

Quotes of the Dalai Lama

“Generosity is the most natural outward expression of an inner attitude of compassion and loving-kindness. When one desires to alleviate the suffering of others and to promote their well-being, then generosity - in action, word, and thought - is this desire put into practice. It is important to recognize the “generosity” here refers not just to giving in a material sense, but to generosity of the heart.”

“When we are angry we are blind to reality. Anger may bring us a temporary burst of energy, but that energy is blind and it blocks the part of our brain that distinguishes right from wrong. To deal with our problems, we need to be practical and realistic. If we are to be realistic, we need to use our human intelligence properly, which means we need a calm mind.”

“The very purpose of spirituality is self-discipline. Rather than criticizing others, we should evaluate and criticize ourselves. Ask yourself, what am I doing about my anger, my attachment, my pride, my jealousy? These are the things we should check in our day to day lives.”

“It is important that when pursuing our own self-interest we should be “wise selfish” and not “foolish selfish”. Being foolish selfish means pursuing our own interests in a narrow, shortsighted way. Being wise selfish means taking a broader view and recognizing that our own long-term individual interest lies in the welfare of everyone. Being wise selfish means being compassionate.”

“There is a saying in Tibetan that “at the door of the miserable rich man sleeps the contented beggar.” The point of this saying is not that poverty is a virtue, but that happiness does not come from wealth, but from setting limits to one’s desires, and living within those limits with satisfaction.”

“In the face of all the challenges we face today, is my optimism about the future of humanity idealistic? Perhaps it is. Is it unrealistic? Certainly not. To remain indifferent to the challenges we face is indefensible. If the goal is noble, whether or not it is realized within our lifetime is largely irrelevant. What we must do therefore is to strive and persevere and never give up.”

“The creation of a more peaceful and happier society has to begin from the level of the individual, and from there it can expand to one's family, to one's neighborhood, to one's community and so on.”

“Compassion is something really worthwhile. It is not just a religious or spiritual subject, not a matter of ideology. It is not a luxury, it is a necessity.”

“Developing inner values is much like physical exercise. The more we train our abilities, the stronger they become. The difference is that, unlike the body, when it comes to training the mind, there is no limit to how far we can go.”

“We are all, by nature, clearly oriented toward the basic human values of love and compassion. We all prefer the love of others to their hatred. We all prefer others’ generosity to meanness. And who is there among us who does not prefer tolerance, respect and forgiveness of our failings to bigotry, disrespect, and resentment?”

“In an increasingly interdependent world our own welfare and happiness depend on many other people. Other human beings have a right to peace and happiness that is equal to our own; therefore

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we have a responsibility to help those in need. Many of our world's problems and conflicts arise because we have lost sight of the basic humanity that binds us all together as a human family."

"The first beneficiary of compassion is always oneself. When compassion, or warm-heartedness, arises in us and our focus shifts away from our own narrow self-interest, it is as if we open an inner door. It reduces fear, boosts confidence and brings us inner strength. By reducing distrust, it opens us to others and brings us a sense of connection to others, and sense of purpose and meaning in life."

"My hope and wish is that one day, formal education will pay attention to what I call "education of the heart." Just as we take for granted the need to acquire proficiency in the basic academic subjects, I am hopeful that a time will come when we can take it for granted that children will learn, as part of the curriculum, the indispensability of inner values: love, compassion, justice, and forgiveness."

"Even more important than the warmth and affection we receive, is the warmth and affection we give. It is by giving warmth and affection, by having a genuine sense of concern for others, in other words through compassion, that we gain the conditions for genuine happiness. More important than being loved, therefore, is to love."

"The basic foundation of humanity is compassion and love. This is why, if even a few individuals simply try to create mental peace and happiness within themselves and act responsibly and kind-heartedly towards others, they will have a positive influence in their community."

"Genuine happiness requires peace of mind or a degree of mental composure. When this is present, hardship counts for nothing. With inner strength or mental stability, we can endure all kinds of adversity."

"More fundamental than religion is our basic human spirituality. We have a basic human disposition towards love, kindness and affection, irrespective of whether we have a religious framework or not. When we nurture this most basic human resource – when we set about cultivating those basic inner values which we all appreciate in others, then we start to live spiritually."

"Great compassion is the root of altruistic action. It really is a source of wonder. There is no greater source of help and happiness. The capacity to devote yourself to the welfare of others yields otherwise unobtainable power and potential for good. Generate great compassion and you become a friend of the world and a companion of the warm-hearted."

