Divine Abiding, d. Appreciative Joy, Muditā - read by Therese Caherty

Noirin Sheahan · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Noirin Sheahan · 40:06

For the past few evenings, I've been talking about the Brahma Vihara, the beautiful states of mind and heart expressed when we're in harmony with the world.

The basis is metta or goodwill. We wish all beings to be happy, but metta doesn't make us smile with delight in all situations and circumstances. The intelligence we cultivate in Vipassana is also very much to the fore, and we're acutely aware of the ever-present potential for suffering and the need to take care that we don't unwittingly get the wheel turning. As we learn to acknowledge and bear with our emotions in Vipassana, we are better able to tune into the emotional tone of various situations that we find in our daily lives. Then we can tailor our goodwill towards compassion, mudita, or equanimity so as to fit in with different circumstances.

Suppose you're meeting a friend for coffee. You're feeling bright and breezy and giving silent good wishes to everyone in the restaurant. Then you see your friend coming and, to your surprise, you see them looking weary and glum. The simple metta wish, "may you be happy," just doesn't fit. It doesn't show any sensitivity to the situation. You might prefer if they'd feel bright and breezy to match your own mood, but that wish is out of kilter with their present reality. So you have to be prepared to let go of your bright and breezy mood and instead take into consideration that something may be amiss. As you let your mood change from brightness to concern, your goodwill can take on the hue of compassion. This more sombre form of goodwill fits when you're aware of witnessing some degree of suffering. The phrase, "may you be free from suffering," acknowledges both the suffering and your friend's potential to find freedom. Holding this good wish while you watch them approach means your tone of voice and body language will express empathy and care for whatever's troubling them.

To take another example, suppose you're walking down a street wishing strangers well as they pass by, but something catches your eye, and in a dark alley you see someone squatting on the pavement injecting drugs into a vein. Again, the straightforward metta wish, "may you be happy," just doesn't work here. It would be glossing over the reality, refusing to engage with the human tragedy you're witnessing. The wish "may you be free from suffering" fits better, as this is certainly a situation of suffering and it's possible that the person is suffering very deeply. But it doesn't acknowledge the kernel of the problem—that as far as we can judge, the person is making things worse for themselves by drug addiction. Equanimity is the Brahma Vihara which allows us to cope with what we don't want and judge as wrong. It accommodates both good and evil. The understanding of karma provides a channel for equanimous good wishes, such as,

"may you be able to bear with the karma you are creating." Or it could help to phrase the wish in more mundane terms, such as, "may you stop harming yourself," or "may you learn to cope with your challenges more skillfully."

Now let's say you've made your good wishes for the person shooting drugs and have recovered your good humour and are back to wishing well to strangers as you pass them by. Then you spy a couple with their arms around one another, obviously deeply in love. Once again, the metta wish, "may you be happy," doesn't fit, as they're already so obviously happy. They don't need your good wishes on that account. In this case, you need to form your good wishes in a way that acknowledges and honours their existing happiness. This brings us to mudita or appreciative joy, which is the Brahma Vihara I want to talk about tonight.

Mudita tunes into our natural human capacity for joy and gives us a skillful way to build on that. The classic phrase to cultivate mudita is "may your happiness continue, may your happiness increase." If your mudita channels are open, you'll be delighted for them and get a little shot of joy yourself into the bargain. And as you pass them by and continue wishing well to those all around, your good wishes will have an extra animation. With mudita, happiness is multiplied. The happiness of the couple became your happiness. Mudita is all about appreciating the good things in life.

Buddhism tends to have a bad reputation in this department because of the emphasis on the first noble truth of dukkha. But joy is also very much part of the Dhamma. It will certainly be there when we're fully developed, as described in this verse from the Dhammapada: "Happy indeed we live, we who possess nothing. Feeders on joy we shall be, like the radiant gods."

But joy isn't only for when we've reached such an exalted state. After spending years doing mortification practices and deciding they led nowhere, the Buddha then remembered his joyful experience as a child under the rose apple tree, watching his father ploughing. The mortification practices had dismissed joy as worthless, but now the Buddha questioned himself on this. He realised the joy he had experienced wasn't to do with attachment to the world but was what he described as a blameless joy. He decided he'd no longer dismiss that and instead would actively cultivate it as an aid to meditation. Thus we have joy as a factor of enlightenment. The Pali term for this is pīti. In this case, joy emerges from fascination with the pursuit of truth. We're glad to be seeking out and sensing the path to freedom. It's not linked to anything specific in life, like seeing a couple in love. Mudita, on the other hand, arises when we are touched by the beauty of life—young love, the birth of a baby, the smile of a friend. It's the response of gladness to the good things in life.

