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Dedicated to the Reader:

May you find happiness.

PR EFACE TO THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

by His Holiness the Dalai Lama



I am very happy to learn that the publisher of *The Art of Happiness*—which I cowrote with my old friend, the American psychiatrist Howard Cutler—is bringing out a tenth anniversary edition of the book. Those who have read the book will know that it was the result of many hours of discussion, with Howard representing the current scientific perspective and me representing the Buddhist understanding of the issues pertaining to mental health and human well-being. So when the book was received well by the general public, I felt a deep sense of satisfaction since this indicated that our labor had made some contribution towards others' happiness and well-being. Though each of us, the two authors, came from different perspectives, we always endeavored to bring our discussion to the basic human level, the level where distinctions between people—gender, race, religion, culture, and language—break down. At this fundamental level, we are all the same; each one of us aspires to happiness and each one of us does not wish to suffer. This is our most fundamental reality. And on this level, the problems that we each face as human beings remain the same. Given this belief, whenever I have the opportunity to engage with the general public, I always try to draw people's attention to this fundamental sameness of the human family and the deeply interconnected nature of our existence and welfare. I also share my belief that as a species we need to ground our interaction with fellow human beings and the world around us on recognition of these profound yet simple truths.

Today, a decade after the publication of *The Art of Happiness*, I am heartened to see that the topic of human happiness is attracting increasing levels of interest and serious research, even from the scientific community. There is also a growing recognition within the wider community, as well as a growing body of scientific evidence, that confirms the close connection that exists between our own states of mind and our happiness. Many years ago I wrote: "If you want others to be happy practice compassion; and if you want yourself to be happy practice compassion." The Buddhist tradition has, like many of the world's great spiritual traditions, exhorted us to live our lives compassionately. These spiritual traditions teach us to feel connected with our fellow beings and with the world we live in. They celebrate service to others as one of the highest virtues. Today, growing scientific data confirm this insight. Researchers on human happiness identify compassionate service to others as one of the key characteristics shared by many of the world's happiest people. To me this makes perfect sense. When we help others, the focus of our mind assumes a broader horizon within which we are able to see our own petty problems in a more realistic proportion. What previously appeared to be daunting and unbearable, which is what often makes our problems so overwhelming, tends to lose its intensity.

The question is: Can we cultivate ourselves to be more compassionate? If so, how do we do it? Again, here I believe that profound recognition of the fundamental sameness of the human family and the deeply interconnected nature of our well-being are crucially important. When you feel connected with others you are able to open your heart, which I often call our "inner door," and reach out to others. In doing so, you acquire a deep sense of security and trust and a true sense of freedom. A key element of this process entails cultivating some degree of greater awareness with respect to one's own mental states, especially one's emotions and moods. With these practices you can lay a strong foundation within you, a kind of anchor that provides a true inner home. This is the basis of true inner happiness, a genuine wellspring of joy. Researchers often wonder about the causal sequence between compassion and happiness. They ask: Is it the case that compassionate people are happier or are happy people more compassionate? On a practical level, I suppose, which comes first does not really matter. What matters is that we can cultivate both. In my own Buddhist tradition, numerous mental trainings are offered to systematically cultivate greater compassion and well-being. Today, with new insights from the field of neuroscience, especially with the discovery of brain plasticity, we know that the human brain is highly amenable to change and adaptation, even at advanced ages, as in one's seventies, as I am now. The revered thirteenth-century Tibetan master Sakya Pandita once said, "Seek learning even if you were to die tomorrow."

In *The Art of Happiness*, we attempted to present to the reader a systematic approach to achieving greater happiness and overcoming life's inevitable adversities and suffering. Our approach combines and integrates the best of East and West—that is, Western science and psychology on the one hand and Buddhist principles and practices on the other. Our aim has been to share with others the conviction that there is a lot each of us can do to achieve greater happiness in our lives and, more important, to draw attention to the tremendous inner resources that are at the disposal of each of us. Given these central aims, the main approach in this book has been to explore ways and means towards greater happiness and joy in life from the perspective of an individual human being.

Over the last ten years, Howard and I have continued our conversations, taking the discussion to the level of wider society and how the external environment impacts our happiness. In the course of these conversations we have explored a number of the key principles and practices that can play an important role in one's personal quest for happiness. And more important, we have explored some of the challenging questions pertaining to how one can best apply these principles and practices in the context of the wider society. How can one maintain happiness in today's troubled and challenging world? How can one apply the principles of *The Art of Happiness* in dealing with problems and suffering in the world? What are the roots of violence, on both the individual level and the societal level? How can one learn to undo these sources of violence? How can one sustain hope in humanity in the face of human violence and suffering? These are a few of the questions we strove to address in our discussions. During this decade, I have also continued with my ongoing dialogues with scientists, especially from the fields of cognitive and affective neuroscience as well as psychology, so that a greater convergence could be brought between the age-old insights of my own Buddhist tradition and modern science. I hope the fruits of this exploration as well as my ongoing conversations with Howard will evolve into a new book so that others can share in these exchanges, which I have personally found deeply enriching.

INTRODUCTION TO THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

The Art of Happiness: Looking Back and Looking Forward

by Howard C. Cutler, M.D.



THE BEGINNING

A full decade has now passed since *The Art of Happiness* was first published. As I reflect on the course of events leading to the book's publication, I think back to the beginning of the nineties, when I first conceived of collaborating with the Dalai Lama on a book about happiness. The Dalai Lama's name was familiar to most Americans by that time, but beyond the Buddhist community, few had any sense of him as a real human being. The general public's image of him was often little more than a vague sketchy caricature, marred by misconceptions: the jolly giggling Buddha, "the Pope of Buddhism," "the god-king of Tibet." In fact, if you mentioned the Dalai Lama's name at that time, the most likely image to surface in the mind of an average American was probably Carl Spackler, the disheveled golf course groundskeeper in the film *Caddyshack*, describing his brief stint as the Dalai Lama's caddy: "... So we finish the eighteenth and he's gonna stiff me! And I say, 'Hey, Lama! Hey, bow about a little something, you know, for the effort.' And he says, 'Oh, uh, there won't be any money, but when you die, on your deathbed, you will receive total consciousness.' So I got that goin for me—which is nice."

