The gap from the opening of your heart in your practice and seeing the fruit in results in your daily life is a very important gap to bridge. We have discussed reflecting upon our challenges and bringing this reflection to the cushion, looking directly with open awareness at our emotions and conflicts. We must create bridges between our practice and our behavior, making changes in our lives. Perhaps we experience love, but it is only half-ripened, and so a little encouragement to manifest that love would be nice. If you can manifest love in your kitchen or your workplace or with colleagues or with your family, if love can manifest in those particular situations where it seems necessary, that will be a practice. It is not a formal practice, but definitely it is a practice, definitely and absolutely. I would give more credit to those places where you are conscious and aware when you are challenged and pushed. There, your spiritual muscles are exercised. When you pay attention to the difficult places and are able to shift them, that is great joy. You can see the areas right in front of your eyes where you have difficulty and see the shifts.

Perhaps through your meditation practice and as you have grown, you have learned to be nice where otherwise you were not. Think of that as a practice, instead of thinking, “I missed my practice, my half-hour of sleepy meditation this morning.” What is the big deal of missing that meditation when you have been kind to somebody in that difficult
situation today? Look at the success of your day rather than the failure of missing a session of practice. It is important to think of this as, "Yes! I am practicing!" The idea of feeling guilty and inadequate because you are not on the cushion doing your silent meditation is not useful.

I’m not saying formal practice is not important. It is. But we expand our notion of practice in order to bring the results into everyday life. If we look closely at our lives, we always have time to practice. We don’t need a half an hour to create problems in our lives. Do we need to sit somewhere quietly thinking in order to create a little extra problem? No, we are able to worry in-between everything. I don’t know anybody who says, "Give me a little more time to worry." Why? Because we can always find that time. First thing in the morning, it is there. I don’t schedule half an hour a day for worry. I can find more than enough time for it! Standing in a line in a post office or in the bank, I can worry. The long line for the security check at the airport is perfect. I can get agitated and manifest my six realms in many places! In terms of the practice, that time is available to practice the virtues and the antidotes. That time becomes wonderful practice as you live your everyday life, conscious and working with the situations of life, and your formal practice supports you to make the changes that benefit you and others.

A Joyful Meditation

An edited excerpt from oral teachings given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, 2005

I sometimes say to people that one of the simplest meditations you can do is: Find a comfortable position, close your eyes and - be joyful.

Of course, anyone can give that advice. It’s nothing mysterious; one does not have to look into a special text to find this.

As well, anyone can do this meditation! And the moment that you do it, you feel the joy. It’s as easy as that. And then, when you do it a few more times, you will be amazed at how easy it is to feel joyful. It’s really so easy! You will be amazed, too, at why you don’t do it more often. You may say, "If it’s that easy, why don’t I do it more often? Why do I, instead, choose the most complicated way that ever existed in the whole universe for finding happiness?"

Somehow, that’s what we end up doing. We try to find the most complicated place, the most complicated person, the most complicated situation in which to look for our happiness. We do that, right?

To experience that joyfulness, it’s not a question of searching for the most complicated ways of finding happiness, rather it’s a question of simply allowing oneself to be joyful.
Offerings

Bringing Practice to Life
Excerpts from the written teachings of modern Buddhist masters

From "Fearless Simplicity" by Tsoknyi Rinpoche

Wherever you are, whatever you are going through, whatever the setting, practice right there. When you go see the doctor and sit in the waiting room, practice right there. If you have an interview with Tsoknyi Rinpoche and are waiting in line, practice there. When you are on the telephone and get put on hold, practice then. If you are in rigpa when they finally say hello, you can immediately reply – but if you are in stupidity meditation they will think no one is there and hang up on you. Wherever you are, practice. When you go back home, do not lie in wait for the right time to practice, because that right time never comes. Please remember that. That is the perseverance we need: to practice on the spot.

From "The Heart Treasure of the Enlightened Ones" by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche

Whether practicing formally in a session or carrying the practice into the activities of your daily life, you should remember three supreme points applied to the preparation, the substance, and the conclusion of whatever you are doing. The preparation is to wish that what you are about to do may benefit all beings, bringing them happiness and ultimately leading them to enlightenment. The substance is to be fully attentive to what you are doing, without ever taking subject, object, or action as having any true existence. The conclusion is to dedicate to all beings the merit you may have accumulated through your practice or activity. By sealing everything you do with this dedication, you ensure that the merit will ripen into the fruit of Buddhahood both for yourself and for others.

From "The Spirit of Buddhism" by Sogyal Rinpoche

All too often, people will enter the Dharma, but somehow just wait passively for the teachings to come to them. We need to be more active in engaging with the teachings, applying them to ourselves and making a conscious effort to keep them alive. We may hear the teachings, but how little we put them into action! That’s why we need to hear them again and again, so that what we should do becomes so clear that it is almost second nature. Then, through practice, it becomes a natural good habit. Otherwise there’s a huge gulf between what we aspire to and what we are, and our spiritual aspirations leave us behind.

Sources


Five Good Reasons to Feel Joy

Tenzin Rinpoche gave a public talk in Charlottesville a few years ago in which he recommended that we cultivate joy in our hearts and our lives. He suggested to us half-jokingly that if we couldn’t think of a good reason to feel joy, then we could think up a bad reason to feel joy ... but in any case, we should try to allow the joy to arise in us. He later added that the best experience of joy is the kind that requires no reasons at all; but if our conceptual mind creates an obstacle, then it is good to use the conceptual mind to remove the obstacle. For a while I couldn’t think of any good reasons to feel joy, so I thought up some “bad reasons” ... and in time, I discovered that all the bad reasons were actually good ones. I wrote up this list of five good reasons to help me remember.

1. Here, in this lifetime, I have found a heart teacher who is a true lineage master of a precious, ancient tradition that traces its source, in an unbroken line, directly back to Tapihritsa, Tonpa Shenrab, and Kuntu Zangpo. Through my connection with the teacher, the sangha, and the sacred Bön teachings, and through diligent practice, I have a real opportunity in this lifetime to proceed on a true path to enlightenment and to realize my own essence. Through the blessings, this goal is clearly reachable. Gaining confidence in this gives me joy.

2. It is good to feel joy. For most of my life I had assumed that I did not deserve the sheer, unbounded happiness of unconditional joy. But the riches of joy are like mountains of precious gems and gold, hidden in a long-abandoned cave – they belong to no one, and they belong to everyone. They are there for us all, there is an infinite amount to go around. Why not revel in joy?

3. It’s important to feel joy. Joy is one of the four immeasurable qualities of love, joy, equanimity and compassion, each of which is perfected in the very nature of mind, and each of which is a doorway to the center of one’s being. If I close myself off from joy, I close myself off from myself. When I bring more joy into my practice and awareness, all of my practice can bear more fruit. This is why I must set the conditions that allow joy to arise and manifest.

4. If I can’t experience joy myself, how can I help someone else to feel it? By experiencing joy I can benefit others. Benefiting others is good.

5. There are no good reasons to not feel joy.

—Polly Turner

Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche walks to early morning teachings in Kathmandu, Nepal, February, 2005

Photographs by Mary Ellen McCourt
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