

## Dharmette: Four Truths of Happiness (3 of 4) Maintaining Happiness.

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So, hello and welcome to this third talk that I'm calling the *Four Truths of Happiness*. And they are complements to the Buddhist teachings on the *Four Noble Truths* of suffering, which I talked about last week. And these two pairs of four complement each other, kind of parallel each other. But one of the things they have in common, kind of at the center of them, is they concern our contribution to our state of mind, state of heart, or state of being.

The *Four Noble Truths* have to do with how we contribute to what's called suffering, *dukkha*, emotional pain. And it's not necessarily all emotional pain, but that emotional pain which we do, in fact, contribute to. And the contribution is summarized in the word craving, or thirsting, having thirst for stuff, that kind of a compulsive desire. And that as long as this compulsive desire is operating, there's frustration, there's expectation, there's tension, there's stress. There are more elaborate things that begin happening around that compulsive desire, which is building from a desire identities, layers and layers of identities and stories and realities that we live in. And so we want to be careful and see how we contribute to the suffering, our role.

We don't ignore the role of others or other situations. But at least we take care of our contribution. And it makes a world of difference. For the four truths of happiness, we also have a contribution to make. And we don't just leave our happiness to chance, hoping that the world will somehow provide it for us. Hoping that something out there will do it if we pay enough money, or if we find the right person to be with.

There are all kinds of things that we're looking out there for happiness. But we find it within. And we find what within contributes to that. What we can know for ourselves, or we can

experience for ourselves, what we can contribute. And that's to contribute wholesome states of being, wholesome activities. Live ethically.

Do the things which are wholesome, that for our heart feel good. Not things which are stressful, not things that are dutiful and we should do and to be the right kind of person. But to start learning, to touch into, to discover the natural goodness, the natural wholesomeness that we're capable of and how they can well up from within if we're relaxed enough, if we're settled enough, if we're connected to ourselves enough. So part of what we contribute to our own happiness is a practice of mindfulness, is a practice of being present and aware so that that can follow, that we can then recognize what is wholesome, recognize healthy states and activities, and then we can call on them.

The third truth of happiness is that once we recognize these wholesome states of being, and mindfulness itself, done well, done calmly, not contentiously, equanimously, is actually considered to be extremely wholesome. It can be. And that's kind of like the bottom line, perhaps. Start there. But as we start to connect to the wholesome, as we start connecting to what feels, that brings us well-being, stay close to it.

The Buddha talked about states of well-being, states of wholesomeness, as things that we should maintain. The causes of suffering are things we want to bring to an end. The conditions that bring about well-being, we want to maintain. We want to stay close to it. I've been in many situations where I felt pretty happy, and then I had a to-do list to do, and I threw myself into this to-do list, and I got grumpy, I got irritated, I got frustrated, and unnecessarily so. But I gave up on my well-being.

I ignored it in favor of the things to do. Other times I felt connected. I've maintained my sense of calm, my sense of ease, my sense of joy and happiness. And I've also had a to-do list to do. And I did it out of that well-being, with that well-being. Usually what happens then, I do it a little bit slower.

Usually I do it with more delight and joy. And usually I make less mistakes. Usually there's less repetition. Usually it's done well the first time. So while it's slow, you know, sometimes slow is what gets things done the fastest. So this idea of maintaining.

And that's a message that many Buddhists don't seem to get because there's so much emphasis on letting go, not holding on to anything. And so much emphasis on just showing up for the next moment, the next moment, that there's no sense of let's maintain something. So the example of petting the cat. You have to maintain the petting for the cat to keep purring. And you get instant feedback if you stop. So there has to be a maintaining of something.

So it's our heart. The way we nourish, nurture, pet our heart, pet, care for it. It needs maintenance. It needs attention. It needs care. This doesn't have to be selfish.

It doesn't have to be at the expense of others. It doesn't have to be done with attachment. It doesn't have to be done with any clinging. Maintaining is not the same thing as attachment. Maintaining. I maintain my car usually. I go get the oil changed. But I have no attachment to, in a sense, to doing or not doing. It's just a matter-of-fact thing to do.

So we maintain our heart. We maintain the wholesomeness that's here. So we contribute to our happiness. And the word contribute is a choice word because it's not meaning we cause it. To be the cause of our suffering and focus on causing it to happen just messes it up. But what we do is, it's almost like, let me be happy, the heart willing.

Kind of an openness and allowing and trusting. Because who knows what the heart wants to reveal, what it wants to show at any given time. There might be unresolved anger or grief that needs to come that doesn't look like conventional happiness. However, there can be a way in which it feels good, it feels healthy to let it be there. It feels like there's a healthy awareness, capacity to be present. This is good. And this is true.

This is really connecting to a true process, a true depth of what's really concerning me. And it's good to be here with it. And so then we maintain the goodness or the healthiness of how we relate to our anger, how we relate to our grief. We're not looking for kind of cheerful happiness. We're looking for a way of being that feels so good, that feels right given the circumstance. And that's contributing the conditions out of which well-being and joy can arise.

The Buddha used language of birth to describe joy appearing for us. Joy is born. It's not something we cause. And so sometimes we have to spend time letting something gestate, letting something mature and sprout for joy to arise. We have to contribute the care, like a gardener would care for a garden.

So the third noble truth of happiness is maintain the well-being. Maintain a satisfying form of awareness, of mindfulness. Maintain care and friendliness. Maintain joy. Maintain delight. Stay close to it.

Stay in touch. Don't get too far away from it by getting distracted and busy and overwhelmed by the to-do list or whatever's going on. You can do that, but to allow this garden to grow, to allow the happiness to grow, to allow the clarity to grow and the freedom to grow, the conditions, the right conditions have to be there. Not just wishful thinking. Not just touching in just a few times a day to some kind of calm state. But for the garden to really grow, it needs

to have sunlight on it all day long.

So, to maintain these good things, and maintain it through the day, easy said, difficult to do, but satisfying to do. And it becomes second nature. Like riding a bike after a while becomes second nature. We can live closely in touch with our inner well-being, our inner wholesomeness. It is possible. So, this is the third truth of happiness.

And so, today, as you go through your day, find a way to remind yourself again. Yesterday I suggested tying a string around your finger. Maybe today do something a little bit more. Remind you even more strongly, perhaps. Or you can put a timer on your phone to maybe go off every 10 minutes or something. Or use some kind of reminder.

And check in and see if you can tap into what feels wholesome within. And if you don't feel anything wholesome within, that's a time where finding out how to be aware in a wholesome way, how to be aware in a way that feels good, feels satisfying, feels calm, feels spacious, feels supportive, is invaluable. At the minimum, no matter how difficult things get, 50% attention on how we're aware, so that how we're aware can be nourishing for us, beneficial, and create the conditions for other wholesomeness to come out, to be born.

And the fact that it's 50% attention on yourself and how you're aware, embodied awareness, being connected here, does not mean you have to have less awareness for other people or for the activities you do. It actually can give more. Because our capacity to be aware can grow. And to have this 50-50 awareness of awareness here with how you're aware, how you are, and 50% with what you're doing, people you're with, creates the conditions that the sum total of your awareness may be triples. So, you clearly have more awareness for what you're doing than you had before. But you do it with being able to stay closely in touch with what's happening here so you can know yourself better.

But maybe also you can stay in touch to maintain what is good. Maintain the wholesome. Maintain it through the day. So I wish you well with that. I hope you take this on and see what you'll learn in the process. Thank you.