



HAPPINESS

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to the heart – realizing the value of *compassion* and then cultivating it. Compassion, an attitude based on the wish for others to be free from their suffering, is *the* essential ingredient to human closeness, and has been associated in many studies with increased physical and psychological health – i.e., happiness. So how can we nurture our *compassion* for others?

The Dalai Lama suggests a simple yet powerful 5-minute meditation:

Have you ever wondered...

about the secret to happiness? Last week, this column featured a psychologist's scientific discovery that happiness is something that we make happen when we challenge ourselves to master difficult yet attainable tasks. Csikszentmihalyi called this experience FLOW, a state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter...

The Dalai Lama, the spiritual and temporal leader of Tibet, looks for happiness in 2,500 years of Buddhist wisdom rather than in Western science. What he has discovered is that true happiness does not come from external activities but from an inner discipline, a sense of control over our internal mental states. His message is clear: we don't need more money, greater success or fame, the perfect body, or even the perfect mate in order to feel happy – right now, at this very moment, we have a mind, which is all the basic equipment we need to achieve happiness. For the Dalai Lama, happiness is not *what* you do but *how* you do it, and it stems at its core from *deepening our connections* to other people. Happiness emerges from the *social* realm of life, from our ability to relate to human beings on a deep level. The Dalai Lama's strategy for forging such intimate bonds bypasses working on social skills or external behaviors in favor of an approach that cuts directly

1. Begin by visualizing a person who is acutely suffering. Reflect on that individual's pain for 2-3 minutes.
2. Think about how that person has the same capacity to experience pain, joy, happiness, and suffering as you do, and allow your natural response toward that individual to arise (1-2 minutes).
3. Think about how strongly you wish that person to be relieved from their suffering, and focus on your compassionate feelings for 1-2 minutes.



Try this exercise daily for a month and you will see your compassion, empathy, and forgiveness for others develop and grow, which just might end up making you a happier person...

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