

Total Happiness – 4 of 5 – Self and Others

~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 What is the difference between the world of unconditional happiness and the world of objective happiness?

00:00:05 You'll remember that in the world of conditional happiness,

00:00:10 we talked about having this or that objective condition.

00:00:14 There is something analogous to that in the world of unconditional happiness.

00:00:19 There is something objective, not simply sensory,

00:00:26 in the world of unconditional happiness.

00:00:29 What's objective is our objective behavior.

00:00:34 If we are optimal in our objective behavior,

00:00:41 then whatever the outcome, we will be happy, even if we fail.

00:00:47 If we did our best, if we gave our A game,

00:00:51 if we were to our best possibility acting in good character and ethics,

00:00:59 even if things don't work out, we still have the right to be happy.

00:01:04 And in fact, we won't be happy unless that dimension is also there.

00:01:10 If extraordinary happiness or happiness independent of conditions

00:01:15 were merely okay to transcend the mind and body,

00:01:19 well, there are some pathological ways that people transcend the mind and body.

00:01:27 But when people transcend the mind and body in those pathological ways,

00:01:32 the pathology leaks over into their behavior, and that's how you know.

00:01:39 But when people transcend the mind and body in a healthy way,

00:01:43 the health must eventually seep into the behavior.

00:01:50 And if it doesn't, then they weren't taking feedback or there's some other problem.

00:01:55 I take two dimensions in behavior.

00:01:57 One might be called character.

00:02:00 We talked a little bit about that at the beginning of the talk, character.

00:02:04 Sila in the Pali language, shila in the Sanskrit language.

00:02:08 We can think of it in terms of positive behavior change.

00:02:12 Everybody needs positive behavior change in their life.

00:02:16 Well, it turns out that concentration power, sensory clarity, and equanimity

00:02:21 are very related to changing our behavior

00:02:26 because objective behavior is driven by body-mind experience.

00:02:33 As you start to get a handle on your thoughts,

00:02:36 and particularly your emotional body sensations,

00:02:40 but also physical body sensations that might drive eating behaviors and so forth,
00:02:45 touch, feel, image, talk are there what drive our behavior.
00:02:50 So if we want to change external behaviors,
00:02:53 avoid doing certain things that we should be avoiding,
00:02:58 start doing certain things that we are procrastinating on,
00:03:02 those are sort of the two sides to behavior change.
00:03:05 Getting a handle on body-mind states that are controlling those behaviors
00:03:10 will certainly be relevant to controlling the behaviors themselves,
00:03:15 changing the behaviors themselves.
00:03:18 So character could also be called positive behavior change.
00:03:27 What I have found, however, is that although concentration, clarity, and equanimity
00:03:32 are very powerful tools to potentiate behavior change,
00:03:38 they may not be sufficient.
00:03:40 I myself, I won't go into details, but most of you have heard my own personal stories
00:03:47 of struggles with behavior changes over the years,
00:03:51 and the fact that I not so many years ago spent 18 months with a psychiatrist
00:04:00 working on a certain behavior issue, I needed something from the outside,
00:04:05 some external behaviorally oriented force on me.
00:04:10 Now, I'll still say a large part of whatever success I've had with that behavior change
00:04:17 has come from the practice, but I needed that external support.
00:04:22 I needed it from a mental health professional.
00:04:26 Improvements in behavior, improvements in character over the years
00:04:34 is an important dimension in unconditional or extraordinary happiness.
00:04:41 Another behavior dimension besides the character piece is performance.
00:04:49 We have sports performance, we have job performance,
00:04:54 there's academic performance.
00:04:56 There are things where we want to be able to do the very best,
00:05:01 to be the very best that we could possibly be, professionally, intellectually,
00:05:06 or academically, what have you, the best that one could possibly do
00:05:11 in terms of task performance.
00:05:14 That, to me, leads to extraordinary happiness, because as I say,
00:05:18 if you know you did your best, even if it doesn't work out, you'll still be happy.
00:05:22 I put under behavior a character improvement and a performance improvement.
00:05:29 Those are something that are objective, although they're related to sensory experience.

00:05:36 To sum it up, in the realm of extraordinary happiness,
00:05:43 you're happy if your objective behaviors are the best they can be,
00:05:50 and you're happy if you avoid suffering and find fulfillment,
00:05:56 avoid confusion as a problem, and find the answer.
00:06:04 Those taken together represent extraordinary happiness
00:06:09 or happiness independent of conditions.
00:06:13 Mindfulness skills impact all facets of ordinary happiness
00:06:18 and all facets of extraordinary happiness.
00:06:22 But there's another dimension to happiness.
00:06:26 We're not alone in this world.
00:06:28 What I just described is happiness for a person.
00:06:33 So if I had a lot of ordinary happiness and a lot of extraordinary
happiness,
00:06:40 I wouldn't yet be totally happy.
00:06:44 I wouldn't be happy unless I did something to contribute to the happiness of
others,
00:06:50 for many reasons.
00:06:53 At the ordinary plane, because I'm an ordinary human.
00:06:57 And with regards to extraordinary happiness,
00:07:00 one of the facets of extraordinary happiness, as you'll remember,
00:07:03 is to have the wisdom that knows your source.
00:07:07 And if you know your source, you know who you are,
00:07:10 means you know where you come from.
00:07:12 Where you come from is where everyone comes from.
00:07:15 And an automatic consequence of that is you cannot help
00:07:19 but seeing everyone as sort of yourself.
00:07:23 Automatically, the issue of the happiness of others becomes relevant to you.
00:07:29 If we want to speak of contributing to the happiness of others,
00:07:33 it makes sense to consider that that service, that contributing,
00:07:39 can be done both towards the ordinary happiness of others
00:07:44 and towards the extraordinary happiness of others.
00:07:47 So when you contribute to the ordinary happiness of others,
00:07:50 that's what people ordinarily mean by service.
00:07:55 You support good causes.
00:07:57 You give to charity.
00:08:00 You philanthropize.
00:08:02 Volunteering, hospice, part or all of your job can be seen,
00:08:06 your work can be seen as service.
00:08:09 And some people are fortunate that they have jobs with a large service
component.
00:08:15 If they're a mental health professional or a health professional
00:08:18 or in any of the helping professions,

00:08:21 there's a large service component right in what you're being paid to do.
00:08:25 People find that very fulfilling.
00:08:27 Certainly, what you give to your family,
00:08:31 the creation and raising of children,
00:08:34 getting them up to have conditions,
00:08:38 have pleasure in their body, have knowledge in their mind,
00:08:43 the main one for most people will be the family.
00:08:47 The raising of the family is the service to others.
00:08:51 That contributes to the ordinary happiness of the world.