

Struggle  
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Note: The PowerPoints mentioned in this dharma talk can be found on-line on the LHM website: <http://www.lihuehongwanjimission.com/lay-message/>

I started to call my talk today “Miscellaneous” because my mind was full of so many ideas that I couldn’t seem to pull together. Then I realized that my ideas were centered on a theme of “struggle.” Struggle happens in our lives routinely; it is the 1st of the 4 Noble Truths, that life is suffering. Struggles happen when we are trying to accomplish a task or trying to get out of something. But again, work is a part of life; it is all in how we see the effort.

There is a PowerPoint that Rev. Bruce sent to me a few months ago about the struggles of becoming a butterfly which puts struggles into a different perspective. Life has struggles, some small and some much larger. We all have difficulties; they can be positive if we allow them to be. We cannot and should not run from struggles, they make us who we are and can make us stronger through the strivings. Be careful, I’m not talking about the drama that can pop up in our lives. Drama is not struggle, it simply is a spectacle. Think of children as they are growing and learning. What if we always step in and do for our children, whether it is learning to put on a jacket at age 2 or learning to do chores? If we don’t allow our children, or our grandchildren, to learn how to put on their own jacket, with all of the struggle it entails, we deprive them of the satisfaction of a job well done. I learned in education that when we consistently do something for another person that they are capable of doing on their own or even learning how to do, we are telling them that they are unskilled and unqualified. We do what we do out of love but we need to reflect on the lessons we are teaching. I’m not talking about helping out, about doing a favor for another person. That is called Dana and that is different. I am speaking to the everyday simple struggles that are important in life and learning.

Struggle seems to be a word, a concept that we want to avoid. As we saw in the program about the butterfly, we can understand that effort and struggle are actually a part of life. We want security instead of work, comfort instead of struggle. Comfortable is good, unless it makes us resistant to change and insistent on life being set in stone, never changing. Life is about changes and about the struggles that come our way. Don’t run from the struggles, don’t hide from the problems. They create and define who we are. Remember how important struggles are to the butterfly’s formation. Don’t run away from difficulties, but as always, remember to breathe.

Another struggle we have, or at least I have, is remembering what I have already learned. It is easy to remember the general basics but remembering the details is often fuzzy, at least to me. Of course the more details there are, the worse my memory. Think of Buddhism . . . . it is relatively easy to remember the 4 Noble Truths: 1. Life is suffering, it’s a bumpy road; 2. the cause of suffering is our own desires and wants; 3.

there is a way to end the suffering, to smooth out the bumpy road; 4. the way to end the suffering is to follow the 8-Fold Path. Now comes the tricky part. We all know about the 8-Fold Path, we know it gives us the guidelines for living our lives in the best way possible, but if anyone would ask me what all of them are, I would be lost. I might get a few of them but not all of them and not in any sort of order. How many of us could name all of the 8 Fold Path, in order? Hold up your hands. Please notice that my hand is not raised. I couldn't do it. But I found a fun way to remember. It is called "VTSCLEMM." I found this on the internet. It is from Rev. Harry Bridge from Oakland Buddhist Church. "VTSCLEMM" is a mnemonic device & a way of turning a list into an easy-to-remember word or sentence to help trigger our memories when we want to remember something important. I don't know if they still do it this way, but does anybody remember how they taught us to remember the lines on a musical scale? Every, Good, Boy, Does, Fine. When trying to memorize the planets in order from the sun, try "My Very Elegant Mother Just Served Us Nine Pizzas" or "My Vicious Elephant Makes Jelly Secretly Under Neil's Pillow." VTSCLEMM is another mnemonic: Views, Thoughts, Speech, Conduct, Livelihood, Effort, Mindfulness and Meditation. It's just a fun and different way to look at and remember the 8 Fold Path. Personally, I am always in favor of any learning tricks I can find to help me remember those things I really want to remember.

To end, there is a slide show I found online. The name of the slideshow intrigued me because it was "Life in 14 Words." ( [www.launchyourgenius.com](http://www.launchyourgenius.com) ) What? How can you talk about life in 14 words? But, think about these words and how they connect to our lives: Love, Appreciate, Connect, Be, Happy, Give, Kind, Sad, Play, Angry, Have, Do, Create, Peace. Remember, the theme for 2014 is "Path of Entrusting: Share Peace." Remember to share peace with people you know and also with those who are strangers. Above all, share peace with yourself.