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when taking refuge imagining all beings join us and all have been our mothers, **Carrying Practice:** with pure perception to free self of habitual patterns in order to benefit others, learning to place awareness on anything

[00:02:09] So again, we will recite together the Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer and... adding one thing to it, which is very important. In the beginning it says: "Until the summit of enlightenment is reached, I and *all* beings go for refuge to the sources of true refuge." I suspect that most of you... are aware... that during the day and the night... you imagine... an extraordinary number of things. ... *Fantastic* things appear in the mind. Someone you dislike... plans... to take care of them... and almost *never* do we follow through with these things. Mostly, we would like to be... *extraordinarily* good. At the very least, we would like to be *known* as extraordinarily good. Unfortunately, that's not helpful.

[00:04:01] But it's helpful for us to notice... what our *minds* do. ... How we feed ourselves all sorts of things. And in the context of our Dharma practice, and especially in this tradition... we *elaborate* on what it is that we're saying, from a mental perspective. So, for example, when we say, "Until the summit of enlightenment is reached, I and all beings go for refuge to the sources of true refuge." It's reasonable to ask the question, "All beings?" ... We don't just leave it there as a thought or a wish. We imagine... in front of us... *all* beings... *uncountable* beings. More beings than the billions and trillions of stars and galaxies. We imagine them... all... *here!* Engaging *with* us... the practice of meditation. And... on top of that, because we want to squeeze... every drop of goodness... out of this piece of fruit that we can... we imagine that they appear here, by virtue of our... previous connections with them. And our future connections with them. So we imagine they appear here, and *with* us. Perhaps struggling... with the practice of calm abiding.

[00:06:08] So if you can *imagine* when you say... 'all beings... go for refuge to the sources of true refuge' ... we imagine all beings as a vast oceanic cloud extending to the very limits of space itself. ... We *stretch* our minds... to accommodate... that vision. We can have a smaller vision. One hundred beings... join us for this. ... We want to *stretch* our minds... as far as we possibly can. ... Because anything *short* of that... will *not* bring us to full enlightenment.

[00:07:16] So we imagine all those beings... and we add another ingredient. There is not a single one of them who has *not* been our mother. ... Not a single one of them who has not been... an extraordinary... beneficial mother. And not just once, but over and over. So that when we look at... another person... we have trained our mind to see that person through *that* lens. This is not just *somebody* walking down the street. We develop an appreciation, which is generally... quite rare. And we apply that appreciation... to every being that we meet.

[00:08:27] There are *many* things that we will discuss... that are, in a way, requirements... in order for the practice of calm abiding to bear its fruit. Merely... a still mind is not sufficient. It is a grand *thing*, a still mind... but it is not sufficient.

[00:09:04] All of our habitual patterns... our likes and dislikes, the things we want and don't want... our conflicted emotional states in regards to our relationships with others... these patterns tend to *drive* us... continually... whether we *want them*... or not. ... So at some point, if not now... we come to the conclusion... that as long as I am... the *subject*... of all of my habitual

patterns, tendencies and so on... I cannot be free. If I cannot be free... the mere *thought* of benefiting others is nearly impossible.

[00:10:15] So having... invited... all beings to... go for refuge with us, we imagine that they appear and they *do* that. And we don't just do that... and then... put that imagination *aside*... for another time. The *object* is to... call up all beings to participate. Imagine that they *joyfully* come to participate... that they *do* participate... and that they continue participating... in the Dharma and the effort. In this case of calm abiding. So we'll begin again, taking that into account with the recitation of refuge and bodhicitta three times together.

sangha [00:11:17] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer*

[00:13:41] Now, regarding the practice of calm abiding... it would be good... to develop the ability... to place your awareness... upon *anything*... and find it easy to relax... and maintain that awareness... for a few seconds, or 10 seconds, like that. ... If you make that effort... for 10 seconds... you can then let go of the effort... relax, *really* relax... and then do it again. Continue in that way... first, placing your awareness on... an inanimate object in front of you perhaps. I have a little leaf from bodhi tree. I can put my awareness on that. Or... I could put my awareness on a feeling. ... Have you ever just *put* your awareness on a feeling and done *nothing* with it? But just watch it... for a few seconds... and then... *not* trying to extend it... from 3 or 4 seconds, to 10 or 20, or half a minute ... try to close it. Finish that... successfully. And then relax. Don't try to meditate. Just relax... for maybe a minute... and then again... place your awareness on... an inanimate object... a feeling... a memory... anything. Three or four, five seconds, 10 seconds *maximum*. And then *intentionally*... let go of the meditation again. Relax for a minute or two... and then do it again.

[00:17:09] I will say *one* thing. ... It's two different kinds of difficulty. ... Placing your awareness on... a cup of water... is a different experience than placing your awareness on a feeling. I can *think* about the cup, wonder where it was made... wonder what it's made out of... wonder if the person who made it is still alive. Wonder if what I'm drinking is drinkable. I can think all sorts of things. The cup is... *clearly* accessible to the intellect. If you have a *feeling*... like or dislike... kindness, feeling of joy, feeling of anger... there is *naturally*... in feelings, and emotions... energy... that is not in the cup. It's more difficult, usually, to rest your awareness... on a feeling. It's very slippery. But if you *can*... even for two or three seconds... and then just let go of it, kind of like, while you're *ahead*, don't *push* it. Just... settle there... and then let go of it. ... It's a much more *powerful* experience and it's imbued with much more potential. Still, the important thing is... to *succeed*... at placing your awareness... *anywhere*... for a while... successfully. So as you wish... and maybe... after the lunch break... you can *report*... can have an open conversation... and hear how that practice went.

[00:19:24] *period of meditation*