108 Adages of Wisdom

Living Freely and Joyfully (Part I)

Master Sheng Yen

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The four steps in dealing with any problem:

1. Face it.
2. Accept it.
3. Deal with it.
4. Let it go.

Compassion has no enemies; wisdom, no vexations.
Protecting The Spiritual Environment

Use ordinary mind to face unordinary circumstances.

What would happen if we don't treat the unordinary with an ordinary mind?

We may lose our cool!
Even if you're right, don't be harsh to others. Express correct views gently.

Let others be your mirror. If your words or actions discomfit, shock, or cause concern to others, immediately reflect on your behavior, express remorse, and improve.

Why should we be yielding when we know others are being unreasonable?

Only when we don't embarrass others will everything end well.

Thank you all for giving me room to grow.
Take care of your mind, no matter the situation. Keep inner mind calm and peaceful. This is spiritual health; this is protecting the spiritual environment.

Anger may stem from the body, perception, or many other causes. It's not necessarily an indication of poor cultivation. If you can look within, dissolve your anger, you will harm neither yourself nor others.

My mind is a little unsettled, let me use the breathing method to clam it down.

I have been misunderstood and no one understands me. Of course I am upset! It's hard enough to feel wronged, why torture yourself even more with anger?
Unpleasant encounters, unhappy situations – we must mend our own minds, not other people’s minds.

We have to respond to problems with calm. If our minds are not equanimous and harmonious, then we will likely say the wrong things and make the situation worse.

I am the only one who understands my problems.

It's none of your business!

(Adjusting your own mind)

(Adjusting another person's mind)

Things are getting worse.
Conflicts usually come from an over-assertion of personal views.

Those who are selfish, self-serving, and insatiable act this way due to feelings of insecurity.

I will never yield!

Neither will I!

I am so afraid that I will lose everything.
Being selfish and self-serving may seem to be a way to protect yourself, but this is not so. One who is self-serving actually harms others and ultimately, himself.

Do not compare yourself against some standard; do not compare yourself with others. Just be diligent in the present and be prepared at any time for the future.

Why won't anyone give me a hand when I need help?

This is how you always treat people. Now you know how it feels!

Opportunities may come at any time. I have to be prepared!
People usually hide their shortcomings and avoid confronting them. Face them with openness, and then these shortcomings and other problems will actually decrease.

Do not think you know it all; do not belittle yourself.

You will overcome your shortcomings one after another. Keep it up.

To feel neither superior nor inferior; the "Middle Way" is the best approach.
When we interact with others, giving them space is to give ourselves space.

When angry, learn to contemplate and illuminate the mind. Consider your thoughts and ask yourself, "Why do I want to feel angry?"

Give each other space and respect one another.

Why was I so angry at that moment?

Observe your mind, and you will find out why.
When your mind is tied into a knot, it is best to reflect deeply into the place where the mind arises and thoughts move.

The discriminating mind has blocked this part. No wonder your mind is all tangled up.

His cable channel is showing a rerun of his vexations again.

Mind engaged – things to do.
Mind let go – nothing to do.
Letting go does not mean giving up. Letting go means not thinking of the past, not thinking of the future, a mind that lets go. Giving up means believing in nothing, abandoning all faith and courage.

If you are prepared for a setback, then you will not fear setbacks.

I won’t be troubled by this any more!

Never mind. Nothing matters any more.

Come get me, setbacks!

She’s really developed immunity after getting the vaccine.
Sickness need not be a source of suffering; the same is true for poverty and physical labor. But when the mind is distressed, that is true suffering.

Take your illness as an experience. Then it will not be suffering.

A suffering mind will not find happiness even in heaven.

Now you know how important our health is!
Take adversity as something interesting, you will harvest a very different crop.

Oh, no. Where did my allowance go?

Well, whoever finds it can make use of it.

Ponder for two more minutes, and opportunities may reveal themselves; as long as we have one more breath, our potential is unlimited.

