

Positive & Negative Actions

The natural law of cause and effect (*karma*-Sanskrit, *Las-rGyu-dBras*-Tibetan) means that we experience the result of whatever we think, say and do. In accordance with this natural law, the nature of our actions – whether positive and wholesome or negative and harmful – determines the phenomena and circumstances we subsequently experience. Positive actions, like the seed of a medicinal plant, produce happy conditions. Negative actions, like the seed of a poisonous plant, result in unhappy conditions. There is nothing we experience beyond the results of our own actions.

Whether we recognize it or not, we are ‘in the driver’s seat’ as far as our destiny is concerned. If we want to experience happy circumstances, health, peace of mind, sufficient resources, etc., then we need to take hold of the steering wheel and direct ourselves toward a good result through our own conduct. That requires knowing which types of action should be engaged in because they result in beneficial, happy and healthy states; and which to avoid because they cause us harm, suffering and illness. Our happiness and suffering doesn’t come from anywhere else.

The *Ten Positive and Negative Actions* are taught accordingly. Of the ten, there are four pertaining to the mind, three to speech, and three to the body:

THE TEN NEGATIVE ACTIONS TO AVOID (MI-DGE-BA BCu (TIB.)-TEN NON-VIRTUES)

1. Killing conscious living beings
2. Theft (taking what has not been given)
3. Sexual misconduct (sexual activity that harms others)
4. Falsehood (telling lies)
5. Slander
6. Irresponsible chatter
7. Verbal abuse (hurtful speech)
8. Covetousness
9. Vindictiveness (malice)
10. Holding wrong views (such as “actions motivated by hatred produce benefit”)

THE TEN POSITIVE ACTIONS TO ENGAGE IN (DGE-BA BCu (TIB.)-TEN VIRTUES)

(These are the opposite of the ten non-virtues listed above.)

1. Protecting life
2. Not stealing
3. Not engaging in sexual conduct that harms others
4. Speaking the truth
5. Not slandering or engaging in divisive speech
6. Speaking meaningfully and with a positive purpose

7. Not saying things that harm the hearts of others
8. Maintaining a content mind that does not covet the resources of others
9. Abandoning malice and cultivating the intention to benefit others
10. Seeking the truth and understanding the natural laws of life and existence

Furthermore, we can practise a way of life in general that supports happiness and the power to help others by endeavoring to engage in the following:

1. Be content.
2. Act to benefit others.
3. Especially help the poor and needy.
4. Diminish anger, desire/attachment/greed, pride, envy, and ignorance of ourselves and the way things are.
5. Increase loving kindness, compassion, equanimity and rejoicing for the well being of others. These four qualities can become infinite within us, and are thus known as the four immeasurables (*tshad-med bzhi-Tib.*).
6. Increase the six qualities of generosity, moral discipline (conduct that benefits oneself and others), patience and tolerance, diligence in accomplishing what is meaningful and beneficial, mental composure and meditative concentration, and wisdom that penetrates the truth of things and existence.

The last is the conduct of the *bodhisattva*, the noble individual who seeks enlightenment – ultimate wisdom and compassionate power – for the benefit of all living conscious beings. They are known as the six transcendental perfections (*pha-rol-tu phyin-pa drug-Tib.*).