

*Erric Solomon &
Kyabgön Phakchok Rinpoche*

Radical Happiness

A USER'S GUIDE
FOR THE MIND

OVERVIEW OF THE PATH TO BEING RADICALLY HAPPY

Relax the Comparing

Gaining stability in remaining in the present moment takes time, since we have been practicing distracted mind wandering for most of our life.

But the more we can relax and let go of constantly comparing, the easier it is to come into the present moment. We have already discussed how the subtle involuntary habit of constantly evaluating experience distracts us, and makes it difficult to fully enjoy even life's simplest pleasures. The gross level of evaluation is our habit of comparing ourselves to others and their circumstances. We may think we aren't smart enough, rich enough, good looking enough, kind enough, the list can go on and on. We can find so many reasons to denigrate ourselves, even believing that this will spur us on to achieve greater success. To a certain degree that may be true, though a lot of the time what we are doing is hiding our insecurity and dissatisfaction through accomplishing things.

We can actually accomplish much more when we aren't burdened by insecurity and anxiety. By relaxing the habit of comparing ourselves to others or some idealized concept of how we should be, we actually are able to accomplish more and be happier while doing it. Accepting ourselves as we are and appreciating what we have overcomes the gross level of evaluation and will even bring us much closer to just being present.

Through accepting, we can approach our foibles and improve our lives from the perspective of a healthy self-image, rather than through a perspective of self-denigration.

We can weaken the habit of comparison by noticing when it arises and replacing it with appreciation. For example, when we are on the beach having a great day, instead of thinking "too bad" we can think how wonderful it is to be able to be here right now. Appreciating what we have, turns our mind towards the Be Present experience, the root of Basic Happiness.

Be Present

Through the practice of meditation we turn our attention towards the present moment. Then, we don't get so caught up in the habit of discursively thinking about our thoughts, and instead just be present with what is, just as it is. When things are going well, we can drop most of our usual strategies for trying to keep the good times rolling and instead just be present and enjoy. Also when disaster strikes, we don't completely lose our equanimity and become depressed. We don't exaggerate the badness by looping over it again and again, worrying about everything that could happen. Basically, we become more even keeled whatever the situation.

But we needn't leave the Be Present experience on our meditation cushion. The whole point of meditation practice is to become so familiar with the state of non-distraction that the Be Present experience is with us whatever we are doing. Then Basic Happiness will arise even in difficult circumstances.

