



THE ART OF HAPPINESS

A Handbook for Living

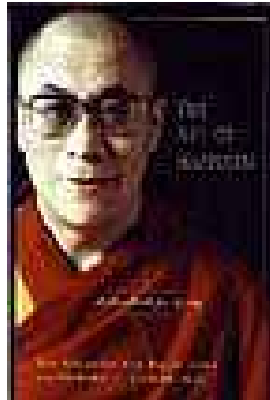
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About the Author



The Dalai Lama
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His Holiness the **Dalai Lama**, is the spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people. His tireless efforts on behalf of human rights and world peace have brought him international recognition. He is a recipient of the Wallenberg Award (conferred by the U.S. Congressional Human Rights Foundation), the Albert Schweitzer Award, and the Nobel Peace Prize.

Howard C. Cutler, M.D., is a diplomate of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology. He first met the Dalai Lama in 1982, while visiting India on a research grant to study Tibetan medicine. He maintains a private psychiatric practice in Phoenix.

Wisdom in a Nutshell

The Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is the spiritual leader of millions of Tibetan Buddhists. Born in 1935 as the son of a peasant family in northeastern Tibet, he has been exiled and living in India since the Chinese invaded Tibet in 1950. In 1989 the Dalai Lama won the Nobel Peace prize for his worldwide mission in search of a peaceful solution to the Chinese repression of Tibet. The title 'Dalai Lama' means teacher whose wisdom is as vast as the ocean. This book is an excellent overview of some of the main ideas of Buddhism along with the Dalai Lama's advice on a variety of topics. Howard Cutler does a good job of asking penetrating questions and translating the answers.

The Big Idea

The Dalai Lama believes that the pursuit of happiness is important. Unhappy people are often more self-focused, antagonistic and less able to tolerate life's daily frustrations.

At this moment we have a mind, which is all the basic equipment we need to achieve complete happiness: we don't need more money, success, etc.

University experiments showed that people can increase or decrease their sense of life satisfaction by changing their perspective (after being showed pictures of harsh living situations).

Plasticity

The brain can design new patterns, combinations and wiring according to new thoughts and experiences. The brain is constantly adapting and developing. By mobilizing our thoughts and practicing new ways of thinking, we can reshape our nerve cells and change the way our brain works (forming new neural circuits). Thus, training the mind for happiness becomes a very real possibility. Bringing about discipline within one's mind is the essence of the Buddha's teaching.

The Dalai Lama sees anger and violence as a reaction to our frustration in our efforts to achieve love and affection, not as part of our basic underlying nature. He looks for each individual's positive aspects, creating a feeling of affinity and connection. He believes in approaching others with the most basic things that we have in common- for example, we each have a physical structure, a mind, emotions, each wants happiness, etc. Respect their natural right to fulfill this fundamental aspiration. Approaching others with the thought of compassion: a wish for others to be free of their suffering. Develop a sense of commitment, responsibility and respect towards others.

Field of Merit (Buddhist doctrine). Positive imprints on one's mind or 'mental continuum' that

occurs in one's mind as a result of positive actions (kindness, generosity, tolerance) and a constant restraint from negative actions (killing, lying, stealing).

Mental attitude makes a tremendous difference

An athlete loves training but other work is often considered to be a chore. Transform our attitude towards suffering by seeing it as a natural and helpful signal from our body to help it go back into balance. See suffering as part of a greater spiritual path of purifying the mind and ultimately achieving a state of mind in which there is no suffering. The practice of shifting perspective and realizing that many others have gone through similar experiences. Compare it with a greater event, look at my problem from a

Being honest with oneself and others about what you are or are not capable of doing can counteract the feeling of lack of self-confidence.

distance, it appears smaller and less overwhelming. Make an effort to see the problem from another's perspective. Avoid seeing others with 100% negative or positive qualities. Train myself to see new viewpoints before getting into a difficult situation.