There is hope as long as I live.
If our views are correct, then we know that birth, aging, sickness, and death are natural and we will not blame others.

The world can face great danger and calamity at any time. If we are mentally prepared for anything, then when misfortune strikes we reduce the potential injury to the bare minimum.

Make good use of today and follow the course of nature.

So many disasters and accidents, the world really is impermanent.

Let's get on the web and search for useful information for disaster prevention.

30 years old 20 years old Now 5 years old 3 years old 1 year old
When vexations descend upon you, it is best to enjoy the sensation of breathing.

Breathe in slowly, breathe out slowly; breathe in the sunshine of happiness, breathe out the clouds of vexation.

The most important concept in protecting the environment is "simplicity." Simplify your life and that will protect the environment.

Breathe in slowly, breathe out slowly; breathe in the sunshine of happiness, breathe out the clouds of vexation.

Thrift leads to no waste.

When there's less waste, there's less burden for the planet Earth.

This is environmentalism.

Woof!
Look more, listen more; speak less, act fast; spend slow.

The reason why I have become a millionaire is because I spend money even more slowly than I can crawl.
A true step on the path merits more than a hundred shallow words adorned with tinsel.

The more you come to know your weaknesses, the faster you will grow, with your self-confidence unwavering.

A check that can't be cashed is useless!

How come some shortcomings are so difficult to get rid of?

If you are determined and persistent, any shortcomings can be eliminated.
In daily living it is better to think: "fine if I can have it, no matter if I can't"; thus transform suffering to joy and live a life of serenity.

Just follow the causes and conditions, why bring more vexations onto yourself?

About to speak? Think for a moment. Slow your speech a bit. It's not that you should not speak, but rather that you should cherish what you say and choose your words with care.

Now I am in big trouble!
Let the measure of your heart be great; the size of your ego, small.

If you wish to build good relationships with others, develop a broad mind, and become more tolerant and forgiving.

How can I minimize "myself"?

With regard to everything, think of not only yourself, but others, even the whole world.

Treat your good friends as soul mates, treat your bad friends as a mirror.

What about those who are neither good nor bad?

They are all little Bodhisattvas just like you.
When you change your way of thinking, what is around you will transform accordingly; nowhere in the world will you find absolute good or bad.

The way to get along with others is to communicate effectively. When communication fails, compromise, when compromise fails, tolerate and forgive.

Why is there no absolute good or absolute bad?

Something good can become bad, something bad can become good, it all depends on your attitude and effort.

I don't agree with what you say, but I respect your right to express yourself.
The great must make allowance for the small; the small must be understanding toward the great.

Don't measure yourself as high or low in comparison to others. Just work with all your heart and mind.

Be forgiving and understanding with each other.

I can't achieve my ideal now doesn't mean I can't achieve it next year. Keep going!
More praise and less criticism! Cut down the karma that comes from what you say.

If possible and permissible, seek after it; if impossible and forbidden, keep away from it.

This is the result of creating too much bad karma with spoken words.

What are the things that I can't and shouldn't acquire?

That includes everything that is beneficial to yourself but damaging to another’s rights or reputation.
We love to grasp what we love and reject what we dislike; gain and loss, gain and loss – vexations are sure to come.

You have a particular role and responsibility in life; act accordingly.

Students Xiao-Ming Lin and Li-Li Wang respect their teachers in school, study hard in class, help others selflessly after school and are familial to their parents. They are hereby awarded the certificate of "little Bodhisattvas".
Worry causes needless injury!
Mindfulness brings security.

Seek a peaceful mind, and you will find a peaceful refuge; treasure others and you will find fortune and happiness.

Don't forget your safety helmet.

Caring for others is like sowing the seeds of happiness.

Once the flowers bloom, everyone can enjoy the fragrance of happiness.
Rejoice when you encounter good, praise it, encourage it to spread, but take care to learn with an open mind.

Finish your work quickly, but in an orderly manner; don't become nervous trying to compete with time itself.

You've been working so hard, grandfather. Let me help you.

