

The Circle of Joy

..... source unknown (adapted and modified by Amy Fox)

One day, a countryman knocked on a monastery door. When the monk tending the gates opened up, the countryman gave the monk a magnificent bunch of grapes.

"Brother, these are the finest grapes my vineyard has produced. I've come to give them as a gift."

The monk thanked him and said, "I will take them to the Abbot immediately, he'll be delighted with this offering."

"No," said the countryman, "I brought them for you. Whenever I knock on the door, it is you opens it. When I needed help because the crops were destroyed by drought, you gave me food to eat every day."

The monk was touched by this man's gesture and he thanked him again.

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The monk spent the entire morning admiring the grapes and after much thought, he decided to deliver the grapes to the Abbot, who had always encouraged him with words of wisdom.

The Abbot was very pleased with the grapes, but he recalled that there was a sick brother in the monastery, and thought: "I'll give him the grapes. Who knows, perhaps they may bring some joy to his life."

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The Abbott gave the grapes to the sick brother but the grapes didn't stay in the sick monk's room for long. The sick brother wanted to thank the cook for taking care of him and feeding him the best meals while he was sick.

The sick brother gave the grapes to the cook and the cook was amazed at the beauty of the grapes. He thought the grapes were so perfect– so perfect that no one would appreciate them more than the sexton, a man that many at the monastery considered to be a holy man.

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The sexton was so appreciative of the gift and, in turn, gave the grapes as a gift to his youngest novice so that he could see that joy is in the smallest things.

When the novice received the grapes, he remembered the first time he came to the monastery, and of the person who had opened the gates for him; it was that gesture which allowed him to be among this community of people who knew how to value the wonders of life.

And so, just before nightfall, he took the grapes to the monk at the gates. He said, “Eat and enjoy these grapes for you spend most of your time alone here, and these grapes will make you very happy.”

It was then that the monk at the gates understood that the grapes had been truly destined for him, and that the circle of happiness and joy always shines brightly around generous people.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

OPENING CLASS

The Law of Karma states that what goes around, comes around. Essentially, whatever it is we do, comes back to us.

Take a moment to arrive as you are, where you are...

As you settle into this space, ask yourself, "What can I do for the next 60 minutes that will make my future self proud?"

DURING CLASS

After Telling Part 1 and 2 of the Story

It's the actions we take today that inform our tomorrow's. We literally write the future in the present moment.

Notice what is taking up space for you right now. Is how you're showing up, fueling the future you want to live into?

After Telling the Story

What we sow is what we reap and when we sow seeds of love and kindness, the world becomes a much brighter place.

Breathe into your heart space. Expand the space of your heart and send loving energy to every person in this room. See if you can keep building Metta and send it out beyond this walls to all people everywhere.

CLOSING CLASS

Where joy and love is given, all receive.

Where this week can you start the circle of joy? To whom can you offer conscious kindness and love?

EXTRAS

We'd all agree that kindness makes the world a better place. Conscious kindness is kindness done with intentionality and one that is done without seeking validation or acknowledgment in return. It's a powerful practice because it primes the brain to think and act on love, which creates and releases oxytocin and serotonin.

Challenge your class to take on a week of conscious kindness where each day they perform an act of conscious kindness.

If you or your students need inspiration, check out [111 Acts of Conscious Kindness](#).