

From Scarcity to Generosity

Dharma talk presented by Kelli Schonher, Insight Meditation South Bay via Zoom

August 25, 2020, 6:30p to 8:00

1) **Reflect upon your intentions.** Do you see wealth as an end in itself, or as a means to greater happiness for ourselves and the world around us?

2) **Become more mindful of your financial transactions.** Take a moment to notice how you feel when money comes in and goes out. Does your body feel constricted or relaxed? In this digital age, it is not always as easy as getting a check that you deposit in a bank nor giving a dollar bill to a cashier at a store. We live in an age of electronic money transfers and credit cards, but these can still be useful moments for reflection. Are you in a scarcity mindset or feeling generous?

3) **Be open to the possibility of talking about money in a healthy way with others.** I think we have a long way to go in American culture to be able to engage in open conversations about not only money, but also racial and climate injustice. However, we have to begin sometime. Your participation in this talk is a wonderful start. I believe our good intentions have value.

4) If talking about money feels far away, maybe **start with a Generosity Journal.** This is a variation on a gratitude journal. I suspect you all have heard about the positive benefits of establishing a daily habit of writing down (or even mentally reviewing at night) specific things you are grateful for in your day. I don't know of any research studies involving generosity journaling versus gratitude journals. Although, I took on the practice for the month of May. I already had a gratitude journal practice and found generosity reflection to have a different feel. As I have shared earlier, I struggle with feelings of stinginess, journaling about generosity showed me that I may be judging myself too narrowly and harshly. Identifying my generous actions did not come as easily to me as recollecting on gratitude. However, it got easier with practice and I am starting to find more ways to be more generous.

5) **Explore reflecting on generosity during formal sitting practice.** Shaila's book *Wisdom, Wide and Deep* (pg 34) provides a wonderful meditation instruction titled "Reflection on Virtue and Generosity". She writes "You might explore reflective practices with the combined contemplation of virtue and generosity. First, reflect on the spiritual potency of these qualities in general; consider the benefits associated with virtuous deeds or generous acts. Second, think of specific virtuous deeds or generous actions that you have personally performed, and allow attention to dwell on these thoughts. Third, sense that virtue supports your attention, providing a current of joyful wholesome energy that upholds consciousness, making your mind worthy of the happiness of concentration. Sustain the contemplation, repeatedly turning virtuous and generous thoughts over in your mind to massage away underlying feelings of doubt, trepidation, and stinginess."

Books referenced in talk or mentioned after:

Ariely, Dan, and Jeff Kriesler. *Dollars and Sense: How We Misthink Money and How to Spend Smarter*. Thorndike Press, 2018.

Brown, Chair. *Buddhist Economics: An Enlightened Approach to the Dismal Science*. Bloomsbury Press, 2017.

Catherine, Shaila. *Wisdom Wide and Deep: a Practical Handbook for Mastering Jhana and Vipassana*. Wisdom Publications, 2011.

Loy, David R. *Money, Sex, War, and Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution*. Wisdom Publications, 2008.

Novogratz, Jacqueline. *Manifesto for a Moral Revolution: Practices to Build a Better World*. Henry Holt and Company, 2020.

Rahula, Basnagoda. *The Buddha's Teachings on Prosperity: at Home, at Work, in the World*. Wisdom Publications, 2008.

Sutta's referenced in talk:

“Accomplishments (2nd)” (AN8.7 5 Numbered Discourses 8 8. Pairs # 76) Translated for SuttaCentral by Bhikkhu Sujato, 2018. Dedicated to the public domain via Creative Commons Zero (CC0). <https://suttacentral.net/an8.76/en/sujato>

“Wealth in Detail” (Numbered Discourses 7) translated by Bhikku Sujato Translated for SuttaCentral by Bhikkhu Sujato, 2018. <https://suttacentral.net/an7.6/en/sujato>