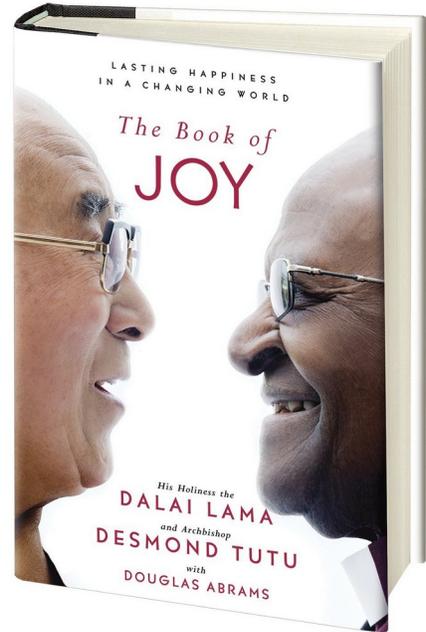


6.

Envy: That Guy Goes Past Yet Again in His Mercedes-Benz

Suffering and Adversity: Passing through Difficulties



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As the Dalai Lama would point out, even dogs that are eating together peacefully can suddenly start comparing the size of their portion to another's, and a fight can break out with barking and the gnashing of teeth. But it is for humans that envy can become a source of great dissatisfaction.

There is a Tibetan Buddhist teaching that says what causes suffering in life is a general pattern of how we relate to others: "Envy toward the above, competitiveness toward the equal, and contempt toward the lower."

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Fairness seems to be hardwired into our genes, and so we are very uncomfortable with inequality of any sort.

however much we address these large global imbalances, as the Archbishop has pointed out, there will always be people who have more than we do, or who are more successful, or who are more talented or smarter or better-looking.

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According to the happiness research, "upward comparisons" are particularly corrosive to our well-being. Envy doesn't leave room for joy. The Tibetan word for envy is *trakdok*, which means "heavy or constricted shoulders," and indeed the feeling of envy leaves one with a pinched feeling of discontent and resentment, tinged with guilt. Buddhism sees envy as so corrosive that it compares it to a venomous snake that poisons us. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, one of the Ten Commandments forbids "coveting" thy neighbour's house.

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remedies for envy offered by Archbishop Tutu: gratitude ... motivation ... reframing

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[Dalai Lama] "It is important to cultivate any emotion that brings joyfulness and peace of mind. Any sort of emotion that disturbs this happiness and peace of mind, we must learn to avoid

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For a person who is committed to compassion practice and a genuine sense of concern for others' well-being, then you will rejoice in others' good fortune because you will be happy that what that person aspires for is being obtained."

The Dalai Lama was describing the Buddhist concept of *mudita*, which is often translated as "sympathetic joy" and described as the antidote to envy. *Mudita* is so important in Buddhism that it is considered one of the Four Immeasurables, qualities we can cultivate infinitely. The other three are loving-kindness, compassion, and equanimity.

[...]

Mudita sees joy as limitless

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Mudita is based on the recognition of our interdependence, or Ubuntu. ...someone else's achievements or happiness is in a very real way our own.

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[cultivating *mudita*] we should recognize our shared humanity. [...] When humanity is happy, we will be happy. When humanity is peaceful, our own lives are peaceful. [...]

We must develop the sense of 'we.'

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This is a beautiful prayer that Jinpa uses to cultivate *mudita*:

As for suffering I do not wish even the slightest;

as for happiness I am never satisfied.

In this, there is no difference between others and me.

Bless me so that I may take joy in others' happiness.

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There is a Tibetan saying that adversities can turn into good opportunities. ... There's another Tibetan saying that it is actually the painful experiences that shine the light on the nature of happiness. They do this by bringing joyful experiences into sharp relief.

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we try so hard, with our natural parental instinct, to save our children from pain and suffering, but when we do, we rob them of their ability to grow and learn from adversity.

Jinpa had mentioned that in the Tibetan spiritual teaching known as the Seven-Point Mind Training, three categories of people are identified as being special objects of focus because these are the most challenging: your family members, your teachers, and your enemies. "Three objects, three poisons, and three roots of virtue." [interaction with them leads to attachment, anger, and delusion]

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Through spiritual training we have the opportunity to transform our engagement with our family, teachers, and adversaries into the development of the three roots of virtue – nonattachment, compassion, and wisdom.

inner spirit, or warm-heartedness, had allowed some to endure the hardships of the gulags.

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We say that you will be surprised by the joy the minute you stop being too self-regarding. Of course, you have to be somewhat self-regarding, because the Lord that I follow said – taking it from the scripture – *'love thy neighbour as --'* [...]

You must long for the best for that other as you would want the best for you.

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"You see, if there are no difficulties and you are always relaxed, then you complain more," the Dalai Lama said, now laughing at the irony that we could experience more joy in the face of great adversity than when life is seemingly easy and uneventful.

The path to joy, like with sadness, did not lead away from suffering and adversity but through it.

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suffering can either embitter us or ennoble us and that the difference lies in whether we are able to find meaning in our suffering. Without meaning, when suffering seems senseless, we can easily become embittered. But when we can find a shred of meaning or redemption in our suffering, it can ennoble us, as it did for Nelson Mandela.

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Deep down we grow in kindness when our kindness is tested.

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Because of the shock suffering causes us, our arrogance falls away. Suffering also gives rise to compassion for all others who are suffering...we avoid actions that will bring suffering to others

Questions for reflection:

1. Do you agree with the statement, "keeping up with the Joneses happens within a peer group"? How have you responded to moments of envy?
2. Can you think of a time when you (or perhaps someone you know) went through a painful experience, or time of adversity, and came through it with a different appreciation for joy?

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