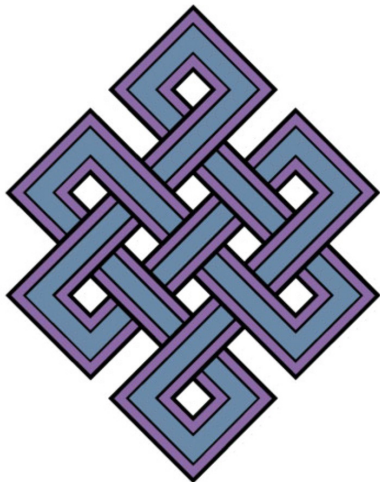
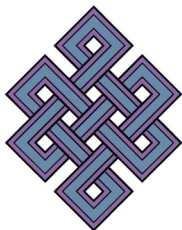


*The Purpose of Life*



**The Emily Dahl**  
*Foundation*



## **The Emily Dahl** *Foundation*

### **The Purpose of Life and The Emily Dahl Foundation**

This booklet was put together with thoughts and readings that started in October 2018 on a trip to Thailand. Over the following months, many hours were spent thinking about the purpose of life and true happiness. Many of the teachings and philosophies that attempt to answer these questions are based on understanding your thoughts and your mind. As the back cover of this booklet says, “Happiness is an inside job.”

A special thanks goes out to the many books, YouTube videos and lectures that have been attended to make this booklet. In addition , many friends and family helped

with editing this booklet but a special thank you to Emily Dahl's Uncle Roger Haubrich who lives in Sydney, Australia, one of the many places Emily visited. And get this, he lives on "Daydream" street. True Story. He dived in and put a lot of work into helping the booklet get completed. Thanks Uncle Roger!

These are not new concepts but are often not adhered to as we live our daily lives.

It is time to change that - it is time for a revolution!

It is time for the youth of today to consider themselves as brothers and sisters. This century is young and so much can be done to promote happiness. When you think of yourselves as brothers and sisters with all others you develop true compassion for others which leads to happiness.

The purpose of life is to be happy. From the moment of birth, every human being wants happiness and does not want to suffer. Neither social conditioning, education nor ideology affect this. From the very core of our being we desire contentment. One does not know whether or not the universe, with its countless galaxies, stars and planets, has a

deeper meaning, but it is clear that we who live on this earth face the task of making a happy life for ourselves. Therefore, it is essential to discover what will bring about the greatest degree of happiness.

## **How To Achieve Happiness**

For a start, it is possible to divide every kind of happiness and suffering into two main categories: mental and physical. Of the two, it is the mind that exerts the most significant influence on us.

Unless you are gravely ill or deprived of necessities, your physical condition plays a secondary role in life. If the body is content, you can virtually ignore it. The mind, however, registers every event, no matter how small. Hence, you should devote your efforts to bringing about mental peace. Most will find that with time and experience the greatest degree of inner tranquillity comes from the development of love and compassion.

The more you care for the happiness of others, the higher your sense of well-being becomes. Cultivating a close, warm-hearted feeling for others will automatically put

your mind at ease. This helps remove whatever fears or insecurities you may have and gives you the strength to cope with any obstacles you may encounter.

It is the ultimate source of success in life. As long as you live in this world, you are bound to encounter problems. If you, or someone close to you, lose hope and become discouraged, your ability to face difficulties will diminish. If you remember that it is not just yourself, but everyone who undergoes suffering, this will increase your determination and capacity to overcome troubles.

With this attitude, each new obstacle can be seen as yet another valuable opportunity to improve the power of your mind! You can strive gradually to become more compassionate. You can develop both genuine empathy for others suffering and help remove their pain. As a result, the overall serenity and inner strength of society will increase.

## **Need For Love**

Ultimately, the reason why love and compassion bring the greatest happiness is that our nature is to desire them

above all else. The need for love lies at the very foundation of human existence, resulting from the profound interdependence shared by all. However capable and skillful an individual may be, left alone, he or she will not survive.

