SANGHARAKSHITA’S SYSTEM OF DHARMA LIFE - PLAN FOR **WEEK 4**

**Main themes:**

* We need the ability to respond as well as to cultivate skillful will;
* Our meaningful responses can be to people, the arts or simply to quality or value;
* Friendship may be a particularly good context for receptivity;
* The practice of deliberately doing nothing**;**
* ‘Surrounding everything with space’ – the ‘just sitting’ practice.

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| **START TIME** | **TOPIC** | **LED BY** |
| 19.05 | Saluting the shrine | LM |
| 19.10 | Body awareness, them Mindfulness of Breathing (25 mins)   * Could read a poem | LM |
| 19.35 | Pairs: what do you recall from last week and what has seemed relevant since? | LM |
| 19.45 | Recap of last week:   * ‘Skillful action’ involves actually exercising our moral responsibility ; * We need to be able to recognise what skillful action is; * The precepts allow us to compare our actions with how they would ideally be; * We shouldn’t assume that unpleasant feelings are unskillful; * Developing skillful behaviours requires conscious effort. | Ch |
| 19.55 | Any questions? | Ch |
| 20.00 | Short talk introducing dharmic responsiveness (or spiritual receptivity):   * The last 2 aspects of the system have been about willing, but we also need the ability to respond. * Our meaningful responses can be to **people** whom we admire, or in whom we take delight. They can also be to **the arts** (in whatever form we find most helpful), or just to **quality or value** – developing a feeling for something more, better, more true or more fulfilling in our experience. * **Friendship** may be a particularly good context for receptivity. When there is a true ‘meeting of minds’ with our friends we can take delight in them and be carried beyond ourselves. | Ch |

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| **START TIME** | **TOPIC** | **LED BY** |
| 20.15 | Pairs, then plenary: What are the things in our lives that inspire us (in which we contact a sense of quality or value)?   * Stress that this could be any area we like – it doesn’t have to have a ‘spiritual’ flavour (whatever that means!). | Ch |
| 20.25 | **TEA BREAK** |  |
| 20.50 | More thoughts about spiritual receptivity:   * Although responsiveness is quite different from willed effort, we still need to make an effort to allow responsiveness to arise in our lives. To begin with, we can focus on whatever area of our life already inspires passion. * The practice of deliberately **doing nothing** is a helpful one in developing responsiveness. If we experience boredom, this is good – when we feel that we lack responsiveness there is actually a space in which it can spontaneously arise. If we leave a space in our experience it can begin to be filled from within rather than through external stimulation. * The essence of spiritual receptivity can be seen as ‘**surrounding everything with space**’. The ‘**just sitting**’ practice is helpful for this (perhaps in combination with the Mindfulness of Breathing or the Metta Bhavana). | LM |
| 21.05 | Meditation:   * 10 minutes of Mindfulness of Breathing – trying to shift from (a) thinking about the breath to (b) directly experiencing the sensations of breathing, then (c) being open to the ‘aesthetic quality’ of those sensations * 5 minutes of ‘just sitting’ | Ch |
| 21.25 | Tasks for the next week:   * Read ‘Spiritual receptivity’ section of the handout; * Could listen to the 4th of Dayanandi’s talks in the series “The Five Great Stages of the Spiritual Path”: Spontaneous Compassionate Activity (47:53); * Try to cultivate a sense of spaciousness (or even boredom!) by setting some daily time aside to do absolutely nothing. | Ch |
| 21.30 | Finish |  |