

Question 21:

I have recently begun meditating and found it very helpful to find my own personal happiness. Although, I am not nice or fun for others to be around. My family and friends do not enjoy being around me, though I seek to be happy and aware and one with the universe including the people around me. When people expect me to be fearful or shy I react accordingly as well. The answer is within me, but I would like some advice on my path, please. *From Peter S.*

Answer: As you know, people enjoy being around someone who is deeply happy and peaceful, because it radiates from him or her, and makes them relax. But relatively few people are like that. Many people are nice to be around only as long as everything is basically going their way. And many people have talents of humor and/or good interpersonal skills that make them appealing to other people. But not all of us have those talents. Yet, anyone can practice mindfulness, meditation and morality (right speech, right action, right livelihood, and right effort on the Noble Eightfold Path), which will develop inner peace and happiness by diminishing negative thought patterns. By the practice of all three of these – which are interdependent - we become more aware of the negative thought patterns that make us irritable, anxious, fearful, shy, depressed, or otherwise disharmonious with others, and what causes them (ultimately, the root causes are our desires, aversions and ignorance). We then replace those negative thoughts with positive ones. Also there are some activities that will increase positive and happy thoughts. Doing selfless service, that is, volunteering to help the needy or otherwise helping others without anticipation of any reward, increases our positive thoughts and merits, and develops friendly feelings with others and confidence, overcoming fearfulness and shyness. Attending a meditation group is a relaxing atmosphere to interact with others (on a limited basis) and feel harmonious with them, as the meditation radiates feelings of loving-kindness among all beings. It is good to associate with people who have been working to purify their minds and who have attained some wisdom, as they will see and enjoy the goodness and niceness in you, which you undoubtedly have. You have already taken some big steps in purifying your mind by being aware of and admitting weaknesses, by your interest in meditation, and by beginning to practice it. For some more examples of how to increase positive thoughts and decrease negative ones, see the discourses on Patience and on Mindfulness Techniques to Develop Peace and Positive Attitude on this website.