In meditation we rejoice in freedom, letting go of our attachments in life. In mudita we rejoice in life itself. Is there not a contradiction?

To embrace both sources of joy is part of our path to freedom. For example, we need families to help us through infancy and childhood. We need some level of education to be able to hear and understand the

Dhamma. We need a stable society to give us the possibility of retreat centers where we can practice meditation. And of course we need food, clean air, water, and medicine to keep us alive until our moment of enlightenment, when we fully understand that which goes beyond life and death. Although freedom, nibbana, is not dependent on education or families or a stable society, we can only find our path to freedom in the midst of all these. At one level, mudita can be seen as a thank you to all the conditions that allow for ourselves and others to tread the path to freedom.

Mudita builds on our natural joie de vivre. As babies, we took delight in seeing faces we recognised, playing with whoever and whatever came our way, in food and comfort and being able to explore and learn. This delight only led to dukkha because of attachment, the mistake of believing we could control and own all the lovely stuff. But the delight itself animated us, let us develop confidence and trust, helped us smile and make connections and learn to communicate. Mudita cultivates delight with all its benefits for our psyche, and perhaps also for our bodies, without the delusion of attachment.

Our baby's capacity for delight is still there, even though it might by now seem buried under tons of depression and anxiety. To recapture our joie de vivre, we need to reflect on what really nurtures us and make a deliberate attempt to appreciate all these. The Mahamangala Sutta, which we chant last thing at night, gives the Buddha's list of things we can rejoice in. He places associating with wise companions first among the list of great blessings.

If you have a meditation group, you're really lucky. Not only does it get you onto the cushion regularly, it also gives you the chance to discuss the Dharma and how it applies to the many challenges in life. Trying to put our understanding into words really helps it sharpen. It can be uncomfortable, as we only notice all our confusions when we try to put our vague notions into a string of words. But every attempt is worthwhile for both you and your friends. Together you can help each other sort through some of the confusions and let each person's unique perspective become part of the group wisdom. Try making the wish, "May our happiness continue. May our happiness increase," whenever you meet up with your group.

The next on the list is residing in a suitable place, meaning somewhere that encourages and supports us in our practice. Certainly Satipanya fits the bill, but your own home can be conducive to meditation practice too. For some people, making a small shrine helps, or setting aside a room for meditation. For me, the main thing has been to establish the habit of a daily practice. Over the years, this became more and more central to my life, a deep source of refuge. After a challenging day at work, it was such a relief to know that in the evening I could close the door behind me and let meditation clean out the layer of fractious energy that had built up over the day. So if we're lucky enough to have a home, we have a deep reason to rejoice. Caring for our home, keeping it clean and tidy, and adding touches of beauty are also part of mudita practice, a way of saying thank you for this precious gift.

Beauty might seem unnecessary. After all, we're cultivating equanimity, so why should we care whether

things are drab or pretty? But that line of thinking is drawing us towards indifference rather than equanimity. It encourages a "don't care, doesn't matter" attitude to the world, whereas true equanimity only exists within a deep care for the world. Beautifying our surroundings is a way to express that care. It also shows sensitivity to the way the human body and psyche thrive on pleasure. The feelings we recognise as pleasant vedana have a soothing effect on our bodies and mind. I imagine various hormones are released to calm our nervous systems. Why not give ourselves every opportunity for such benefits?

The Buddha appreciated beauty. In the Parinibbana Sutta, which tracks the last stages of his life, we find him wandering from one shrine to another. Along the way, he says to Ananda, "Come, Ananda, let us go to Vesali. Pleasant, Ananda, is Vesali. Pleasant are the shrines of Udena, Gotamaka, Satambaka, Bahuputa, Sarandada and Kapala." In fact, he repeats this a number of times as he moves from shrine to shrine, as if the memory of their beauty meant a lot to him. You can imagine the effort it would have taken for a dying man of eighty years to walk from place to place, and yet this is how he spent his last days. The way he kept repeating the list of beautiful shrines suggests their memory gave him energy for the journey. We can take this as encouragement to adorn our homes and whatever we value as supporting us in life.