However vigorous and independent one may feel during the most prosperous periods of life, when one is sick or very young or very old, one must depend on the support of others.



*His Holiness the Dalai Lama comforting a young survivor during his visit to the Tsunami devastated region of Sendai, Japan on November 5, 2011. (Photo by Tenzin Choejor/OHHDL)*

Interdependence, of course, is a fundamental law of nature. Not only higher forms of life but also many of the smallest insects are social beings who, without any religion, law or education, survive by cooperation based on an innate recognition of their interconnectedness.

The most subtle level of material phenomena is also governed by interdependence. All phenomena from the planet we inhabit including the oceans, clouds, forests and flowers that surround us, arise from dependence upon subtle patterns of energy. Without their proper interaction, they dissolve and decay.

It is because human existence is so dependent on the help of others that the need for love lies at the very foundation of existence. Therefore, a genuine sense of responsibility and a sincere concern for the welfare of others is the key to happiness.

We have to consider what human beings really are. We are not like machine-made objects. If we were merely mechanical entities, then machines could alleviate all of our sufferings and fulfill our needs.

Since human beings are not solely material creatures, it is a mistake to place all hopes for happiness on external development alone. Instead, consideration of the true origins and nature of mankind are needed to discover what is required.

Leaving aside the complex question of the creation and evolution of the universe, it can at least be agreed that each of us is the product of our parents. In general, our conception took place not just in the context of sexual desire but from our parent's decision to have a child. Such decisions are founded on responsibility and altruism - the parents compassionate commitment to care for their child until it is able to take care of itself. From the very moment of conception, our parents love is directly in our creation.

All of us are dependent upon our mothers care from the earliest stages of our growth. According to some science, a pregnant woman's mental state, be it calm or agitated, has a direct physical effect on her unborn child.



The expression of love is also critical at the time of birth. Since the very first thing we do is suckle from our mother's breasts, we naturally feel close to her, and she must feel love for us to feed us properly; if she feels anger or resentment, her milk may not flow freely.



*Emily Dahl is holding Scott Swertz, a newborn baby of the neighbours of Emily's family friends Doug and Catherine Johnson in the Shuswap in 2013. (Photo Katie Dahl)*

There is the critical period of brain development from the time of birth up to at least the age of three or four, during which loving physical contact is the single most important factor for the normal growth of the child. If the child is not held, hugged, cuddled, and loved its development could be impaired, and its brain might not mature properly.

Since a child cannot survive without the care of others, love is its most important nourishment. The happiness of childhood, the allaying of the child's many fears and the healthy development of its self-confidence all depend directly upon love.

Nowadays, many children grow up in unhappy homes. If they do not receive proper affection, in later life, they will rarely love their parents and, not infrequently, will find it hard to love others.

As children grow older and enter school, their need for support must be met by their teachers. A teacher not only imparts academic education but also assumes responsibility for preparing students for life. His or her pupils will feel trust and respect, and what has been taught will leave

an indelible impression on them. Subjects taught by a teacher who does not show real concern for his or her students' overall well-being will not be remembered.

Similarly, if one is sick and being treated in hospital by a doctor who evinces a warm human feeling, one feels at ease, and the doctor's desire to give the best possible care is itself curative, irrespective of the degree of their technical skill. If one's doctor lacks human feelings and displays an unfriendly expression, impatience or casual disregard, one will feel anxious, even if he or she is the most highly qualified doctor and the disease has been correctly diagnosed and the right medication prescribed. Inevitably, a patient's feelings make a difference in the quality and completeness of their recovery.

Even when we engage in ordinary conversation in everyday life, if someone speaks with feeling, we enjoy listening, and respond accordingly; the whole communication becomes more interesting, however unimportant the topic may be.

When a person speaks coldly or harshly, we feel uneasy

and wish for a quick end to the interaction. From the least to the most critical event, the affection and respect of others are vital for our happiness.

