

FULLY BEING

IMMERSION LEVEL I > HANDSHAKE

TEXT VERSION



PREFACE

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WELCOME TO HANDSHAKE I

MEETING AND HEALING OUR FEELINGS



DESCRIPTION

Handshake is the meeting of the mind and our feeling world. It is a way to be open and fresh, without judging, suppressing, indulging, or running away from our feelings. Rooted in a kind and spacious attitude of complete acceptance, all our emotions, resistances, sensations, and thoughts are welcomed. Handshake is deeply healing because we learn how to be true friends to all of our experiences.

METHOD

Handshaking is called a "practice" even though it isn't a method, but more of a non-method. It is not so much about something to do as what **NOT** to do. It is a re-training of our attitude – the attitude that particular feelings, emotions, moods, or ways of thinking are bad and therefore need to be suppressed, attacked, eliminated, and so on. Handshake is precisely the opposite approach; it allows every feeling and emotion to arise, to be there fully, and to express itself. There is no active judgment of good and bad, right or wrong, and no resistance. So the only "method," which isn't truly a method, is to train in non-judging and non-resisting, in allowing everything to be and reveal itself.

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BEING OK

QUESTIONS

- What are the different layers of feeling?
- What is the root of the feeling nature?
- Why is it important to take the “main door”?



KEY POINTS

- Feelings connect to the body. There are physical sensations and a more subtle level of feeling consisting of emotions and moods. Underneath these is a more refined feeling, which is part of our subtle physiology consisting of nadi, prana, and bindu (channels, energies, and essences.) The bindu aspect is what we call essence love and is experienced as a basic okayness.
- Naturally, deep down, there is a feeling of “I’m okay.” It’s very soft and subtle. It’s not dramatic, overpowering, or intoxicating. It’s called essence love because it is hidden and not expressed outwardly.
- We have two tasks: to be aware of clarity and to be mindful of essence love.
- On the way to meet clarity, we encounter many other things such as thoughts, cloudiness, dullness, and distraction. Similarly, on the way to meet essence love, we see a lot of emotional stuff, a lot of wounded feelings. We see fear, anxiety,

speediness, numbness, etc. We each have a top-ten list of emotional patterns or schemas.

- Don't sneak through a side door. Go through the main entrance, like a king entering a palace.

EXERCISES

- Explore and clearly distinguish the three levels of the feeling world: physical sensations, feelings, and emotions. Then allow awareness to sink to a deeper level and feel into what is beneath all of them. Try to connect with the underlying feeling of essence love, even if it's only for a moment. Feel into this, without analyzing, just letting it be how it is.
- When schemas or patterns arise, cultivate an attitude of friendliness and kindness, rather than judging them.

DAILY CONTEMPLATIONS

- Essence love is home
- Essence love sparks expression
- Clarity's juice: essence love
- Royalty uses the main door

WELCOME FEELINGS

QUESTIONS

- Does the feeling world deserve kindness?
- What does it mean to be biased against our feelings?



KEY POINTS

- Just be aware of whatever comes in. Knowing and awareness are present but without judging.
- Please don't choose which particular feelings or thoughts are welcome. Then we become sectarian or biased towards our own minds.
- It doesn't matter what we're feeling; all feelings are welcome.
- Feelings come and we know them. But we aren't saying anything to them, we are not judging them.
- Our poor feelings have been judged by our thoughts for so many years.
- Be kind to the feeling world. Feelings deserve kindness in the form of non-judging.
- Sometimes we do judge. It's a strong habit. But then just relax again.
- Relax the reactor, not the cause. The causes are allowed to occur. We are learning to relax the reactor.

- We are not suppressing, nor indulging, nor running away. We are just being there without doing anything.

