

TRAININGS OF THE MIND IN DIVERSITY¹

- 1. My Own Beliefs.**² Aware of the suffering caused by imposing one's own opinions or cultural beliefs upon another human being, I undertake the training to refrain from forcing others, in any way—through authority, threat, financial incentive, or education—to adopt my own belief system. I commit to respecting every human being's right to be different, while working towards the elimination of suffering of all beings.
- 2. Different Beliefs And Attitudes.** Aware of the suffering caused by invalidating or denying another person's experience, I undertake the training to refrain from making assumptions, or judging harshly any beliefs and attitudes that are different from my own or not understandable to me. I commit to being open-minded towards other points of view, and I commit to meeting each perceived difference in another person with the willingness to learn more about their world view and individual circumstances.
- 3. Treating Others As Inferior Or Superior.** Aware of the suffering caused by the violence of treating someone as inferior or superior to one's own self, I undertake the training to refrain from diminishing or idealizing the worth, integrity, and happiness of any human being. Recognizing that my true nature is not separate from others, I commit to treating each person that comes into my consciousness, with the same lovingkindness, care, and equanimity that I would bestow upon a beloved benefactor or dear friend.
- 4. Avoidance And Indifference.** Aware of the suffering caused by intentional and unintentional acts of rejection, exclusion, avoidance, or indifference towards people who are culturally, physically, sexually, or economically different from me, I undertake the training to refrain from isolating myself to people of similar backgrounds as myself and from being only with people who make me feel comfortable. I commit to searching out ways to diversify my relationships and to increase my sensitivity towards people of different cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations, ages, physical abilities, genders, and economic means.
- 5. Privilege.** Aware of the suffering caused by the often unseen nature of privilege, and the ability of privilege to benefit a select population over others, I undertake the training to refrain from exploiting any person or group, including economically, sexually, intellectually, or culturally. I commit to examine with wisdom and clear comprehension the ways that I have privilege in order to determine skillful ways of using privilege for the benefit of all beings, and I commit to the practice of generosity in all aspects of my life and towards all human beings, regardless of cultural, ethnic, racial, sexual, age, physical or economic differences.

¹**Diversity Practice** © 2004 Larry Yang. A version of these trainings is included in Thich Nhat Hanh's *Friends on the Path: Living Spiritual Communities*, compiled by Jack Lawlor (Parallax Press, 2002.)

² Headings added.

6. **Conflict And Disagreement.** Aware of the suffering caused to myself and others by fear and anger during conflict or disagreement, I undertake the training to refrain from reacting defensively, using harmful speech because I feel injured, or using language or cognitive argument to justify my sense of rightness. I commit to communicate and express myself mindfully, speaking truthfully from my heart with patience and compassion. I commit to practice genuine and deep listening to all sides of a dispute, and to remain in contact with my highest intentions of recognizing the humanity within all people.
7. **Ignorance And Lack Of Information.** Aware of the suffering caused by the ignorance of misinformation and the lack of information that aggravate fixed views, stereotypes, the stigmatizing of a human being as “other,” and the marginalization of cultural groups, I undertake the training to educate myself about other cultural attitudes, world views, ethnic traditions, and life experiences outside of my own. I commit to be curious with humility and openness, to recognize with compassion the experience of suffering in all beings, and to practice sympathetic joy when encountering the many different cultural expressions of happiness and celebration around the world.
8. **Institutional And Structural Forces.** Aware of the suffering caused by the cumulative harm that a collective of people can impose on individuals and other groups, I undertake the training to refrain from consciously validating or participating in group processes, dynamics, activities, decisions, or actions which perpetuate the suffering that these trainings describe on a familial, social, institutional, governmental, societal, cultural, or global level. I commit to exploring, examining and eliminating the ways that I consciously and unconsciously ally myself with forces that cause harm and oppression, and commit myself to working for the benefit and peace of all.