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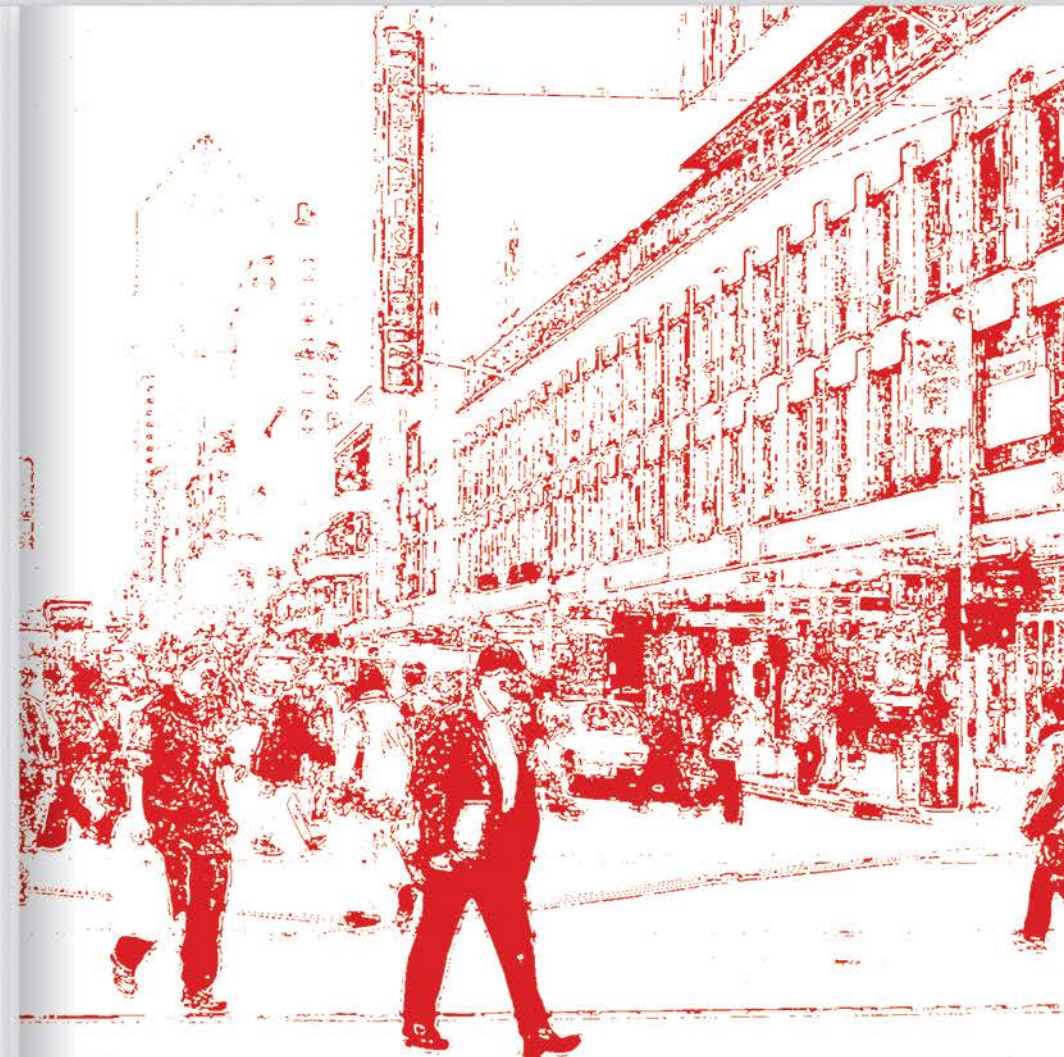
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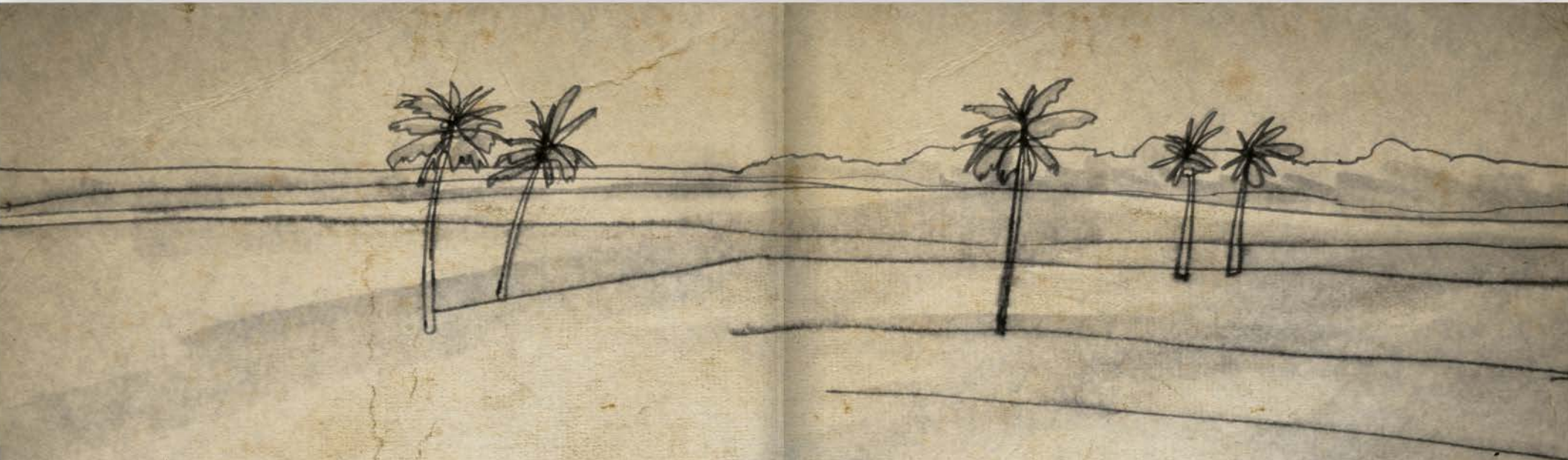
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THE VERY BASIS OF OUR
DISCONTENTMENT IS OUR
ONGOING AND NEVER-ENDING
EVALUATION OF THE QUALITY
OF OUR EXPERIENCE

Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche





BASIC HAPPINESS

The key to Basic Happiness is to get used to being fully present in the moment, just as it is. The more we are able to be in the present moment, the less the involuntary habit of thinking about thoughts will have the power to distract us.

Always React the Same Way
Relax the Comparing
Be Present

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BASIC HAPPINESS

In order to become Basically Happy we need to let go of involuntarily thinking about thoughts and in so doing be able to be completely present, in the moment. The more we are able to be present, the less the constant evaluation of experience will rise, or if it does, then we won't be drawn into habitually thinking about it.

Through the practice of meditation we become more and more familiar remaining present. We weaken the habit of constantly evaluating, by learning to accept ourselves, warts and all, and appreciating what we have. The more we do this the more we will be able to enjoy being Basically Happy.

What makes this radical? Don't we usually think that in order to take care of ourselves and our loved ones, we have to put our needs and theirs before all others? Yet, Interconnected Happiness begins when we realize the fundamental equality that underlies all experience; Everyone has the same kind of wants and needs and therefore, are deserving of exactly the same level of care and consideration.

Relax the Judging

In the same way that we always are comparing things relative to ourselves, the same habit leads to constant judging of others. We are always making judgments about one another, how they look, how they act, how the way they look says something about how they are going to act. In fact, research has shown that in as little as 1/10th of a second we have made some pretty strong judgments about people that can be very hard to change... and other research has shown that those judgments are often wrong. (obviously need some footnotes).

The best way to overcome this habit of instantaneously judging people, is to empathize with them. We need to remember the commonality of our experience by **considering others as if they were another you**. Upon the foundation of realizing this basic equality we can cultivate kindness, compassion and joy. In so doing, not only will we be able to relax our habit of judging others, we will be able to see others strengths and weaknesses more accurately.

Be Mindful

By maintaining a mindful vigilance we can overcome our habitual way of relating to others. The more we can be consciously aware of our habit of judging others the more likely we will **relax the judging** and be able to **Consider Others as if They Were Another You**.

So we place others needs at the same level as our own, expressed through compassionate action. Compassion action is about an ultimate respect for everyone and a responsiveness to their needs. Compassion arises when we can really feel what others are going through. Even though we can't fix all suffering, we have the strength to face it, both ours and everyone else's. Normally we try to do everything can in order to avoid suffering. We actually become uncomfortable at the mere possibility that suffering or unwanted circumstances could arise. It's not that we no longer try to make things better but, that we have the courage and inner strength to face the possibility of suffering without succumbing to even a subtle kind of fear. This is way of relating to others is a radical shift in attitude and a radical source of happiness.

RADICAL HAPPINESS

Becoming Radically Happy isn't a quick fix or something we create to make us feel better, it emerges naturally when we become more and more used remaining in the present moment or during moments of kindness and compassion. Although we can experience moments of radical happiness while practicing Basic or Interconnected Happiness, we need to learn how to stabilize the experience.

There are three main points to being radically happy

Combine Basic and Interconnected

No Expectations, No Agenda

Be Aware

Combine Basic and Interconnected

Interconnected happiness and Basic happiness support and enhance each other. When we are in the Be Present experience of Basic Happiness, we no longer are distracted by the involuntary thoughts of the constant measuring our experience. Through cultivating the Be Mindful experience of Interconnected Happiness, we appreciate and begin to live in accord with the natural interdependence between ourselves and our world and all its inhabitants.

We need the strength of meditation's mindful awareness to stabilize love and compassion so that it begins to rise in every situation. When we think of others we forget about ourselves. The preoccupation with ourselves is the very basis for the constant comparison of experience against how we think things should be. At the moment where great love and caring for others becomes predominant in our mind, our normal self-centered way of thinking has completely dissolved. At that moment, if we have been training in being present, we can experience ourselves and the world around us in a radically different way—unmitigated by our usual habitual patterns of thoughts and emotions. That way of being is the essence of being radically happy.

