



ONENESS



Bright Dawn Treasurers

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF BRIGHT DAWN CENTER OF ONENESS BUDDHISM

VOL. 22 NO. 4 WINTER 2018

WE ARE FAMILY

By Rev. Koyo Kubose

The core Buddhist teaching of Interdependency underlies the notion of family. In thinking on the theme of family, I had an interesting revelation. The idea of family does not have to be limited to one's blood relations. What is family can be broadened to include an amazing number of things. First of all, what does family means? A broad meaning is that family refers to a feeling of belonging or togetherness, where you have something in common with others. If you take this meaning of family, then you quickly realize that there are all kinds of families.

Consider our Bright Dawn family, which would include all who are interested in our Way of Oneness approach. This includes you, the readers of our Oneness newsletter. I'd also like to take this opportunity to introduce DJ Morris who is an addition to our newsletter editorial staff. Other important members of the Bright Dawn family are those who have completed our two-year lay ministry program. Lay minister Shaku Sayo Shenpan is now helping Adrienne administrate this program, which began a dozen years ago and now has over fifty lay ministers who are a resource pool to provide leadership continuity as our organization moves forward into the future. Previously I taught

all the program courses but now a host of lay ministers have taken responsibility of the curriculum needs.

The notion of family can be seen in the area of sports. The fans of a particular team, together with the members of the team itself, can be called a family. Some of you may recognize that the title of this article was also the slogan of the 1997 Pittsburg Pirates baseball team. If you are at a public social gathering and discover that some stranger is a fanatic fan of same sports team that you love, you probably could spend the entire evening sharing warm memories and laughing together. Maybe there are others at this gathering that also are fans of the same team. Suppose there are others who are fans of a rival team? You can easily imagine a family feud breaking out!

If you love classical music, you will have something in common with those who also feel the same way. Members of an orchestra would share a feeling of belongingness. Members who play the same instrument within the orchestra would have a similar feeling of togetherness. There can be a strong sense of family in various contexts, especially in situations where there are others present who differ from your group in some relevant way.

Similar feelings of family togetherness could exist among those who share a common hobby, favorite cuisine, occupation, and many kinds of demographics; e.g. race, religion, sex, etc. The context is important. For example, depending on where you may be traveling, a feeling of family could arise with those who reside in the same neighborhood, city, county, state, country, or in the case of alien life forms, there certainly would be a strong sense of family with fellow human beings.

If family means a sense of kinship, such a feeling could apply to our relationships with aspects of nature, and even with non-sentient things like rivers and mountains. Upon further reflection, there can be a feeling of family with anybody and anything. Literally, we are all family.



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TAKING GRATITUDE FOR GRANTED

By Niko Ana Burkhardt

We all hear quite a bit about the concept of gratitude around the holidays. People ask each other at family gatherings, “What are you grateful for?” and there are countless encouraging memes on social media nudging us to participate in this obligatory function of the season.

Don’t get me wrong, I am all about gratitude. In my profession as a Life Coach, I give clients “gratitude assignments” often as part of their coaching. The most common one being a daily gratitude journal in which a person will write down as many things as they can think of that they feel grateful for at the end of each day. The catch to this assignment is to not only write these things down and be done with them, but to really meditate on each one and invoke the feeling of specific gratitude for that specific things. Imagining it in your mind and really allowing the feelings to unfold and grow is a very experiential way to practice gratitude rather than an intellectual exercise.

What we take for granted is that we actually know how to be grateful. This may not be as easy as one would think because of something called a “negativity bias” that is genetic. Science can tell us so much about the brain now and we know that our brains are wired to constantly seek out potential threats and create scenarios for how we would deal with them. This comes from a genetic predisposition that was prevalent ages ago when we were running from tigers in the jungle. The humans who were the most hypervigilant were the ones who survived and passed their genetics on to the next generation.

This is just dandy for surviving but unfortunately, the part of our brain that keeps us alive doesn’t care whether we are happy or not. If living in a state of constant fear keeps you from being the one who gets eaten, our brains would have us choose that instead of a life of peace, ease and joy.

