

CONTENTMENT

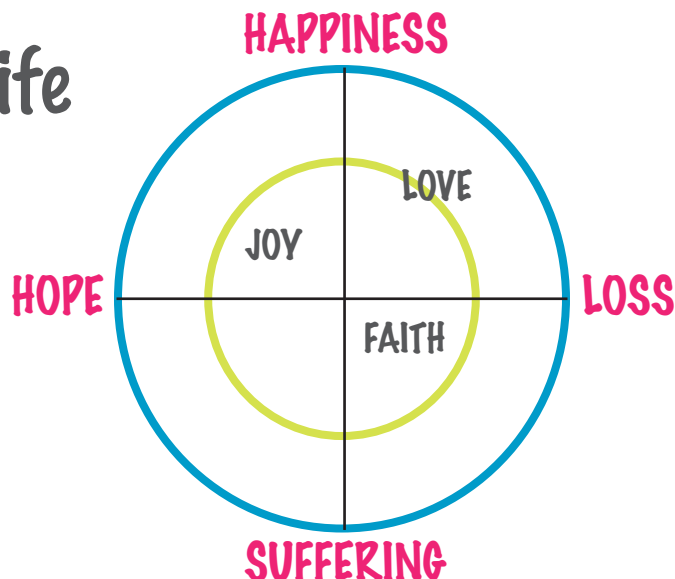
JOY VS. HAPPINESS

Asking most people what they want from life gets the same answer, “I just want to be happy.” There is a common belief that happiness is something that can be achieved and held on to it. We look forward to that time in which we can finally be happy, but it continually recedes. We want to get to the top of the Wheel of Life and stay there. When in high school, we think, “If I can just graduate then I will be happy.” Graduation, however, is not fulfilling, and we decide “If I go to college then life will be better.” But a college education does not bring happiness. Maybe it will come upon finding the right job, or getting married, or having children, or retiring. The goal remains elusive. “Happiness that lasts” is never found because it is actually impossible to get happy and stay happy. If life is based on obtaining happiness, then we will always fall short because life is always changing as the wheel turns.

It is far better to seek “joy.” Joy is related to happiness, but it is a deeper experience. In the search for happiness the individual focuses upon himself, but joy moves a person out of a self-centered preoccupation and provides an orientation towards others. Joy is an experience which connects us to that which is “Greater” than we are. It connects us to the creative power that is more than the “I” or ego. Joy gets us out of ourselves and in contact with this “Other” and with others. Joy can sustain us throughout the four phases of life. If we are willing to give up the search for happiness, we may find joy. It exists near the center of the wheel where happiness and suffering meet and intermingle.

To make such a move off the rim from happiness into suffering requires faith. Faith is also found at the center of the Wheel of Life. It is where Loss and Hope intersect. Faith comes from the action of moving towards the center. It is not that we have faith first and then act. We act first. Moving towards hope in the midst of loss gives birth to faith. This is a move that engages rather than avoids suffering. The creative power at the center of the wheel brings into being Faith and Joy. They exist in the context and container of Love, which is also at the center of the wheel. To love is to respect and value ourselves while breaking out of limited self-interest and reaching out to others. It is Love, Joy, and Faith that give meaning to life, and they arise from being centered.

Wheel of Life



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- 1 Carmel McConnell is famous for saying, “Do more of what makes you happy”. Understanding that happiness is temporarily, what are a few things that bring happiness to your life?
- 2 What are some steps that you may need to take to pursue JOY: Joy that abounds, that is life-giving and lasting. Some of the best things come with the greatest cost. What adjustments do you perceive need to be made in your life?
- 3 Regarding the people that you serve, how do you know when they are experiencing happiness, what do you see? In understanding Gentle Teaching’s long term commitment to people, how do you help people transition from moments of happiness to lasting joy?