

# Intro to Mindfulness Pt 2 (18) Happiness of Non-Clinging

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**Gil Fronsdal**

Hello, and welcome to the third talk on the signs or symptoms of non-clinging. Last week the focus was on mindfulness of the bundles of clinging, which are the source of a lot of suffering. There are different variations of what in Buddhism we call attachment or clinging. In meditation, we untie those bundles of clinging. As we dissolve the glue that holds the infrastructure of attachment, clinging, grasping, and the continuity of resistance, pulling away, and closing down, the release of that clinging has results that can lead to a sense of well-being.

We start discovering that our clinging, grasping, resistance, and closing down interfere with or cover our capacity to be happy and feel contentment and ease. Even when there are times of great challenge, it's possible to stay connected to some feeling of being present. Being here feels good, feels right. Being connected to reality has a goodness to it, a rightness that we could call "Dharma happiness," or a symptom of well-being. One of the symptoms of letting go well is experiencing feelings in the family of happiness: happiness, joy, ease, and lightening up.

I've learned through too many painful experiences that when I let go, if the consequence of letting go is that I feel neutral, then I haven't really let go. Because I've been doing Buddhist practice for so long, sometimes letting go can be relatively easy for me. I've let go of challenging situations where maybe I was angry or upset. Sometimes I thought I had let go, but I ended up feeling neutral or back to normal. Inevitably I hadn't really let go, and whatever I was holding onto and clinging to would come back and bite me. It would reappear at some point. I learned that for letting go to be full and healthy, there has to be some feeling of goodness in it, some lightening up, some feeling of joyful or happy energy.

I want to be careful with the words I choose because sometimes we let go in very challenging situations, and we can't say that we're happy in conventional ways as a result of that. But there is something that feels right. There is a goodness to it, a lightening up and easing up. There might be a sense of richer vitality. Maybe there's not contentment with what's happening, but there's contentment in being more fully present for it.

There are a range of emotional states in the family of happiness that are symptoms of release, letting go, non-attachment, and non-clinging. Sometimes we aren't oriented towards that happiness. We ignore it. We might think we're not supposed to be happy. We might think that happiness and joy aren't serious enough for someone who is a serious practitioner, and we should just go directly to the truth of emptiness, and non-self as if there's no room for joy and happiness. But if we are oriented like that, we're doing ourselves a great disservice.

Certainly, it can be easy to overemphasize joy and happiness. It's possible to be attached to it and cling to it. It's possible to expect it and try to hold on to it. All of these interfere with the possibility of a deeper well-being that practice can bring. But don't deny yourself that happiness. Don't get in the way of it.

It's unfortunate that many of us are so busy with what we think is important – with our attachments, our clinging, our sense of responsibility, our sense of obligation, our sense of fear that drives us and says "We have to do something here." Then we don't avail ourselves of the well-being right here that doesn't require some great wonderful thing happening in the world. It doesn't require getting something, or having some relationship with some person, or having praise or success, or any of the conventional worldly things. There's a well-being that we can have that's independent of worldly conditions.

It's very simple. It can seem unimportant. It can seem as if, "Why should I focus on this when it doesn't relate to my sense of self, my agency, who I am, what I need to have, and what I need to do?" This well-being is deeper and fuller than that. It is simple, ordinary well-being, a joy of simplicity, of just being alive, a simple sense of contentment, ease, and satisfaction in simple things.

This can be, for example, looking at the sky when it's blue, appreciating the sun and the clarity of the air, appreciating the temperature or the freshness of the morning. The first morning breath outside can feel so nice. There are all these simple pleasures in life that are available, and which we're overlooking by rushing, accomplishing, getting things done, and doing the responsible thing.

Certainly, don't give up some of your responsibilities. But there's more well-being in this life than most people avail themselves of, or feel that they have permission to stop for, enjoy, and make room for. If you can start to appreciate the joy and happiness that's available here, you also might begin to appreciate the sense of well-being that comes from non-clinging, non-rushing, non-attachment, non-hostility, and non-greed. That is an invaluable kind of well-being to be attuned to.

Non-clinging gives us a healthy alternative to hostility, to the satisfaction of anger or involvement in a strong desire that seems to hold some promise. We are shifting the orientation to get our satisfaction from non-greed, non-hatred, non-fear, and to be reconditioned by that. The sense of well-being can shift, change, and transform us.

Begin to appreciate the happiness of non-clinging so you can be nourished and reconditioned by it. Some of us have been powerfully conditioned and shaped by the chronic fear we live in, the chronic ambition or desires, the chronic conceit we live in, or the chronic hostility and aversion we live in. Some people have been so shaped by it, they don't even know they have it. Living with those is a powerful conditioning.

In Dharma practice, we're looking to change that conditioning, to decondition the unwholesome forces within us, and to bring forth the conditioning that is wholesome, nourishing, and supportive of all that's good within us and that leads to greater happiness and well-being.

It is possible to be happy. The Dharma practice that we do here is a path to happiness. A step in that direction is to begin availing yourself of the well-being, contentment, and joy that might be here for you already if you give yourself time to realize it, make space for it, and allow it.

The challenge I offer you for today is to spend a good part of the day recognizing – realistically, not superficially, or holding on to an idea or wearing rose-tinted glasses – the sense of well-being, joy, happiness, contentment, and satisfaction you can have with just the simplicity of being here in your life right now,

Granted, you might have challenges, but there are still sources of joy and happiness that are simple and clear and right here that you can nourish yourself with, and recondition yourself.

The happiness of non-clinging is also part of mindfulness practice. For some of you, this is an introduction to mindfulness. So the well-being that arises is part of this big package of things we include in mindfulness. Thank you.