

Laozi University Common Core

The Way of Awakening: Life Wisdom from the Dao De Jing

(Module One)

Format: 9-week online course (9 chapters per week)

Session Structure:

- Guided lectures
 - Meditation/mindfulness practices
 - Reflective writing exercises
 - Interactive dialogues ("Dao in Dialogue" sharing sessions)
 - Practical life challenges
 - Classic verse calligraphy for centering
 - Nature observation and body-awareness practices
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Chapter 1: The Unspeakable Dao — Returning to the Source

Core Concept: *"The Dao that can be spoken is not the eternal Dao."*

Key Themes: Source, Nameless vs. Named, Intuition, Formless Dao

Practice Focus: Releasing the need to "understand," observing the formless.

Exercises:

- Meditation: Breath-focused observation of "emptiness."
 - Writing: *"Who am I beyond words?"*
 - Dialogue: Sharing experiences of encountering the unknowable.
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Chapter 2: Harmony in Duality — Transcending Binary Thinking

Core Concept: *"Beauty and ugliness arise together; good and evil coexist."*

Key Themes: Non-dual thinking, Wuwei (non-action), flowing with nature.

Practice Focus: Embracing opposites; cultivating flexible perspectives.

Exercises:

- Self-awareness: Track "black-and-white" language in daily speech.
 - Role-play: Finding common ground in conflicts.
 - Nature observation: Study symbiotic relationships in ecosystems.
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Chapter 3: Reducing Desires, Returning to Authenticity

Core Concept: *"Do not exalt the wise, nor hoard rare goods, nor flaunt desires."*

Key Themes: Desire, ego, competition, humility.

Practice Focus: Cultivating inner stability vs. external comparison.

Exercises:

- Decluttering challenge: Discard one non-essential item daily.
 - Mindfulness: Journal moments of greed; meditate on *"filling the belly, emptying the mind."*
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Chapter 4: The Power of Emptiness — Inner Space and Softness

Core Concept: *"The Dao is an empty vessel, yet inexhaustibly useful."*

Key Themes: Emptiness, creativity, receptivity.

Practice Focus: Harnessing creativity through spacious awareness.

Exercises:

- Visualization: Observe mental clutter as "sand in a jar."
 - "Empty Cup" meditation: Release preconceptions before learning.
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Chapter 5: The Selfless Cosmos — Heaven's Vastness, Earth's Calm

Core Concept: *"Heaven and Earth are impartial; the sage is without selfishness."*

Key Themes: Emotional detachment, natural equality, clarity.

Practice Focus: Releasing emotional turbulence for equanimity.

Exercises:

- Emotional journaling + mindful breathing.
 - Group discussion: *"Is selflessness coldness?"*
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Chapter 6: The Mysterious Feminine — Connecting to Life's Source

Core Concept: *"The valley spirit never dies; it is the primal feminine."*

Key Themes: Nurturing, rebirth, inner roots.

Practice Focus: Reconnecting to the body's life force.

Exercises:

- Meditation: Visualize a "womb-like" safety in the lower abdomen.
 - Writing: *"How do I nourish myself and others?"*
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Chapter 7: Selflessness as Immortality — Serving to Fulfill

Core Concept: *"Heaven and Earth endure because they do not live for themselves."*

Key Themes: Humility, altruism, timelessness.

Practice Focus: Redefining self-worth through service.

Exercises:

- Reflection: *"Why do I seek to be 'useful'?"*
 - Challenge: Perform one day of anonymous acts of kindness.
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Chapter 8: The Wisdom of Water — Softness Conquers All

Core Concept: *"The highest good is like water, benefiting all without contention."*

Key Themes: Adaptability, humility, resilience.

Practice Focus: Embodying water-like flexibility.

Exercises:

- Water meditation: Visualize flowing around obstacles.
 - Observation: Identify "water-like" individuals in daily life.
 - Relationship practice: Withdraw once to create space.
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Chapter 9: Knowing When to Stop — The Art of Release

Core Concept: *"To hold until full is 不如 stopping in time."*

Key Themes: Moderation, letting go, simplicity.

Practice Focus: Recognizing excess and embracing "enough."

Exercises:

- Life experiment: Practice "blank space" (silence, minimalism).
 - Reflection: Journal patterns of overcommitment.
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Final Note: Each chapter includes a *"Dao in Dialogue"* session for shared insights and a weekly calligraphy practice with a key verse.