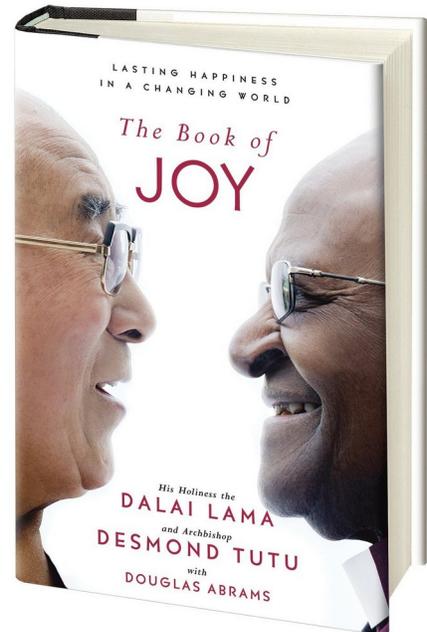


8.

The Eight Pillars of Joy

1. Perspective: There are Many Different Angles
2. Humility: I Tried to Look Humble and Modest
3. Humour: Laughter, Joking is Much Better



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“joy is a by-product”

it was time to delve deeper into the qualities of mind and heart that we needed to cultivate

eight pillars of joy. Four were qualities of the mind: *perspective, humility, humour, and acceptance*. Four were qualities of the heart: *forgiveness, gratitude, compassion, and generosity*.

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we create most of our suffering, so we should be able to create more joy

A healthy perspective really is the foundation of joy and happiness, because the way we see the world is the way we experience the world.

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The Dalai Lama had discussed the importance of a wider perspective [“many different angles”] when he was telling us about how he was able to see the calamity of his losing his country as an opportunity. ...what he had gained: wider contact and new relationships, less formality and more freedom to discover the world and learn from others.

Viktor Frankl: our perspective toward life is our final and ultimate freedom.

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wider perspective and *larger perspective*... involve stepping back, within our own mind, to look at the bigger picture and move beyond our limited self-awareness and our limited self-interest.

We suffer from a perspectival myopia. ...we are left nearsighted, unable to see our experience in a larger way. When we confront a challenge, we often react to the situation with fear and anger. The stress can make it hard for us to step back and see other perspectives and other solutions. ...but if we try, we can become less fixated, or attached

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we can recognize that our limited perspective is not the truth... we can even see our own role in any conflict or misunderstanding

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when you are stuck in a traffic jam, you can deal with it in one of two ways. You can let the frustration really eat you up. Or you can look around at the other drivers and see that one might have a wife who has pancreatic cancer. It doesn't matter if you don't know exactly what they might have, but you know they are all suffering with worries and fears because they are human. And you can lift them up and bless them. You can say, Please, God, given each one of them what they need.

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When we have a wider perspective, we are also less likely to spend our time lost in self-referential thought, ruminating. [...] Think about where you are suffering in your life and then think about all the other people who are going through a similar situation. This perhaps is quite literally the birth of compassion, which means "suffering with." The incredible thing, the Dalai Lama and the Archbishop pointed out, was that this "suffering with" others reminds us that we are not alone, and actually lessens our own pain.

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"As I mentioned earlier I used to get nervous," the Dalai Lama continued. "When I was young and had to give some formal teachings, because I was not thinking that we are all same, I would experience anxiety. I would forget that I'm just talking as a human being to fellow human beings. I would think of myself as something special, and that kind of thinking would make me feel isolated. It is this sense of separateness that isolates us from other people. In fact, this kind of arrogant way of thinking creates a sense of loneliness, and then anxiety.

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humility is essential to a life of joy. And it's exactly this humility that allows these two men to be so approachable, so connected to others, and so effective in their work in the world.

Tibetan wisdom: "Whenever I see someone, may I never feel superior. From the depth of my heart, may I be able to really appreciate the other person in front of me."

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When we have a wider perspective, we have a natural understanding of our place in the great sweep of all that was, is, and will be. This naturally leads to humility and the recognition that as human beings we can't solve everything or control all aspects of life. We need others. ...We are not created for independence or self-sufficiency, but for interdependence and mutual support.

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The word *humility* actually comes from the Latin word for earth or soil, *humus*... Humility literally brings us back down to earth, sometimes with a thud.

None of us are immune to the all-too-human traits of pride or ego, but true arrogance really comes from insecurity. Needing to feel that we are bigger than others comes from a nagging fear that we are smaller. Whenever the Dalai Lama senses this danger, he looks at a bug or some other creature and reminds himself that, in some ways, this creature is better than we are, because it is innocent and free of malice.

“No one is a divine accident.” While we may not be special, we are essential.

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Sometimes we confuse humility with timidity... Humility allows us to celebrate the gifts of others, but it does not mean you have to deny your own gifts or shrink from using them.

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whenever we challenge ourselves, fear and doubt are inevitable.

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Humour, like *humility*, comes from the same root word for *humanity*: *humus*. The lowly and sustaining earth is the source for all three words. Is it any surprise that we have to have a sense of humility to be able to laugh at ourselves and that to laugh at ourselves reminds us of our shared humanity?

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if you are longing to bring people together, you're not going to do so by being acerbic. You know, it's so good to see the ridiculous in us all, really. I think we then get to see our common humanity in many ways.

“Ultimately, I think it's about being able to laugh at yourself and being able not to take yourself so seriously. It's not about the belittling humour that puts others down and yourself up. It's about bringing people onto common ground.

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[humour can say] ‘Come stand next to me and let's laugh at me together, then we can laugh at you together.’ It does not belittle either of us but uplifts us, allows us to recognize and laugh about our shared humanity, about our shared vulnerabilities, our shared frailties. Life is hard, you know, and laughter is how we come to terms with all the ironies and cruelties and uncertainties that we face.

Jokes are funny precisely because they break our expectations and help us to accept the unexpected. Other people are one of the greatest sources of uncertainty in our lives, so it is not surprising that much humour is used to manage and massage these encounters.

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Laugh at yourself and don't be so pompous and serious. If you start looking for the humour in life, you will find it. You will stop asking, Why me? and start recognizing that life happens to all of us.

Questions for reflection:

1. Have you found that you have reacted to situations in a single way, before, when you might've had a better outcome by looking at different perspectives?
2. Can you describe a time when you felt loneliness or anxiety when you were treated in a special way, or perhaps felt you were in a superior position? Can you imagine a similar situation and framing it where you are just another human being talking to human beings?
3. Are there moments that you've experienced where you've acted seriously, but later have found the light in those previously-serious times?

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Pastor Tyler's highlights and notes on the reading

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