And of course, our home wouldn't exist if it weren't for all the supporting social structures around us—roads, shops, sewage pipes and electricity, as well as courts of law that uphold our right to lock the door behind us and meditate. Every aspect of the society we live in contributes something to the fact that we have time and space to practice, Dhamma books to read, Dhamma talks to listen to. Think of the enormous web of conditions that allowed Buddhist teachings to reach our Western ears. Seeing things this way, any contribution we make towards society can be done in the spirit of mudita.

Say the water pressure drops and we have to get onto the local council to get it sorted. Generally, we think of this as a real pain in the neck. But just think of what a gift it is to have fresh water on tap. It was my mother's ninetieth birthday recently, and as part of the celebration, she decided to write up the story of her life. When she was young, the family water had to be drawn from a spring in a boggy field a good distance from the house. And if you wanted it heated, it was a question of lighting the fire and pouring buckets of water into a cauldron for a few hours. Reflecting on how much extra time we have because we don't have to walk miles to collect water from a well each day—this might bring a sense of gratitude into our dealings with the council. We might even take little jolts of hope and joy away with us every time we get a helpful response.

Now, of course, you could argue that rejoicing in your local council and your home and meditation group is only going to lead to dukkha when these go the way of all earthly phenomena and eventually fall apart. That line of thinking represents fear of attachment, not wisdom. Our problem is that we're already deeply attached to our possessions, friends, and activities, as well as to our social status as householders deserving of running water in our taps. Deciding not to rejoice in these won't help matters at all. We only learn the art of non-attachment by experiencing the pain that comes when these things fall apart. So we might as well go through that pain for the sake of worthy attachments, like all those the Buddha suggests.

And as we get more and more involved in the meditation group, we'll find our buttons being pushed left, right and centre. All this shows us our attachment to personality styles, ideas of how the group should be run, interpretations of the Dhamma, preferences for meditation techniques, and so on. If we didn't put any effort into bonding with the group, we could just float in and out of the meetings, congratulating ourselves on our equanimity and raising our eyes to heaven when we hear squabbles among the more established members. But this is to mistake indifference for equanimity. We only learn true equanimity by putting our heart into our activities, making deep connections, and bearing with any reactionary pain as part of our learning curve. Mudita helps us open our hearts to form those essential connections.

Next on the Buddha's list is the joy at having done meritorious actions. We easily miss this source of mudita. Say, for example, we help an elderly person cross the road. It would be very easy to dismiss this with words like, "That was nothing—anyone would have done the same thing." But according to the Buddha, we are to rejoice at every good deed. We need to say "well done" to ourselves for any small act of kindness or generosity.

I found this really helped with my recovery from laryngectomy. I couldn't find any joy in my new state until it occurred to me to think of my role in life as someone who cared for a laryngectomee. I started to see every little thing I had to do—cleaning the various tubes, taking medicine, doing exercises—as acts of kindness for someone who had suffered laryngectomy. This gave me a new source of joy, and with that my self-confidence started to recover. And when I recovered enough to be able to do a few things for others, these really meant a lot. It might just have been that I cut the vegetables for dinner or sorted through the recycling bins. Before the illness I wouldn't have paid much heed to these, but after a long spell of being totally dependent, I saw how much joy was on offer from being able to play a role in society.

Now, of course, we can get attached to our roles and get very uptight when we're not appreciated. But if we keep reminding ourselves that our motivation is kindness and congratulating ourselves for that kindness, this undercuts the attachment. Reflecting on the law of kamma helps with this. We shape our future happiness or unhappiness depending on the motivation for our actions. Acting out of kindness sows seeds for future happiness; acting out of anger or meanness sows seeds of unhappiness. Kamma is our only real possession in life. Everything else will fall apart in time. So we're looking after our future self really well when we do things out of kindness. And we can definitely congratulate ourselves for every good deed.

Further on in the Mangala Sutta, the Buddha includes supporting our families as a blessing in which to rejoice. There's so much involved in family life—all the daily chores of cooking and cleaning, educating children, caring for older parents. Can we make a practice of joy out of all this? For that, we have to spend quality time with our family, rather than let it all become a burden of hard work. Eating together is one way of expressing value for one another, along with activities like sports, playing cards, Scrabble, crosswords, going for walks—whatever pastimes your family enjoys. If we're not careful, television can become a mind-numbing escape from interaction. But we can also make it a focus for shared enjoyment,

chatting about the programme like they do on Gogglebox.

