## 'Deepening Our Connections'

### An Edited Excerpt From Oral Teachings Given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, July 2009

Today marks the last day of our retreat, and the question arises: How can you take what you have gained — all of your experiences and realizations — and integrate it into your daily life? Allowing these experiences to take root and grow requires challenging your old, habitual patterns.

One way to do this is through reinforcing your informal and formal meditation practice. I strongly recommend engaging in formal meditation practice every day. A very common phrase we recite is "I don't have time." But is this really true? Just being aware that we may have adopted that mantra is a key element of the integration process. And then also remembering that it is just not true — we really do have time. It's just a question of making meditation a priority.

If the mantra "I don't have time" is very strong, then please try to remember to say it in reverse ways, such as "I don't have time to worry!" or "I don't have time to suffer!" "I really don't have time for these negative thoughts and activities; I'll just move on and start living!"

We all know we have time, even though we say we don't. We have no trouble finding the time to worry! In fact, it's not uncommon that the worry is there upon first waking up in the morning. Any moment in your day could be used for practicing worry — you can have one foot in your car, the other foot on the pavement, your arms full of shopping bags, and yet amid all this movement you'll still find time to worry. In that very hectic moment, you can still worry, can't you? And yet in order to meditate — we feel we need the right time and the right space, our bedroom is not big enough, the living room couch has too much stuff on it — we find that every place is just not quite the right place to do it! We are used to making up incredible stories, aren't we? So a key element in integrating our practice into our daily lives is to challenge those deluded stories of the mind and develop the ability to cut through them. We all know what I'm referring to here. The sad part, though, is that even knowing this, we don't change so easily.

Another thing that's very helpful for integrating our experiences into our daily life is having some sense of sangha, of the community of practitioners. For sure, those of you who are living near one of our retreat centers or who are volunteering in some capacity find that being actively involved ties us a little more closely to each other. Such involvement is not necessary, but you can feel its beneficial effect. It's one more reason to talk to each other, to meet with each other. These external activities can connect us back to the teachings and to a deeper part of ourselves.

Some people may not feel this kind of connection is necessary. They may live in an area where there are no other sangha members, and may feel, "I can practice in the morning after I wake up, I can practice before I go to sleep at night, I integrate the experiences and insights from the retreat well back into my life, and sangha is fully present in that experience, their external presence is not so necessary for me." If that is the case, then you are free from needing it. If that is not the case, then you have to do something different, right?

If there are no sangha members nearby, then the Internet is one possible way to maintain closeness. Another way is to create a local sangha. When I first arrived in America, I did not have a sangha, and so we have created a little sangha here at Serenity Ridge and Ligmincha Institute, and we have created a little global sangha. If I managed to create a little sangha out of nothing, I'm sure everyone can do it. It can help to feel the support of others in maintaining a group practice. Sangha can also be there to offer help and prayers when someone is going through a health challenge or loses their job. Activities like these build community, and the social circle can further support integrating one's meditation practice into all of one's life. We really need to do that!