

~ Heart Advice for Young People ~

Mingyur Rinpoche

Advice for young people. Many young people ask me for life advice. And most of the time, young people ask me questions like “What is the meaning of life? Why am I here? What is my purpose in life?” A lot of questions. And sometimes they ask me, “What is my destiny?” “Where can I find my soulmate?” Sometimes I get a lot of questions about those things.

Then, sometimes what happens is that we do not appreciate where we are. Sometimes I ask small children or teenagers, “How old are you?” And they will say, “Eight years, eight months, and one week.” [Mingyur Rinpoche laughs.] Why? Sometimes we are not happy and feel, “I am too young. I want to be eighteen years old. If I turn eighteen, I will have freedom from my parents.” And so they keep track of their age every month.

Then, we turn eighteen, and we are so happy. “Finally, I’ve got freedom.” Maybe we move away from home, but when we move away, sometimes we might face challenges and obstacles.

So we say that suffering is international, universal. Problems are also international, universal. So, of course, if we do not know how to transform from the inside, if we try to fix things on the outside only . . . We will not get real happiness, contentment, and joy from outside circumstances alone. We cannot really find the meaning of life from outside circumstances, from situations, from the environment, or from money, fame, power, and all this. Even if you get all of this, you might still feel something is missing, incomplete, or insecure. You might feel a little bit lonely. Especially nowadays, many young people feel lonely, depressed, or a little bit sad. This is normal.

Sometimes, when we move out of our parents’ house, we face a lot of challenges in life, and when we turn twenty-five years old, we move back to our parents’ home. That is possible.

So how to find the purpose of life? The meaning of life? How to find real happiness? Normally, we suggest that the first important thing is the “view” — the “view” meaning our perspective on life and on who we are.

When I was young, I had panic attacks. And then, I felt life was miserable. And then, of course, when I had panic attacks, everything became a problem. The environment became a problem — all the weather, elements, winds, thunderstorms . . . Strangers became a problem for me. If I ran away from my home and hiked the mountain, panic followed me there. If I went down into the bushes, panic followed me there. If I played with my friends, panic followed me there. If I stayed alone in my bedroom, panic followed me there. So running away does not work.

Then, I learned these ancient teachings from my father when I was nine years old, and he said, “You do not need to run anywhere. You do not need to get rid of anything. You do not need to create any special state of mind.” He told me I have this wonderful nature.

This wonderful nature is what we sometimes call “basic innate goodness.” All of you, all of us, have this incredible nature that we possess. The qualities of this innate nature are awareness, love and compassion, and wisdom — these three are together in unity. So you have a lot of skills, capacities, potential, and power, and all these things are there because when we connect with these three innate qualities in union, then most of the time we find answers. So who we are, actually, is not just who we believe we are — we are more than what we believe we are. We have this wonderful nature.

Then, when we connect with love, compassion, wisdom, and awareness, there is a purpose. The purpose is to discover these great qualities within ourselves, and then help others — maybe our friends, family, and society — and then it becomes a win-win situation. It is good for you, and good for others. And then every day is exciting, actually, and whatever we do in our lives, like studies and education, also has the purpose of discovering love, compassion, wisdom, and awareness in yourself, others, society, and everybody in the world, as much as we can.

Then if you work, the work is related to that. If your work is related with an intention that has these three things, then your work really becomes beneficial for you, for others, and for society. Even if you do business, the business becomes successful because your product or whatever you work on, in the long term, benefits others, and they will look for and buy your products. Therefore, business also becomes compassionate business — a win-win situation. Your professional work is also compassionate work. It helps you and helps others, so it is a win-win situation. Study also, and of course spiritual practice. If we are connected with awareness, love and compassion, and wisdom, then our everyday life also becomes spiritual practice. So everything comes together like that.

This is very important to keep in mind. Otherwise, sometimes we are lost. Especially when we are young, we have so many questions, and when we are beginning to explore the world, we see everything as negative. We look at our parents, and we feel their lives are boring, and that what they are doing is not so meaningful. We think, “If I end up like them, I would not like that, because it is boring and has no meaning.” Then you think, “All these politics are not really good, and all the businesses are evil.” And then everything becomes negative. So we need to be inspired. We need to not lose hope. We can be the change-makers in the next generation.

We really want to be inspired, we really want to have a positive impact on ourselves and everybody on Earth, but at the same time, we need to accept impermanence. It goes up and down. Let go. But letting go is not giving up. Finding this balance is very important.

As far as what we can do to integrate these practices in everyday life, I think that in the morning when you wake up, appreciation and gratitude are very important. “I am still alive. How wonderful! Also, there is a roof above me. And there is water in the bathroom.” Or you can drink coffee or tea. To have coffee is not so easy — it takes so many people, from farmers, to someone to package it, someone to make the coffee machine through whatever efforts, and finally it is in your cup on the table. So many causes and conditions and so much effort go into it. And this effort comes from kindness, care, love — so many things are involved there. So appreciate that. With just a small

coffee, you can have a lot of appreciation. Then maybe when you touch your feet to the ground, appreciate the ground. Then appreciate the fresh air, and maybe the sunlight. Appreciate the sky, the mountains, the trees, people . . .

Then maybe you can do some meditation for five minutes. No need to do a lot. Just something simple is of great benefit, like doing a short awareness meditation. Then life begins with appreciation, and then awareness practice, which is really beneficial.

After that, you can think, “Now, my life begins. The intention now, in whatever I do, is that my work, my study, may be a cause for happiness for me, my friends, family, and society, and all beings.” If you can, add some kind of positive intention for what you are going to do next that is related with loving-kindness and compassion.

Then we have appreciation through wisdom, awareness through meditation, and an intention with loving-kindness and compassion, and the day will be full of virtue.

Before you go to sleep at night, you can reflect on whatever virtuous things you did — like learning, connecting with awareness, love and compassion, and wisdom — and you can feel happy about that. And whatever mistakes you think you made are gone, but you can learn from those mistakes or problems. “How can I grow in the future?” You can think about that. Then, you can pray for world peace. “May my efforts, my practice, become a cause for world peace, a cause for the well-being of all beings.” Something like that. You make some aspiration and dedication of your virtue at the end of the day. Then you can sleep.

If you do that, then you will find the purpose of life, the meaning of life, which is really eventually connected with our basic innate goodness. Then eventually, you will not feel empty or incomplete, or like something is missing.

In June, Tergar will do an event for young people — a half-day event including a teaching, practice, listening, and learning all together. It is called “Thrive Daily.” Please, if you have time, you are welcome to join this.