Remember, kāma is about motivation, not the activity itself. If our motivation for watching TV is to have some relaxing and enjoyable time with our family, we're on the right track. To help with this, we can inject little muditā wishes every now and again: "May our happiness continue. May our happiness increase."

Having said that, we have to take care that our activities don't violate the precepts. We can't justify watching pornography or sadism by saying, "May my happiness continue, may my happiness increase." So we have to choose forms of entertainment which stimulate wonder, for example, or humour, or understanding of human nature, or appreciation of skill.

The Buddha isn't asking us to neglect our families, homes, or society for the sake of enlightenment. Instead, we bring all these within the definition of what is our path by appreciating them and adding to their beauty or joy wherever possible, while we remind ourselves that they cannot be relied upon for lasting happiness.

We can find any number of occasions for muditā, but it can be quite a challenge because earthly joys don't last forever and because we can't own them or control them to any meaningful degree. It can be quite poignant. This is why muditā can be quite a challenging brahmavihāra.

I sometimes find myself preferring funerals to weddings, for example. There is some comfort in knowing it's okay to feel and express sorrow, whereas there can be a confusing disconnect when sadness is felt but it's not the appropriate emotion to express. At a wedding, if we're feeling depressed, the effort to keep smiling and making small talk can be quite wearying.

The ephemeral nature of joy means that like all phenomena, it fades away moment after moment. Unless we have a background level of peace within ourselves, the experience of joy fading away can be so hard to bear that we find ways of excluding it altogether. This process underlies the far enemies of muditā, which centre around jealousy for other people's happiness and disparaging our own sources of happiness.

Many myths and legends illustrate the destructive power of jealousy. In the Bible, we have the first record of murder when Cain killed his brother Abel out of jealousy for the favour God showed to Abel. A bit later, Joseph is set upon by all ten of his elder brothers, who are jealous of the love their father showers on his younger son. And Snow White was cast out of the palace by the jealous queen, who couldn't bear to be judged less beautiful than her stepdaughter.

All these stories go on to illustrate how jealousy destroys the one who harbours it. Cain becoming an outcast, Joseph's brothers suffering famine and imprisonment, and the wicked queen having to dance herself to death in red-hot slippers at Snow White's wedding.

Shakespeare gives a graphic illustration of the self-destructive power of jealousy when Iago warns

Othello: "O beware, my lord, of jealousy. It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on."

These epic stories show jealousy in the form of murderous rage, but its power can also drive the drip-drip destructiveness of peevishness. In fear of their success, we denigrate our rival's achievement as worthless. Caught up in the throes of jealousy, their success implies our failure, and the only way to relieve our pain is to belittle their achievement.

To the extent that we're identified with our skills and talents, we're in danger of jealousy when another exhibits a similar talent. If you read *Little Women*, you'll remember the night Amy burned her sister Jo's precious manuscript in a fit of jealousy. The 1950 Nobel Prize was said to have been offered to Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla for their work in electromagnetism, but they both refused to accept it if the other person was to be included. Jealousy can destroy any partnership, be it artistic, scientific, business, or even religious—Devadatta's attempt to kill the Buddha being a prime example.

Jealousy also ruins personal relationships. We want our partner to be totally bound up in us. If they enjoy someone else's company, we take it as betrayal. And of course, if they leave us for another, we're in an agony of hatred for both parties.

Practising muditā for ourselves is a powerful antidote to jealousy. We build self-confidence by appreciating ourselves and especially every effort we make—good kamma for ourselves. As we build our own sense of self-worth, we're less threatened by the talents or good fortune of others. Congratulating ourselves is in itself an exercise in muditā. It stirs joy. A healthy sense of ourselves is worthwhile. We need this healthy sense of self to sustain us on the path.

Sometimes we mistake the teaching on anattā, not-self, to mean that we shouldn't have any sense of self. So whenever we feel a sense of self, we condemn ourselves, saying, "I shouldn't feel like this" or "I shouldn't be here." But the Buddha often uses the word "self" in a very positive way. For example, he says that if we truly care for ourselves, we will practise the Dhamma.

