You need others every single day, every single moment of your life. It's thanks to others and their presence and effort that you have the things you need to continue, and that you have friendship and love and meaning in your life. Without others you have nothing. You may think, "Well, yes, but I work and I make money, and I pay for everything. So they are not taking care of me, it's my money that takes cares of me. Even the highways and commuter trains: I pay my taxes." But suppose you have a lot of money and there is no one else in the world but you, you and your gigantic pile of money. How would you survive? Could you eat the money? Could you make a house for yourself inside the money? The money is only valuable because others exist. Money makes no sense without others. Its value exists because others exist.

But our dependence on others runs even deeper than this. Where does the person we take ourselves to be come from in the first place? Apart from our parents' genes and their support and care, and society and all it produces for us, there's the whole network of conditions and circumstances that intimately makes us what we are. How about our thought and feeling? Where does it come from? Without words to think in, we don't think, we don't have anything like a sense of self as we understand it, and we don't have the emotions and feelings that are shaped and defined by our words. Did we invent this language that constitutes ourselves? No, it is the product of untold numbers of speakers over un-

told numbers of generations. Without the myriad circumstances that provided us the opportunities for education, for speech, for knowledge, for work, we wouldn't be here as we are. And without all the people in our lives whom we know and who know us and love us and create complications for us and infuriate us, we would have nothing to think about, we would be very bored. More than bored: without others our consciousness would be shattered by loneliness.

So it is literally the case that there could not be what we call a person without other people. We can say "person" as if there could be such an autonomous thing, but in fact there is no such thing. There is no such thing as a person. There are only persons who have cocreated one another over the long history of our species. The idea of an independent, isolated, atomized person is impossible. And here we are not only speaking of our needing others practically. We are talking about our inmost sense of identity. Our consciousness of ourselves is never independent of others.

This is what nonself or emptiness means in Buddhist teaching: that there is no such thing as an isolated individual. Though we can say there is, and though we might think there is, and though many of our thoughts and motivations seem to be based on this idea, in fact it is an erroneous idea. Literally every thought in our minds, every emotion that we feel,

every word that comes out of our mouth, every material sustenance that we need to get through the day, comes through the kindness of and the interaction with others. And not only other people but nonhumans too, literally the whole of the earth, the soil, the sky, the trees, the air we breathe, the water we drink. We not only depend on all of this, we are all of it and it is us. This is no theory, no poetic religious teaching. It is simply the bald fact of the matter.

So to practice **Be grateful to everyone** is to train in this profound understanding. It is to cultivate every day this sense of gratitude, the happiest of all attitudes. Unhappiness and gratitude simply cannot exist in the same moment. If you feel grateful, you are a happy person. If you feel grateful for what is possible for you in this moment, no matter what your challenges are, grateful, first, that you are alive at all, that you can think, that you can feel, that you can stand, sit, walk, talk—if you feel grateful, you are happy and you maximize your chances for well-being and for sharing happiness with others.

These first three slogans, **Turn all mishaps into the path, Drive all blames into one,** and **Be grateful to everyone,** are relative bodhicitta slogans. That is, slogans that depend on a conventional understanding of beings as we usually conceive of them, self and other, you and I, them and us. The three go together: grateful to everyone and everything, we are willing to acknowledge whatever happens as an opportunity, which we accept with complete responsibility and receive with joy.