

The Four Causes of Happiness

by

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All living beings have the same general wish: we all want to be happy and free from suffering. Everyone shares this common wish. It doesn't matter which country we're from, what tradition we follow, our background, or our beliefs—our goal is the same.

We should embrace this deep, common ground we share, and try to respect, appreciate, and have patience with one another. We're here to learn from one another, support one another, and to grow together. Everyone is important and special.

Since we all like happiness and peace, we shouldn't ignore their causes. We can't really expect results to appear without their causes. There is nothing we know of where results have arisen without their necessary causes and conditions. So, as much as we love the results, we should also love the causes and conditions behind them. As much as we want to be happy, we have to love the causes for happiness as well. The foundation of happiness is to bring more joy to our own hearts—appreciation for who we are and what we have. Many times we ignore what we already have. We're always looking ahead to somewhere else without looking at our own richness. We look outside at what others have and ignore our own beauty. We should have more joy and appreciation for who we are and what we already have. We're all such amazing beings who are so fortunate to enjoy one another's company. Let's deeply remember our richness, and celebrate and appreciate one another and ourselves.

The first cause of happiness is to see that it's not enough for us to be happy without thinking about others. We should expand our concern for the happiness of all living beings. Wishing and working for others' happiness is called "love." Boundless love is the basic nature of all living beings. Without love everything becomes dry. Love makes everything rich, lush, and vital. It's like a protein that makes a more nutritious life. Love without clinging naturally shines on every living being like sunlight. We become a friend to everyone, and our mind becomes very calm and peaceful, clear and gentle. This is something we can experience for ourselves. With love, we see everyone as special, beautiful, and lovely—outside and inside. We might not see this because of our limited preferences and vision, but everyone has unique beauty. We depend on others for everything we have—their cooperation and support makes everything possible for us. We're here for all living beings and we have a responsibility to love everyone. So we should bring on the love, opening and radiating it in our hearts as much as we can.

The second cause of happiness is compassion, which is the outreaching expression of our love. Compassion is the wish and activity to help relieve the suffering of others. When someone we love is in trouble, we naturally feel compassion and want to help. Every living being experiences difficulties, suffering, and sorrow. No one is above that. Genuine compassion connects to others in their current situation. We stand with them and share their experience, their thoughts, and their pains. We can offer our help according to our capabilities, and each time feel joy, appreciation, and happiness for however much we're able to help, and sincerely wish to be able to help more in the future. If we have courage, commitment, and determination, gradually our capabilities will grow and our compassionate activities will increase. Rather than becoming bored and tired with others' difficulties—including our own—take them as opportunities to increase our courage, confidence, joy, and our love, compassion, and wisdom.

The third cause of happiness is rejoicing. Rejoicing in others' happiness is very special because it reaffirms and strengthens our own love and compassion. When we love someone and they experience some degree of happiness and peace, or they're relieved of suffering and difficulties, it's always a cause to rejoice. How wonderful it is! How special it is! May their joy, peace, and achievement last forever! Rather than feeling jealous or competitive with their success, let's celebrate their happiness and wish that it becomes even greater! This is boundless joy.

Along with boundless love, boundless compassion, and boundless joy, the fourth cause of happiness is boundless equanimity, or balance. With balance we become more flexible and strong so that we can grow and develop without allowing anything to become too rigid and extreme. We become imbalanced when we hold on to things too tightly. Deep down, our nature is open and fluid, dynamic, creative, and inclusive. With boundless equanimity, we bring balance to our activities and our minds, and we're more fully expressive of our goodness nature.

Where do these boundless qualities of love, compassion, joy, and equanimity come from? We all know that these don't come from outside. They come from our own hearts and minds. They're an infinite treasure that we already have—we just have to open and reveal them. This is the nature of the mind. When we're in touch with our love, it means we're in touch with the essence of our mind and hearts. Whatever we do, it's so important to be in touch with our hearts and minds. Essentially this means that we relax into the nature of our minds, and share our natural, beautiful qualities with others. This will bring lasting happiness for everyone. ❁

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Ven. Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche (1938-2010) and Ven. Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal Rinpoche established the Padmasambhava Buddhist Center (PBC) in 1989 to preserve the authentic message of Buddha Shakyamuni and Guru Padmasambhava in its entirety, and in particular to teach the traditions of the Nyingma school and Vajrayana Buddhism. PBC includes over 20 centers in the U.S.A., India, Puerto Rico, Latvia, and Russia, as well as monastic institutions in India, the U.S.A., and Russia.

Ven. Khenpo Tsewang Rinpoche was born in eastern Tibet and enthroned as a Nyingmapa abbot by His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche. As a holder of the complete Nyingmapa lineage, Khenpo Tsewang Rinpoche is fully versed in the Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana schools, and is a master of Dzogchen. He has co-authored over 25 Dharma books in English with Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche, and travels throughout the world giving teachings, empowerments, and personal guidance in fluent English at numerous retreats.

Padma Samye Ling Monastery and Retreat Center (PSL) is located in Delaware County in upstate New York. Located in the western region of the Catskill mountains, the outstanding facilities are contained within 500 acres of forests, meadows, and natural springs. PSL hosts group and personal retreats throughout the year, as well as an annual philosophical Shedra, weekly Dharma Study, and a long-term residency volunteer program.

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