EXERCISES

- Contemplate the normal use of the term “biased”. We usually think of bias as directed outwards towards stereotypes we don’t like or fear. Or maybe bias as showing preferential treatment for one group over another as in racial or gender bias. Here bias is being used in an inward sense of being biased against particular feelings and emotions we don’t like or fear. This is a deeply ingrained bias that we may not even be aware of. Contemplate how this inward bias operates and try to explore the biases you have within your own mind. Practice being unbiased towards all feelings and emotions.
- Practice noticing the difference between the reactor and the causes, the raw feelings. Can you distinguish these in direct experience? Try to notice raw feelings on their own, without any reaction. Then watch the reactor in action, reacting to each feeling that arises. Practice by alternating being aware of causes and the reactions to them.

DAILY CONTEMPLATIONS

- Just be aware of whatever comes in
- Don’t be biased towards your own mind
- All feelings are welcome
- Don’t look for a cozy feeling yet
- Be kind to the feeling world by not judging

ISSUES

QUESTIONS

- What are some of our underlying issues?
- What is a good way to transform them?



KEY POINTS

- After the physical body gets relaxed then another layer needs attention: our “issues”.
- Our issues are driving or churning underneath all the other layers of our psyche.
- For things to transform they must be directly felt. The term ‘transform’ here means self-liberated, freed from within.
- We have to allow things to be, we have to trust. If we don’t trust, we will always bring other issues to deal with that first issue.
- We need honesty and a willingness to meet our issues, to accept them as they are.

EXERCISES

- Strong sensations tend to overpower subtler feelings and emotions, and vice versa. Practice becoming more aware of this dynamic and shifting relationship of sensation into feeling and feeling into sensation. With the relaxation of the body, can we feel the deeper issues, monsters, under the dance of feeling and sensation? How do they affect the body and feelings in your experience?
- Allow your awareness to suffuse the entire feeling world and the coarser and subtler levels of sensations. For example, choose a sensation such as warmth, cold, tiredness or heaviness. Practice allowing awareness to continuously feel that sensation and at the same time the presence of more subtle feelings like concern, happiness, sadness and, care. Be aware of their connection and how they affect each-other.
- Sense what may come up for you when strong “issues” arise. Is there shame or embarrassment or other feelings that cluster around them? Is there acceptance of them just as they are without judgment or do old stories control our experience?
- Reflect on what it means to be completely honest with your issues. Honesty is not always easy since it can be painful, even if it is the truth. For example, we may feel unloved but not able to face this. How does being with this difficult feeling in a direct way change our experience? What happens when we are no longer driven or churned by the issue?

DAILY CONTEMPLATIONS

- Feel issues directly
- Issues drive us
- Honesty frees us
- Meet and let be

GOOD FRIENDS

QUESTION

- What is handshaking what?



KEY POINTS

- We are so capable of hiding, and we often have layers upon layers of issues inside.
- We have to be aware of that numbness because many things are happening underneath.
- Handshake practice is between the mind and the feelings in the body. There are a lot of issues, a lot of beautiful monsters in the feeling world.
- There are triggers and our reactions to them. There are two types of response: feeling-based reactions, which are emotions, and cognitive reactions, which are thoughts.
- If there is some woundedness within a beautiful monster, we need to be cautious with using any method. If it's not wounded, if it's just a blockage, then using a process can be very helpful.
- One day our minds and our feelings will become good friends. Then our monsters will be smiling, and we will stop hammering them.

- Artificial kindness will not work.
- In the beginning, be there fully. Handshake means connecting with feelings and staying with them. It means stopping the reaction.
- Being there requires some guts and a willingness to suffer, like a good friend.
- When issues start to show themselves, that's great! How long will we run away from them? How long will we pretend that there is no problem?
- Cognitive awareness slowly induces feeling awareness. Feeling awareness feels feelings.
- Invite knowing and awareness to be aware of the feelings. Through that, you will feel the feelings, not only be cognitively aware of them. Then the feeling world can transform.
- We are not inviting issues to come up in the sense of urging, but we are welcoming them.

EXERCISES

- Contemplate the two types of reaction, emotions, and thoughts. Watch them happen.
- Detect whether numbness is lingering in the feeling world. Is it continuously there? Or does it come and go, like a shawl that covers us when we feel cold and exposed? Explore any sense of hiding at the surface of the feeling world.
- Contemplate having guts, being willing to suffer for a good friend. Generate that same courage, the same willingness to suffer for your spiritual growth.
- Practice just being honest with feelings. Practice welcoming whatever comes up.