"Many people think that patience is a sign of weakness. I think this is a mistake. It is anger that is a sign of weakness, whereas patience is a sign of strength."

"Human beings are not intrinsically selfish, which isolates us from others. We are essentially social animals who depend on others to meet our needs. We achieve happiness, prosperity and progress through social interaction. Therefore, having a kind and helpful attitude contributes to our own and others' happiness."

"The more adept we become at cultivating an altruistic attitude, the happier we will feel and the more comfortable will be the atmosphere around us. But if our emotions fluctuate wildly and we easily give

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in to hatred and jealousy, even our friends will avoid us. So even for people with no spiritual beliefs, it is important to have a peaceful mind."

"Love, kindness, compassion and tolerance are qualities common to all the great religions, and whether or not we follow any particular religious tradition, the benefits of love and kindness are obvious to anyone."

"It is time to develop a big 'US', rather than the old 'us and them' that lets us to exploit and bully others on a personal level, and on an international level to wage war. The East must see the West as part of 'US' and the North must come to feel that the South is part of 'US'. We should include the entire world in our concern, wishing all humanity well. If we can do that there will be no room for hatred, thinking of others as enemies. And we will achieve this through education, not through prayer."

"Spirituality concerns our own motivation, while secular activity implies working in the world. Because motivation pervades all action, it is important that we have a positive motivation. Whatever we are involved in, whether it's politics, education, medicine, law, engineering, science, business or industry, the nature of our motivation determines the character of our work."

"Study and practice are both very important, but they must go hand in hand. Faith without knowledge is not sufficient. Faith needs to be supported by reason. However intellectual understanding that is not applied in practice is also of little use. Whatever we learn from study we need to apply sincerely in our daily lives."

"Under certain circumstances, you may need to take steps to counteract someone else's wrongdoing, but it's better to do so without anger. That will be more effective, because when your mind is overwhelmed by a disturbing emotion like anger, the action you take may not be appropriate."

"The nature of the mind is such that if certain mental qualities are developed on a sound basis, they not only remain, but they also increase. In fact, once properly developed, the mind's good qualities eventually increase indefinitely. Therefore spiritual practice brings us long-term happiness and inner strength."

"Let us cultivate love and compassion, both of which give life true meaning. This is the religion I preach. It is simple. Its temple is the heart. Its teaching is love and compassion. Its moral values are loving and respecting others, whoever they may be. Whether one is a lay person or a monastic, we have no other option if we wish to survive in this world."

"Leaving aside the perspective of spiritual practice, even in worldly terms, in terms of our enjoying a happy day-to-day existence, the calmer our minds are, the greater our peace of mind will be and the greater will be our ability to enjoy a happy and joyful life."

"Modern education pays attention to the development of the brain and the intellect, but this is not enough. We need also to be able to develop warm-heartedness in our educational systems. This we need from kindergarten all the way through university."

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“In daily practice, reflect on the benefits of love, compassion and kindness, then reflect on the disadvantages of anger. Such continuous contemplation, the growing appreciation of love, has the effect of reducing our inclination towards hatred and increasing our respect for love. By this means even anger can be diminished.”

“Everyone can understand from natural experience and common sense that affection is crucial from the day of birth; it is the basis of life. The very survival of our body requires the affection of others, to whom we also respond with affection. Though mixed with attachment, this affection is not based on physical or sexual attraction, so it can be extended to all living beings without bias.”

“The goal is to cultivate in our hearts the concern a dedicated mother feels for her child, and then focus it on more and more people and living beings. This is a heartfelt, powerful love. Such feelings give us a true understanding of human rights, that is not grounded just in legal terms, but rooted deeply in the heart.”

“The compassion we feel normally is biased and mixed with attachment. Genuine compassion flows towards all living beings, particularly your enemies. If I try to develop compassion towards my enemy, it may not benefit him directly, he may not even be aware of it. But it will immediately benefit me by calming my mind. On the other hand, if I dwell on how awful everything is, I immediately lose my peace of mind.”

“Genuine respect will come about if we have more contact with one another and come to understand each other’s values. This is how we will develop admiration and appreciation for each other.”

“Until you have the inner discipline that brings calmness of mind, external facilities and conditions will never bring the joy and happiness you seek. On the other hand, if you possess this inner quality, calmness of mind, a degree of stability within, even if you lack the various external factors that you would normally require to be happy, it will still be possible to live a happy and joyful life.”

