



What Is Happiness?

SGI-USA District Discussion Meeting

March 2020



**“What is the purpose of
life? It is happiness.”**

- Daisaku Ikeda, *My Dear Friends in America*, third
edition, p. 92





How would you define *happiness*?

Happiness Is Found Within Us

“People often tend to think of happiness as something abstract and removed from their present realities. They imagine, for example, that they would be happier if they could move to another place, or that they would enjoy more comfortable and pleasant lives if they could change jobs. They always feel that the grass is greener on the other side and place their hopes on a change of external circumstances

A real sense of happiness and deep satisfaction in life can be found only within us.”

- Daisaku Ikeda, *The Wisdom for Creating Happiness and Peace: Part 1*, pp. 10–11



Relative vs. Absolute Happiness



“Relative happiness means that your everyday wishes are fulfilled one by one—for instance, to have a million [dollars], a wonderful spouse, fine children, a nice house or clothes, and so on . . . Such happiness is not of great consequence. Yet everyone is convinced that this is what being happy is all about.

What, then, is absolute happiness? Absolute happiness means that being alive and here itself is a joy.”

- Josei Toda, *The Wisdom for Creating Happiness and Peace: Part 1*, p. 7

Absolute Happiness Is Experienced Together

“Joy” means that oneself and others together experience joy . . . Both oneself and others together will take joy in their possession of wisdom and compassion.

- Nichiren Daishonin, *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, p. 146





The Strength of Human Bonds

“When beset by some misfortune, people tend to think that no one could possibly be as unhappy or unlucky as they are. They feel sorry for themselves and become blind to everything but their own situation . . .

At such times, what gives someone the strength to go on living? It seems to me that it is human bonds—the desire to live for the sake of others. As long as we are wrapped up in ourselves, there is no happiness. When we courageously take action for others, the wellspring of our own life is replenished.”

- Daisaku Ikeda, *The Wisdom for Creating Happiness and Peace: Part 1*, p. 104



Chanting Enables Us to Experience Absolute Happiness

“There may be times when we give in to self-defeat and our determination wanes, or when things don’t go as we’d hoped and we begin to feel anxious or fearful. But the important thing is to continue chanting, no matter what. Whether our prayers are answered right away or not, we must keep chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, without harboring any doubts . . . Why is the Gohonzon important? Because, through having faith in it, we can bring forth the Gohonzon, or the state of Buddhahood, that is inherent in our own lives.”

- Daisaku Ikeda, *The Wisdom for Creating Happiness and Peace: Part 1*, p. 65



Brief Experience in Faith

Becoming People of True Wealth

“In our lives we possess the limitless treasure house of all riches gathered from throughout the universe. When we open and make free use of this treasure house, we can lead a proud and joyful life with the composure of a great wealthy person. Like the lion king, we fear nothing and are unaffected by fleeting joys and sorrows . . . Therefore, you who have embraced this great Law are wealthy people rich in life force who possess good fortune surpassing the wealth of even the world’s richest people.”

- Daisaku Ikeda, *My Dear Friends in America*, third edition, pp. 34–36



Discussion Questions

1. Can you share about a time when you felt a sense of indestructible happiness?
2. How has the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo helped you shift your focus from relative happiness to absolute happiness?
3. Relating back to happiness for oneself and others, is there anyone you can think of who would benefit from learning about this hope-filled view of life?



March 2020 District Discussion Meeting Presentation Notes

Theme: "What Is happiness?"

Slide 1:

- Welcome and thank you for coming to today's discussion meeting!
- These meetings happen in local neighborhoods throughout the country, for people to connect, and learn about the power of Buddhism to win in their lives.
- This brief presentation will be followed by the heart of today's gathering: dialogue / discussion groups.
- The theme for today's discussion is "What is True Happiness?"

Slide 2:

- So why happiness—how come we are talking about this topic today?
- SGI President Daisaku Ikeda says: "What is the purpose of life? It is happiness."
- The whole point of our Buddhist practice is to help us become happy.

Slide 3:

- So let's get things going by asking everyone a question!
- How would you define Happiness?
- Please feel free to shout out your answer in a few words!