Let's face it, the teaching on anattā can be very confusing. I appreciate Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro's interpretation that sometimes the sense of self is appropriate and helps us along the path, while other times it leads to suffering. Our job is to get better and better at recognising whether we should let our sense of self help us do what we need to do, or whether it's one of those times when the sense of self is curling itself around some habit based on greed, aversion, or delusion—in which case, of course, we need to let it go.

When our judgement tells us that what we're doing is wise, we strengthen the sense of self needed to follow through on the activity. But when we've done the activity and the self wants to do it again and again for no good reason, then it's time to accept the truth of anattā and let that sense of self dissolve.

So the self is something to care for, according to the Buddha. The only thing we have to worry about is

making the mistake of expecting it to give us permanent happiness. Like everything else in this phenomenal universe, it is temporary and contingent. But of all the temporary contingent entities we find here, the self is the most important, the one we must cherish most deeply. To practise the Dhamma is to care deeply for ourselves.

We give ourselves the gift of mindfulness moment after moment, asking nothing in return. As you all know, this is a tough challenge. We fortify ourselves for this challenge by appreciating every good deed we do, thanking ourselves for every effort we've made to practice, congratulating ourselves for everything we do well. This is strengthening the sense of self that does wise actions. Just as an ideal parent would praise and encourage their child, we must do the same for our poor, downtrodden selves.

Denigration is less dramatic than jealousy, but also powerfully destructive. In fact, it's such a quiet form of negativity that we hardly notice it. What's happening is that we see the joy as too little to bother appreciating. So we disparage our incredibly good fortune of living in a peaceful society, having shelter and enough to eat. We rarely remember to be grateful for the gift of the Dhamma or for having friends to practice with. We only appreciate our health when it's gone.

Denigration also destroys relationships. Belittling a child or partner is a powerful form of bullying. It keeps the other from flourishing. The belittled party comes to believe in their worthlessness. Their personality and talents wither. Lucy illustrated this perfectly in a Peanuts comic strip, saying, "The trouble with you, Charlie Brown, is that you're you."

Apart from the interpersonal level, we regularly extend our disparaging remarks to collective aspects of human endeavour, remembering only the failures of institutions, politicians, technology, and society. This bespeaks bitterness, resulting from our repeated attempts to shut joy out of our hearts.

For some strange reason, we're often encouraged culturally to denigrate ourselves. "I'm no good at this." "I always make a mess of things." "I can't ever get things right." In one sense, it's a form of appeasement, a way of saying, "I'm not a threat to you." It defines us as one of the gang. If we see it in that playful way, just a form of social pleasantry, then it's not harmful. But to the extent that we're really convinced of it, we're damaging ourselves.

None of us would like to be thought of as a bully, and yet the self-disparaging remarks we make to ourselves are actually those of a bully. We are shaming ourselves rather than seeing the liberating truth of anattā—that I cannot be expected to get everything right because conditions are always beyond my control. We can start to undo the habit of self-denigration by practising muditā for ourselves, saying "well done" even just for putting on our shoes—mindfully, of course.

The near enemy of muditā is excitement and excess. It's natural to get excited when there's something to celebrate, but indulging this only brings the inevitable downer when the party's over. Think of the excess around Christmas and weddings. The same goes for other supposedly religious celebrations. In Ireland,

many families go into huge debt over First Communion outfits, for example. Even when we invite a friend to tea, we can go over the top in preparations.

We mistake this daft excess for muditā because we're so happy about the celebration. But the joy goes to our head and escalates. In this heady exuberance, we lose all sense of proportion. And in the frenetic excitement, things can go badly wrong. Rivalries flare over matters of style and taste and who should sit where. For all these reasons, celebrations can be more stressful than happy.

Excessive exuberance turns sour very easily. Think of the riots that can follow football matches. I know one sister who hasn't spoken with her brother since an incident at her daughter's christening. In some forms of illness such as bipolar depression, the high set up by the celebration can lead to depression afterwards.

The far enemies of jealousy and denigration shut out joy, while the near enemies of excitement and excess cling to it. For muditā, we need to find the middle way—opening our hearts to the good things in life while also relaxing, taking it easy, not building things out of proportion.

It's a tightrope. One moment we're singing someone's praises; the next we've exhausted all our goodwill and we're hoping they'll get their comeuppance. Just being aware of which side of the tightrope we've fallen off tells us what needs to be cultivated right now.

