



The Art of Happiness in a Troubled World (Art of Happiness Book)

By Dalai Lama, Howard Cutler M.D.

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Blending common sense and modern psychiatry, *The Art of Happiness in a Troubled World* applies Buddhist tradition to twenty-first-century struggles in a relevant way. The result is a wise approach to dealing with human problems that is both optimistic and realistic, even in the most challenging times.

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His Holiness the Dalai Lama has suffered enormously throughout his life, yet he always seems to be smiling and serene. How does he do it? In *The Art of Happiness in a Troubled World*, Dr. Cutler walks readers through the Dalai Lama's philosophy on how to achieve peace of mind and come to terms with life's inherent suffering. Together, the two examine the roots of many of the problems facing the world and show us how we can approach these calamities in a way that alleviates suffering, and helps us along in our personal quests to be happy. Through stories, meditations, and in-depth conversations, the Dalai Lama teaches readers to identify the cultural influences and ways of thinking that lead to personal unhappiness, making sense of the hardships we face personally, as well as the afflictions suffered by others.

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Editorial Review

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With a title as promising and intriguing as this one, the current Dalai Lama can't miss. In this sequel to his best-selling *The Universe in a Single Atom* (2005), His Holiness taps into a universal nerve that begs to be soothed and comforted in the midst of the chaos and confusion that characterize modern existence. Not surprisingly, readers are counseled to apply general Buddhist philosophy and traditions to the often baffling host of contemporary dilemmas and conditions that besiege us daily. Culled from multiple conversations with the Dalai Lama, these anecdotes, messages, and meditations are intended as both a temporary balm and as a possible path to enlightenment. Divided into three primary sections: "I, Us, and Them," "Violence versus Dialogue," and "Happiness in a Troubled World," the fluid narrative attempts to address and assuage all the most pressing twenty-first-century issues. As the authors are articulating an essentially positive message and the Nobel Prize-winning Dalai Lama commands almost universal respect and reverence, expect broad appeal among people who subscribe to a variety of faiths and philosophies. --Margaret Flanagan

About the Author

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people. He is a recipient of the Raoul Wallenberg Congressional Human Rights Award, the Albert Schweitzer Humanitarian Award, and the Nobel Peace Prize. He lives in Dharamsala, India.

Howard C. Cutler, MD, is a psychiatrist, bestselling author, and speaker. He is coauthor, with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, of the acclaimed *Art of Happiness* series of books. He is a diplomate of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology and is on the editorial board of *The American Journal of Psychotherapy*. He lives in Phoenix, Arizona.

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Chapter 1

ME VERSUS WE

I think this is the first time I am meeting most of you. But whether it is an old friend or a new friend, there's not much difference anyway, because I always believe we are the same: We are all just human beings. -H.H.
THE DALAI LAMA, SPEAKING TO A CROWD OF MANY THOUSANDS

Time passes. The world changes. But there is one constant I have grown used to over the years, while intermittently traveling on speaking tours with the Dalai Lama: When speaking to a general audience, he invariably opens his address, "We are all the same . . ."

Once establishing a bond with each member of the audience in that way, he then proceeds to that evening's particular topic. But over the years I've witnessed a remarkable phenomenon: Whether he is speaking to a small formal meeting of leaders on Capitol Hill, addressing a gathering of a hundred thousand in Central Park, an interfaith dialogue in Australia, or a scientific conference in Switzerland, or teaching twenty thousand monks in India, one can sense an almost palpable effect. He seems to create a feeling among his audience not only of connection to him, but of connection to one another, a fundamental human bond.

It was early on a Monday morning and I was back in Dharamsala, scheduled to meet shortly with the Dalai Lama for our first meeting in a fresh series of discussions. Home to a thriving Tibetan community, Dharamsala is a tranquil village built into a ridge of the Dauladar mountain range, the foothills of the Himalayas in northern India. I had arrived a few days earlier, around the same time as the Dalai Lama himself, who had just returned home from a three-week speaking tour in the United States.

I finished breakfast early, and as the Dalai Lama's residence was only a five-minute walk along a mountain path from the guesthouse where I was staying, I retired to the common room to finish my coffee and review my notes in preparation for our meeting. Though the room was deserted, someone had left on the TV tuned to the world news. Absorbed in my notes, I wasn't paying much attention to the news and for several minutes the suffering of the world was nothing but background noise.

It wasn't long, however, before I happened to look up and a story caught my attention. A Palestinian suicide bomber had detonated an explosive at a Tel Aviv disco, deliberately targeting Israeli boys and girls. Almost two dozen teenagers were killed. But killing alone apparently was not satisfying enough for the terrorist. He had filled his bomb with rusty nails and screws for good measure, in order to maim and disfigure those whom he couldn't kill.

