



To the Shambhala Community,

In a state of complete heartbreak, I write to you, humble, embarrassed, and thoroughly apologetic for disappointing you. I feel a tremendous amount of sorrow for the pain, confusion, and anger that our sangha is experiencing. I accept accountability for this pain, and want to express my commitment to personal growth.

I fully support a third-party investigator being hired to look into claims of sexual misconduct in the Shambhala community. I feel that I must, at this time, step back from my administrative and teaching responsibilities as a leader of Shambhala to allow space for the investigation to occur.

It is clear to me that I have much more learning to do. I am committed to engaging with women and others in our community who have felt marginalized, beginning this week. I will be using this time of self-reflection to deeply listen and to better understand how the dynamics of power, gender, and my actions have affected others.

I know that some of what you are hearing may be surprising and shocking for those of you who have only known me as a teacher. I wish to share with all of you some of the challenges that I have gone through. None of this is to give an excuse for my actions, but I do wish to be open with you about my journey as a human, and give some history and context to my life and behavior.

After the passing of my father, I took on the leadership role of Shambhala at a young age, followed by my enthronement in 1995. During this period, I struggled to find my way, and fumbled with unhealthy power dynamics and alcohol. I failed to recognize the pain and confusion I was creating.

Noticing this, a group of senior students came to me deeply concerned about the way I was drinking, and it was then that I began to realize how my actions were impacting others, and affecting my ability to lead in a genuine way. At that point, I realized that I needed to change my lifestyle. Again, I am not saying that this is an excuse.

In the years following this feedback, I cut back my drinking, began running and developed a more healthy lifestyle, physically and spiritually. I committed myself to deepening my own practice and teaching path. In 2005, I met and married my wife, the Sakyong Wangmo. We established our home and began a family together. She has been a teacher and partner, helping me to open my heart in a healthy way.

Since then, I have consciously worked on improving my relationship to alcohol as well as trying to improve my general behavior and my relationship to others as a teacher and as a person. Personal development and learning is a lifelong process and I know that I must continuously apply myself and hear the feedback that I am getting. I feel tremendous regret and sadness, and I commit myself to continuing this healing.

Our teachings advise that we do not give up on ourselves or on each other. I am realizing that I have much to learn and am committed to that process. I hope that by my doing this, our Shambhala community and organization can evolve, and become a true place of kindness, respect, and dignity. I am here for you, and am thinking of you always.

With love,

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche