



HEART & MIND

EnJOY Your Life!

*Simply enjoying your life every day may be the most beneficial spiritual practice of all—and for many of us the most difficult. Fortunately, say **ARI GOLDFIELD** and **ROSE TAYLOR GOLDFIELD**, there are proven techniques to help you experience the joy and goodness of life.*

IT SEEMS SOMETIMES that we are just destined to feel on edge. Evolutionary scientists note that humans started in a state of high alert, always scanning for dangerous predators. Developmental psychologists talk of persistent feelings of self-criticism and inadequacy that stem from growing up with inattentive, anxious, or even abusive caregivers.

The Buddha too spoke of the struggle to find security in a life in which we are fundamentally powerless, and how this can be a constant source of fear and unease. But he also taught that a joyful life is possible.

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Joy can be cultivated; it can be experienced. We can develop the habit of happiness. We can deepen our visceral experience of well-being, goodness, and appreciation of our world and ourselves. In the words of the great Thai Buddhist teacher Ajahn Chah, we can offer ourselves “a holiday for the heart.”

One way to offer your heart a much-needed holiday is to connect with the experience of love. This might mean thinking of your loved ones—those you love and who love you. It helps to keep a collection of your favorite photos of loved ones so that you can look at them regularly.

This has a powerful impact, even on our bodies. Women who are breast-feeding, for example, report that it is easier and more productive when looking at a

picture of their baby and internally opening to that connection. So whether you are looking at someone’s photo or simply remembering them, don’t leave that as a mere thought. Give yourself the time and space to experience how that love feels in your body. That’s the key to experiencing love’s joy, strong and warm.

You can also offer a holiday of relaxation and ease to all the cells in your body by feeling your embodied, breathing being. The center of your physical and energetic being, sometimes called the *hara* or *origin point*, lies just below your navel in the center of your body. As you breathe down fully into your belly, let whatever tension you are holding in your body surrender to gravity.

Even more simply, let yourself just feel

the physical sensations in the parts of your body that are touching your chair, your seat, and the ground. When you let your attention settle down in this way, you settle into your somatic home. You are grounded and centered; your mind and energy feel gathered rather than scattered.

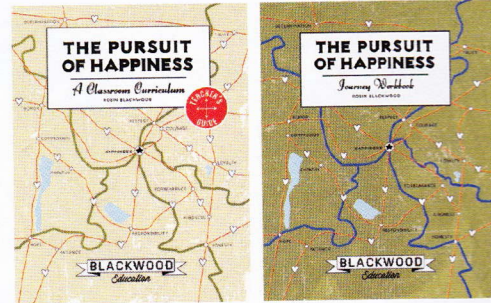
Once you've centered in your body in this way, you can then allow your awareness to spread throughout your whole body—from the belly out through your trunk, to your limbs, toes, and finger-tips, to your chest, shoulders, and all the way up to the top of your head. Feel the wholeness of your body.

To experience deeply the joy and upliftedness of your human experience, connect with your heart and recall your basic goodness. Your essential human worth, dignity, and goodness are invulnerable. Remembering this, breathe down into your heart and feel a sense of warm, loving acceptance radiate out into your entire body. You are fine just as you are, and you don't have to prove or accomplish anything in order to be fine. Relaxing into this contentment with your deepest, most fundamental self yields the most satisfying and fundamental joy.

Buddhist texts describe how the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and bodily sensations of our everyday experience are filled with qualities that can nourish and invigorate us. To enjoy these, connect with your senses' pure perception of their objects, which is naturally occurring all the time. Here is a Tibetan Buddhist practice to help you connect with the vividness and richness of pure sense perception:

- 1. Pause for a moment.** You could set an alarm to initiate this pause, or perhaps the pause may come to you. Take just a brief break from your thoughts—by doing so you create an opening for something else to happen.
 - 2. Notice.** In this gap between your thoughts, something will capture the attention of your senses, like a visual object or even a smell or a sound. A visual object is often the easiest object to begin with, but you can practice with any sense object—sight, sound, smell, taste, or tactile sensation. Simply notice whatever sense perception draws your attention.
 - 3. Open your awareness to it.** While letting your thinking mind relax, even for a moment, connect with how your sense faculty is naturally perceiving its object in a pure way. It is free of naming it, judging it, or comparing it to anything else. Feel the impact this pure perception has—it may make you feel warm, tingly, alive, substantial. Let that response spread throughout your body.
 - 4. Let go.** Relax, let the experience go, and continue with your day.
- Do this brief practice regularly and you will begin to experience how each of your experiences, far from being mundane, repetitive, or boring, is actually inexpressibly unique and even delightful. Experience how the basic goodness of sense perceptions brings joy into your life. ♦

*A practical roadmap
for finding your way to
increased awareness
& life satisfaction...*



The Pursuit of Happiness curriculum is a personal or classroom guide designed to teach important skills that will help you navigate your personal journey to happiness.

“Robin Blackwood’s conversion of my book, *Too Soon Old, Too Late Smart*, into a...course is at once flattering and very impressive. The principles contained herein—that we are defined by our behavior, that we are largely responsible for what we make of ourselves, that we need to be astute about whom to avoid and whom to cherish as we move through our lives—all are ideas of vital importance. We can never know enough about the pursuit of happiness.”

- Gordon Livingston, M.D.

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