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*occasionally assess practice, **Carrying Practice**: instruction for calm abiding with breath 24/7*

[00:05:39] Good morning to all of you. And welcome back to some of you. So, first of all, I apologize for not knowing *well*, the history of the text [First Light]. so I'll tell you what I do know. The text was written by 17th Karmapa. And the intention of the text was that people would read it at first light. So that was a few days ago, right? [laughs] The first light. And the idea was that people around the world would recite the text at first light. And so all of the Dharma centers and the monastic institutions around the world would kind of play *relay* with the text. And as we recite it, even though this is not first light, still we're in that period when people around the world are reciting this text at this very moment. So... also there is a number of melodies which are used with it. And I don't think that we're able to do the one that Dora was so proficient at doing, but nonetheless, that one also had the downside of... it was difficult to follow it. So we will recite this together this morning and [our umdze] will lead us in it.

umdze [00:08:45] So there are actually three prayers. The first one is by His Holiness Karmapa. The second one is by Tai Situ Rinpoche. And the last one is by Gyaltsap Rinpoche. So we'll just go through the whole thing first.

sangha [00:18:51] *reciting the 3 prayers and then the Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer*

[00:22:59] As practitioners of the Dharma, the teachings of the Buddha and the meditation practices... as we become familiar with those practices and we contemplate their meaning... and we engage in the meditation and continue with our studies... there is a natural inclination to have some desire for success in our endeavors. ... So it's helpful, periodically, to assess how we're doing. Without any particular judgment, but just to see how things are going. And maybe, even more to the point... it's helpful periodically to begin fresh. And so in our own culture, this day of beginning a new year is the point that we traditionally mark to begin fresh.

[00:25:18] There's a little problem with that approach, however. When you begin fresh only once a year, it has a little bit of an artificial weightiness to it. Can it be that I will fail again? That kind of thing. Not so helpful. ... We want to avoid the judgment side of the equation *completely* and embrace the freshness side of the equation. ... If we can make a... kind of 'big thing' out of the freshness without the judgment, then we're likely to have experience of success also. ...

[00:27:06] So let's approach it as we did yesterday. For those of you who were here yesterday, we went like this: we began with a short meditation on calm abiding. There's a myriad [of] ways to approach calm abiding. But one of the very easy and always approachable methods is to use our breath. To bring our awareness to the movement of our breath coming and going. Every hour, every minute, day and night.

[00:28:16] *Ideally*, in all of our calm abiding practices... we would like to be able to follow whatever the object of meditation is without attachment to an outcome. And without any fear that there won't be an outcome that's positive. So we start by just putting our awareness on the breath... for three or four breaths. Following the breath in. ... Noticing as the breath fills us and then begins to leave again, like the tide coming and going. We don't control the tide, but we can observe it, even count the waves. So to with our breath. Ideally, we step aside. ... And just observe... the rhythm of breathing, which does not require our control.

[00:30:31] And from a meditation standpoint, it's best to develop the *skill*... of letting the control go. And just observe the breath coming and going. Almost as if it belonged to someone else. ... And of course, because our habit of distraction is sooo deep, we definitely will be distracted. But because we're not *entirely* asleep, we also recognize the distraction when it arises. And if you want to become skilled at the meditation, deeply effective, then you must become skilled at recognizing it *very* quickly when you are distracted. And when you see that you're distracted, you also must develop another skill. And that skill... is really a simple habit of returning when we recognize we're distracted, returning immediately without hesitation... to the calm abiding practice, awareness of the breath. ...

[00:32:54] So for the remainder of this session this morning, our first session, having heard the instruction... contemplate it for a few minutes. ... Ask yourself if it makes sense. ... Do I understand it? Is it clear? ... And after pondering and contemplating it a bit, then just relax a little more. And settle your awareness on the movement of the breath for the duration of the session.

[00:34:02] *period of meditation*
sangha [00:49:20] *dedicating the merit*