

Introduction to Meditation Class 43 Homework

Homework

a. Consider this reflection from Alan Wallace: *Genuine Happiness*

If feelings aroused by sensory stimuli, thoughts, memories always arise relative to a context, then what constitutes genuine happiness? What is a true source of happiness?

A clear distinction can be drawn between mundane, hedonic happiness and genuine happiness. . . . In Buddhism, there are 8 mundane concerns: material acquisition & loss, sensual pleasure & pain, praise & blame, fame & defamation. All such mundane concerns arise due to sensory stimuli.

The Buddha described 3 sources of genuine happiness. The first is due to ethical blamelessness. This pertains not what you get from the world but to the quality of life & conduct that you bring to the world. If you know that you've done your very best not to injure people, your intent is to treat others decently, respectfully, & honestly, then there arises a sense of well being & blamelessness. The Buddha called this happiness 16 times more valuable than mundane happiness derived from sensory stimuli.

The 2nd dimension of genuine happiness & well being is one that arises through developing exceptional mental balance. . . . as in the practice of samadhi. When you achieve samadhi, with the deeply focused attention of shamatha, a sense of well being arises. Over extended periods of cultivating loving kindness, samadhi will arise increasingly spontaneously, with fewer people excluded. This will lead to a sense of well being that does not derive from the world but from the quality of awareness one brings to the world. Cultivating the qualities of the heart, emotional balance & attentional balance create the conditions leading to samadhi & sense of well being.

The third aspect of well being & happiness that arises from gaining insight into the nature of reality. The bliss of knowing reality - a sense of well being comes from knowing the truth.

As you go through your daily living observe your experiences of happiness. Which sources are mundane? Which sources are true?

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- b. *Give yourself a daily allowance of 5 minutes of relaxed “body breathing” either sitting or lying down. Body breathing is simply rotating your awareness through your body as you are aware of breathing. You can start with your feet and scan up or start with your head and scan down.*
- c. *Once your body is relaxed and your mind is calm, take some time to think about the most important benefits you’d like to realize from practice - your heart felt aspirations. Then let go of your questioning & begin stilling your mind.*
- d. *Practice 10-15 minutes of formal sitting meditation. Be guided by the themes we used in class: Intentionally settle your body, speech and mind while focusing on the tactile sensation throughout the body. Once you’ve established this foundation of calm, narrow your attention to the sensations of breathing in your belly. Attend to the entire length of the in-breath, the entire length of the out-breath. Arouse your attention with the inhalation. Release thoughts with the exhalation. When your mind wanders simply notice, relax, come back to sensations in the belly and attend to the each in breath; each out breath.*
- e. *Incorporate a period of settling the mind in its natural state. Intentionally shift the focus of your attention away from physical sensations and observe whatever is arising in your mind. As in class, when you find yourself caught up in a thought or memory, simply notice and relax. Return to the mental field and noticing whatever arises there, moment to moment.*
- f. *As you conclude your practice bring to mind your most meaningful aspirations & envision their actualization with the yearning: May these wishes be filled by the value of this practice, with great benefit for all.*
- g. *Try checking in and journaling - make this fun! Consider how your practice is benefiting you and your relationship to others.*
- h. *Suggested reading, listening & viewing*

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- i. Listen to the “dharma talk” given by Cheri Maples at Upaya Zen Center on “Balancing Equanimity & Compassion in Engaged Practice at: <http://integral-options.blogspot.com/2013/09/upaya-zen-podcasts-cheri-maples.html>
- ii. Listen to meditation instructor and author, Tara Brach’s guided meditation: “Loving This Life: Happiness” at <http://www.tarabrach.com/audio/2011-04-13-Metta-Meditation--Happiness-17min-TaraBrach-hq.mp3>
- iii. Watch Dan Gilbert, author of "Stumbling on Happiness," as he challenges the idea that we'll be miserable if we don't get what we want. Our "psychological immune system" lets us feel truly happy even when things don't go as planned.: http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_gilbert_asks_why_are_we_happy
- iv. For more guided meditations and talks you can peruse the audio library at Dharma Seed <http://www.dharmaseed.org> and or D.I.Y. Dharma <http://www.diydharma.org/about-us>