“It is clear that feelings of love, affection, closeness and compassion bring happiness. I believe that every one of us has the means to be happy, to access the warm and compassionate states of mind that bring happiness. In fact, it is one of my fundamental beliefs that not only do we inherently possess the potential for compassion, but I believe that the basic or underlying nature of human beings is gentleness.”

“The practice of altruism is the authentic way to live as a human being, and it is not just for religious people. As human beings, our purpose is to live meaningful lives, to develop a warm heart. There is meaning in being everyone’s friend. The real source of peace amongst our families, friends and neighbours is love and compassion.”

“It is important to understand that counterproductive actions of body, speech and mind do not arise of their own accord, but spring up in dependence on our motivation. Faulty states of mind give rise to faulty actions. To control negative physical and verbal actions, we need to tame our minds.”

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“Giving up attachment to the world does not mean that you set yourself apart from it. Generating a desire for others to be happy increases your humanity. As you become less attached to the world, you become more humane. As the very purpose of spiritual practice is to help others, you must remain in society.”

“We have different degrees of happiness and different kinds of suffering. Material objects give rise to physical happiness, while spiritual development gives rise to mental happiness. Since we experience both physical and mental happiness, we need both material and spiritual development. This is why, for our own good and that of society we need to balance material progress with inner development.”

“My advice is that if you must be selfish, be wisely selfish. Wise people serve others sincerely, putting the needs of others above their own. Ultimately you will be happier. The kind of selfishness that provokes fighting, killing, stealing, using harsh words, forgetting other people’s welfare will only result in your own loss.”

“People inflict pain on others in their selfish pursuit of happiness and satisfaction. Yet true happiness comes from a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood. We need to cultivate a sense of universal responsibility for one another and the planet we share.”

“I am convinced that human nature is basically affectionate and good. If our behavior follows our kind and loving nature, immense benefits will result, not only for ourselves, but also for the society to which we belong. I generally refer to this sort of love and affection as a universal religion. Everyone needs it, believers as much as non-believers. This attitude constitutes the very basis of morality.”

“Compassion is of little value if it just remains an idea. It must motivate how we respond to others and be reflected in all our thoughts and actions.”

“Because of the great differences in our ways of thinking, it is inevitable that we have different religions and faiths. Each has its own beauty. And it is much better that we live together on the basis of mutual respect and mutual admiration.”

“Peace is not just the mere absence of violence or disturbance. It's when there is a possibility of conflict, but you deliberately avoid violence and adopt methods to solve the problem through peaceful means. That is real peace.”

“Each one of us is responsible for the whole of humankind. We need to think of each other really as brothers and sisters and to be concerned for each other’s welfare. Rather than working solely to acquire wealth, we need to do something meaningful, something directed seriously towards the welfare of humanity as a whole.”

“Anger cannot be overcome by anger. If someone is angry with you, and you show anger in return, the result is a disaster. On the other hand, if you control your anger and show its opposite – love, compassion, tolerance and patience – not only will you remain peaceful, but the other person's anger will also diminish.”

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“Whatever path our activity takes, if our intention is to make ourselves useful to others, there is a good chance our conduct will be useful; whereas activities generally considered to be good, such as the practice of religion, risk causing more harm than good if they are not motivated by a desire to help our fellow beings.”

“Love, compassion and concern for others are real sources of happiness. If you have these in abundance, you will not be disturbed even by the most uncomfortable circumstances. If you nurse hatred, however, you will not be happy even in the lap of luxury. Thus, if we really want happiness, we must widen the sphere of love. This is both religious thinking and basic common sense.”

“Some people automatically associate morality and altruism with a religious vision of the world. But I believe it is a mistake to think that morality is an attribute only of religion. We can imagine two types of spirituality: one tied to religion, while the other arises spontaneously in the human heart as an expression of love for our neighbors and a desire to do them good.”

“Foolish, selfish people are always thinking of themselves and the result is always negative. Wise persons think of others, helping them as much as they can, and the result is happiness. Love and compassion are beneficial both for you and others. Through your kindness to others, your mind and heart will open to peace.”

“Friends, genuine friends, are attracted by a warm heart, not money, not power. A genuine friend considers you as just another human being, as a brother or sister, and shows affection on that level, regardless of whether you are rich or poor, or in a high position; that is a genuine friend.”

“Our visit to this planet is short, so we should use our time meaningfully, which we can do by helping others wherever possible. And if we cannot help others, at least we should try not to create pain and suffering for them.”

