

The modern world says that stress can appear in only day-to-day routines. However, spiritual practice has never been more important.

There are two famous spiritual teachers, the Dalai Lama, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. They can help you by teaching some perspective, decreasing your stress, and making life more joyful. They are the best in these issues.

Your first step will be studying their teachings on a road which includes true love, acceptance, and joy.

Here is a fundamental aspect of life and happiness: Suffering

Suffering is always within human life such as traffic jam in the mornings or accumulated bills. However, it is essential to understand the meanings of positive moments in life despite its obvious drawbacks. Even, it is a vital part of life itself. Actually, pain and suffering can be fruitful and constructive.

For example, although every mother knows about the pain of birth, they accept it because it is necessary for the tremendous joy of a new child. If women avoided the discomfort of childbirth, the human race would be done for!

Let's look at Nelson Mandela. He had a painful 27 years in prison. He had to sleep on the floor and he had a mindless job which is breaking rocks that caused every moment was difficult.

After such an experience, everyone would expect that Mandela became miserable like his broken rocks; in contrast, he used his suffering to develop kindness and empathy for his political adversaries. Thanks to that compassion, Mandela later became the first president of a free South Africa.

So it's important to suffer, but if you're only experienced in a certain way, you need to shift your perspective away from yourself and toward others. At some point, if you become obsessive over

yourself about your goodness or malignancy, you will face with sadness as the Buddhist mind-training practice *lojong* teaches.

The Dalai Lama had been asked to share his Buddhist teachings at Bodh Gaya, the holiest Buddhist site in the world. Let's consider that experience.

He felt a sharp pain in his stomach before reaching the area and it looked like a serious situation. So, he needed to be taken to the hospital immediately but the nearest one was two hours away.

When he was on his way, there was a sick, old man sitting on the street by himself, clearly nearing the death. The author shifted his attention to an old man by feeling his agony and, at least for a moment, forgetting his own pain.

Sometimes you may not have control over suffering, but there is always a way to respond.

Think about your body. As long as you are healthy, your chance of getting sick is quite low. However, even a tiny virus can make you deathly sick when you become unhealthy. Immunity and resilience are very important for your physical health and the same principle can be valid for your mind.

If you establish a certain level of mental immunity over the years, you may still suffer from emotional disturbances but it will be easier to get better. In contrast, if you have a weak mental immunity, you will suffer for months or years.

So, how can you build up this mental immunity?

Firstly, you need to understand fear and frustration as facets of the mind, not of reality. As such, they couldn't become the controller of your life and you can find joy in any situation.

For instance, once, the Dalai Lama canceled his flight and forced him and filmmaker Peggy Callahan to make a six-hour-long journey to the next closest airport. Although the situation was

certainly discouraging, anger or frustration did not appear because they've made improvised journeys more fun by sharing funny travel stories along the way.

This example shows the reason for the fact that you shouldn't criticize yourself when the circumstances are out of your control. Also, Desmond Tutu offers another example as he stuck in a traffic jam while rushing to make an important meeting.

In previous years, he would have tried to overcome his urge to express his rage physically by grinding his teeth, but he eventually realizes that there are wonderful opportunities for quiet and prayer while in a traffic jam. So, he moved away from destructive behavior like teeth grinding, which served to infuriate him further, thanks to this realization.

Of course, it is easier to say that you can do the same when you feel stuck in difficult circumstances you can't change. But, if you just accept the situation and see it as an opportunity to exercise patience, stress may stay away from your mind.

While compassion helps, frustrated expectations cause anger.

The pressures of modern life in Western society can support unrealistic expectations and desires such as everyone's desires of a bigger apartment and a better career. That comes from the idea that more is always better and it is easier to believe.

However, what happens when you inevitably fail to meet them all is more important than those expectations. After all, there is almost always fear, which soon turns into anger.

Such fear is all too common. Also, there are some uncertainties which cause anger and these can be painful as well as damaging. That can be the fear of not getting what you want, the fear of others disliking or disrespecting you. Fortunately, despite this, you can overcome with love and affection towards others.

Let's look at Paul Ekman as an example. His father had aggressive behavior and his mother committed suicide so he became a rage-aholic which included powerful anger that he would explode randomly throughout the week; however, it continued until his meeting with the Dalai Lama at a conference hosted by the Mind and Life Institute. Paul's anger disappeared instantly when the Dalai Lama grabbed Paul's hand and looked into his eyes with pure love.

Compassion can be a powerful tool to connect people but surprisingly, it can lead to sadness. In fact, according to the studies of psychological researcher Joseph Forgas, low levels of sadness can actually produce positive results.

In Forgas' experiment, the sad participants were more sensitive to social norms. On the other hand, they had more judgment and generosity rather than those who were happy. In order to determine this final trait, Forgas asked the participants to decide how much money they would keep for themselves and how much would give to others. In the end, sad participants were eager to share more than happy ones.

