

Sila discussions:

(1) Your father, in an advanced state of dementia, has a live-in aide who enables him to stay in his own home. He adamantly insists that the aide should be happy to have a place to live and she should very definitely not be paid a salary. He has been rude to her over this and, upon recently learning that you and your siblings are secretly paying her, he fired her and insisted that she leave his house. You and your siblings are thinking of lying to your father and say that the aide has agreed to work without salary and just for room and board.

With the dharma teachings in mind, what is wholesome speech in this case?

(2) You are a volunteer manager of a meditation retreat at a center that is new to you. Tonight, you are helping out in the kitchen. You find, to your dismay, that someone has left open, sticky flypaper in the pantry and a tiny mouse has become stuck on it. You have tried to free the mouse, but it seems impossible as you have ended up breaking two of the mouse's legs.

With the dharma teachings in mind, how might you handle this?

(3) You work in a large retail setting in a southern city with colleagues of diverse race, culture, sexual orientation and religious belief. You all get along well; you respect your co-workers, and they respect you. The company's motto is "We make customers happy." Because you are white, other white customers sometimes think that you are safe place for their coded racist, sexist or homophobic remarks. Yesterday, a customer remarked to you that they had to move to a city up north because, "when you have a very pale, blond, blue-eyed daughter, you have to get her out of [our diversely populated city], if you know what I mean."

With the dharma teachings in mind, how might you handle this?

(4) You just divorced your partner of 20 years. You are proud of yourself for finally getting out of that relationship which, over time, grew more and more abusive, unpredictably verbally violent and terrifying. No one outside your family knew about this. Your ex-partner is in a new relationship. You are considering contacting their new partner to warn them. You know there are a hundred reasons not to contact this person (intruding in the relationship, they are unlikely to believe you, etc.), but you wonder if your former partner's abusive tendencies are enough of a reason to try.

With the dharma teachings in mind, how might you handle this?

(5) Your uncle was contacted via a DNA site by a grown daughter he has not known that he had. He sent her a warm letter welcoming her into his life. He told your father, his

brother, immediately about her, but not his own two adult daughters, because he said that he wanted to meet his new daughter face-to-face first. You inadvertently came upon the site and told your uncle what you had found. He asked you not to meet her in person until he himself had, but you were determined and you went ahead and contacted her and had a great lunch with her anyway. You also told your six cousins about her because you feel so strongly that they have a right to know.

Your uncle has since told his own daughters and met his new daughter but he is now angry with you for going against his wishes. You wonder, what's the big deal? Your own father agrees with you that your lunch with her was fine and now he and his brother are estranged over this.

With the dharma teachings in mind, how might you handle this?

(6) You have a very strong crush on a work colleague with whom you work very closely. You are both married. The colleague has a wonderful sense of humor which resonates with you. It is a delight to laugh a lot and you are getting very attached. You are guessing that this is likely a result of your home front not feeling comfortable right now. You have a new baby at home and your spouse has become crabby and irritable. You no longer look forward to your evenings together and your affections are getting shredded. You want a safe haven, and you are not even liking your spouse these days. You fantasize about your work colleague a lot.

With the dharma teachings in mind, how might you handle this?

(7) When you were a child, you were molested by your brother, who was then in his late teens. Now you are close to his adult children, though estranged from him. They know nothing about this history, nor will you ever tell them while your brother is alive; you imagine that it would tear the family apart.

You occasionally think, however, that this knowledge would be something you would like to have if you were his child. You imagine asking his children if they would like to know something troubling about their father once you and he are both gone. If they all said yes, you could put the information in a letter and leave it with your lawyer and your will. If they said no, you wouldn't write a letter.

You imagine that they might have vague memories of something similar that happened to them? Maybe your knowledge would be beneficial to them in seeking help. Your nieces and nephews, now in their 40s and 50s, would have the choice of knowing.

With the dharma teachings in mind, how might you handle this?

(8) You live alone and have a very demanding job. At the end of the day, you like to plop down at home with a glass of wine while you read the day's news and check social media. Sometimes you just skip dinner.

With the dharma teachings in mind, what is a wholesome behavior in this situation?

(9) A good friend just told you that she and her husband, who together earn around \$500,000, asked their son's stepmother to declare him on her taxes for the last two years

so that he could get more financial aid for college. Their son doesn't live with the stepmother and she provides no support. Your friend is delighted that, because of this, their son is now getting a full grant to a very expensive private college.

You are taking a trip with your friend in a few weeks, but you are pretty angry about this and you don't know how or if you can speak to her about this.

With the dharma teachings in mind, what is a wholesome response in this situation?

(10) One of your favorite meditation teachers has just written a book which you would love to read. Though they seldom teach publicly anymore, as one of their long time students, you also have been invited to attend a mediation retreat they will be leading next fall at Southern Dharma Retreat Center, a 7 hour drive away in Hot Springs, NC. Your partner wants you to go and to make this into a family vacation. After the retreat, your partner could bring the children and drive to meet you for a week of rest and family adventure at an outdoor cabin in the mountains near Asheville.

With the dharma teachings in mind, what is a wholesome response in this situation?