Haste makes waste. You will waste more time if you have to do it over.
Ordinarily people like to boast about their strengths. Our strengths should be developed, but there is no need to exaggerate them.

Big duck swims, big wake; little duck swims, little wake. No duck in the water? No wake at all.

Even the new first graders know that you have been elected Model Student. Now come down!

As long as you take the first step, the world will be different.
Can't move the mountain? Build a road! Road blocked? Start climbing! Can't climb? Shift your mind!

A good method to lighten strain and stress: lessen the mind of gain and loss; increase the mind of appreciation.

Adjusting our thoughts is like changing channels on our TV. When the program is not good, change the channel.

The rainbow usually only appears after the rain.
Disputes are best settled by tolerance.

Great possessions don't necessarily bring satisfaction; few possessions don't necessarily lead to poverty.

Since you are accommodating to me, of course I am willing to take a step back.

How come we don't always feel satisfied even when we have a lot?

Because we are never content!
An urgent task needs immediate attention? Be ready now!

Stop the litter, clutter and garbage! Always clean up and pick up what you can. These are virtuous acts.

Let me dry the floor quickly so no one slips again.

Let me deal with the bigger pieces of garbage.

Are you hurt?
Right now you gather what you have planted; what you harvest tomorrow, you plant at this moment.

An ordinary mind is a mind of utmost freedom, utmost joy.

If you want to become popular in the future, you have to start forming good relationships with people now.

So this is also the principle of "Causes And Consequences".
Living Joyfully

Say “Blessings to you” when you meet another. This spreads good will and brings peace and calm.

Wish you lots of good luck!

I hope you get better grades.

I hope you’ll be popular with everyone.

Blessings for the whole world!

Wish you good health and happiness.
When you work with others, consider their needs. When you make a mistake, reflect upon your own conduct.

Offer friendship and a helping hand to others, and so be a beacon of harmony, happiness, peace and calm.

It's not my fault at all; it's all someone else's fault.

Is that really true?

So good, so considerate.

The little Bodhisattva is radiating the light of compassion.
Self confidence is recognizing your strong points; growth is knowing your weaknesses; respect is understanding another's position.

Reduce others' vexations with compassion; reduce your own with wisdom.

To often consider another person's perspective helps you understand others as well as yourself.

Come out of "the rainy season of vexations" quickly.
True diligence doesn't mean placing your life at risk. It is simply unwavering persistence.

As long as I follow the plan and review the lessons daily, my performance will definitely improve.

People usually have no insight into themselves and consequently cause themselves unnecessary trouble.

One person plays so many roles. Who am I?

My mood changes all the time. Who am I?
Be clear about what is necessary for you to have. Untangle yourself from wants driven by desire.

Rather than fighting for something you cannot get, it is better to cherish and use what you already have.

What a difference between what I need and what I want.

Even though I don't have the best grades, I am always happy to help my classmates with any problems.

I really appreciate someone who has a heart for helping others.
Don't get carried away when the sailing is smooth; don't lose heart and give up when the boat starts to toss and turn.

Character creates wealth; giving creates savings.

With an ordinary mind one will have fewer vexations.

Giving is like a homing pigeon. As long as it has delivered the message, no matter how far it's flown, it will always return home.
Happiness does not derive from how famous you are or how much money you have; rather it is a measure of inner peace and contentment with few desires.

Wealth is like flowing water, and giving like the digging of a well. Dig deeper and more water flows in; give more and wealth multiplies.

I think I am still missing something.

You are missing "contentment".

Please take the allowance we have saved up and use it to "dig more wells" for others.
Look at yourself with contrition; at the world with gratitude.

With the mind of contrition, what will we see?
We will see that everyone can be our teacher.

What about with the mind of gratitude?
We will see that everyone in the whole world is our benefactor, our guardian angel!

Demand right-minded conduct of yourself, do not use it as an excuse to harshly criticize others.

Old habits die hard.
Unable to let go of attachment to self? No wisdom. Unable to let go of attachment to others? No compassion.