In formal meditation, we start off by thinking of someone who has recently had cause for celebration—for example, someone who has become a parent or grandparent, got a new job, or won a prize. We then wish that their happiness will continue and increase. One variant on the classic phrase that I like is: "I'm happy that you're happy." It usually makes me feel happy too. You could also try a simple "well done." Or in some cases, "thank you" might fit the bill. Use whatever phrase best sustains your sense of appreciation when you think of that person.

It doesn't matter if you can't think of a reason for celebration. Imagine them smiling at a joke, or enjoying a book, or having coffee with a friend. The simplest daily activities can form the basis for muditā.

As with all the Brahma Viharas, the self can be a particularly challenging category. Remember that any way your life is going well—family, professional, social, hobbies, physical fitness, meditation practice—has taken hard work and commitment and deserves appreciation. Sometimes a very simple image works best for me. I picture myself petting the dog or scattering breadcrumbs for the birds, and I say, "Well done."

If, when you offer muditā to yourself, you feel vanity surface, just note this. We need to learn to take a healthy pride in our achievements. Once we're mindful of vanity, it won't spiral into self-delusion. Similarly, if you feel yourself contracting in jealousy or heady with excitement, just note these, set them aside, and continue. Take a few breaths between good wishes to help you keep balance and perspective.

If jealousy becomes overpowering, try turning attention to your own successes instead, murmuring "well

done" to yourself for these. An alternative that I often find helpful is to encompass the jealousy within a good wish, such as "May competition between us bring out the best in us both," or if the jealousy is about a personal relationship, I've used the wish "May your love for others help me to love them too."

And as usual, if the near or far enemies or any other hindrances get so overwhelming that none of the remedies works, take a vipassanā break and only return to muditā when you feel more balanced.

I want to finish with a few words about working with the near and far enemies in daily life. For example, we easily get overexcited about celebrations, especially if we're involved in the planning stage. Noting this is the first and at times the hardest step. We can be so caught up in our plans that we forget to be in any way mindful. They just take us over. Sooner or later, we'll notice that we're going over the top. Then we have to find strategies to calm ourselves. Mindful breaths, mindful footsteps, mindful actions—all these help.

Also, take a moment to think of the event you're celebrating. Ironically, we easily forget this in the midst of all the fussing. If it's a birthday party, take a moment to bring the person to mind and wish them a happy birthday. Very often, this brings us back down to earth for a while. Often we fuss about the arrangements because we want to impress people. If you think that could be the case, take time for some self-directed good wishes as a means of bolstering a healthy sense of your own value and protecting you from going into great excess.

While excitement shows particularly during the planning stage, the far enemies tend to show up during or in the aftermath of the celebration. As host, we might feel peeved that people aren't more appreciative. As guest, we might be fed up pretending we're happy. And as the door closes, both parties may be thinking, "Thank God that's over." Celebration isn't easy.

Often problems come about because we feel we ought to be happy. This puts us under pressure, which in itself quells a lot of happiness. So remember that we don't have to feel happy to practice muditā. The fact that we've taken the time to mark the occasion is enough. We can keep reminding ourselves of this whenever we feel jealousy, boredom, or irritation setting in.

Say we're at a graduation party. After an hour or so we get fed up hearing about all the courses and exams they passed and wish they had just dropped out after the first day. Any effort to be happy on their account sets our teeth on edge. Our practice with the small stuff can help here. Although our heart has closed down at the thought of our friend's great achievement, we might still be able to enjoy the food or see the beauty of a flower arrangement, or we might get a little lift by listening to the music playing in the background. Ironically, even our misery can be a basis for muditā, as we say "well done" to ourselves for every moment we endure in our efforts to celebrate our friend's achievement.

I hope this talk has helped clarify the importance of joy in the spiritual path. In meditation we have the joy of pīti, which results from interest in the process leading to liberation. It's what keeps us coming back to

the cushion, back on retreat, despite all the dukkha we witness there. In daily life we're sustained by muditā, by the joy that arises naturally when things go well for us. We cultivate muditā by paying deliberate attention to anything that makes life pleasant, inspiring, or easy, and getting into the habit of saying "thank you" and "well done" many times every day.

An especially important aspect of muditā is to rejoice in our own good deeds and every attempt we make to practice meditation and incorporate the Dhamma into our lives. Congratulating ourselves for all these builds up the self-confidence we need to follow the path to liberation.

May our efforts to cultivate muditā bring joy to our lives and to the lives of those we love.

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