Recent research suggests that the rate of mental illness is quite high - around 12% of the population. This makes it clear that the leading cause of depression was not a lack of material necessities but a deprivation of the affection of others.

As you can see from everything that you have read so far, one thing seems clear: whether or not you are consciously aware of it, from the day you are born, the need for human affection is in your blood. Even if the affection comes from an animal or someone you would generally consider an enemy, both children and adults will naturally gravitate towards it.

No one is born free from the need for love. This demonstrates that, although some modern schools of thought seek to do so, we cannot be defined as solely physical. No material object, however beautiful or valuable, can make us feel loved because our deeper identity and real character lie in the subjective nature of the mind.



*Venerable Guan Cheng and School Principal Tom Watkinson visit with students, June 2019, Seaton High School (Photo Sherman Dahl)*

## **Developing compassion**

Some believe that while love and compassion are marvelous and enjoyable, they are not very relevant. Our world, they say, is not a place where such beliefs have much influence or power. They claim that anger and hatred are so much a part of human nature that they will always dominate humanity. This is not a logical conclusion.

Humans have existed in our present form for about a hundred thousand years. If during this time, the human mind had been primarily controlled by anger and hatred, the overall population would have decreased. However, today, despite all the wars, we find that the human population is greater than ever. This indicates that love and compassion dominate the world.

Moreover, this is why unpleasant events are news. Compassionate activities are so much part of daily life that they are taken for granted and largely ignored.

So far this discussion has focused mainly on the mental benefits of compassion but it also contributes to good physical health. Research, as well as your own personal experience show that mental stability and physical well-being are directly related. Without question, anger and agitation make us more susceptible to illness. Once the mind is tranquil and occupied with positive thoughts, the body will not easily fall prey to disease.

But, of course, it is also true that we have an innate self-centeredness that inhibits love for others. Since most of us desire true happiness that is brought about by a calm mind, and since such peace of mind is brought about by only a compassionate attitude, how can this be developed? It is not enough to think about how helpful compassion is! It is important to make a concerted effort to improve it; you must use all the events of daily life to transform your thoughts and behaviour.

First of all, we must be clear about what we mean by compassion. Many forms of compassionate feelings are mixed with desire and attachment. For instance, the love parents feel for their child is often strongly associated

with their own emotional needs, so it is not fully compassionate. Again, in marriage, the love between a couple - particularly at the beginning, when each partner may still not know the other's deeper character very well, depends more on attachment than genuine love. This desire can be so strong that the person to whom you are attached appears to be good, when, in fact, he or she is very harmful. In addition, there is a tendency to exaggerate small positive qualities. When one partner's attitude changes, the other partner is often disappointed, and his or her attitude changes too. This is an indication that love has been motivated more by personal needs than by genuine care for the other individual.

Genuine compassion is not just an emotional response, but a firm commitment founded on reason. A truly compassionate attitude towards others does not change even if they behave negatively.

Developing this kind of compassion is not at all easy! As a start, let us consider the following facts:





*Emily Dahl with Vern Haubrich who lost his wife Liz Haubrich in a tragic accident, December 2018, Hodgeville Sask  
(Photo Sherman Dahl)*

Whether people are beautiful and friendly or unattractive and disruptive, they are human beings.

Like oneself, they want happiness and do not want to suffer. Their desire to overcome suffering and be happy is equal to your own. When you recognize that all beings are equal in both their desire for happiness and their right to obtain it, you automatically feel empathy and closeness to them.

Through accustoming your mind to this sense of universal altruism, you develop a feeling of responsibility for others and wish to help them actively overcome their problems. This wish is not selective. It applies equally to all. As long as they are human beings experiencing pleasure and pain just as you do, there is no logical basis to discriminate between them or to alter your concern for them if they behave negatively.

It is within your power, given patience and time, to develop this kind of compassion. Our self-centeredness, our distinctive attachment to the feeling of an independent, self-existence, works fundamentally to inhibit our compassion.

Genuine empathy can be experienced only when this type of self-grasping is eliminated.

### **How can we start**

One should begin by removing the greatest hindrances to compassion: anger and hatred. These are extremely negative emotions and they can overwhelm you, nevertheless, they can be controlled. If, however, they are not controlled these negative emotions will plague you - with no extra effort on their part - and impede your quest for happiness.

As a start, it is useful to investigate whether or not anger is of value. Sometimes, when you are discouraged by a difficult situation, anger does seem helpful, appearing to bring with it more energy, confidence and determination.

Here you must scrutinize your mental state. While it is true that anger brings extra energy, if you explore the nature of this energy, you will soon discover that it is blind.

One cannot be sure whether the result of anger will have a positive or negative affect on the most important part of our thinking: our rationality. So, the energy of anger is almost

always unreliable.

Anger can cause an immense amount of destructive, unfortunate behaviour. If anger increases to the extreme, one becomes like a mad person, acting in ways that are as damaging to oneself as they are to others.



*Emily Dahl with her brothers Jackson and Nicholas Christmas Day 2017 (photo by Katie Dahl).*

It is possible, however, to develop equally forceful but far more controlled energy with which to handle difficult situations.

This controlled energy comes a compassionate attitude formed from reason and patience. These are the most powerful antidotes to anger. Unfortunately, many people misjudge these qualities as signs of weakness. The reality is, the opposite is true. They are the actual signs of inner strength. Compassion is by nature gentle, peaceful and soft but very powerful. It is those who quickly lose their patience who are insecure and unstable. The arousal of anger is, in fact, a sign of weakness.

When a problem first arises, try to remain humble. Maintain a sincere attitude and be concerned that the outcome is fair. Others may try to take advantage of you, and if by remaining detached you encourage aggression then adopt a firm stand. This should be done with compassion, and if it is necessary to express your views and take active countermeasures, do so without anger or ill-intent.

It is important to realize that even though your opponents appear to be harming you, in the end, their destructive activity will damage only themselves. In order to check your selfish impulse to retaliate, you should recall your desire to practice compassion and assume responsibility for helping prevent them from suffering the consequences of their acts.

Thus, because the measures you employ have been calmly chosen, they will be more productive, more accurate and more charismatic. Retaliation based on the blind energy of anger seldom hits the target.

## **Friends and Enemies**

It is important to emphasize again that merely thinking that compassion, reason and patience are beneficial will not be enough to develop them. You must wait for difficulties to arise and then attempt to practice them.

Moreover, who creates such opportunities? Not your friends, but your enemies. They are the ones who give you the most trouble, if one genuinely wishes to learn, then consider your enemies to be your best teacher!

For a person who cherishes compassion and love, the practice of tolerance is essential, and for that, an enemy is indispensable. You should feel grateful to your enemies, for it is they who can best help us develop a tranquil mind! Also, it's often the case in both personal and public life that with a change in circumstances enemies become friends.

Anger and hatred are always harmful, and unless you train your minds and work to reduce their negative force, they will continue to disturb and disrupt your attempts to develop a calm mind. Anger and hatred are your real enemies. These are the forces you most need to confront and defeat, not the temporary enemies who appear intermittently throughout life.

It is natural and right that everyone wants friends. One could joke that if you're going to be selfish, you should be very altruistic! You should take good care of others, be concerned for their welfare, help them, serve them, make more friends, make more smiles. The result? When you need help, you find plenty of helpers! If you neglect the happiness of others, in the long term, you will be the negative person.

Is friendship produced through quarrels and anger, jealousy and intense competitiveness? Think about it. Only affection brings you genuine close friends.



*Emily Dahl with friends, Vancouver BC, June 2017  
(Photo Sherman Dahl ).*

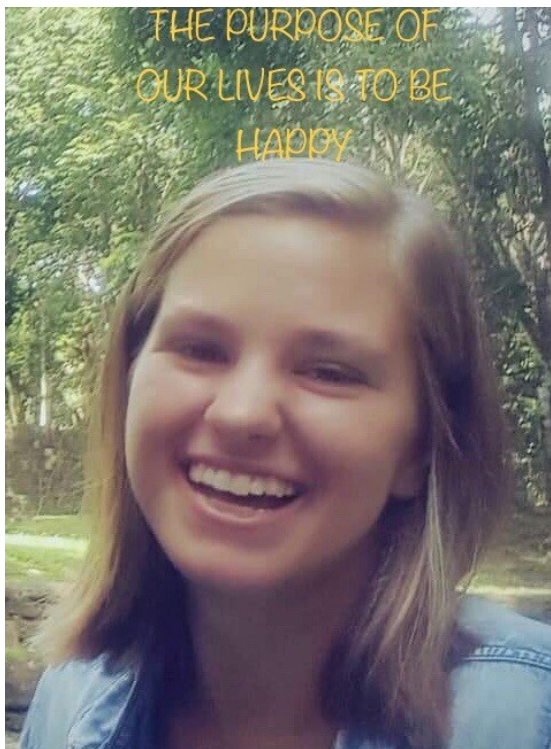
In today's materialistic society, if you have money and power, you appear to have many friends. However, they are not friends of yours; they are the friends of your money and power.



When you lose your wealth and influence, you will also lose most of these friends.

The trouble is that when things in your life go well, it is easy to become confident that one can manage by themselves and feels no need for friends, but as status and health decline, you will quickly realize how wrong you are. That is the moment when you learn who are your true friends. To prepare for that moment, to make genuine friends who will help when the need arises, you must cultivate altruism!

Though sometimes people laugh at this, you always want more friends. Learn to love smiles. You want to develop the attitude of knowing how to make more friends and how to get more laughs, in particular, genuine smiles. For there are many kinds of smiles, such as sarcastic, artificial or diplomatic smiles. Many smiles produce no feeling of satisfaction, and sometimes they can even create suspicion or fear. However, a genuine smile gives us a sense of freshness and is unique to human beings. If these are the smiles you want, then you must create the reasons for them to appear.



*Emily Dahl, Belize Fall 2018*

## **Compassion and the world**

In conclusion, let's briefly expand these thoughts beyond the topic of this short piece and make a wider point: individual happiness can contribute profoundly and effectively to the overall improvement of the entire community.

Because all of us share the need for love, it is possible to feel love with anybody you meet, in whatever circumstances as he or she is a brother or sister. No matter how new the face or how different the dress and behaviour, there is no significant division between other people and you. It is foolish to dwell on external differences because all humanity is the same.

Ultimately, humanity is one, and this small planet is everyone's home. In order to protect this home, all of us need to experience a vivid sense of universal altruism. It is only this feeling that can remove the self-centered motives that cause people to deceive and misuse one another.

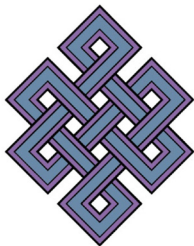
It must be true that at every level of society - familial, tribal, national and international - the key to a happier and more prosperous world is the growth of compassion. You do not need to become religious, nor do you need to believe in an ideology. All that is necessary is for each of us to develop compassion.

You simply need to treat whomever you meet as an old friend. This will give you a genuine feeling of happiness. It is the practice of compassion.



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Adapted from [www.dalailama.com](http://www.dalailama.com)



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“HAPPINESS IS AN INSIDE JOB”

For complimentary copies of this booklet contact:

The Emily Dahl Foundation  
Attn: Kristina Tobler  
369 - 3104 30th Ave  
Vernon, BC  
V1T 9M9

[www.EmilyDahlFoundation.com](http://www.EmilyDahlFoundation.com)

[kristina@emilydahlfoundation.com](mailto:kristina@emilydahlfoundation.com)