



## How Generosity Leads to Awakening, by Sharon Salzberg

The cultivation of generosity is the beginning of spiritual awakening. Generosity has tremendous force because it arises from an inner quality of letting go. Being able to let go, to give up, to renounce, and to give generously all spring from the same source, and when we practice generosity ... we open up these qualities within ourselves. Letting go gives us profound freedom and many loving ways to express that freedom. The practice of generosity is about creating space. We see our limits and we extend them continuously, which creates an expansiveness and spaciousness of mind thatâ€™s deeply composed. This

happiness, self-respect and spaciousness is the appropriate ground in which meditation practice can flourish. It is the ideal place from which to undertake deep investigation, because with this kind of inner happiness and spaciousness, we have the strength and flexibility to look at absolutely everything that arises in our experience. Think about what itâ€™s like when the opposite is happening, when the mind feels brittle, narrow, confined and dark. At that point, you feel on edge, uneasy, and you donâ€™t like yourself very much. With all that going on, how easy is it to accept calmly a painful or difficult experience? How easy is it to be with the experience without judging it -- to accept it as it is, to allow it to be there? Itâ€™s not very easy because of the narrowness of the mind that is receiving it. By contrast, a vast and spacious mind doesnâ€™t feel so bound, contracted

and self-denigrating. Conversely, when a pleasant experience arises, we donâ€™t lunge at it with desperation, because we donâ€™t really need it. We donâ€™t have that sense of needing it to feel good about ourselves. When an unpleasant experience arises, we donâ€™t fear that itâ€™s going to diminish us in some way, that weâ€™re going to be a lesser being because of it. We are whole and we are happy. What better way to be able to look at the vast array of experiences that come and go than with a spacious, generous heart? [...] 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 itâ€™s complete, we realize inner spaciousness and peace, and we

also learn to extend boundless caring to all living beings. --Sharon Salzberg