his first language. In the case of this one word choice, perhaps it shows. Since she was Pema Chödrön’s Root Lama, it’s no wonder she uses the word “slogan,” despite her being American.

### *On Cosmology*

His Holiness the Dalai Lama. *The Universe in a Single Atom: The Convergence of Science and Spirituality*. New York: Morgan Road Books, Random House, 2005. This emerged from one of the Mind and Life meetings between prominent scientists and His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The subject of this one was cosmology. Appropriately enough for a conference on cosmology, this is a vast subject, with many scientific points of view, not all of which could be represented at that meeting. (There’s information on the Mind and Life group’s website in the “Websites” section below.)

### *On Impermanence*

Ram Dass. *Still Here*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2001. Ram Dass has been a primary spiritual leader in Western society for many decades. He writes

with courageous honesty, wit, and wisdom on the subject of impermanence. Just as he was about to start the book, he almost died from a stroke. He includes that event and his arduous recovery in this book.

Sherwin B. Nuland, M.D. *How We Die: Reflections on Life's Final Chapter*; new edition. New York: Vintage, 1995. Dr. Nuland gives several examples of what is actually going on in the body when we die suddenly, or from a long illness. He writes with precision, eloquence, and compassion. He shares with us a painful universal reality with the skill of a doctor and the soul of a kind human being.

### *Fun and Inspiring Reading*

Anna M. Cox. *Just As the Breeze Blows Through Moonlight: The Spiritual Life Journey of Thupten Heruka, a 19th c. Tibetan Yogi*. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2002. This story—both an outer and inner adventure, set in old Tibet—came to Cox after she had been a practitioner for a long time. I didn't want to put it down. I was sad when it was over and I had to leave that world. One of those rare indulgences that's good for you.

Vicki Mackenzie. *Cave In the Snow: Tenzin Palmo's Quest for Enlightenment*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1998. This is the life story of an Englishwoman who found her way to great Tibetan masters in India, then spent twelve years practicing in a cave in Lhadak. She's come back to tell us about it. Very readable and inspiring.

Ani Tenzin Palmo. *Reflections on a Mountain Lake: Teachings on Practical Buddhism*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2002. This is Ani (nun) Tenzin Palmo's own book. It's full of advice and inspiration that's lovely to take in—in sips—and savor.

### *Websites*

Well, of course, there's ours: [www.namchak.org](http://www.namchak.org). We have a lot of free teachings there, opportunities to connect with others in your area and beyond, and a little Sangha store, and more. You'll recognize some of the contents of this book, and audio or video support for some of its content, including Shamata, Tonglen, and Clearing the Stale Winds. Other articles and teachings come and go, too. We also have a large and growing library of print, audio, and visual teachings from our own lamas.

A fun and intriguing one is [www.spaceandmotion.com](http://www.spaceandmotion.com). It combines a lot of different areas of knowledge, including histories of science and various

branches of philosophy. My one caveat is that the website includes what I consider some questionable “science.” The scientists represented there are respected by many, though considered controversial by some. But then, so was Galileo, in his time. If you liked *The Holographic Universe*, you’ll be interested in this website.

Anam Thubten’s website: [www.dharmata.org](http://www.dharmata.org)

Mingyur Rinpoche’s website: [www.tergar.org](http://www.tergar.org)

For more on Seven Point Mind Training, or Lojong: [www.lojongmindtraining.com](http://www.lojongmindtraining.com).

The Mind and Life group’s website offers a lot of historical and current thought on cosmology, with the goal of seeing how current scientific thought on the subject fits with Buddhist cosmology. [www.mindandlife.org](http://www.mindandlife.org)

Dr. Richard J. Davidson’s website: [www.investigatinghealthyminds.org](http://www.investigatinghealthyminds.org). This is my favorite brain science website. They are doing cutting-edge research on such fascinating topics as the measurable effects of meditation on DNA, classroom behavior improvement through meditation, and measurably positive effects on military veterans who practice meditation.

