

Heart Qualities and States of Mind that Serve Us Well is a small book of meditations on some of my favorite themes. The purpose of reflecting along these lines is to increase our experience of positive qualities.

53 pages.

Preface

Virtues are the ways that light comes into the world...

There are qualities flowing around and through our lives that have a special character to them. If we pick up on them, they can add a richness to our experience that goes beyond anything we would have imagined.

For a time, I was thinking of these as 'religious emotions'. Even though some of the connotations of that word lead to other people, institutions and history, there is also the aspect of what we call religious that has to do with our own deeper nature, in a most personal, profound and mysterious way.

Recognizing that as many people might feel excluded the term 'religious' as would feel welcomed by it, I'm now thinking of these more simply as 'heart qualities'.

Any one of a number of themes, if explored and cultivated can lead us to a deeper experience of being alive, with more joy, strength and peace.

When it comes to what's meant by the term 'cultivation', it's such an earthy metaphor for the development of qualities that traditions have used this analogy for ages: just as in growing crops, or flowers, there's both an attentiveness and a care on our part, and then also an unfolding that happens, without our making an effort.

Any time we notice a positive quality throughout the day, and pause to take note of it, and appreciate it, that quality grows in us. This may take only a moment, or it can be that we consciously stay with a feeling, such as gratitude, for hours.

The word Tibetans use for meditation translates to 'familiarization', and this is the process I'm referring to here. The more familiar we are with something, the more a part of our life it becomes, and the easier it will be to call it to mind when we need to, and add to it.

Of the twenty-four qualities I'll say something briefly about next (there are certainly more we can think of) each of these bring light and strength in their own unique way. Each are a part of our human experience, that we can develop and be enriched by.

Rather than go on at lengths, I've only said a little here about these qualities, with the hopes that this will be enough to kindle a fire as to their meaning. A person can then take these as far as they wish to go.

If these are qualities we don't have enough of yet in our lives, it's only because we haven't cultivated them, but the way is open. We need only begin, or take them up again.

Much happiness, health and peace to all.

Jason Espada
Old Gold Mine Hermitage,
in the mountains of Upper Washington State,
March 24th -31st, 2013

Enthusiasm

The word enthusiasm means to be filled with the spirit. When we have this in our lives, energy and joy for what we are doing is manifest right there. Interest, creativity, and confidence also come along with it.

When we have enthusiasm for something, other people can sense it, and be lifted up by it too. Enthusiasm overflows. It's the joy of living, directed towards a worthy aim.

This delight burns away laziness, or lassitude, and re-inspires us. Whenever we find we're lacking in energy, it's enthusiasm that puts the wind back in our sails, and takes us to where we want to go.

Wonder

A close cousin of delight, wonder stops us where we are, and lets the mystery in. This is what we speak of as awe. We are filled with the shining beauty.

Wonder is a moment out of time. If we are to have wonder in our lives, we have to slow down, or to pause at regular intervals, and let ourselves be renewed.

When it comes to wonder, how much can we really say, since it stops all the talk about lesser things, at least for a time?
It really sets us straight.

In what only a moment ago seemed small, like the hand of a child, or the first bright flower seen in Spring, can reveal itself to be something great, after all.

That we are here on this earth, with so many noble, inspiring lives, and endless beauty, gives us one opportunity after another to enter the grandeur of life in this world.

It is bliss.

Gratitude

When we have gratitude, we're able to be nourished and sustained by the gifts we're received. No matter how long ago, or how brief the encounter, or how small the gift seemed at the time, if we keep the feeling of thankfulness for it, it continues to be a blessing in our lives.

Gratitude for friends, for family, for our opportunities and education can also increase in us, as time goes on. This is something we see at times in our elders, who can be so full of joy, and so enriched by what we share with them. This is because gratitude has become fully mature in them.

This thankfulness, I feel sometimes as a running stream, or a continuous hum, that is joyful.

It's hard to be complaining at the same time as we're feeling thankful, so any of that quiets down in us, more and more.

Gratitude is a kind of re-awakening, ever fresh. Like these other heart-attitudes, it costs nothing, and adds richness to all our days.