



The Dalai Lama: Why I Laugh, by The Dalai Lama

I have been confronted with many difficulties throughout the course of my life, and my country is going through a critical period. But I laugh often, and my laughter is contagious. When people ask me how I find the strength to laugh now, I reply that I am a professional laugher. [...]

The life of exile is an unfortunate life, but I have always tried to cultivate a happy state of mind, appreciating the opportunities this existence without a settled home, far from all protocol, has offered me. This way I have been able to preserve my inner peace.

If we are content just to think that compassion, rationality, and patience are good, that is not actually enough to develop these qualities. Difficulties provide the occasion to put them into practice. Who can make such occasions arise? Certainly not our friends, but rather our enemies, for they are the ones who pose the most problems. So that we truly want to progress on the path, we must regard our enemies as our best teachers.

For whoever holds love and compassion in high esteem, the practice of tolerance is essential, and it requires an enemy. We must be grateful to our enemies, then, because they help us best engender a serene mind! Anger and hatred are the real enemies that we must confront and defeat, not the "enemies" who appear from time to time in our lives.

Of course it is natural and right that we all want to have friends. I often say jokingly that a truly selfish person must be altruistic! You have to take care of others, of their well-being, by helping them and serving them, to have even more friends and make more smiles blossom. The result? When you yourself need help, you will find all you need! On the other hand, if you neglect others' happiness, you will be the loser in the long run. Is friendship born of arguments, anger, jealousy, and unbridled competition? I don't think so. Only affection produces authentic friends. []

As for me, I always want more friends. I love smiles, and my wish is to see more smiles, real smiles, for there are many kinds--sarcastic, artificial, or diplomatic. Some smiles don't arouse any satisfaction, and some even engender suspicion or fear. An authentic smile, though, arouses an authentic feeling of freshness, and I think the smile belongs only to human beings. If we want those smiles, we must create the reasons that make them appear.

-- The Dalai Lama, in an excerpt from his book "My Spiritual Journey"

