

The Origin of Happiness

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

There was once a boy who hardly had any toys or money, but nonetheless, he was a very happy little boy. He said that what made him happy was doing things for others, and that doing so gave him a nice feeling inside.

He spent all day helping others, dispensing charity to the poorest, and looking after abandoned animals. Very seldom did he ever do anything for himself.

While this sounds good and wholesome, no one really believed him— how could someone be so happy just by making others happy? People thought the boy was crazy.

One day, the boy met a famous doctor who thought the boy's case was so peculiar that he decided to investigate him. So, with a complex system of cameras and tubes, the doctor managed to record what was happening inside the boy. What he discovered was beyond the scope of any medicine he knew.

What the doctor observed is that each time the boy did something good, a thousand tiny angels gathered around the boy's heart and started tickling it. It was this tickling of the heart that made the boy so happy.

This made the doctor curious: was this boy so special and unique or did we all have this capacity inside of us?

The doctor studied countless individuals of all ages and he did in fact discover that we all have our own thousand angels inside us. Unfortunately, he also found that as most people do so few good things, the angels spend most of their time wandering about bored, instead of tickling the heart and creating more happiness.

And so it was that the secret to happiness was discovered and the power to create that happiness lies in the lives we positively affect in those around us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

OPENING CLASS

We often think that happiness is something we'll experience when we have something or look a certain way. But what if the real secret to happiness was already inside of us?

Start to tune into your breathing body. See if you can begin to deepen your breath here...

DURING CLASS

After Telling the Story

There's a saying that goes, "A little bit of kindness, goes a long way," and there's actually some truth to that. Turns out, acts of kindness benefit all those involved, both the giver and receiver.

When we practice kindness or perform an act of kindness, our bodies release serotonin and oxytocin, which help reduce anxiety and increase our level of happiness.

How different would life be, this world be, if we showed up with conscious kindness, a simple desire to help others achieve or do what we were not able to do?

CLOSING CLASS

Happiness lies in the lives we positively affect in those around us.

Where this week can you be a powerful force for positive change?

EXTRAS

The key to true generosity arises from gratitude. Whereas generosity describes an attitude toward giving, gratitude is receiving with grace and joyful appreciation for the gift.

Turns out, you might be able to increase your generosity by practicing gratitude: In her TED X talk, The key to true generosity, Rachel Chong explains that gratitude for our privilege and luck can motivate us to empathize with others who haven't been so lucky. We can then express this empathy through generous actions.