



Rejoicing is really the antidote. And if you practice it regularly, your mind can be so happy, because then everything you look at you feel good about. You vanquish competition and everything you look at—“Oh, I’m so glad so-and-so got the promotion. I’m so glad so-and-so has a really good relationship. I’m so glad so-and-so is having a wonderful retreat, very peaceful. I’m so glad so-and-so, you know, has wealth and they get to go traveling or whatever they’re doing.”

Just again and again, in our minds saying, “I’m so happy, I’m so happy that so-and-so...,” you know? To train the mind to do that, it is mental training. Instead of the habit now of “How come they get and I don’t?” it’s the habit of “How wonderful that is. How delightful—there’s so much suffering in the world and I’m seeing somebody who has a good condition who’s happy, who’s peaceful, who are—they’re able to fulfill what they want.” That’s wonderful. And then you look at the next person and you think the same way. So think, deliberately cultivating rejoicing and training our mind in rejoicing can bring an incredible amount of happiness.

It also creates a lot of merit, because if we rejoice in people who are equal to us, we receive the same merit, simply from the mental act of rejoicing as we would if we did the action ourselves. If we rejoice in their virtuous activities of somebody who’s lower than us, we receive virtue that is greater than what they did, even though they did the action. If we rejoice in the virtues of those who are superior to us, like the buddhas and bodhisattvas, then we get a portion, some fraction, you know, of the amount of merit that they get. They say rejoicing at the merit of others is the lazy person’s way to create good karma. [*Laughs.*]

You don’t even need to go out and do the virtuous action yourself. You can sit there on the couch and rejoice. [*Laughs.*] You know, “I rejoice at so-and-so’s generosity in giving their wealth. I rejoice in so-and-so’s generosity in teaching. I rejoice in so-and-so’s virtue created by getting to do retreat. I rejoice in so-and-so’s generosity from being a socially engaged Buddhist. I rejoice in this and that and the other thing.” You feel so happy and you’re just sitting there on the sofa. And you’re creating a ton of merit. So it’s really a good deal. [*Laughs.*] So if we want to be happy, we should train our mind in rejoicing.

Okay. We have a little time for questions.

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Man 1: Since becoming a Buddhist I have changed from doing one disgusting thing—*[Laughs.]*—to a different disgusting thing. I’d like to know how to stop that. I used to—when I would see somebody that I would call “evil” who was doing harmful things to others, making others suffer—I would wish suffering upon them, you know.

Now what I do—it may not be that much different—is I say to my wife, “Well, they’re creating a lot of negative karma.” I wish, I pray that that negative karma ripens... immediately. *[Laughs.]* So it’s a way of not wishing them harm, but still wishing them harm. Because I realize that they are creating negative karma, but I am wishing that that negative karma will—

Thubten Chodron: Ripen immediately.

Man 1: Ripen... yeah. How do I get out of that?

Thubten Chodron: Okay. So instead of rejoicing—instead of when somebody’s doing something unethical or something you just don’t like, no matter what it is, you used to wish that they get hit by a truck, now you just sit there and say, “Well, they’re creating negative karma and may their negative karma ripen *[Laughs]* ASAP—” Okay. Isn’t that kind of a disgusting mental state?

You have to ask yourself, you know, “Do I want to continue having that kind of mental state?” I mean, I want to be able to look at myself and have some sense of integrity, and that mind that rejoices in others’ misery is not gonna be the cause of my feeling good about myself. So I need to just leave that way of thinking behind. Mm? Then, actually, you should do the taking and giving meditation—and take on the result of that negative karma so that they don’t have to experience it.

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Man 2: Since I have started this practice I am realizing that a sense of fairness has mixed messages. Especially in our society, which really touts justice, like you were saying, and a sense of fairness and equality. But there are pitfalls with that. What are some situations or skills to maybe utilize fairness in positive ways without falling into those “It’s not fair” mindsets.

Thubten Chodron: Mm. Okay. So how to use the sense of unfairness in a positive way.



Man 2: Sure. Yeah.

Thubten Chodron: Okay. This is not necessarily something I would teach to somebody else who's in a disadvantaged position, who is not a Buddhist. Because if somebody does not have deep faith in the law of karma and its effect, it's gonna come out all wrong. It's gonna come out like, “Well, you're that way cause you created the karma; so too bad, buddy,” which is not the meaning of it at all. So I would never say this to anybody who didn't have a strong sense of karma and its effects. But in looking at the situation myself, when I feel that there's discrimination against me or there's unfairness or whatever, again, to say, “Well, I created the cause for this. In a previous life I might have had more power, more prestige. I was arrogant. I touted to everybody else. So this lifetime I'm born in the opposite position.”

It even says that in the scriptures, when they talk about karmic causes for things. If I'm in this position I created the cause, because I was so arrogant. So I don't like being in this position.” And “I'm still competitive and jealous and arrogant now I just don't have as much to be arrogant about as before. But that arrogance is still in my mind. So I need to really work on myself and stop this whole thing of comparing myself to others. And instead learn to look at everybody equally and think that happiness is happiness no matter whose it is and to rejoice in it. Suffering is suffering no matter whose it is; I'm going to seek to remedy it. So I'm gonna stop putting myself as number one, because the self-centered attitude, again and again, creates the cause for my own misery.”

I find for me that that works quite well. Or, like I said, you know, sometimes when we're in a disadvantaged position we can progress, again, in a way that we never would have if we're in it in an advantaged position. Because when you're in a disadvantaged position, you can actually develop very strong renunciation of samsara, because you're not, you know, befuddled and enchanted by samsaric good qualities, thinking, “I want them.” You're able to see the rottenness of samsara and develop the wish to be free of it. It also gives you the opportunity to develop strong compassion for other people who are even more disadvantaged than we are. If I feel bad because of the impediment I have, imagine how other people feel. Can I look at those people with a kind heart? Can I smile at them? Can I help them feel better or give them something that would enrich their lives?

So you change, you look at the situation in a different way. And it actually helps you to develop your good qualities.



Man 3: At the very beginning of your talk you spoke about the mind that compares. What came to me is that comparison is one of the fundamental ways that we learn. And so in terms of children, in terms of new jobs, in terms of formal education, in terms of all these things, we're constantly comparing and situating our experience within that to make meaning. My question was, specific to the mind of comparison, how do we cultivate practical and applied introspective awareness in terms of that mind of comparison?

Thubten Chodron: So what you're saying is in our society we really learn and progress through comparing ourselves with others. And so your question is how do we use the introspective awareness to—

Man 3: Stop us from engaging in those detrimental comparisons in which the value judgments arise? We're still going to compare, but maybe we don't have to have discourse that creates the infliction of jealousy.

Thubten Chodron: So how to have introspective awareness to stop the kind of comparison that creates jealousy and pride... because if you want to eliminate jealousy, you have to eliminate pride, too. His Holiness often talks about competing or comparing ourselves with ourselves. You know, so instead of “I'm better than somebody else,” or “they're better than me,” you know, “I've been able to do this. How can I take the next step forward?” And so remaining focused on ourselves and what we're able to do and not, and say, “How can I take the next step?” Because you're saying that we learn by comparing ourselves to others as if that were an efficient way to learn. Actually, it's very inefficient, because we waste a whole lot of time in jealousy and arrogance.