DAILY CONTEMPLATIONS

- We are so capable of hiding
- Artificial kindness will not work
- Being requires some guts
- Be willing to suffer
- How long will we pretend there is no problem?

REACTIONS

QUESTIONS

- What is the relationship between wounding and our reactions to it?
- What happens when we stop reacting?



KEY POINTS

- Both of our hands are connected to the same body. The wounded 'hand' and the storytelling 'hand' both need handshaking. It doesn't help if we shake someone else's hand, somewhere else. We need to shake our own hands, right here.
- Cognitive reactions are our thoughts and feeling reactions are our emotions. These two reactions are happening within the wound.
- With handshake, we usually believe that we are working with the wound, but indirectly we are working with the reaction.
- When we don't react, we don't feed the wound the wrong food. Not reacting feels a little crazy at first, but this is good for it.
- Our mind starts to say: "Oh, if I do nothing, it's better." Then we gain confidence and we begin to learn how just being helps. We gain some insight.
- The hardest thing is not to react.

- Anything we do with our monsters, any method we may apply, is a type of reaction. In the ultimate sense, anything we do is feeding our wounds.

EXERCISES

- This may be a bit of an odd practice at first, but use your hands as a puppeteer does. One puppet is the commenter, judge, storyteller, and the other is the wounded feeling. Use your imagination to have them relate to each other in different ways: avoiding, indulging, suppressing, pushing away, fixing. When you do this, feel how this affects your feelings and body.
- When you find yourself reacting to something, be with the reaction and don't go into the wounded feeling. Then shift and go into the wound without reservation. What is the difference in your experience? Can we separate the wounded feeling from a reaction to it?
- When you feel wounded, notice how some of our reactions may be cognitive and some may be emotional. Observe how they interact and shift in the wound, doing a reaction dance. If we don't react cognitively or emotionally, what happens to the wounded feeling?

DAILY CONTEMPLATIONS

- Reactions are sneaky
- Do nothing; confidence grows
- Hard to not react
- Methods are also reactions

WOUNDED OR NOT?

QUESTIONS

- Are all beautiful monsters wounded?
- Is it okay, in the back of our minds, to have the wish to open and liberate?



KEY POINTS

- All beautiful monsters — all habitual patterns — are not wounded. Some are and some are not.
- The wounded ones, until they heal, are not ready to listen.
- Some habits are not wounded. With these we can have a conversation and they can understand.
- For the wounded ones, the only thing we can offer is to be with them --fully and honestly be with them on the emotional level.
- It's okay to have the understanding in the back of the mind that "I am handshaking, and the wound will open up". But at the moment of the handshake, we have no agenda. We have no tricks. We are not playing games or pretending.
- The time for playing fake games is over.
- Now it's time for intelligent honesty. In the background of our minds, of course, we want to liberate, and we should be honest about that.

- When we practice without resistance or resentment, then we honestly meet
- To be, we have to learn to die into our feelings. The practice is not like, “I’m going to die into the feeling, and then you will open, right?” This will not work. That way of practicing is still carrying an expectation and trying to use a method to let something go. That’s too strong.

EXERCISES

- Contemplate how some monsters and habits are wounded, and some are not. Try to sense which of your ‘main monsters’ are wounded and which are not. With patterns that are wounded, practice fully meeting them, just dying into them without resistance.
- Notice the intention to liberate in the back of the mind. Notice if it’s too strong and if it’s affecting your handshake practice. If so, try to relax it and practice without so much expectation.

DAILY CONTEMPLATIONS

- All beautiful monsters are not wounded
- Have a conversation with unwounded habits
- The time for playing fake games is over
- Practice without resistance
- Die into the feeling

NUMB AND TIGHT

QUESTIONS

- What do we do with numbness or tightness?
- Is handshake an antidote?