Another example came from the Dalai Lama: When his eldest teacher died, the writer was in grief and agony. However, he turned his pain into motivation to fulfill his teacher's wishes instead of being arrogant. Now he teaches those who lost their close friends or their families, they can use their sadness to achieve their dreams.

Your life and health can be in danger because of loneliness and envy.

What do you think about how many people you interact with from the moment you wake up to the get into bed at night?

The number is shockingly low for most people and it can be a serious problem because a variety of health issues can appear when loneliness is there. But there is no need to worry because people can overcome loneliness by opening their heart others and trusting them.

Research conducted at Columbia University found that the rate of people having heart attacks increased depending on the participants who more frequently used first-person pronouns "I", "me", and "mine". That means you focus on yourself excessively which may cause isolation, increased stress, and high blood pressure. It's very important to trust others, open yourself and look for ways to share your life to make sure this doesn't come to you.

However, the only threat is not loneliness. People should also avoid a feeling of envy because it is trickier emotion since people are evolutionarily programmed to desire what others have.

The primatologist Frans de Waal found this interesting fact with an experiment. In that experiment, a rock was given to a monkey who rewarded with a cucumber slice when it accepted the rock. Later, monkey's neighbor applied the same task but it was given much tastier grape when it accepted and that was shown to the first monkey.

In return, the monkey performed the task with enthusiasm, waiting for the grape to be given to him. But when another cucumber slice was given to him instead of grape, his response was a rage. He shook the bars of his cage to protest at the unfairness of the situation.

The monkey response looks quite reasonable; after all, isn't justice a good thing?

As it is understood, people who feel excluded may suffer from unhappiness because of a desire for good intentions. In the 1990s, for example, the green cards were given to a group of Tibetans living in India to immigrate to the United States.

They started to send money to their families, who were at home to provide justice for their wealth among their families. However, that caused a problem related to their families' neighbors. As the extra cash came from the American residents, people began to change their homes and buy motorcycles so jealousy appeared among neighbors.

Kill cheating and change your life by getting closer to joy.

A person who has had a near-death experience may say that getting closer to the end makes life more valuable.

When people are inevitably in the face of difficulty, they come close to joy. Let's consider the first democratic election of South Africa in 1994. With their gratitude for their newly acquired freedoms, the South Africans lined up for miles to vote. In the same year, voter turnout in the United States was under 40 percent because most US citizens did not struggle for their right to vote at the time, and therefore did not feel responsible.

There is another good example came from the Chinese Cultural Revolution. In that time, officials claimed that the Tibetan language would be erased within 15 years. Thousands of books written by Tibetan authors were burned and countless statues and monasteries were destroyed by the state to conclude terrible plan.

Naturally, the Dalai Lama became very sad about that but when he came to India as a refugee in 1959; he directed this feeling to protect the remaining pieces of Tibetan culture.

In other words, nothing is appreciated as much as the things that have been almost extinct. However, to accept the reality and the inevitability of death is also very important to have joy while living. As an example, while Desmond Tutu was growing up, he had a tendency for a variety of illnesses and he was close to dying from childhood illnesses on multiple occasions. According to doctors, he was in such a state that his father had even bought wood to make his son's coffin.

Then, Tutu faced with tuberculosis as a teenager. Other patients were bleeding, coughing, and finally passing away and Tutu was also not expected to see his life after his adolescence. But, he is still alive today.

To come closer to true joy, you need to develop your perspective and humility.

So far, you know how to deal with fear and anger in your mental sphere. Then it's time to look at the positive side and learn how to improve happiness. To do so, the most helpful thing is using the eight pillars of joy. Let's look at what is it.

The first of the pillars is a perspective which provides observation of situations with a wider view of point. After all, you will realize that there is nothing which will last forever. As a result, your focus will move away from the present, joy, and hope will take hold of your life.

For example, when the Austrian neurologist and author of the powerful book *Man's Search for Meaning* Victor Frankl was an inmate in Auschwitz concentration camp, he remembered the ways in which many fellow prisoners had survived through a different perspective.

A rumor spread that a camp will be liberated at Christmas when an inmate was ill and on the verge of death. This simple belief that things would be improved soon helped her to survive. When Christmas finally arrived, there was nothing about liberation. Thus, her hope disappeared and she passed away.

Humility is the second pillar and just as important as perspective. The idea here is simply that if you think you're better than others, you'll never find joy. As an example, Dalai Lama was a tense young man always when people wanted to provide spiritual teaching because he had tremendous anxiety as a result of seeing himself above the audience.

Self-supremacy and thus failure to practice humility nurtures isolation and loneliness. But today he sees himself as another person who can destroy his anxiety instantly and make his experiences even more enjoyable.