Relax Expectations and Agendas

It is almost impossible not have any expectations or agendas, but we can learn to relax our attachment to even the most subtle ones. As we become proficient in being Basically Happy, we may develop a slight fondness or expectation for experiencing the peace that is discovered in meditation practice. As we gain familiarity with being Interconnectedly Happy, we may develop a slight attachment to the agenda of helping others or be subtly holding on to the expectation that we will be recognized for our deeds. Through compassionate action we learn how to be present in activity, even when the world around seems to be chaotic. This can overcome even a subtle fondness for the peace of meditation. By remaining in the Be Present experience, the basis of comparing and judging —the constant evaluation of experience— is cut through. Remaining present while acting for the

An abstract painting featuring bold, expressive brushstrokes in vibrant red and deep blue. The red strokes are thick and vertical, while the blue strokes are more varied, including horizontal and diagonal movements. The background is a mix of these colors with some lighter, textured areas. The overall effect is dynamic and energetic.

RELAX
EXPECTATIONS
AND
AGENDAS

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HOW TO CREATE SPACE

So why not try it out now? It isn't necessary to spend lots of time on this exercise, even five minutes is enough, but ten is even better ☐

Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Imagine being surrounded by an infinite, perfectly clear, blue sky. The sky is cloudless spacious, pristine, the deepest sky blue color and completely envelopes you, extending forever in every direction, above, below and to every side. There are no walls, no boundaries and no buildings, nothing at all in any direction. Continue focusing on this infinite sky by making it as vivid and vibrant as possible.

If you become lost in thinking about work, things you need to do or anything else, that is completely normal. Just gently return your attention back to imagining boundless space and continue the meditation.

Having made the sky as vivid and clear as possible, spend some time appreciating the space that you are visualizing. Do this by feeling the spacious quality of the sky. For example, bring to mind how beautiful it is or you can appreciate how infinitely vast, spacious and immaculate the sky around you is. You don't have to go on and on about it. Just gently try to feel how it is to be in the spaciousness of the sky.

Now imagine that this sky is within the body as well. Think that your mind has the same qualities of openness and infinite space as the sky that surrounds you. Blend your mind with the vast open sky. Allow yourself to feel the spaciousness of the sky permeating everywhere inside, outside the body and the mind...

Rest for a little while in this spacious feeling.

Slowly open your eyes and re-orient yourself to your surroundings. How do you feel?

Try this for at least five minutes a day for the next week before trying the next exercise.

**WHY
WORRY?
IF YOU
CAN DO
SOMETHING,
DO IT.
IF NOT,
HOW CAN
WORRYING
HELP?**

Shantideva

When things aren't going our way, and there is something we can do, then we should do it. But we should do it without wasting time worrying about what happens if it doesn't work. Or, if there is nothing that can be done, won't worrying just make it worse? And if things are going well, why not just enjoy them fully? be completely present in the enjoyment of it instead of getting. Why get distracted by thoughts of prolonging or maintaining present circumstances, and why get distracted by focusing on the inevitable fact that present happiness will soon end. The more we situate our attention in the present moment and the less attention we pay to what might yet happen or what has already happened, the more we can enjoy what bliss our life may yield. Further, by keeping our attention firmly on what is happening right now, the less will we be inclined to exaggerate or denigrate what befalls us, allowing both good and bad times to overwhelm us.