Before the immense cruelty of such an act could fully sink in, other news reports quickly followed—a bleak mix of natural disasters and intentional acts of violence . . . the Crown Prince of Nepal slaughters his entire family . . . survivors of the Gujarat earthquake still struggle to recover.

Fresh from accompanying the Dalai Lama on his recent tour, I found that his words "We are all the same" rang in my head as I watched these horrifying stories of suddenly suffering and misery. I then realized I had been listening to these reports as if the victims were vague, faceless abstract entities, not a group of individuals "the same as me." It seemed that the greater the sense of distance between me and the victim, the less real they seemed to be, the less like living, breathing human beings. But now, for a moment, I tried to imagine what it would be like to be one of the earthquake victims, going about my usual daily chores one moment and seventy-five seconds later having no family, home, or possessions, suddenly becoming penniless and alone.

"We are all the same." It was a powerful principle, and one that I was convinced could change the world.

"Your Holiness," I began, "I'd like to talk with you this morning about this idea that we are all the same. You know, in today's world there is such a pervasive feeling of isolation and alienation among people, a feeling of separateness, even suspicion. It seems to me that if we could somehow cultivate this sense of connection to others, a real sense of connection on a deep level, a common bond, I think it could completely transform society. It could eliminate so many of the problems facing the world today. So this morning I'd like to talk about this principle that we are all the same, and—"

"We are all the same?" the Dalai Lama repeated.

"Yes, and—"

"Where did you get this idea?" he asked.

"Huh?"

"Who gave you this idea?"

"You . . . you did," I stammered, a bit confused.

"Howard," he said bluntly, "we are not all the same. We're different! Everybody is different."

"Yes, of course," I quickly amended myself, "we all have these superficial differences, but what I mean is-

"Our differences are not necessarily superficial," he persisted. "For example, there is one senior Lama I know who is from Ladakh. Now, I am very close to this Lama, but at the same time, I know that he is a Ladakhee. No matter how close I may feel toward this person,

it's never going to make him Tibetan. The fact remains that he is a Ladakhee."

I had heard the Dalai Lama open his public addresses with "We are all the same" so often over the years that this turn of conversation was starting to stagger me.

"Well, on your tours over the years, whenever you speak to big audiences, and even on this most recent, you always say, 'We are all the same.' That seems like a really strong theme in your public talks. For example, you say how people tend to focus on our differences, but we are all the same in terms of our desire to be happy and avoid suffering, and-

"Oh yes. Yes," he acknowledged. "And also we have the same human potential. Yes, I generally begin my talk with these things. This is because many different people come to see me. Now I am a Buddhist monk. I am Tibetan. Maybe others' backgrounds are different. So if we had no common basis, if we had no characteristics that we share, then there is no point in my talk, no point in sharing my views. But the fact is that we are all human beings. That is the very basis upon which I'm sharing my personal experience with them."

"That is the kind of idea I was getting at-this idea that we are all human beings," I explained, relieved that we were finally on the same page. "I think if people really had a genuine feeling inside, that all human beings were the same and they were the same as other people, it would completely transform society . . . I mean in a genuine way. So, I'm hoping we can explore this issue a little bit."

The Dalai Lama responded, "Then to really try to understand this, we need to investigate how we come to think of ourselves as independent, isolated or separate, and how we view others as different or separate, and see if we can come to a deeper understanding. But we cannot start from the standpoint of saying simply we are all the same and denying that there are differences."

"Well, that is kind of my point. I think we can agree that if people related to each other as fellow human beings, if everyone related to other people like you do, on that basic human level, like brothers and sisters, as I've heard you refer to people, the world would be a far better place. We wouldn't have all these problems that I want to talk to you about later, and you and I could talk about football games or movies instead!

"So, I don't know," I continued, "but it seems that your approach to building the sense of connection between people is to remind them of the characteristics they share as human beings. The way you do whenever you have the opportunity to speak to a large audience."

"Yes." He nodded.

"I don't know . . ." I repeated again. "It is such an important topic, so simple an idea yet so difficult in reality, that I'm just wondering if there are any other methods of facilitating that process, like speeding it up, or motivating people to view things from that perspective, given the many problems in the world today."

"Other methods . . ." he said slowly, taking a moment to carefully consider the question while I eagerly anticipated his insights and wisdom. Suddenly he started to laugh. As if he had a sudden epiphany, he exclaimed, "Yes! Now if we could get beings from Mars to come down to the earth, and pose some kind of threat, then I think you would see all the people on Earth unite very quickly! They would join together, and say, 'We, the people of the earth!' " He continued laughing.

Unable to resist his merry laugh, I also began to laugh. "Yes, I guess that would about do it," I agreed. "And I'll see what I can do to speak to the Interplanetary Council about it. But in the meantime, while we're all waiting for the Mothership to arrive, any other suggestions?"