The funny thing is that for most of us, our lives are relatively safe. We could in fact live lives filled with peace and joy but our primal brains tell us otherwise. Our nervous system is keyed to detect any kind of perceived or real threat to our physical, emotional and mental survival. We spend time in our minds exploring all kinds of “just in case” scenarios about most everything that could go wrong.

When a threat is perceived, the brain signals the body to release stress hormones such as cortisol and directs the flow of blood away from the torso and into the limbs. It “turns off” the part of the brain that is involved in creative thinking, problem solving and so forth. All resources are being directed to what we need to either fight, flight or freeze.

What does this have to do with gratitude? Here’s the short answer. It is impossible to be in a state of gratitude and also be in a state of high stress. The two feelings are not compatible in your nervous system. While you might be able to understand what you “should” be grateful for, it will not be possible to maintain a state of gratitude when you are in a chronic stress pattern (which many of us are).

So what can we do about it? Science can also show how the brain is elastic and can be re-patterned. Just as you can train yourself to always see potential threats and problems, you can train your brain to recognize good things in your life and in the world. When this becomes a repeated practice, the part of the brain that can see possibilities other than ones related to survival, life becomes more than a race to win or “make it”.

When we practice gratitude in a real way with the things that are currently working well in our life or the things that are good about the world, we create more opportunities for this to be the norm in our life and grow more gratitude.

This does not mean you won’t still experience stress in your life. What it means is that you will be able to turn off the stress response once the situation or problem causing it is resolved. You will have a more balanced approach to things that would normally cause you to panic and perhaps make hasty decisions. You might even be able to see the silver lining in the cloud and know that the clouds always pass to reveal the sun.

When practicing holiday gratitude, consider making it a regular tool you use to cultivate more peace, joy and happiness in your life and in the lives of those around you.

Isn’t that the spirit of the season?



“INNER CELEBRATIONS”

By Wendy Shinyo Haylett

Happy Thanksgiving, Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas, Happy Kwanzaa, and Happy New Year!

We are in the time of celebrations, all happening within about six weeks. The celebratory spirit is wonderful! We need reasons to be joyous and come together for special moments and occasions. We need events to look forward to—calling our childlike spirit of anticipation and wonder from our rational day-to-day focus: the “grind” that often borders on drudgery and dread.

But some see this time of “the holidays” as more reason for dread. The commercialism ... the drive to “do it all” ... to create the perfect Thanksgiving or Christmas for our families and guests. Yet, I wonder if we tried to practice inner celebrations, focusing on the internal reasons for celebrations—every week, every day, and every hour—it might make these external celebrations and seasons seem less commercial or shallow?

I recently recorded and released a new episode of my podcast, Everyday Buddhism: Making Everyday Better, with guests Phakchok Rinpoche and Erric Solomon, talking about their recently released book, *Radically Happy: A User’s Guide to the Mind*. In the episode, Rinpoche spoke about how the external and internal worlds have completely different dynamics, yet we try to function in our internal world by applying external dynamics and the expectations of those dynamics. And that, he commented, can be a primary cause of our not being happy.

One of the key points of the book *Radically Happy* is something that seems pretty obvious and not so profound, especially to those of us practicing the Dharma: that real happiness (or radical happiness, “radical” meaning the core or “root” of happiness) is not found in situations and things. We know that, don’t we? Of course, we do! Yet the authors’ point, despite what we may admit to, is that “most of us behave as if we **do** really believe that circumstances and things are the key to happiness.” I think that is because what Rinpoche pointed out. There are certain external dynamics that contribute to successful outcomes like preparing or studying for an exam ... working extra hard to accurately evaluate or judge information for a company project ... protecting

our financial situation by choosing the right insurance ... and making good choices about ours and our loved ones’ health.