KEY POINTS

- Maybe we feel numb. If so, be aware of numbness. Or perhaps we feel tight or blissful. Then, likewise, be mindful of tightness or bliss. Just be aware, don't do anything with it.
- Notice any sensations of physical tension, including neck pain, tightness in the eyes, shoulders, heart, etc. Whatever pops up, let it come in.
- The feelings need to express themselves because they've been suppressed for so many years.
- We say to our feelings, "You can come. Do whatever you want."
- Don't fight with feelings. Don't look for particular areas, special places inside, which only have the feelings we like.
- Try not to improve. Try not to suppress. Just relax and wait.
- This is mindfulness of body and mindfulness of feelings.

- Don't run away from feelings. Be with the feelings without judging. We need some guts not to judge.
- The difference between being and indulging is a fine line.
- Being should not be a method nor an antidote. There is no antidote.
- Don't wish the tightness to go away. The tightness needs kindness.
- Kindness is non-judging.

EXERCISES

- Explore the feeling world for numbness, tightness, and bliss. Lean into whichever feelings are present so that they saturate awareness, and you feel fully immersed in them. Allow awareness to embrace them without trying to improve anything or suppress anything.
- Consider whether you have some feelings or emotions that have been suppressed for a long time. Cultivate an intention to let them be free.
- Contemplate the value and wisdom of waiting. Reflect on situations where waiting or pausing allowed something good to happen. Maybe a better solution appeared, a misunderstanding cleared up, or a disaster was averted. Internalize this "pausing" principle to the feeling world. If we give our feelings and emotions this gift, maybe some unexpectedly good things might happen too.
- We often fall into the habit of judging one thing after another. We judge other people and our thoughts and emotions. Here Rinpoche is talking about the guts not to judge our feelings and emotions. Contemplate the relationship between the courage not to judge our inner world and the courage not to judge the outer world. Practice resting in the space of non-judging.

DAILY CONTEMPLATIONS

- Feelings need to express themselves
- Don't run away from feelings — be with them
- It takes guts not to judge
- Don't wish numbness or tightness to go away
- The kindness is non-judging
- Being is not a method or an antidote

FEELING AWARENESS

QUESTIONS

- Is there a value to waiting in handshake practice?
- What do we do if the mind doesn't like to handshake?



KEY POINTS

- Bring awareness to what's happening in the feeling world, stay there, and wait. Handshake practice is the beginning of the meeting between the cognitive mind and the feeling world.
- Just keep meeting. Any feeling is excellent as long as a meeting happens. It might be a physical feeling, an emotional sense, a subtle body feeling. It could be constructive or destructive. It doesn't matter what kind of feeling it is. All we need to do is meet it, connect to it, feel it, be aware of it, and stay with it, again and again.
- Handshake needs to be very friendly but without a big agenda. Almost just saying "hi," but not, "Where are you from? Why are you here? What are you doing?"
- The mind hand is shaking the feeling hand. But the mind's hand has no agenda other than to meet, to connect. From the feeling hand, we don't know; it might not like to shake; it might like it a lot. But this doesn't matter. Whatever comes

from the feeling hand, we shake — we give our hand and be there. This is how to have a warm meeting.

EXERCISES

- Practice connecting to the feeling world and just waiting. Practice noticing different types of feelings — physical, emotional, subtle body, constructive, and destructive. Imagine the feeling world to be like a wildlife park and the mind to be on safari, beholding many interesting and beautiful monsters.
- Cultivate a warm and friendly attitude with your feelings. Imagine a tough meeting at work, with family members, friends or the public. Feel the tension before, during, and after the experience. Then imagine a warm meeting with an old and trusted friend. Practice relaxing and having a friendly meeting with your feeling world, your old but perhaps misunderstood friends.

DAILY CONTEMPLATIONS

- Meet again and again
- Handshake has no agenda but to connect
- Any feeling is fine
- Have a warm meeting

BEING HANDSHAKE

QUESTIONS

- Why is suppressing not an effective strategy?
- Can our beautiful monsters become our friends?