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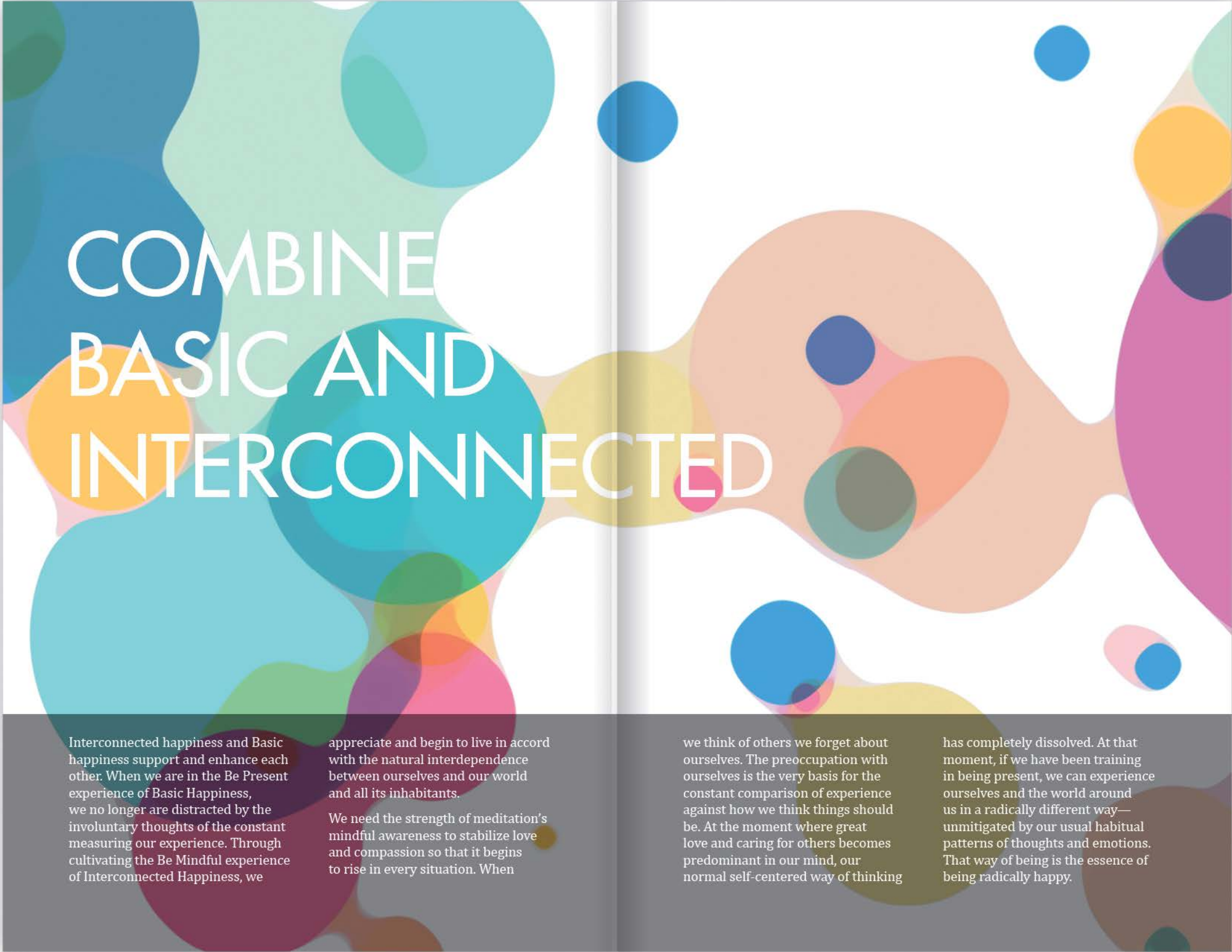
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**RELAX THE
COMPARING**