But there is the other part—the internal part—of those external experiences where we think, “OK, now everything will be perfect!” ... after we ace the exam ... get the promotion ... stabilize our financial life ... or get in shape. But that moment of happiness quickly fades. No sooner do we arrive at where we want to be, after our careful planning, then we worry about how to protect where we are, or whether it will last, or we begin to think that maybe things could be even better. Our internal dialogue—that real-time, play-by-play announcer—never pauses and constantly judges how our lives are good or bad now ... or how we like or don’t like something ... or what we plan to do or say ... or how we wish we HADN’T done or said something. So, it seems that this happiness thing is elusive right? If we achieve “THE” happiness event that we seek, our happiness quickly dissipates. Or, as the authors’ wrote, “our future discomfort is generated the moment we settle into a comfortable position.... And the same external circumstances that seemed to be producing happiness and contentment become— inescapably—the foundation for future dissatisfaction.”

They summarized it in three points:

1) *We aren’t very good at predicting what will make us happy.*

2) *If and when we do seem to get it right, and we do manage to create all the right circumstances for happiness, we nonetheless find it’s difficult for us to fully enjoy them. Either we become preoccupied with prolonging them, or unhappy at their fleeting nature.*

3) *What first makes us happy becomes in turn the very basis for future discontent.*

“Inner Celebrations” continues on page 4

According to Phakchok Rinpoche’s teacher, his grandfather Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche:

“The very basis of our discontentment is our ongoing and never-ending evaluation of the quality of our experience.”

And this keeps us—blocks us—from seeing what is right in front of us all the time: the present moment.

The holidays seem to bring all of this into sharp relief, because we have so many expectations of how things should be ... or how we wish they would be ... or how they weren’t perfect when you were a child ... or how they could be perfect if only that one family member wasn’t there.

Maybe if we started a practice of focusing on inner celebrations, we could make the holidays truly happy, inside and out. What I mean is focus on the true meaning of each holiday rather than the external dynamics.

Not thinking or judging the perfect or imperfect dinnerware, place-setting, tablecloth, or food for Thanksgiving, but about being thankful—right now—for whatever is in front of us. The Cardinal on the tree out the window singing to you? The electricity and gas keeping your house warm and bright? And keeping your food cold, then warming it so you can eat?

Not about the size or shape of the Christmas tree or the cost of the gift, and not about the giver or receiver, but about giving. What gift are you receiving right now? The gift of heat from your furnace or fireplace? The gift of an “I love you” as you walk out the door in the morning? What gift are you giving? Did you replace the roll of toilet paper this morning? Did you clean up your breakfast dishes? Did you smile at the cashier and customers as you were waiting in line at the grocery store?

Not about what resolutions you broke or what resolutions you’re going to keep, but about how every day is a renewal of you ... a renewal of life. The ending of one year and the beginning of the next isn’t much of a transition, is it? And, just as the transition from one year to the next is not absolute, then the month, the week, the hour, minute, and second are also in question. Intellectually, we know this. As Buddhists, we know this. As Buddhists, time is the here and now. We also know that most major changes happen—unpredictably—in a flash—in a nanosecond. A car accident, death, birth.

Yes, I can look backwards and forwards at my external circumstances and behaviors, but maybe it’s more important to just look at where I am now. Right this instant. What is my intent, in this instance? What is my non-dual reality right now, if not measured against the past or future—let alone not measured against anyone else—and not labeled as past, future, good, bad?

As Gyomay Kubose Sensei wrote in *The Center Within*, describing the scroll written by Ryokan, “*nichi nichi kore jo jitsu.*” Every day is a good day.... All days are good days.... We are the ones who make comparisons according to our expectations.” And those “expectations” are the external dynamics that don’t belong in our inside experience. They don’t belong in our minds and hearts.

And again from Rev. Gyomay, in “Thoughts for the New Year” from *Everyday Suchness*, he wrote about a Japanese New Year greeting, “*Shinnen akemashite omedeto*”, which means a new year has “opened up.” I love that! It goes beyond expectations. It even goes beyond the certainty of a new year, because like a flower, it opened up. As he wrote in that talk, “New Year comes only to those who welcome it. After all, it is we who make a new year... it is in our minds.” But it is also in our hearts. It is truly inside, not functioning on external dynamics. In that same talk/essay, Sensei wrote a poem for the New Year. He wrote:

*Holding a warm heart
Together with people,
I will move forward;
Oh, this good year.*

Putting the teachings together of, Phakchok Rinpoche and Rev. Gyomay Kubose, Rinpoche said that our true practice of “radical happiness” is to “uncover our natural warm- heartedness... bringing interconnectedness to mindfulness, to find meaning and purpose.”