If you let other people misunderstand you, it's nobody's fault but your own.

Don't you find it painful to carry your vexations everywhere you go?

Maybe I made some mistakes when I expressed myself?
Just as you would not ask others to wear your own shoes, don't make someone else's problems your own.

A smile and a good word are great gifts that create virtuous affinity with all.

The key to overcoming obstacles lies in yourself: Just make up your mind.

When we meet someone for the first time, a smile and loving words are the best gift.
Reduce pointless emotions and avoid unnecessary trouble.

If you hear gossip, be calm and reflect carefully. If it’s true, it calls for change. If it’s false, continue to do good work. A short temper can turn gossip into a deadly weapon.

Let's run! The bomb of emotions is about to go off!

The best way to deal with untrue rumors is to pay no attention to it.
A healthy body and mind constitute life's greatest treasure.

Transform your mind and transform your destiny.

I have made a lot of money, but now I can only stay in the hospital.

Having a healthy body and mind is really important.

Take a good hold of the wheel of life and go towards a bright and beautiful future.
The good are not lonely; the benevolent, happiest; ever and always help others and thus achieve the utmost happiness for yourself.

Let everyone speak kindly!
Let everyone do good deeds!
Let everyone's bad luck turn to good!

You are always running around helping others, don't you ever feel tired?

Oh right! I totally forget about being tired.

Let's share good things with good friends.
Perfecting Life

The value of life is not in duration but in contribution.

Grandfather, what is a "great contribution"?

Everything is a great contribution if it is done not for your self-interest but for the benefit of others.
The past is an illusion; the future, a dream; the present, essential.

Breathing is wealth – as long as you are alive there is hope.

I want to become the most skilled video game software engineer when I grow up.

Then you must study hard so you can go to a good university with the best learning environment.

There is hope as long as one lives.
Flowers blossoming and bearing fruit is a natural phenomenon. Flowers blossoming and not bearing fruit is also natural. Both accord with the workings of causes and conditions.

Wisdom is not merely understanding the sutras; it includes the skillful means to transform vexations.

Why do you still carry on your back all these books that you have read?
Vexation is bodhi, but that doesn't mean there is no vexation. Vexations exist, but don't see them as vexations.

Thank you for your test that helps me grow my wisdom.

You are a teacher, not a vexation.

When you recognize that you lack wisdom, your wisdom has already increased imperceptibly.

Now I understand. Wisdom has to grow out of a lack of wisdom.
Compassion has no enemies; wisdom, no vexations.

Do your utmost – no matter who gains or loses.

I think of everyone as a good friend, why are there still people who don't like me?

Even if people are your friends, you should still respect their choices.

I have done more than you have!

Oh, oh. How come something good has turned into this…
There are really no bad people in the world, only those who make mistakes. There are no evil people, only those whose thoughts have deviated from the norm.

Insight comes from wisdom; good fortune, from merit.

You shouldn't always pray for good luck. The more you use up luck and blessings, the less you'll have. Wisdom is the opposite; the more you use it, the more you'll have.

Sometimes I still make mistakes if I am not careful.

It is okay as long as you don't do it again.
Everyone has the capacity to help others. We can help others through our sincere appreciation, encouragement, consolation, and guidance.

As long as you have the heart to do it, you can help people any time, anywhere.

Buddha in mind, speech, and daily life.

You will have a good mind when you have the Buddha in your mind.

You will speak kind words when you have the Buddha on your lips.

You will do good deeds when you make the Buddha a presence in your daily life.
Compassion must be accompanied by wisdom. The kind of compassion that lacks wisdom may very easily end up harming yourself and others. Even with good intentions, such "compassion" is still prone to mistakes and harming others.

There is an order to developing aspirations. Begin small with what's close at hand. Start with good intentions, positive speech, and good deeds. These are things that everyone can do and vows that everyone can make.

You can't give him any more money. He'll just gamble it away!

We can all do this.
Don't just express gratitude. Make it a reality.

