

discard

“Was King Midas **really** happy when  
he could turn things into gold? OR  
Was he **really** happy when he got his daughter back?”

—Parent-Teacher Guide

Shallow men and women live that they may eat and  
drink, whereas the deeper men and women eat and drink  
that they may live.

—Socrates

If you give a pig and a boy everything they want,  
you get a good pig and a bad boy.

—88 year old Tennessee  
farmer, when asked what  
he had learned in life

# The Classic Stories: True Happiness

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## Brief and Long Lasting Happiness Excitement vs Happiness High Happy vs Deep Happy

The distinction between inherent happiness and the happiness that is *caused* forms a central theme in every great religion and philosophical persuasion. It is not the things or the power you get or have that makes you happy, it's what you are and how you value and relate to others, creatures, and things. It has always been noted that happiness is not in things, but in love. This distinction between inherent, expressive happiness and caused, acquired happiness forms the foundation of character: Morality itself could be said to be described by this distinction. In simply noticing this difference between happiness and excitement, a worthier life is nourished; an unexamined life is truly not worth living. This is values education at its core.

Because inherent happiness is native and is the simplest of all feelings, it doesn't require any form of special knowledge to feel it. Sage counsel has always pointed to a childlike (not childish) awe in real living. Children in their naive state of openness can easily feel this native happiness. Children enjoy the lesson of inherent happiness' seniority over acquired glee in a plethora of stories throughout the world. Beginning with the archetypal western tradition, the Classic Stories consider the ancient story of gold-loving King Midas.

As you may know, Dionysus only reluctantly gave the magic touch to King Midas for taking care of his friend Silenus, who had lost his way and fallen asleep in King Midas' rose garden. And of course, Midas, upon attaining his reward, ran around turning everything to gold, until no other enjoyments remained, not even the natural pleasure of eating, drinking, and smelling the roses. Most poignant of all, he lost his relationship with his daughter. Only gold was the tragedy foretold in Dionysus' reluctance.

When Midas realized that he had wished for a tragedy, he was truly sorry for the real treasure he had lost. On the basis of this turning from acquiring happiness from objects to relational, harmonious appreciation, he washed everything in water from a nearby river, restoring every thing and everyone to their greater-than-gold native state. Realizing that happiness was not cloistered in things but in the open wonder of existence itself, King Midas left his kingdom and went with his daughter to

live in a small cabin near a meadow in the woods. By applying the wisdom of this most foundational of all lessons, we know how to locate true happiness.

**D**eveloping character deepens with the magnification of the primary feeling at one's core; the open, relational heart in the middle. This happiness, not to be confused with gleefulness or even a "positive outlook", comprises the deep substance of an intelligent life. Happiness distinct from excitement widens the door to deep, full character. The stories and games in this section, combined with our own growth, sensitivity, and confession, guide our children to feel this primary urge to true happiness, and also confirms in them their own emotional durability. They strengthen their ability to feel toward long-lasting happiness in every situation, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. This preference for native, relational happiness is the foundational wise choice of all other wise choices. Parents can find a multitude of stories and sayings addressing this theme in their own spiritual and religious tradition.

**A** corollary theme immediately appears: how we feel affects how we see. As we notice happiness and un-happiness and a vast range of emotions, we also notice how our perception of our world is colored by how we feel. We see poorly when we are unhappy and lazy; we see better when we are excited or energetic; we see best when we are happy and engaged. Wisdom about perception itself naturally arises when we give our attention to this primary issue of true and lasting happiness.

What does a glass of water look like to someone at a big party or  
to someone crawling across a dry desert?

**I**t is good and essential to talk about happiness directly, learn about happiness with your children, and demonstrate happiness to them. Let them simply know that happiness does not come from things but is always at one's core, and magnified in caring relations. True happiness is not acquired but shared. Such straightforward attention to this most essential need provides an inviting avenue to the unthreatened, simple feeling of real joy. Let us share this openness with our children and teach them to share it in ordinary and intelligent ways with the world.

## Hellenic: The Story of King Midas

The Story of King Midas is a classic Hellenic myth on the tragedy that is inevitable when true happiness is not noticed. It partially refers to the King of Lydia, in his gold-rich Pactulus river valley in southwest Asia Minor.

**M**idas was once a very rich king who ruled the land of Phygia. He had everything a king could want. He lived in a huge castle surrounded by rose gardens and all kinds of beautiful and luxurious things. He had all the good food he could eat, and shared his abundant life with his wonderful daughter, Zoe (meaning "Life").

