



Generosity Helps Us Accept Change, by Sharon Salzberg

The aim of practicing generosity is twofold, or else it's an incomplete experience.

The first aim is to free our minds from the conditioned forces that bind and limit us. Craving, clinging and attachment bring confinement and lack of self-esteem. If we're always looking for some person or thing to complete us, we miss the degree to which we are complete in every moment. It's a bit like leaning on a mirage only to find that it can't hold us; there's nothing there.

When we are continually moved by looking for the next experience and the next pleasure, it's like going from one mirage to another. We have no security. Nothing is holding us up. We practice generosity to free the mind from that delusion, to weaken the forces of craving and clinging so we can find essential happiness.

We also practice generosity to free others, to extend welfare and happiness to all beings, to somehow, as much as each one of us can, lessen the suffering in this world. When our practice of generosity is genuine, when it's complete, we realize inner spaciousness and peace, and we also learn to extend boundless caring to all living beings.

The movement of the heart in practicing generosity mirrors the movement of the heart that lets go inside. So the external training of giving deeply influences the internal feeling-tone of the meditation practice, and vice versa. If we cultivate a generous heart, then more and more we can unconditionally allow things to be the way they are. We can accept the truth of the present moment, rather than continually impose conditions on what's going on: it must be this way or that way or you can't be happy. Your sitting must be perfect or you won't be happy. You must have no restlessness or you won't feel good about yourself. Reality moves along outside of our control, and yet we impose all of these conditions on it. Generosity allows that whole project to start to fall away.

The strength of our generosity is a primary factor in our ability to accept change.