

DIY Happiness

If not now, then when?

"Freedom is not given to us by anyone; we have to cultivate it ourselves. It is a daily practice... No one can prevent you from being aware of each step you take or each breath in and breath out." ~Thich Nhat Hanh

Simple tips for living in the here and now

This booklet is developed in support of the Buddhist Conference 2554
- Creating Happiness in the Here and Now,
organised by Dharma In Action on 23 October 2010.



Published by

Text: Venerable Faxun, Poh Yong Hui

Graphic design: Niki Lim, dzenith-purestateofmine.blogspot.com

Sources used: Shen Shi'an, TheDailyEnlightenment.com

Venerable Thubten Chodron, thubtenchodron.org

For feedback and enquiries, contact info@dharmainaction.net

www.dharmainaction.net

Free Distribution

Terms of use: You may copy, reformat, reprint, republish and redistribute this work in any medium, as long as: (1) you make them available free of charge; and (2) you clearly indicate that any derivatives of this work (including translations) are derived from this source document.

Spiritual Practice in Daily Living

Spiritual practice can be in the small actions that we do everyday. The more we start these small habits of happiness, the more we can help ourselves to become a happier person at work and at home. We can make our environment a happier one, through small, achievable acts.

PRAYERS_{AND} CHANTING

Prayers are ways of guiding our thoughts and energy in a certain direction; they are a technique in helping us transform our mind. By repeatedly thinking of the meaning of what we are saying or reading, we train and familiarize ourselves in a way of regarding and relating to ourselves

and others. Thus for a person dedicated to developing his or her Buddha potential, prayers and the activities of daily life complement each other.

Some examples of prayers:

“May all sentient beings have happiness and the causes of happiness.”

“May I be able to go for a pilgrimage next year.”

We must bear in mind that we are not asking the Buddha to make things happen for us - rather, we are setting a goal and mindfully working towards it.

Hence, we should take concrete actions for this goal to be realised. For example, we will want to put in our leave application earlier and start saving up for the trip.

When prayers do not come true, how should we handle it? If you pray to a Buddha for a particular favour and it is not granted, you may feel disappointed or lose your faith.

From the Buddhist perspective, we understand causes and conditions. **In order for an action to happen, the necessary conditions must be present.** To go on a pilgrimage, you need leave from work, sufficient money and good health. There are conditions beyond your control – for example, a riot broke out at the pilgrimage site and the trip has to be cancelled. Faced with such a situation, we accept that the conditions are not there for the pilgrimage to happen.

Whether or not the prayers are realised, we accept the outcome. We do not need to become attached to it. **With a light heart, we simply accept that certain conditions are not there.**

Aspiration

The world's happiest people are truly concerned with the happiness of others. **They understand the suffering of others and can only be happy if others are, too.** It is not enough to seek one's own happiness, you have to help others. You may recite this verse as part of your daily practice, to remind yourself about helping yourself to help other people:

The Four Immeasurables (Aspiration for Universal Love)

May all sentient beings have happiness and its causes

May all sentient beings be free of suffering and its causes

May all sentient beings never be separated from sorrowless bliss

May all sentient beings be in equanimity, free of bias, attachment and anger

The practice of Buddhist repentance is not so much the asking for divine forgiveness. **It is the clear recognition of our unskilful actions done intentionally or unmindfully through our body, speech and mind.**

After recognising our faults, we make resolutions to be as mindful as we can, so as to never repeat them. In this sense, repentance is about forgiving oneself through expressing regret and turning over a new leaf, absolving oneself of unhealthy guilt while renewing determination to further avoid evil, do good and purify the mind with greater diligence.

Repentance should ideally be practised at the end of each day, as we try to recall best we can, any misdeeds we have done in the day. For repentance to be more effective, misdeeds should be recalled as specifically as possible, instead of vaguely generalising.

For example: **What went wrong?
How could I improve myself?**

Doing this practice daily reduces our repetitive mistakes as it increases our mindfulness the next day.

You may recite this verse:

For all the misdeeds I have done in the past,
Created by my body, speech and mind,
From beginningless greed, hatred and delusion,
I now know shame and repent them all.

Please visit moonpointer.com/new/2010/03/an-easy-gauge-of-your-good-evil for details

Repentance

do it
YOURSELF
do it
NOW

Create happiness for yourself in the here and now by following these simple steps

Morning Exercise

You may do it at home or on the way to work/school.
Yes, you can meditate on the bus or in the MRT.

Recite or mentally remind ourselves:

**"Today, may I not cause harm to anybody.
Today, may I try to be of service and
benefit to others."**

Meditate or Chant for 3 to 15 minutes

You may do relaxation meditation, or loving-kindness meditation.

(Refer to Appendix for meditation exercises)

You may chant the Buddha's name, or a mantra. Examples:

**Namo Buddha ya
Amitufo**

Om Mani Padme Hung

For those who are more ready, you may chant a Buddhist text, such as the Metta Sutta, the Four Immeasurables, etc.