“Improved technology, population growth and globalization have made today’s world increasingly interdependent. Therefore, putting your own country’s interests first, at the expense of others, can have serious consequences. What we need to do is to think of humanity as a whole and develop a sense of concern on a global level. I refer to this as having a sense of ‘universal responsibility’.”

““It is important to reflect on the kindness of others. Every aspect of our present well-being is due to others' hard work. The buildings we live and work in, the roads we travel, the clothes we wear, and the food we eat, are all provided by others. None of them would exist but for the kindness of so many people unknown to us.”

“Practicing compassion, caring for others and sharing their problems, lays the foundation for a meaningful life, not only at the level of the individual, family or community, but also for humanity as a whole.”

“In training the mind, perspective is of crucial importance. We cannot expect to transform our minds in a few minutes or even a few weeks, thinking, perhaps, that the blessings of an enlightened individual will enable us to obtain immediate results. Such an attitude is not realistic. It takes a long time, sometimes years or even decades; but if we persevere, there is no doubt we will make progress.”

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“As human beings we possess determination and intelligence, the combination of which offers many opportunities. It is important to direct our intelligence with good intentions. Without intelligence, we cannot accomplish very much. Without good intentions, the way we exercise of our intelligence may have destructive results.”

“In a world in which demographic growth and progress in communications have put us in very close contact with our neighbors, the very survival of humanity depends on our working together. That is why more than ever, we must look upon humanity as one entity. The problems that we face go beyond individuals and nations. We can only resolve them through an effort of shared responsibility.”

“When we wish and seek to help others, our attitude is more positive and relationships become easier. We are less afraid and have less anxiety. Otherwise we remain shy and hesitant, and feel the need to take a thousand precautions before we approach people. When our intentions are good, we have greater self-confidence and are stronger. This is how we learn to understand how precious and valuable kindness is.”

“It is clear that inner peace is the principal cause of happiness. We can observe this in our daily lives. On days when we are calm and happy, even if difficulties arise or we fall victim to a mishap, we take it well, it doesn't bother us unduly. But on days when we feel sad or have lost our usual calmness, the least little annoyance will take on enormous proportions and be deeply upsetting to us.”

“Whatever the intellectual quality of the education given our children, it is vital that it include elements of love and compassion, for nothing guarantees that knowledge alone will be truly useful to human beings. Among the major troublemakers society has known, many were well-educated and had great knowledge, but they lacked a moral education in qualities such as compassion, wisdom and clarity of vision.”

“The key to genuine happiness is in our hands. To think this way is to discover the essential values of kindness, brotherly love and altruism. The more clearly we see the benefits of these values, the more we will seek to reject anything that opposes them; in this way we will be able to bring about inner transformation.”

“When confronted with human problems, force will not bring a lasting solution. That is why I attach great importance to the feeling of mutual love among all human beings, as well as to the sense of responsibility of community life. These concepts are the source of peace everywhere in the world. They are the origin of all individual and collective fulfillment in a human community and therefore of concern to us all.”

“Although there is no certainty about what lies ahead, people live with the hope that all will go well for them. It is impossible to fulfill our life when we are utterly discouraged. But if we manage to keep our hopes in the future alive, we will be able to overcome all sorts of difficulties and go on living.”

“Through constant familiarity, we can definitely establish new behavior patterns, using our tendency to form habits to our advantage. If we make a steady effort, I think we can overcome any form of

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negative conditioning and make positive changes in our lives. But we need to remember that genuine change doesn't happen overnight."

"Since patience or tolerance comes from an ability to remain steadfast, to avoid being overwhelmed by adverse situations or conditions, we should not see patience as a sign of weakness or giving in, but rather as a sign of strength. Responding to a trying situation with patience and tolerance rather than reacting with anger and hatred involves active restraint, which arises from a strong, self-disciplined mind."

"A given situation can be viewed as either unbearable or beneficial: it depends how we look at it. We must make certain that things don't begin to seem unbearable. If we look too closely at problems we will see nothing else and they will appear all out of proportion with reality; that is when they become intolerable. If we can stand back from them, we will be better able to judge them and they will seem less serious."

"All the positive states of mind such as love, compassion, insight and so on, have the quality that you can enhance their capacity and increase their potential to a limitless degree, if you regularly practice them through training and by developing constant familiarity with them."

"Feelings of anger and hatred arise from a mind that is troubled by dissatisfaction and discontent. So you can prepare to deal with such occasions by constantly working to build inner contentment and by cultivating kindness and compassion. This brings about a certain calmness of mind that can help prevent anger from arising in the first place."