COMBINE BASIC AND INTERCONNECTED

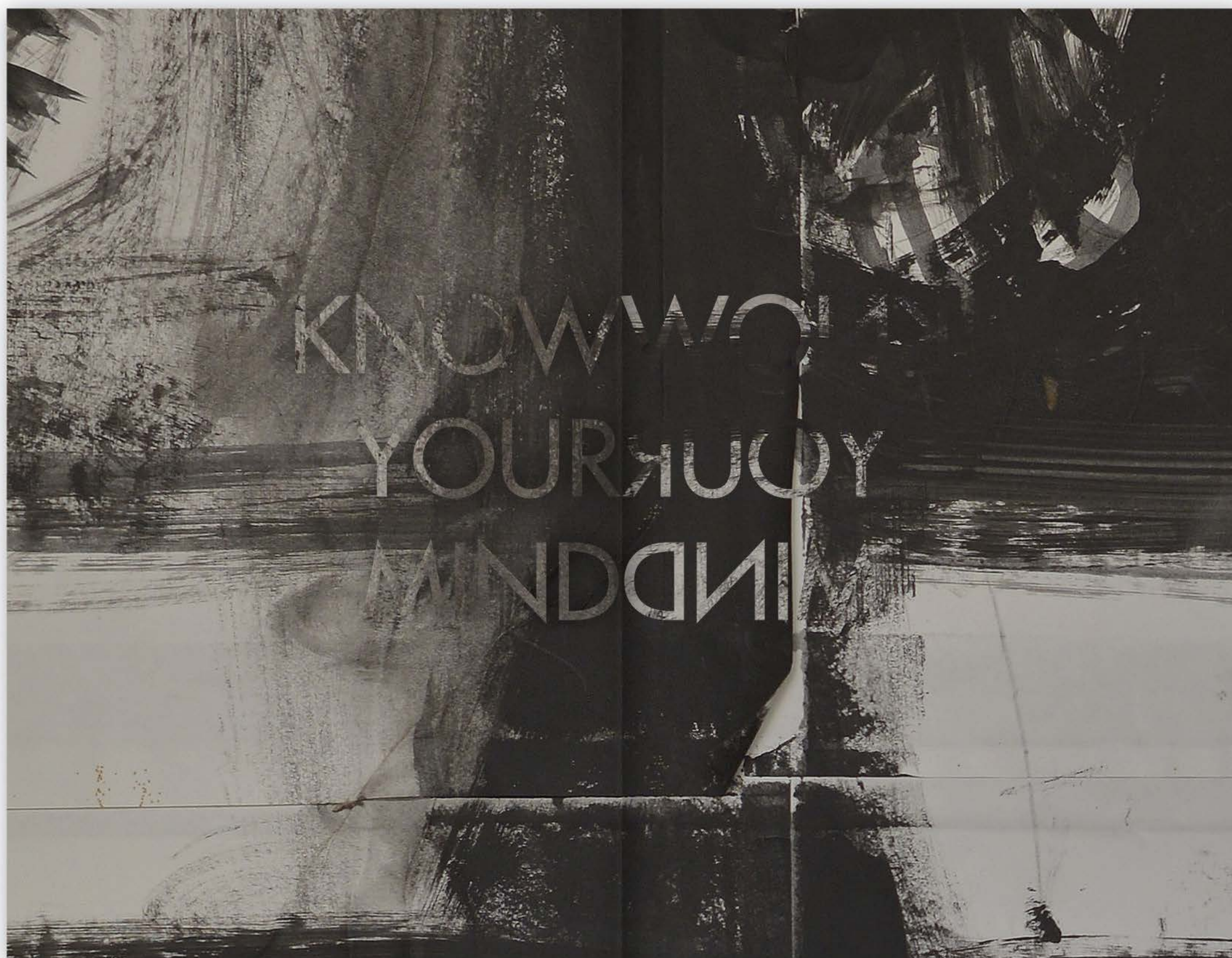
Interconnected happiness and Basic happiness support and enhance each other. When we are in the Be Present experience of Basic Happiness, we no longer are distracted by the involuntary thoughts of the constant measuring our experience. Through cultivating the Be Mindful experience of Interconnected Happiness, we

appreciate and begin to live in accord with the natural interdependence between ourselves and our world and all its inhabitants.

We need the strength of meditation's mindful awareness to stabilize love and compassion so that it begins to rise in every situation. When

we think of others we forget about ourselves. The preoccupation with ourselves is the very basis for the constant comparison of experience against how we think things should be. At the moment where great love and caring for others becomes predominant in our mind, our normal self-centered way of thinking

has completely dissolved. At that moment, if we have been training in being present, we can experience ourselves and the world around us in a radically different way—unmitigated by our usual habitual patterns of thoughts and emotions. That way of being is the essence of being radically happy.



KNOW YOUR MIND



NO EXPECTATIONS

NO AGENDA

FORM & EMPTINESS

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