

Community Circles

A New Day, with Rev. Melanie Eyre

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*One great question underlies our existence. What is the purpose of life?
After much consideration, I believe that the purpose of life is to find
happiness.*

~ His Holiness the Dalai Lama

In April of 2015, the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu met at the Dalai Lama's residence-in-exile, Dharamsala, located in Northwest India. Their purpose was to embark on "a quest to understand joy." Their conversations over the coming week were recorded by author Daniel Abrams and released in his book called "The Book of Joy." Their message is that we are here to be joyful, and, no matter the circumstances of our lives, we can do it.

So what is the path to a joyful life? They agreed that it's not acquisition of many possessions, professional success, or even great wealth. True joy, they said, is not "dependent on the vicissitudes of circumstance." "Joy," Archbishop Tutu said, "is much bigger than happiness. While happiness is often seen as being dependent on external circumstances, joy is not."

The Dalai Lama disagreed here, but only because his definition of happiness is very akin to Archbishop Tutu's articulation of joy. Each envisions a deep and profound sense of satisfaction and balance, arising from one's inner state and not surrounding events.

In their conversation they identified 8 pillars of joy, and I give them here. During our talk on Sunday I invited each listener to list their own "pillars of joy", and bring them to our discussion. ***What were your pillars of joy? Let's discuss yours as well as the list given by Archbishop Tutu and the Dalai Lama.***

Here are the 8 pillars of joy discerned by these two wise men:

First are four pillars of the mind. They are:

1. **Perspective** – reframe events in a way that uplifts by stepping back and looking from all angles.
2. **Humility** – realize your connection to others as you boot yourself off center stage.

3. **Humor** – nothing defuses a tense situation and brings people together like humor.

4. **Acceptance** – Here, the Dalai Lama reflected the wisdom of Shantideva, who said “If something can be done about the situation, what need is there for dejection? And if nothing can be done about it, what use is there for being dejected?”

Next are four pillars of the heart. They are:

5. **Forgiveness** – no one is incapable of forgiving, the Archbishop said, and no one is unforgivable. Forgiveness enables us to continue to love, and in forgiving we heal ourselves.

6. **Gratitude** – the Dalai Lama recommends we begin every day with the thought “ I am fortunate to be alive. I have a precious human life. I am not going to waste it.” Can you live every day in that energy?

7. **Compassion** – compassion and the next pillar, generosity, are the cornerstones of joy according to the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Tutu. Compassion is not pity. Compassion is opening your heart to others in a way that leads to acts of kindness, generosity, and comfort.

8. **Generosity**- both men described the quality of generosity as a “generosity of the spirit,” and said that in practicing generosity we really practice all the other pillars as well.

Abrams put it this way: “In generosity, there is a wider perspective, in which we see our connection to all others. There is a humility that recognizes our place in the world and acknowledges that at another time we could be the one in need, whether that need is material, emotional, or spiritual. There is a sense of humor and an ability to laugh at ourselves so that we do not take ourselves too seriously. There is an acceptance of life, in which we do not force life to be other than what it is. There is a forgiveness of others and a release of what might otherwise have been. There is a gratitude for all that we have been given. Finally, we see others with a deep compassion and a desire to help those who are in need.”

What are your thoughts on this list? What would you add, or remove? How do you find joy?