Maybe the miracle to revel in, on New Year’s—or any of the holidays and every day—is the miraculous ordinariness and the warmth of the people around us in the present moment.





HOLIDAY ADVICE

by Dharma Dan

For the coming winter holiday season, Dharma Dan advises us to live each day like a caterpillar:

Eat a lot.
Sleep a little.
Wake up beautiful!

Take the above advice not just for yourself, but for how to relate to others in your family. In fact, hum the melody and sing,

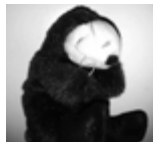
♪ You are so BUDDHA-FUL to me...♪

WHAT'S IN A NAME?



The Stork arrived for Dharma Dan and Shirley Squirrel. We asked our readers to submit some name suggestions, here are five entries:

1. **DANA** *Sanskrit, for generosity and giving. Nothing like being named after a Paramita!*
2. **DANIELLE** (if the furry one is a girl!) *It contains letters from both parents!*
3. **DAYSUN** (could be 2nd name, as the parents both go by two) *Link to Kubose tradition of inspirational "sunny" names*
4. From Arizona, a Dharma friend submitted: **SHIRDANA** (pretty neat, but... DRUM ROLL PLEASE...)
5. THE WINNER IS:
BODHI



Thank You to everyone who submitted!

JUST SO

by Eimi Okano

From the vantage point of being in the sunset years of my life, I now realize how true it is that Buddhism is for "old people" This is what I heard said (and accepted at face value) when I was in the springtime of my life.

Since my school years spent at Berkeley Buddhist Temple, I recited cursorily "Hard is it to be born into human life, now we are living it. Difficult is it to hear the teachings of the Blessed One; now we hear it..." not truly understanding the depth of its meaning...However, now when I recite these words, I think "how meaningful and how true it is. I think of all the eons of karmic forces in my life that had to line up perfectly, "just so". In order for me to be sitting right here reciting these truths...the wonder of it all...all the connections falling into place "just so". Most recently I thought of, my Hawaiian-born father, educated in Japan, asked to escort his sister to America, where he met my American-born mother who chose him from among her suitors in order for me to be here today. How fortunate for me. How awesome. Domo Arigatai! In my self-reflective moments, so grateful to be in the here and now ... living this life that is just right for me...

Namu Amida Butsu.





Seasonings
SAYINGS TO ADD A LITTLE FLAVOR TO LIFE

**One kind word can warm
three winter months.**

ONENESS NEWSLETTER WINTER 2018

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The purpose of the Bright Dawn Center is to offer a non-sectarian, non-dualistic approach, the Way of Oneness, to deepen individual spirituality in everyday life for people of all backgrounds

FEELING GREAT-FULL

by Sayo Shenpän

Being grateful is something we try to practice everyday. Rev. Gyomay was fond of saying that "gratitude is the spiritual life".

We're usually grateful when things are going the way we want. But do we practice gratitude when we get a flat tire? Or when something in our life shakes and rattles us? How can we practice gratitude during all of life's events?

The way I see it, it's by always having a feeling of being full! After Thanksgiving dinner we have a feeling of fullness. Satisfied with a meal that included everything we like about Thanksgiving. We

have a feeling or not needing a single thing. We feel content.

When we carry this feeling of fullness everyday, we can live life full, without anything else needed. We live a life of contentment.

At the very least, even if the sky is falling, you are alive! Living this very precious human life with all the freedoms and endowments.

When we feel full of life, no matter what, we are always feeling great and full! For every moment is a blessing and a moment in which we are experiencing life!

So "stuff" yourself with life! Be great and full!

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Not only is making a memorial donation a way to remember and honor a loved one, it is a karmic action that fosters awareness of the two main teachings of interdependency and impermanence. Acknowledging one's "roots" also nurtures a feeling of gratitude, which is the foundation of a spiritual life. A memorial donation does all this and at the same time helps support the mission of a worthy organization of one's choice.