Three poisons of the mind are craving, hatred and ignorance (fundamental misperception of true nature and of the self and all phenomena).

Guilt arises when we convince ourselves that we have made an irreparable mistake. Realize that change is constant and appreciate the impermanent, transient nature of our existence. Contemplation of impermanence and change serves to increase my resolve to use my time to it's best advantage. Investigate my resistance to change and avoid linking

my self-image to things in the past that have now changed.

Consider our enemy as a great teacher and revere them for giving us this opportunity to practice patience. It is rare since there are so many people in the world that we never interact with, and those who we do, only a small percentage give us any problems. Our enemies test us and provide us with the resistance necessary for growth. Remember- we don't hate all of them (their fingernail, their knuckle, toe, etc.) Shift our perspective and allow a softening in our attitude.

By adopting a flexible, malleable approach to life, we can maintain our composure even in the most restless and turbulent conditions. It is through our efforts to achieve a flexible mind that we can nurture the resiliency of the human spirit. The ability to reduce our value system to its most basic elements (everyone wants to be happy and not suffer, etc.) that allows us the greatest freedom and flexibility to deal with the vast array of problems that confront us on a daily basis.

Victor Frankl, a Nazi concentration camp survivor, determined that survival wasn't based on youth or physical strength but rather the strength derived from purpose, and discovering meaning in one's life

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and experience. We must begin our search for meaning when things are going well. A tree with strong roots can withstand the most violent storm, but the tree can't grow roots just as the storm appears on the horizon.

The idea of seeing my suffering as an opportunity for the practice of taking others' suffering upon myself. By experiencing an unpleasant event, I may be able

to save other beings from undergoing the same thing. Also, see pain as a remarkable, elegant, and sophisticated biological system that warns us of damage to our body and protects it (an example would be rats gnawing off fingers of leprosy victims who could not feel pain). Pain is the most effective way of the body to communicate about a vital topic.

When anger does come, actively challenge it, analyze it logically and reappraising the thoughts that trigger the anger can help dissipate it.

Quitting smoking and overcoming other problems

Learning is the first step, but alone is not enough. You have to increase the awareness until it leads to a firm conviction about the harmful effects and strengthens our determination to change. Finally, you must exert the effort to establish new habit patterns.

At the very instant when strong feelings of anger or hatred arise, no matter how hard the person tries to pretend to adopt a dignified pose, it is very obvious that the person's face looks contorted and ugly. There is a very unpleasant expression, and the person gives out a very hostile vibration. Other people, and even pets can sense it.

Hateful thoughts collect inside a person and cause loss of sleep, appetite, etc. The practice of tolerance and patience can give anyone refuge and protection from the destructive effects of anger and hatred. When anger does come, actively challenge it, analyze it logically and reappraising the thoughts that trigger the anger can help dissipate it. Shifting perspective or looking at different angles of the situation can also be very effective. These things are often easier at lower or moderate levels of anger, so practicing early intervention is important.

For feelings of anxiety use the same approaches of actively challenging, logically analyzing, and reappraising it can help. The Dalai Lama says that if the situation or problem is such that it can be remedied, then there is no need to worry about it (spend the energy on the solution). Alternatively, if there is not way out, no solution or possibility of resolution, then there is also no point in being worried about it, because you can't do anything about it anyway. Also, checking to make sure that my motivation is sincere can help reduce anxiety in ordinary daily situations. Being honest with oneself and others about what you are or are not capable of doing can counteract the feeling of lack of self-confidence. Reminding ourselves of the great qualities that we share with all human beings acts to neutralize the impulse to think that we are bad or undeserving.

All of the virtuous states of mind- compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, caring and so on are genuine Dharma, or genuine spiritual qualities, because all of these internal mental qualities cannot coexist with ill feelings or negative states of mind.

Strive for penetrating intelligence without artifice, kindness without excessive sentimentality, humor without frivolousness, the ability to inspire rather than awe.