When you enter the office/classroom,
gently generate this thought in your
mind: **"Today, I want to have a
kind heart towards others."**

When the telephone rings, instead of
rushing to pick it up, first think, **"May
I be of service to whomever is
on the line."** Then answer the phone.

In school, when walking to a class or
when we are nervous about a test or an
exam, we can recite to ourselves, **"May
I be well and happy. May I cope
positively."**

When you leave the office/school, gently
tell yourself that, **"I have put in my
best at work/school today.
Whatever happened, I will let
go for now and go home
happily."**

at Work / School

whenUPSET

When we are feeling angry, jealous or upset, we should be **aware** that we are getting upset, and try not to react immediately.

Take 1 to 2 minutes to calm down and re-orientate ourselves. We can take long, deep breaths, make a cup of tea, or walk out of the office for a short stroll. We can gently recite to ourselves, "May I be well and happy and gently let go of our negative emotions."

returning home from work/school

As you are reaching home, gently generate this thought,
“May my family and I be well and happy.
May I be more patient with my family
members. I will smile when I open the door.”

When we come home in the evening, instead of collapsing in front of the TV or on your bed, we can take 3 to 5 minutes to sit quietly by ourselves. **We can do deep breathing or relaxation meditation.** We can do this before or after showering, or while waiting for dinner.

atHome

beforeBED

We reflect about and come to terms with what happened during the day. We look back on our day and think, "**What went well today? Did I act with a kind heart?**"

Noticing the instances in which we acted kindly, we rejoice. We dedicate that merit, that positive potential, for the enlightenment of ourselves and others.

We may discover that we were angry, jealous, or greedy and we don't feel so good about what happened. We can "detox" emotionally, by forgiving ourselves and letting that negative energy go.

"I have caused some harm to others and to myself, may I be forgiven. May I continue to work hard at improving myself" Having done this repentance, our sleep will be peaceful.

Appendix 1: Relaxation Meditation

Choose a posture that you feel comfortable in (refer to Appendix 2)

Keep your body upright, stable, yet relaxed

Observe the inflow and outflow of your breath

When breathing in, be aware that you are breathing in

When breathing out, be aware that you are breathing out

You may mentally remind yourself to relax each time you breathe out

Do not control your breath, let it be natural

If you have problems with observing the inflow and outflow of the breath, you may choose to observe the rising and falling of your stomach

Place your palm on your abdomen and feel (focus) on the rising and falling of your abdomen

Appendix 2: Meditation Posture

Legs

Full lotus posture

Put your left foot on the right thigh, with sole facing upwards and your right foot on the left thigh, with sole facing upwards. This position is difficult to achieve, but the body could be trained to do so over time. This is the posture that provides the best support to the mind and body. However, it is not absolutely necessary.

Half lotus posture

Place one foot on the floor, the other foot on top of the opposite thigh.

If you are sitting on a round cushion, make sure you sit only on one-third of the cushion. This will help you to sit for a longer period of time without feeling uncomfortable, and reduce the numbness of the feet.

Arms

Place your right palm over the left palm, with thumbs touching each other. Rest both palms slightly below the navel. Keep your arms and shoulder relaxed.

Back

Keep your back straight, upright, yet relaxed

Eyes

Beginners

It is advisable for beginners to keep eyes fully closed. This will cut off all distractions

Experienced

It is recommended to keep your eyes half open, half closed, looking downwards

By having the eyes half open, it allows light to enter the body; having eyes fully closed may induce sleep

Jaw, Mouth and Tongue

Jaw and mouth should be relaxed and not clenched, lips slightly touching, and tongue resting lightly on the upper palate

Head

Upright and relaxed, not too far forward or chin held too high

Appendix 3: Loving-Kindness Meditation

Choose a meditation posture that you are comfortable with

Keep your body upright, well supported, yet relaxed

Keep your mind focused on your breathing; observe the inflow and outflow of your breath

Visualise that there is light emitting from the Buddha. Open your heart to receive this beam of light which is pure, soft and subtle, dispelling all your negative mental attitudes and emotions

Gently wish yourself:

May I be well and happy

May I be peaceful

May my pain be eased and wounds be healed

May my sorrows and regrets soften and dissipate

May my misdeeds be forgiven

May my worries and frustrations dispel off

May I be free from suffering

May I be joyful

May I open my heart and live happily

May I be at peace

May I dwell in deep, abiding peace

Generate this loving kindness to someone whom you love or have been kind to you – Picture their face in your mind and feel their presence. From the bottom of your heart, generate loving kindness towards this person, replacing “I” with “you”.

Now extend your loving kindness more broadly to the people living in your neighbourhood.

Extend your loving kindness further to encompass the nation and the world.

Extend your loving kindness to all beings

“May all beings be well and happy
May they be free of all suffering
May they live peacefully and happily.”

Finally, bring to mind your self. Focus on your breathing and end the meditation by wishing yourself well and happy.