

# Appreciative Joy

Muditā is another boundless heart quality, the illimitable release of joy that comes from appreciation. A quick contemplation to consider: have you had a moment of joy without some appreciation being present? Is it possible to have appreciation without some joy coming to life?

It is often easier for us to generate a sense of appreciation for life, than it is to jump into a sense of joy. We could say that appreciation plants seeds of joy. So one aspect of the path of muditā could be express appreciation such as cultivating interest; admiration; gratitude; or cherishing.

Furthermore, it is appropriate that we additionally use the word appreciate to mean something that increases or gets enhanced. When we direct appreciation towards a phenomena we may notice it growing in detail, dimension, as it fills more of our awareness. If we notice a certain beauty or delight in what we attend to the joy present can grow such that it feels to fill or fulfil our being.

Habitually when another being gets something we might wish to have, we often feel the sting of jealousy. In this way, we could say we make dukkha (stress) out of sukhā (pleasure). Muditā practice brings that movement into question. Sometimes, muditā is translated as unselfish or altruistic joy. This helps us hear how this practice directs our attention in a way we broadly could call selfless. Or more accurately, attending with a much quieter, even barely noticeable self-interest. Curiously, self-quietening occurs even when directing muditā towards ourselves.

What we notice in practice is that dukkha (the contracted and stressful feeling of non-freedom) co-arises with a strong and rigid self-view or sense of self. Therefore, it makes sense that the more joyful experience of releasing dukkha also releases the problematic self-sense. All brahmavihārās move us beyond self-obsession to a wider field of interconnectivity. This expresses as joyful release in muditā, declaring its place on an onward-leading path of deeper and more subtle liberation.

Feel for yourself what happens to your mood, sense of self, other, & world of phenomena you attend to when there is more muditā. Remember as always the practice of muditā is a practice. We may not feel joyful as we practice. Yet, overtime, as we exercise this way of attending, we develop a tendency, perhaps by literally strengthening a neural pathway, of inclining towards joy.

Some appreciative joy phrases to try:

May **I / You / We**

learn to appreciate the joy I experience  
the joy I experience continue and grow  
be filled with joy and gladness