



karuna
dedicated holistic support

the kindest care

Care of the mind

Cultivating happiness

What is happiness?

From a Buddhist perspective, happiness involves having a calm mind. It is a state of mental well-being that includes feelings of peace and joy. It is a sense of fulfilment, completeness or wholeness. It is a state of mind that comes from within, from the mind itself.

What we often call happiness is an exciting “high” kind of feeling. This is the opposite of a calm mind. This perception of happiness is usually centred on oneself - the needs of “me” or “mine”. The danger of this self focus is that it can be in conflict with the happiness of others. It may be achieved at the expense of others or even be achieved by harming others. We may even experience “happiness” at other’s misfortune.

Happiness that comes from cherishing oneself results in mental agitation and dissatisfaction because it is based on negative emotions like clinging attachment and anger. This is the very opposite to what we are really seeking.

A calm, happy state of mind comes from cherishing others with loving kindness and compassion. These positive attitudes prevent us from harming others, motivate us to benefit others and enhance our own momentary and long term happiness.

The fact that happiness comes from our own mind means we all have the capacity and the freedom to achieve it.

Happiness does not come from external things

We commonly look to external things like family and material possessions for our happiness. But these external things are not the true source of happiness. If chocolate, for example, were a true source of happiness, it would result in happiness for everyone who indulged. In fact it would also mean the more chocolate we ate, the happier we would be. Unfortunately we know this is not the case.

External things are not a reliable source of happiness because they do not last. We buy things to increase our happiness, but then they deteriorate, go out of fashion or lose their shine. What makes us happy today is never enough because our desires never cease. Relying on transient external objects only increases our dissatisfaction and our yearning for perfect happiness.

Sometimes it may seem that if we could just be free of our external problems we would be happy. Once again, this is relying on external factors, but happiness comes from within. People can

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have great wealth or leisure but not be happy, while people with few external comforts or material enjoyments can be very happy. People who have a debilitating illness may feel happy while others who enjoy good health may often be unhappy.

Being happy in good times and bad

When enjoyable or good things happen to us we usually grasp at them with attachment. Instead, with an open heart, we can wish that all others experience the same good fortune.

When painful and difficult things happen to us we can replace our fear and aversion with the compassionate wish that all others facing this same experience be alleviated from their suffering.

Thinking this way can be transformative. Cultivating such thoughts can simply take a moment of our time or can be an extended period of contemplation or meditation.

When we become agitated by something or someone, first calm the mind by focusing on the natural flow of the breath. When the mind has settled we can then think more clearly about the next step to take.

When we feel overwhelmed or burdened by life events, focus on the present moment and take one step at a time.

**Karuna also has experienced people you can talk with on:
07 3632 8300 or karuna@karuna.org.au**



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