

These emails are designed to assist you to live a Heart Centred Life by giving you understandings and practices that you can use in your daily life.

Generosity: from Physical to Spiritual

Heart Thought 21, 20/5/08

by Nicholas de Castella

**What isn't given is lost
So when the world is on fire with ageing and death, one should salvage [one's wealth] by
giving:
what's given is well salvaged.**

**What's given bears fruit as pleasure. What isn't given does not:
thieves take it away, or kings; it gets burnt by fire or lost.
— [SN 1.41](#)**

I would like to invite you to pause for a moment, focus on your heart, and breath gently. Call to mind someone you love or some of the good things you are blessed to enjoy in your life. Breathe as if you could breathe into your heart and see if you can feel a sense of expansion, openness, fullness, spaciousness or abundance. [We call this a Heart Centring]

It is from this place of connection and open heartedness that the spirit of generosity flows naturally. And in expressing generous we feel an even larger sense of expansion and oneness.

Last week I wrote about Tonglen, the practice of welcoming suffering in and breathing out peace, happiness and gratitude.

This week I want to focus your attention on Tonglen's cousin, generosity. The practice of giving freely from a place of compassion, abundance and love. The origins of the word generosity are denoting noble birth. My family motto is: To serve God is to Rule". I started these weekly Heart Thoughts as my way of expressing generosity this year, my way of giving something freely as a way of being of service.

Generosity

Generosity has some kind of reference to giving more than is reasonable or expected and without any conditions or expectations of return. It also has a lovely aspect of giving freely and abundantly.

The inference in the quote above is that when we give freely we transform what is on the Earth plane into spiritual dimensions of goodness. Obviously when we die we do not take anything with us, but when we give to others we benefit from this kindness spiritually.

In Buddhism the three causes of suffering are:

1. Aversion: pushing away and resisting what we do not want (creates pain and anger)
2. Attachment: Trying to hold on to what we have / the way things are (creates pain and fear)

3. Self Absorption: Identification as our personality and our attempts to protect it. (creates fear and isolation)

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Generosity is the opposite of attachment.

The Perils of Miserliness

When we are stingy with our giving we close our hearts in resentment or fear that we will not have enough. This creates an instant sense of tightness in our heart, and separation from others. It also creates a heightened fear of not having enough and of not being supported by life. And it stops the flow of love and support from the universe in our lives (This tightening of flow of energy is often felt as tightness in our hands (grasping) and lower back (our support mechanism)).

The Benefits of Generosity

recent studies show that in response to the act of giving, our brain releases dopamine a hormone that induces a natural high. Shantideva, a famous Buddhist monk, said : “All misery comes from people trying to make themselves happy. And all true happiness comes from people wanting others to be happy“. Just try giving freely and you will see the truth of this.

When we give with generosity we affirm abundance and trust that life will support us.

Generosity gives us a chance to open our hearts and go beyond our self-centredness into a world of love and compassion.

Generosity Practices

Here are some ways that we can practice generosity:

Give freely of our time, energy or money to help others.

Maybe your neighbour needs some help.

Maybe there is a community project you could help with.

Maybe you could do some extra chores around the house.

Make a donation to a disaster appeal.

Sponsor a child in a third world country.

Be patient and understanding when others are contracted and shut down around us.

Instead of getting angry, practice understanding what they must be feeling.

Be forgiving if someone was having a bad day and snapped at you.

Understand that everyone is doing the best they can in that moment.

Understand that most people a good intention behind most of what they do.

Offer the wish that all people may enjoy the goodness that we enjoy

If you are enjoying a fine meal you simple say “I wish everyone could enjoy a meal like this”.

Offer the intention that all beings may enjoy the beauty that surrounds us

If it is a lovely sunny day, then your wish is that all people may enjoy such a day.

Delight in others’ good fortune (this is also the antidote to jealousy).

When others around you do well, acknowledge and celebrate their success.

Practice cultivating the feeling of generosity

Think of something you are attached to and imagine giving it way multiple times.

By the Way

Remember that you ay be called on to receive an act of generosity, so please do not deny the person who gives you a gift from the enjoyment they get. Just accept it with

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gratitude and thankfulness.

Why not choose something you can practice generosity on this week

And let me know if you have any other favorite any other ways of practicing generosity.

May you be happy and know the roots of happiness

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