You can relax by neutralizing tense situations thanks to humor and acceptance.

Humor is the third pillars of joy and it is not surprising because everyone knows that a good joke is always successful to overcome a stressful situation.

Desmond Tutu was forced into a tense situation by invited to speak with the Hutus and Tutsis, the two fighting ethnic groups in the conflict after the Rwandan genocide. Despite the difficulty of the situation, Tutu overstepped the difficulty of speaking about the sensitive subject by using humor as a tool.

Tutu used a simple, daily humor tool to relieve difficult emotions and comfort people. For instance, his fictional story about a place where people with big nose discriminated against people with a small nose made the audience laugh but at the same time, they also began to understand the absurdity of prejudice.

On the other hand, *acceptance* is the fourth pillar and thanks to humor it can be lead. As a result, if you cannot accept that there are hard moments in life that you are not in control over, you will never feel the joy.

For example, if your relationship with your neighbor is poor, you can have many solutions which are useless such as criticizing your neighbor, feeling anxious about your interactions or accepting that no tension between yours.

However, you need to accept your relationship and have a desire to improve it if you want really making progress. Thus, you can further accept that you are not in charge for your neighbor or her feelings toward you.

Having this insight will help you to move towards feelings of joy and calmness by helping you get rid of despair and fear your relationship causes you.

Two important steps for a feeling of joy: Forgiveness and gratitude.

Are you thankful for your warm bed and the clean water that comes out of your tap? If you live in the West, these are not luxuries for you because they are expected and usually guaranteed.

However, there are no such simple facilities for many people around the world. The reason why gratitude has an essential pillar of joy comes from that idea: In the end, we are ready to be more grateful for what we have.

Gratitude represents the idea that virtue is not to receive anything given and everything you have or all you experienced are reasons for being thankful. For instance, Anthony Ray Hinton was sentenced to 30 years in prison for a murder he did not commit. Moreover, police officers stated that, on the day of his arrest in Alabama, he was put in solitary confinement because he was black.

After decades, the Supreme Court unanimously decided to release him. He forgave the people who locked him up instead of feeling anger. He couldn't continue his life by staying in past without his forgiveness and couldn't enjoy the present.

Now, when it rains, he runs out to feel the drops fall on his face which was a simple experience in prison. He gets up every morning and gives praise to another day of peace and joy instead of letting his long confinement affects his life of unhappiness.

Forgiveness is the next pillar of joy that is exemplified in Hinton's experience. Here is another good example which came from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. In this process, a case involving the mothers of adolescents who had been fooled by the supporters of apartheid was included in a deadly booby trap.

One of the mothers, who saw that her son's body was being dragged down the streets on public TV, forgave the responsible people when those who were cheating on young people wanted to be forgiven. She said that imprisoning them for their crimes will never bring her son back and that revenge cannot bring joy to anyone.

To increase your happiness, you need to be compassionate and think of others.

Are you happy to give gifts to others? A lot of people do and this is quite natural. After all, presenting a gift to someone they really appreciate is a small thing that gives a feeling of intense happiness.

That's why *compassionate concern* is the seventh pillar of joy. According to evolutionary biologists, compassion shapes a core aspect of human self-interest and they called as *reciprocal altruism* which means that a feeling of joy results from helping others. When children are six months, this concept can appear.

Scientists observed children of this age by referring them to toys that could be associated with helping others. As a result, *helper's high* appeared in children and endorphins created a sense of euphoria similar to eating chocolate. In other words, as children become compassionate, their hearts fill with joy.

Finally, the last pillar of joy can take this sensation one step further: *Spending time on others' happiness*.

James Doty, the founder of the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford University donated \$30 million to a charity after he earned his fortune as a medical technology entrepreneur without keeping it all to own self. He did it expense of losing all his wealth in the subsequent stock market crash.

He was aware that money would not bring him power or love and certainly not make him happy. So he refused the advice of his lawyers to withdraw his charitable contributions. On the other hand, what made him happy was to help others feel happy.

Researcher Elizabeth Dunn supports this thanks to her discovery that people feel happier when they spend their money on others rather than on themselves. For this reason, even if many people feel fear of the emerging vulnerability because of emotions such as forgiveness or compassion, these simple emotions continue to be the most healing and refreshing experience that a person can ever experience.

The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World by Dalai Lama XIV, Desmond Tutu, Douglas Carlton Abrams

Book Review

There is a way for true happiness and joy even in a painful world. Of course, it is hard to find and follow because nothing is easy. As you reduce your concern for material things and increase your interest in the goodness of others through compassion and generosity, you will come to live the true joy.

Think about your own mortality when you meditate.

When you sit down to meditate again, try to think about your death and how it should end. You can become more prepared to face it by illuminating and even visualizing the process of death. If you succeed in reaching this situation, you can approach death with joy, without any fear or regret.

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