

Four Immeasurables

Sympathetic Joy

"Where is there some happiness out there? I see a little happiness." It doesn't have to be a big happiness. It's little pieces of happiness here or there. Maybe you are walking down the street and some lovely, young couple passes by, who seem completely thrilled to be with each other. You can focus on that moment, those people, and you can say to yourself, "That happiness is also my happiness. That joy is also my joy." And this will cheer you up. It will decrease your self-absorption. It will open up your mind and heart a little bit. It will definitely lighten your point of view." Norman Fischer

I sometimes feel a little guilty if I don't feel much in the way of sympathetic joy towards people when the occasion seems to demand it. Maybe it is because others put pressure on me saying I 'should' feel it in certain situations. Like when William and Kate got engaged recently. Yeah great - but I don't know them do I? And I feel the Royal Family is somewhat of an anachronism anyway.

OK, it's obviously something I need to work on. Fischer points out that this joy isn't a zero sum game. We can, by sharing the joy of others allow it to expand outwards to more people. And it brings happiness to ourselves. The greatest barrier, I feel, is jealousy. And jealousy is such a strange thing when you think of it. Why do we want someone to be happy only with us? The possessive ego is so insecure that it will deny us so much happiness in life if we let it. We have to practice being more open to the feelings of others in the same way as feeling compassion but happiness should be easier to share than pain, shouldn't it?