

Golden Chain & Happiness

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I heard the other day that money can't buy happiness but generosity can.

The flip side of the same coin is "gratitude." When we can truly be grateful for those little things we have, we can have greater happiness and peace. Now, generosity & gratitude go beyond generosity with and gratitude for our money. Generosity includes being generous with our thoughts, our words and our deeds and being grateful for what we have. Hey, wait a minute that sounds like the Golden Chain. We repeat the Golden Chain every week but do we really pay attention to the words? The beauty of repetition is that we don't have to think about the words, they are just in our brains without thinking. We can just say the words. However, the downside of repetition is that we don't have to think about the words. We say the words but what are we really saying? What is the meaning of "The Golden Chain?" The Golden Chain contains the concepts of Buddhism . . . according to Rev. Harry Bridge from Oakland Buddhist Temple, the Golden Chain is a way of saying "Thank you." It tells us to live our lives the best way we can; not perfectly, just the best we can. The Golden Chain talks of **Interdependence** (I am a link . . . I must keep my link bright and strong). It talks of **generosity** (I will be kind and gentle to every living thing and protect all who are weaker than myself). It talks of the **8-Fold path** (right thoughts, right speech and right actions). As we say the words of the Golden Chain, we need to think about the words and their meanings in our lives, to give us guidance to live in the dharma.

I heard an interesting concept the other day, about going on a diet . . . a thought diet. The idea of going on a thought diet is that we have so many negative thoughts on a daily basis that we really have to train ourselves to notice the negative and change to the positive. It isn't easy. Going on any diet isn't easy but going on a thought diet is even more difficult. Since the Golden Chain says we need to think pure and beautiful thoughts . . . that's the diet goal we need to set. Let me give you an example of a thought diet. There is a video I found on YouTube that shows a bon dance segment from a temple in California. Most of the people seem to know the dance relatively well, with the exception of one man who is there with his children. At first glance, I am embarrassed to admit that I thought, "He's not very good at dancing, He's really not even paying attention to the music or the moves is he? What a goof." I recognized that I was being judgmental and only thinking negative thoughts. Then I thought, "What would I do if I was on a Thought Diet?" That meant that I had to change my negative thoughts to positive ones. What I came up with was "He brought his children to the bon dance celebration and he is out in the ring dancing with them. He is spending time with his children and doing something with them. What a great thing!"

Now I have a challenge for everyone. Let's all go on a thought diet. Every time you catch yourself thinking negative thoughts about someone or

something, see if you can think of something positive instead. It can be difficult but it really is good for your health. Science has shown us, negative thoughts harm our immune system and happiness is good for our health. Choose joy over negativity. It will help you live a longer and happier life.

Remember, there is always, always, always something to be thankful for. We just have to be willing to let those thoughts in.

In closing, let me read this quote about happiness:

“No one is in control of your happiness The question in life is not how much time we have but what we can do with it. This is your story, and it is beautiful.

So live and realize, upon reflection, that real happiness is not complicated at all.”

Thank you for listening.