



Bringing Wellness and Awakening to Life

An Excerpt from a Webcast with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, January 2024



People talk about the importance of finding the balance of life and work, or the balance of life and spiritual practice. However, I feel that it's not so much about a *balance*, but rather that life should *be a practice*;

and that work should *be*

a lifestyle. In other words, whatever you do in your life, it has to be joyful, it has to be nourishing, it has to be healing. If it's not, and if most of the time your life is not nourishing you, then it's not a healthy lifestyle. And if you only portion out an hour of meditation from your day, or an hour of being kind, or an hour of being aware, then it won't have very much effect on the other 23 hours in your day.

I feel instead that it has to become a lifestyle. And that is true for all spiritual practices, regardless of whether you're a student, a yogi or a teacher, anybody. And here, I don't mean a specific spiritual path; you can be Christian, you can be Buddhist, or you may not connect to any specific tradition; you may simply believe in your own community, or your family; or you

may simply believe in yourself, your health, your personal development and your well-being. But whichever path it is, I feel that it has to become a part of one's life.

For many years I have been talking about resting, because this is really an important part of the dzogchen teaching. But resting doesn't mean you don't work. That's the whole key. Enjoying your life doesn't mean not taking responsibility. You have to take responsibility and enjoy; you have to work, then get rest. This integration seems very important.

For a while now, I've also been really interested in many of the latest findings in Western science. Although many doctors and nurses may not necessarily keep abreast of all of the latest developments related to health and wellness, we are all very fortunate nowadays for the ease of access that we can have to much of the latest scientific information that's out there. There are a number of people, too, who are very skilled at conveying the import of these findings and sharing them in ways that everyone can understand. And even though I don't have a Western background, or Western training, I have been pursuing learning a good bit about the science behind these findings. Toward that end, I am very dedicated to spending hours and hours, literally *hours* a day, learning about it.



That is some of the background leading up to my creation of the new spring retreat at Serenity Ridge in April, where we will focus on integrating into a harmonious whole the many aspects of wellness and longevity, along with the essential insights and practices of this ancient wisdom tradition of Bon; not simply as a religion or a faith, but rather with emphasis on its direct application in working with our body and our movement, and working with our breath, as well as working with the natural elements, and also with our sleep and dreams.

So we're very excited about this first retreat concentrating on bringing a lot of awareness to our

lived health and our lived well-being. Of course, we will have a lot of fun. We will wake in the mornings and get to choose from a lot of options based on people's physical condition: we will be doing yoga, tsa lung and breathing exercises. And we will do the sun gazing, but not directly. Nowadays, the science is so clear that for many aspects of our health, having 5 to 10 minutes of exposure in morning sunlight is beneficial. Particularly because it is a natural source of the blue wavelengths of light, which have a powerful effect on your sleep cycle and in setting your circadian clock in the right way. Of course the science simply says, get exposure to the sun, but during this retreat we will definitely want to bring more of an element of the nature of mind to it; resting mind, calming mind, contemplative meditative kindness, while exposing yourself to the sun.

We will also focus on the many aspects of breath as viewed from both the ancient wisdom tradition and the latest science. For instance, science shows that when asleep, people who are healthier breathe at a rate of around 12 breaths per minute. If one is not so healthy, then the rate will be higher. And the latest findings for the most efficient rate of daytime breathing is about 5.5 breaths per minute, which is not so easy to keep up throughout the day. However, at this retreat we will really have an opportunity to talk about why we need to breathe in the right way, and what the long-term effect of that is on our overall health. Then also, we can explore how that integrates with our meditation and our awareness.

As well, there is an emerging body of evidence for some immediate and long-term benefits of cold water immersion, whether it's a plunge or a cold shower. I have been doing these every day now and enjoying it very much. I know that it's not for everybody, but we will also provide that as another option for people to engage in during this retreat. So you may want to check and make sure that you're in the right condition for doing these, if you would like.

We will also be spending a lot of time out in nature, walking within the almost 100 acres of beautiful and partially forested property around Serenity Ridge, which includes a creek and a river. And we will also have a lot of community time, too, just spending time together socially and connecting with each other.



Trail blessing at Serenity Ridge with Menri Shedrup Khenpo Geshe Nyima Dhondup Rinpoche