When submitting donations, please list your name exactly as you wish it to appear in the Oneness newsletter. Acknowledgments are current as of Nov 19, 2018. Donations received after this date will be listed in the next issue. If we have missed an acknowledgment, please let us know by email at: brightdawn@kubose.com.

BOOK LIST

Book by Rev. Koyo Kubose

BRIGHT DAWN: Discovering Your Everyday Spirituality.
Describes the author's daily morning ritual and how ordinary things and activities can deepen one's spirituality. 152 pages.

Books by Rev. Gyomay Kubose

EVERYDAY SUCHNESS. A classic collection of short articles first published in 1967, hailed as one of the most significant books in Buddhism because of its simple explanations and reference to everyday life. 142 pages.

THE CENTER WITHIN. Continues the approach of "Everyday Suchness." Collection of 58 essays of down-to-earth teachings for a richer, more meaningful life. 134 pages.

AMERICAN BUDDHISM. Covers a brief history of Buddhism in America, problems in terminology and misunderstandings common to Westerners. 29 pages.

ZEN KOANS. Commentary on over 200 classical and modern koans. Insights and life teachings applicable to all Buddhists. 274 pages.

Translations by Rev. Gyomay Kubose

THE FUNDAMENTAL SPIRIT OF BUDDHISM by Haya Akegarasu (Rev. Gyomay Kubose's teacher). Translated by Rev. Kubose. 99 pages.

TAN BUTSU GE. (Translation and commentary). This sutra tells the story of Dharmakara who became Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Life and Light. 56 pages.

HEART OF THE GREAT WISDOM SUTRA. (Translation and commentary). This sutra deals with the teachings of non-self and nothingness. 35 pages.

Other Recommended Books

BUDDHIST SYMBOLS. Handy brochure explaining common Buddhist symbols. Quad-fold.

BUDDHISM: Path of Enlightenment. Simple, concise introduction to basic Buddhism. Teachings are superimposed on beautiful full-color photographs of nature scenes such as water ponds, rock gardens, a bamboo grove, etc. 20 pages.

COFFINMAN by Shinmon Aoki. This diary of a mortician invites the reader into the fascinating world of Buddhist spirituality which sees the extraordinary in things ordinary, mundane, and even repugnant. 142 pages.

DISCOVERING BUDDHISM IN EVERYDAY LIFE by Marvin Harada 2011. In commemoration of his 25 years of ministry at the Orange County Buddhist Church, over 40 essays by Rev. Harada were selected from past monthly newsletters. 128 pages.

RIVER OF FIRE, RIVER OF WATER by Taitetsu Unno. Introduces the Pure Land tradition of Shin Buddhism using personal anecdotes, stories, and poetry. With spiritual insight and unparalleled scholarship, this book is an important step forward for Buddhism in America. 244 pages.

THE ART OF TAKING ACTION by Gregg Krech. Draws on Eastern philosophy, Buddhism, Japanese psychology, Zen, and martial arts to offer an approach to ACTION that goes beyond productivity and time management. 216 pages.

No-Nonsense Buddhism for Beginners by Noah Rasheta. Introductory guide to understanding the essential concepts of Buddhism and how they relate to your daily life. 146 pages

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Change Service Requested



YES **YES** **YOUR EVERYDAY SPIRITUALITY** **YES** *Yes*

DEC	<p>Theme: Attention Purpose: Not Taking for Granted Method: "Hands-Gassho:" See how many times during the day you can be aware that you're using your hands. You will be absolutely amazed at how often you used your hands! At the end of the day, use your hands to do Gassho to your hands.</p>
JAN	<p>Theme: Awareness Purpose: Counting Method: Do the above with renewed awareness; try to count how many times you use your hands during a typical day.</p>
FEB	<p>Theme: Focus Purpose: Details Method: Do the above except focus on the times you use your opposable thumb to grab things. Do a gratitude Gassho with your thumbs crossed, to remind yourself how important it is to have thumbs.</p>

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