KEY POINTS

- Handshake is not a method; it is just being. We are not deliberately bringing anything into experience. We are simply with what's there.
- Handshake does not involve a 'heavy hand' squeezing, pushing down, or covering over a wounded emotion.
- Feelings want to open up. Not letting them open is unkind.
- Many people suppress, which is called a defense mechanism. Suppressing will keep things down for a while, but one day your suppression gets exhausted, and then things get scary.
- When handshake becomes a method trying to do something, be aware of that tendency and relax.
- The wounded feeling will beat you. Just wait and be kind, like holding an angry child. It's almost like we welcome the beating from the emotion. Then it will slowly open up.

- Handshake is not running away nor engaging a special method to impose our will. All of that is escaping.
- We have to walk through the main door no matter what. If we go through a side door, we might feel temporarily okay, but not in a profound way.
- We have to handshake many, many beautiful monsters. One day all of them will trust us and be our friends.
- For the first time, we will experience harmony between mind and feelings.
- Beautiful monsters can also find their nature of openness and kindness. The "doer" relaxes. The "I" also relaxes. Through this relaxation, everything works beautifully — fluidity happens. Harmony starts between the mind and body.

EXERCISES

- Notice when your handshake practice feels like a heavy hand pushing down on feelings and emotions. Try pushing down slowly but persistently on something like a book or a cushion. Feel the pressure and ask yourself if this is how you are handshaking. What kinds of situations and emotions trigger these habits?
- What comes up for you when Rinpoche says, “One day all the beautiful monsters will be our friends”?
- Martin Luther King Jr. famously taught groups of young civil rights activists on how to take a beating. Several trainees later wrote that this training was the most profound experience of their protesting days because it taught them how to face their fears. Some even commented that conquering their fear was the real liberation from oppression, which was the internalized bondage of fear. Contemplate the courage, wisdom, and dignity of these civil rights activists, and what a profound lesson it was to learn how to take a beating. Rinpoche says we should welcome a beating from the emotions. Are we willing to do that? Practice mustering an attitude of welcoming a beating.

DAILY CONTEMPLATIONS

- Feelings naturally want to open
- Wounded feelings may beat us at first
- Walk through the main door no matter what
- Beautiful monsters will be our friends
- Harmonize mind and feelings

NO TECHNIQUES

QUESTIONS

- Should we be the manager of our experience?
- What is the root of our beautiful monsters?



KEY POINTS

- Don't use any particular technique. Just be aware of the body and find the feelings. It doesn't matter what kind of feelings. They might be exciting or might be boring, but it doesn't matter.
- Be in the feelings. Don't try to be outside of them. Our emotions are exhausted from being judged by the mind.
- Sometimes, if you can't find any feeling, be in the absence of feeling.
- If we are still trying to determine what we will experience, we are still the driver, the manager. Relax the manager. Relax the desire to manage.
- The object of awareness keeps changing. The content of experience keeps changing, but awareness, knowing, and being don't change. We might be aware of feeling hot and then aware of cold, but it's the same awareness that knows both.

- We might still be holding onto a method of practice and scared to connect directly with our feelings.
- Just wait — there is no need to apply any special Buddhist technique yet. And trust, not to a method, but to the beautiful monsters themselves.
- Don't turn emotions into enemies. Non-judging is the very core of kindness.
- Underneath our beautiful monsters are some clinging and subtle fear. Go to the root and handshake those things also.

EXERCISES

- Practice relaxing the manager and letting experience arise freely on its own. Feel the difference between this way of being and anxiously over-controlling some situation.
- Can you distinguish between the objects of awareness and awareness itself? Practice noticing this difference.
- Are you clinging to a technique? Perhaps you've practiced specific techniques of meditation or inquiry before, and feel comfortable and safe using them. Notice this. Do you feel afraid to connect directly with the feelings? Practice letting go of any technique and just being aware.
- Look underneath the beautiful monsters for their root and see what's there. Is there anything there? Perhaps you might notice a subtle clinging and fear. Try to smile and handshake those.