Thus we began a series of conversations that would continue intermittently for several years. The discussion began that morning with my casually tossing around the phrase "We are all the same" as if I was coming up with a slogan for a soft drink ad that was going to unite the world. The Dalai Lama responded with his characteristic refusal to reduce important questions to simplistic formulas. These were critical human questions: How can we establish a deep feeling of connection to others, a genuine human bond, including those who may be very different? Is it possible to even view your enemy as a person essentially like yourself? Is it possible to really see all human beings as one's brothers and sisters, or is this a utopian dream?

Our discussions soon broadened to address other fundamental issues dealing with the relationship between the individual and society. Serious questions were at stake: Is it possible to be truly happy when social problems invariably impact our personal happiness? In seeking happiness do we choose the path of inner development or social change?

As our discussions progressed, the Dalai Lama addressed these questions not as abstract concepts or philosophical speculation but as realities within the context of our everyday lives, quickly revealing how these questions are directly related to very real problems and concerns.

In these first discussions in Dharamsala, we dealt with the challenge of how to shift one's orientation from Me to We. Less than a year later, I returned to Dharamsala for our second series of conversations-September 11 had occurred in the interim, initiating the worldwide War on Terror. It was clear that cultivating a We orientation was not enough. Acutely reminded that where there is a "we" there is also a "they," we now had to face the potential problems raised by an "us against them" mind-set: prejudice, suspicion, indifference, racism, conflict, violence, cruelty, and a wide spectrum of ugly and terrible attitudes with which human beings can treat one another.

When we met in Tucson, Arizona, several years later, the Dalai Lama began to weave together the ideas from our many conversations on these topics, presenting a coherent approach to coping with our troubled world, explaining how to maintain a feeling of hope and even happiness despite the many problems of today's world.

But that Monday morning we began on the most fundamental level, exploring our customary notions about who we are and how we relate to the world around us, beginning with how we relate to those in our own communities and the role that plays in our personal and societal happiness.

"No Sense of Community, No Anchor"

On a recent Friday afternoon, an unemployed twenty-year-old posted a message on YouTube, simply offering to "be there" for anyone who needed to talk. "I never met you, but I do care," he said.

By the end of the weekend, he had received more than five thousand calls and text messages from strangers taking him up on his offer.

Continuing our discussion, I reviewed. "You know, Your Holiness, our discussions over the years have revolved around the theme of human happiness. In the past we discussed happiness from the individual standpoint, from the standpoint of inner development. But now we are talking about human happiness at the level of society, exploring some of the societal factors that may affect human happiness. I know of course that you have had the opportunity to travel around the world many times, visiting many different countries, so many different cultures, as well as meeting with many different kinds of people and experts in so many fields."

"Yes."

"So, I was just wondering—in the course of your travels, is there any particular aspect of modern society that you have noticed that you feel acts as a major obstruction to the full expression of human happiness? Of course, there are many specific problems in today's world, like violence, racism, terrorism, the gap between rich and poor, the environment, and so on. But here I'm wondering if there is more of a general feature of society that stands out in your mind as particularly significant?"

Seated upon a wide upholstered chair, the Dalai Lama bent down to unlace his plain brown shoes while he silently reflected on the question. Then, tucking his feet under him in a cross-legged position,

settling in for a deeper discussion, he replied, "Yes. I was just thinking there is one thing I have noticed, something that is very important. I think it could be best characterized as a lack of sense of community. Tibetans are always shocked to hear of situations where people are living in close proximity, have neighbors, and they may have been your neighbors for months or even years, but you have hardly any contact with them! So you might simply greet them when you meet, but otherwise you don't know them. There is no real connection. There is no sense of community. These situations we always find very surprising, because in the traditional Tibetan society, the sense of community is very strong."

The Dalai Lama's comment hit home with me—literally and figuratively. I thought, not without some embarrassment, that I myself didn't know the names of my neighbors. Nor had I known my neighbors' names for many years.

Of course, I was not about to admit that now. "Yes," I said, "you will certainly see those kinds of situations."

The Dalai Lama went on to explain, "In today's world you will sometimes find these communities or societies where there is no spirit of cooperation, no feeling of connection. Then you'll see widespread loneliness set in. I feel that a sense of community is so important. I mean even if you are very rich, if you don't have human companions or friends to share your love with, sometimes you end up simply sharing it with a pet, an animal, which is better than nothing. However, even if you are in a poor community, the poor will have each other. So there is a real sense that you have a kind of an anchor, an emotional anchor. Whereas, if this sense of community is lacking, then when you feel lonely, and when you have pain, there is no one to really share it with. I think this kind of loneliness is probably a major problem in today's world,

and can certainly affect an individual's day-to-day happiness.

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