

## 5 Buddha habits

to brighten us up

[Previously published as fb210621 Piya Tan]

### (1) BUDDHA NAME

The Buddha often uses the listener's name when he teaches Dhamma. This connects him closely with the listener, so that the Dhamma is well heard and heeded. Good teachers always know the names of their students, or at least our name, and use it when communicating with us.

Start a conversation by using a person's name; use it in the middle of the conversation; use it to end the conversation. Or when meeting, greeting (name). Notice how embarrassing it is when we meet someone we know and have forgotten his name.

When we speak with someone we look up to (not in status but because he is special in a good way), we naturally use his name. In a society where social distance and power distance are great (such as Malaysia, whose PDI, power distance index, is the highest in the world!), notice we simply dare not address an "atas" person by name. We can break this taboo and superstition by addressing that feared person politely with a "Mr ..." or "Md ..." followed by his name.

### (2) BUDDHA HAND

When you are in the midst of some important chore and need help, but there are people you know well sitting by idly, knowing you are busy. Politely go up to them and strike up a warm conversation. Midway, through the conversation, hand over some of the work to them, or just ask them for help, they usually will naturally respond positively.

Somehow people feel good when we give them some attention, and don't mind giving us a hand then. While discussing an interesting issue with a friend and eating a banana, we then hand the banana peel over to him midway. Surprisingly, he will at once accept it! However, don't do this unless it is really urgent and for good reason. Otherwise, he may see you as an exploitative person or worse!

### (3) BUDDHA BREATH

When we have difficulty concentrating while studying, try chewing gum of a flavour we like. While the doing mind is partly aware of this pleasant routine, the learning mind frees itself to work on the task at hand. Of course, we must first make sure that all the proper tools for learning are present on your desk or within easy reach. In other words, avoid any other distraction.

The Buddha doesn't even need to chew gum: there was none in his time. He became Buddha by watching his breath. To help us focus, we can simply learn to relax our breath, and start by sitting comfortably and focusing on the breath and counting it: "In ... 1; out ... 2;

in ... 1; out ... 2," and so on for a few minutes. Then, just be aware of the breathing without the counting; and start working.

Whenever you feel distracted, take a deep slow breath, breathe out the tension, and go back to counting the breath with focus for a couple of minutes.

#### (4) BUDDHA HEART

The Buddha often tells his followers never to hate others, not even our enemies. We can win them over with our hearts, or at least make them feel we will not harm them in any way. Moreover, instead of licking our wounds in a dark corner of our life, reverse the negative thought into the most positive one (it's all right to over-do this).

Let's say we think we are a failure. Go somewhere you like, or when you are alone and good, imagine how you really want yourself to be in the most positive way. It's all right to over-imagine this as you do it.

This also works in relationships. When we feel someone is upset with us for any reason, or we are upset with that person, during a quiet moment, just picture some really happy memory or event we like. Then, visualize this person, that we are speaking to him or her. Tell her all the positive things. It's all right to exaggerate a bit since we are only practising. After this exercise, let this positive feeling sink into you. Then, see how it works its wonders the next time you meet that person with a smile, even an inner one.

#### (5) BUDDHA SMILE

Notice how almost all the Buddha images often show him smiling radiantly. This helps us become happy, too. To a vital extent, happiness or sorrow is a choice we can make. That choice is easier made when we do not have wrong values, especially attachment to things and people beyond our power to have or help. In other words, when we understand that IMPERMANENCE is universal, and accept this truth, it is easier for us to cope with difficulties.

Happiness starts with an inner smile in difficult situations and with people we do not like. Remember, this is an INNER smile: we don't have to show this outside. Our face and feeling will naturally reflect this inner peace and joy so that others will not feel threatened by us. Smiling during meditation is a quick and simple way of overcoming distractions and progressing in our concentration. Think of the Buddha smile; then, smile.

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