DAILY CONTEMPLATIONS

- Feelings become exhausted
- Relax the manager
- Don't be afraid to connect
- Trust the beautiful monsters
- Emotions are not enemies
- Go to the root

LET THOUGHTS BE

QUESTIONS

- How do we relate to “pop-up” thoughts?
- What is the experience of fundamental clarity?



KEY POINTS

- If you feel some tightness in your lower back, bring your mind there and say, "Hi."
- Don't hold any hope that by doing this practice, you will get better. Then you already have a secret agenda.
- If some thought comes naturally, don't judge it. We need thinking sometimes, but not always.
- Everything is allowed. Allowing is a potent practice.
- If sadness pops up, then notice that.
- If thoughts come up, we notice them, but here we are not mainly focusing on thoughts. The emphasis is on mindfulness of feeling, mindfulness of the body.
- We need a very light kind of awareness in unity with fundamental clarity.
- When awareness is aware of cognizance (essential clarity), judgment naturally subsides. That fundamental clarity is one of the homes of the mind.

EXERCISES

- Notice if there is a secret agenda. Try to relax and let go of any hidden agendas.
- Contemplate how allowing is a powerful practice. Try to cultivate an attitude of merely allowing everything to unfold.
- Notice if there is seriousness. Be playful with your seriousness. Act like Charlie Chaplin or the Marx brothers, mimicking someone who takes himself too seriously. Shake your head and smile at yourself. Make it a point to relax and let go of seriousness.

DAILY CONTEMPLATIONS

- Release the secret agenda of getting better
- Everything is allowed
- No need to be too serious
- We need a light kind of awareness
- Basic clarity is one of the homes of the mind

HANDSHAKE PRACTICE

QUESTION

- How do you rest within raw feelings?



KEY POINTS

- Drop the thinking mind into the body and be aware of the body.
- Feel your body and subtle body.
- Relax, and whatever is there, be merely aware of it: sensations, emotions, etc.
- Relax **WITHIN** the feeling. Relaxation is not a method.
- Be honest with your feelings, and don't try to change them.
- Be with your feelings and with whatever arises: pleasant, pain, numbness, feeling of no feeling. Just be aware and relax—no need to control anything.
- Something may open or not. If so, let it open by itself and stay within this openness.
- If old hard feelings arise, this is fine. Please don't run away from them.
- Being honest is the kindness to the feelings.
- Don't apply any techniques or methods. No antidotes.
- Stay with the raw feeling, whatever it is. Relax both in pleasant and unpleasant feelings.

- If you experience a restless or edgy quality, be aware of this and be kind to it. Not judging.
- Non-judging is kindness. Be with whatever arises. Don't hide into dharma.
- Just meet raw feelings, emotions, and monsters.
- Wait, no rushing, and it's okay to suffer a little bit. Willingness to suffer is also kindness.
- Don't suppress the experience.
- Allowing is kindness. Relax within whatever arises.
- Don't fight with this. This is an authentic way of being with feelings.
- Your monsters want to know your authenticity.
- Relax means not pushing away or blocking.
- Naturally, some okay-ness may appear. No big deal. It's your nature, so why not?
- Drop thinking, but if thoughts continue to come up, then handshake them and forget about feelings for the time being.
- The commenting mind likes to chat about feelings, monsters. Just be aware of this mind.
- Or if clarity happens, then be aware of it and relax.
- We are not looking for a monster or experience to arise, but if it does, then stay with it and let it change by itself.
- This is the beginning of freeing, opening.
- Handshake has four aspects: don't suppress, indulge, run away, or apply an antidote or method. This is fully being.
- When we apply an antidote, and thought comes, then handshake this.
- Just be with what is there.
- To transform, we have to meet or connect. No hiding.

(AT THIS POINT RINPOCHE DOES A DEMONSTRATION FOR THE NEXT FEW MINUTES)

EXERCISE

- Practice with this important teaching as much as you can to feel what Rinpoche means by handshake practice.

DAILY CONTEMPLATIONS

- Being honest is kindness
- Non-judging is kindness
- Not hiding
- Meet raw feelings.
- Let feelings open naturally