It doesn't matter if a good deed is big or small. Always have good intentions and then your mind will be at peace.

In our daily life, there are people everywhere to whom we could repay kindness.

This is for you.
Serve others with a mind of gratitude and reciprocity and you will be neither tired nor weary.

Every child is a little bodhisattva that helps his or her parents grow.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve.

Thank you, little Bodhisattva.

Gratitude to you both, my Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
We can let others know of our good deeds but we should not expect rewards. We can encourage everyone to do good deeds, so that doing good things becomes the norm. We will create positive influences and lasting effects.

An elder living alone often starves. I want to deliver meals to him everyday, would anyone like to join me in this good deed?

I will deliver on Mondays.

So will I.

All the things we do for the benefit of sentient beings will eventually be completed if we have the heart to accomplish them.

To give selflessly will not only move others, but also bring you blessings from the heavens.

That's right!

Woof!
Regret is a kind of emotional affliction. Repentance is a practice.

Gentleness is a mild heart and a flexible attitude toward others and in dealing with situations. It is not a sign of weakness.

How come no one told me things will become so bad?

I have discovered the root of the problem. I am determined to rectify my behavior.

Be firm in your stand, be gentle in your attitude.

(Vexation) (Practice)
A bodhisattva saves others from hardship and suffering; a great bodhisattva takes on hardship and suffering itself.

Death is neither a happy event nor a cause for mourning, but a call to practice our faith seriously.

Thank you for suffering in place of all sentient beings.

Grandmother, we wish you an auspicious and wonderful journey to the Buddha’s pure land.
A single spark can start a prairie fire, a tiny bit of good intention can save the world.

If everyday, everyone spoke another kind word, did another good deed, then all of these little beneficial acts would turn into a great, great good.

I really didn’t expect that the power of a little bit of good intention would spread so fast.

It's so beautiful!
Master Sheng Yen was one of the twentieth century's foremost Buddhist teachers, scholars and meditation masters, and was instrumental in the revival of Chinese Buddhism in modern times. Master Sheng Yen became a novice Buddhist monk at the age of 13. After 15 years of rigorous scriptural study and meditation he entered into a solitary six-year meditation retreat to deepen his realization. He later received formal lineage transmission in both the Linji (Rinzai) and Caodong (Soto) lines of Chan (Zen) Buddhism. Master Sheng Yen understood that advanced formal education would be required to revive Chinese monasticism and in 1969 he went to Japan to pursue graduate studies. In six years he obtained master's and doctor's degrees in Buddhist Literature from Rissho University, becoming the first monk to earn a doctorate in the history of Chinese Buddhism. For the last thirty years of his life, he tirelessly devoted all of his energy to advancing Buddhist education, reviving the tradition of rigorous education for monks and nuns, leading intensive Chan meditation retreats worldwide, engaging in interfaith outreach, and working on behalf of world peace, youth development and the environment.

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Purpose of Sheng Yen Education Foundation
The foundation promotes educational initiatives that help people to know, stabilize, and purify their minds so that they can improve society. The foundation’s mission is based on Master Sheng Yen's vision of "Uplifting the individual character of humanity and building a Pure Land on earth." The foundation pursues the following objectives:
1. To assemble, organize, research, categorize, classify, translate, compile, print, produce, and publish Master Sheng Yen's works, including books, publications, and audio-visual information, as well as to promote, propagate, and provide free copies of such works to people throughout the world in order to improve and enrich the individual and society, and to bring about a pure land on earth.
2. To draw upon Master Sheng Yen's vision in reviving Buddhist education, the foundation funds academic research on Buddhism, publication of Buddhist works and educational undertakings that seek to improve the well-being of humanity and society.
Master Sheng Yen believed that the realization of a pure land on earth hinges upon purifying the human mind, and that education is critical to this endeavor. The foundation hopes to play a part in providing the education that contributes to purifying society, and spreading the message of Buddhism so that peace and harmony prevail and a pure land on earth emerges.

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