(Spend 1-2 min allowing people to give their honest opinions on happiness)

Slide 4:

- Thank you everyone for sharing your answers!
- Let's take a look at how Buddhism views the idea of happiness.
- Buddhism teaches us happiness can be found within ourselves.
- SGI President Ikeda says that: "People often tend to think of happiness as something abstract and removed from their present realities. They imagine, for example, that they would be happier if they could move to another place, or that they would enjoy more comfortable and pleasant lives if they could change jobs. They always feel that the grass is greener on the other side and place their hopes on a change of external circumstances . . . A real sense of happiness and deep satisfaction in life can be found only within us.

The Mystic Law is the fundamental Law of life. Through our Buddhist practice, we can tap the power of the Mystic Law to propel our lives forward.”

Slide 5:

- Buddhism teaches us that there are two kinds of happiness: relative and absolute happiness.
- Second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda, elaborating on this, says: “Absolute happiness is attaining Buddhahood . . . Relative happiness means that your everyday wishes are fulfilled one by one—for instance, to have a million [dollars], a wonderful spouse, fine children, a nice house or clothes, and so on . . . Such happiness is not of great consequence. Yet everyone is convinced that this is what being happy is all about. What, then, is absolute happiness? Absolute happiness means that being alive and here itself is a joy.”
- President Toda goes on to say that absolute happiness is a state where one is free of financial worries, where one enjoys peace and harmony in their family and where all that one sees and hears brings her or him pleasure and joy.
- When we can achieve this state of being, this is what we call attaining Buddhahood.

Slide 6:

- Viewing our lives itself as a joy sounds so hopeful!
- In Buddhism, and in life, “Joy” is meant to be experienced by all, not just by ourselves.
- Nichiren Daishonin says: “‘Joy’ means that oneself and others together experience joy . . . Both oneself and others together will take joy in their possession of wisdom and compassion.”

Slide 7:

- President Ikeda tells us that it is the heart-to-heart human connections we have that push us in our darkest hour.
- He says: “When beset by some misfortune, people tend to think that no one could possibly be as unhappy or unlucky as they are. They feel sorry for themselves and become blind to everything but their own situation . . . At such times, what gives someone the strength to go on living? It seems to me that it is human bonds—the desire

to live for the sake of others. As long as we are wrapped up in ourselves, there is no happiness. When we courageously take action for others, the wellspring of our own life is replenished.”

Slide 8:

- OK, absolute happiness and experiencing joy with others sounds like a great life, but that can be challenging to maintain every minute of everyday.
- As human beings, it is very natural to doubt ourselves or feel anxious when things don't seem to be going our way.
- What can we do to continue to fight against this inner-negativity?
- We can chant sincerely to our Gohonzon.
- Sensei says: “There may be times when we give in to self-defeat and our determination wanes, or when things don't go as we'd hoped and we begin to feel anxious or fearful. But the important thing is to continue chanting, no matter what. Whether our prayers are answered right away or not, we must keep chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, without harboring any doubts . . . Why is the Gohonzon important? Because, through having faith in it, we can bring forth the Gohonzon, or the state of Buddhahood, that is inherent in our own lives. The Daishonin states that the Gohonzon is found only in the faith of each one of us (see WND-1, 832).”

Slide 9:

- (optional) have presenter or someone else give a brief (2-3 min) experience of how you used your Buddhist practice to overcome something related to this theme.

Slide 10:

- To conclude before we break off into dialogue groups, living a happy life entails becoming people of “True Wealth.”
- Sensei states: “In our lives we possess the limitless treasure house of all riches gathered from throughout the universe. When we open and make free use of this treasure house, we can lead a proud and joyful life with the composure of a great wealthy person. Like the lion king, we fear nothing and are unaffected by fleeting joys and sorrows . . .

Therefore, you who have embraced this great Law are wealthy people rich in life force who possess good fortune surpassing the wealth of even the world's richest people."

Slide 11:

- Thank you all, so much, for your attention and listening to this presentation.
- Now we are at the best part of this presentation: group discussion!
- Let's break off into groups of 5-7 and I hope we can all have an open, heart-to-heart dialogue based on these discussion questions.
- The questions are:
 1. Can you share about a time when you felt a sense of indestructible happiness?
 2. How has the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo helped you shift your focus from relative happiness to absolute happiness?
 3. Relating back to happiness for oneself and others, is there anyone you can think of who would benefit from learning about this hope-filled view of life?