"I feel that an individual whose actions are motivated by the wish to bring others happiness necessarily meets with less misfortune than one who does not. Sickness, old age, mishaps of one sort or another are the same for us all. But the sufferings which undermine our internal peace - anxiety, doubt, disappointment - these are definitely less."

"At a fundamental level, as human beings, we are all the same; each one of us aspires to happiness and each one of us does not wish to suffer. This is why, whenever I have the opportunity, I try to draw people's attention to what as members of the human family we have in common and the deeply interconnected nature of our existence and welfare."

"In spiritual growth, it is important to avoid imbalances between academic or intellectual learning and practical implementation. Otherwise there is a danger that too much intellectualization will kill the more contemplative practices and too much emphasis on practical implementation without study will kill the understanding. There has got to be a balance."

"It is very important to value all religious systems. Although they may have great philosophical differences, they all have precepts for cultivating a good attitude toward others and helping them. They all counsel the practice of love, compassion, patience, contentment, and observing society's rules. Since all religions share these goals, it is important to respect them and to value the contribution they can make."

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“For healthy mental and emotional growth, we need a gentle, skillful, balanced approach, avoiding extremes. If we are becoming arrogant and self-important, the antidote is to think about our own problems and sufferings, to bring us down to earth. But if we are feeling overwhelmed, discouraged, helpless and depressed, it's important to reflect on our positive qualities or achievements to uplift our minds.”

“In contemporary life, humility is more important than ever. The more successful we become, both as individuals and as a family, through our development of science and technology, the more essential it becomes to preserve humility. For the greater our material achievements, the more vulnerable we become to pride and arrogance.”

“Learning is the first step in making positive changes within yourself. Other factors are conviction, determination, action and effort. Learning and education help develop conviction about the need to change and increase your commitment. Conviction then develops into determination. Next, strong determination leads to action: a sustained effort to implement the changes. This final factor of effort is critical.”

“I feel that the moment you adopt a sense of caring for others, it brings you inner strength. Inner strength brings inner tranquility, greater self-confidence. Because of such attitudes, even when things going on around you seem hostile and negative, you can still sustain your peace of mind.”

“My belief is that the various religious traditions have great potential to increase compassion, the sense of caring for one another, and the spirit of reconciliation. However, I believe that a human being, without religious faith, can be a very good person - sincere, a good heart, having a sense of concern for others - without belief in a particular religious faith.”

“Compassion creates a positive, friendly atmosphere. With such an attitude, you can create the possibility of receiving affection or a positive response from someone else. If the other person doesn't respond to you in a positive way, your own feeling of openness gives you the flexibility and freedom to change your approach as needed and still allows for the possibility of having a meaningful conversation with them.”

“It is my firm conviction that human nature is essentially compassionate and gentle. That is the predominant feature of human nature. Anger, violence, and aggression may arise, but on a secondary or more superficial level; in a sense, they arise when we are frustrated in our efforts to achieve love and affection. They are not part of our most basic, underlying nature.”

“My basic belief is that first you need to realize the usefulness of compassion, that's the key factor. Once you accept the fact that compassion is not something childish or sentimental, once you realize that compassion is something really worthwhile and realize its deeper value, then you immediately develop an attraction towards it, a willingness to cultivate it.”

“People often expect the other person to respond first in a positive way, instead of taking the initiative to create that possibility. I feel that's wrong; it can act as a barrier that just promotes a feeling of isolation from others. To overcome feelings of isolation and loneliness, your underlying attitude makes

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a tremendous difference - approaching others with the thought of compassion in your mind is the best way."

"When we speak of a calm state of mind or peace of mind, we shouldn't confuse that with an insensitive state of apathy. Having a calm or peaceful state of mind doesn't mean being spaced out or completely empty. Peace of mind or a calm state of mind is rooted in affection and compassion and is sensitive and responsive to others."

"Even our physical structure seems more suited to feelings of love and compassion. We can see how a calm, affectionate, wholesome state of mind benefits our health and physical well-being. Conversely, feelings of frustration, fear, agitation, and anger can be destructive to our health. This is why we are impelled to seek happiness."

"Hatred, jealousy and excessive attachment cause suffering and agitation. I feel compassion can help us overcome these disturbances and let us return to a calm state of mind. Compassion is not just being kind to your friend. That involves attachment because it is based on expectation. Compassion is when you do something good without any expectations – based on realizing that 'the other person is also just like me'."