Of course, there were some whose mental portrait of the Dalai Lama was more finely drawn, those who recognized him as a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, a tireless advocate for human rights, one who remained committed to nonviolence despite living fifty years in exile as a result of the brutal invasion of Tibet by Chinese forces. But even among the more knowledgeable, perception of him was often one-dimensional—some people saw him as essentially a political figure, for example, unaware of his stature as one of the world's leading Buddhist scholars, a teacher with profound spiritual depth and wisdom. And many people at that time would have been surprised to learn that far from considering himself to be a great world leader, the Dalai Lama's personal identity was most closely tied to his role as a simple Buddhist monk—one who rose each morning at 3:30 to spend four or five hours in prayer and meditation.

So by the early 1990s, I began to think about a book that would dispel these misconceptions and add some human flesh to the cartoonlike image of him in the popular imagination. But that was not the main purpose of the book. The far more important objective was to present his ideas about how to find happiness.

PUBLICATION

I vividly recall the meeting when I first proposed the idea of the book to the Dalai Lama. I was feeling far from confident. Over the years I had noted his skill at deflecting such proposals—so, fully expecting that he would turn down my request, I had come prepared, ready to argue my case.

"Your Holiness, I know that you have already written two dozen books," I began, "but this book will be quite different. The objective is to distill the essential principles that you live by, which have enabled you to achieve a happy life. And even though these underlying principles may be based on Buddhism, I hope to present your beliefs in a way that can be applied by individuals from any background or tradition, showing how to apply these principles in their daily lives to cultivate greater happiness...."

"Ah, very good!" he said with enthusiasm.

"And then from my perspective as a psychiatrist," I continued, "I'd like to examine your views on happiness, on what makes life worthwhile, within the context of Western psychology, even looking for scientific evidence that might support your views."

“Yes. Okay!” the Dalai Lama said decisively, nodding his head in agreement to my proposal.

Without taking a breath, I pressed on, driven by my preconceived belief that he would not readily agree. My mind was so focused on convincing him, so intent on dazzling him with my arguments, that I had no attention left over to actually attend to what he was saying or to register his response.

Looking a bit perplexed, the Dalai Lama suddenly interrupted me.

“Howard,” he said, starting to laugh, “I already agreed. Why are you still arguing the case?”

Finally grasping that he had agreed to my proposal, I felt a surge of elation—among my objectives and reasons for proposing this book, there was a more selfish motive that I had conveniently forgotten to mention: I wanted to learn from him how I myself could become happier.

We began work on the book in 1993, during the Dalai Lama’s first visit to Arizona, my home state. That week he had an intensive teaching schedule, delivering a brilliant commentary on a classic text by Shantideva, the great eighth-century Indian Buddhist scholar. Despite his long daily teaching sessions, we managed to carve out some time to meet, aided by the fact that he was staying at the same place where his public teachings were being given, a resort hotel in the Sonoran Desert, outside Tucson. So every morning after breakfast, and in some late afternoons as well, we met in his suite, as I posed question after question, soliciting his views about life, about the things that truly make life worthwhile, the vital questions related to human happiness and suffering.

Over the months prior to our conversations, I had spent a great deal of time preparing a list of questions, carefully arranging their sequence according to a tightly organized outline that filled a thick three-ring binder. So when I showed up for our first meeting, I was ready. And it took only minutes for the Dalai Lama to relieve me of any illusions I might have had about controlling the direction of the discussion. I had planned on sticking with my set agenda in an orderly fashion, breezing through the questions one by one like knocking down a row of dominoes. But I quickly discovered that he apparently felt no compulsion to follow my agenda. His answers to my questions were often unanticipated, suddenly turning the conversation in a completely new direction. I might be following a certain train of thought, when suddenly that train would become derailed as he went off on an unexpected tangent. So I found our discussions to be challenging at times. At the same time, the Dalai Lama’s quick mind and robust sense of humor kept the conversations lively, and riveted my attention throughout.

Those conversations, supplemented with material from his public talks, provided the core material for the book, which was later expanded by additional discussions at his home in India. Quickly becoming absorbed in the project, I decided to temporarily give up practicing psychiatry in order to devote my full attention to exploring human happiness, seeking an approach that bridged East and West. I estimated that it would take perhaps six months to complete the book, and with the Dalai Lama as a coauthor, I figured that finding a publisher would be easy.

As it turned out, I was wrong. Five years later, I was still working on the book. And the thick stack of rejection letters accumulating on my desk from literary agents and publishers was a growing testament to the prevailing wisdom in the publishing industry at that time: the belief that books by the Dalai Lama held no appeal to a mainstream audience. In addition, they claimed, the public simply didn’t seem to be interested in the topic of human happiness.

By 1998, after years of continual rejections, and with my financial resources finally depleted, it seemed I had few options left. Still, determined to see that at least a few new readers could benefit from the Dalai Lama’s wisdom, I planned to use the last of my retirement savings to self-publish a small number of copies. Strangely, however, it was right at that point that the mother of a close friend happened to make an offhand remark to a stranger on a New York subway—a stranger who turned out to be in the publishing industry—which initiated a series of connections that finally led to agreements with both a literary agent and a good mainstream publisher. And so, with a small first printing and modest expectations, the book was at last released.

UNEXPECTED SUCCESS