But Midas thought that his huge pile of gold made him happiest of all. Every day, he would begin to count his gold until he became so excited that he would laugh and laugh and throw the gold up in the air to shower himself with his gold coins. Sometimes he would even lie down and cover himself with golden things, giggle and giggle, and roll around in it like a baby.

Dionysus, the god of celebration, went travelling through Midas' kingdom. Dionysus had a friend named Silenus who wandered away from his travelling party and fell asleep in Midas' famous rose garden. Midas, upon recognizing Silenus, took special care of him for eleven days and then returned him safely back to Dionysus. The god, delighted and grateful to see Silenus, said to King Midas, "You have done a great service by taking care of my friend for me that I want to grant you any wish your heart desires."

In an instant Midas replied, "I wish that everything that I touch would turn to gold!"

Dionysus frowned, "Are you sure that's what you want?"

"Oh yes," Midas answered, "gold makes me completely happy!"

"Very well," Dionysus sighed reluctantly, "starting tomorrow morning, everything you touch will turn into gold."

The next morning Midas woke up and couldn't wait to try out his golden touch. Before he got out of bed, he reached over and touched his bedside table and instantly it turned to gold, just as Dionysus had prom-

ised. Midas had the golden touch!

"It works, it works!!!" he shouted as he sprang out of bed. He touched the chair, the table, the rug, the door, the fireplace, his bathtub, a picture, and went running like a madman on and on through his palace, touching one thing after another until he was out of breath and hungry, but still elated.

Midas felt all bubbly as he entered his dining hall. He sat down at the breakfast table, leaned over and pulled a rose close to his nose to enjoy its fragrance. But when he touched the flower, its sweet smell poured forth no more. It was now cold metal. "I'll have to sniff them without touching them from now on!" he thought to himself with disappointment.

Without thinking, he popped a grape into his mouth, but he nearly broke a tooth for the grape had also turned to gold. Very carefully, he tried to eat a muffin, but his teeth only clanked on the now hard bread, once so soft and delicious. "Gold again," thought Midas. "Oh no! Everything I touch turns to gold. Perhaps..." he said, as he grabbed his wine glass to take a drink, but immediately he began to cough and choke as liquid gold slid down his throat.

Fear suddenly gobbled his joy. At that moment his favorite cat jumped up into his lap, wanting to get stroked and petted, but was instantly turned into a metal statue. Instead of snuggling his fingers into warm purring fur, Midas' fingers touched only hardness and coldness. He started to cry. "Am I only to feel gold's coldness for the rest of my life?" he shouted through his tears.

Zoe, hearing her father cry, ran over to comfort him with a hug. He tried to stop her, but accidentally touched her. Instantly before him was only a gold statue of what before had been his joyous daughter. Midas cried and cried and cried.

Finally, he held his arms up and pleaded, "Oh Dionysus, gold is not what I really want after all! I already had all I wanted all

along. I just want to be able to hug my daughter again, to hear her laugh, to see her smile, to touch and smell my roses and pet my cat and share food with my loved ones. Please help me, save me from this golden curse.”

Dionysus, being a very kind god, whispered an answer into Midas’ heart. “You may undo your golden touch and restore those golden statues to life again, but it will cost you all the gold in your kingdom.”

“Anything,” Midas cried, “I want life, not gold.”

“Then go to the river Pactulus and wash your hands at its source. Carry the water back home in jugs and pour it over everything that you’ve changed to gold. That water, along with your changed heart, will restore the liveliness to those things that your greed froze into metal.”

Midas ran to the river and washed his hands, grateful to Dionysus for another chance. He watched in wonder as the gold flowed from his hands into the sand at the bottom of the riverbed. Quickly he filled a jug with water and hurried to his royal palace to pour it over his daughter. He wetted his hand from the jug and petted the cat.

In an instant, the empty silence reawakened into laughter and the music of Zoe’s voice and his cat purring. The sounds filled the rooms and hall of the palace once again. Midas and his daughter hugged and laughed over and over again. Then she helped him bring jugs of Pactulus water back to the palace to pour over every last twig, rose, rock, rug, bed, bread, and grape that still gleamed gold.

Midas rejoiced as the vibrance of life returned to his garden, palace, and heart. He now loved the Brightness of life instead of the luster of gold. To celebrate, he gave away the rest of his money and possessions and moved to a cabin on the edge of the forest. There, having learned life’s most valuable lesson, he and his daughter enjoyed the wonders of the fields and forest, and never forgot where true happiness is found.

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# Parent and Teacher Guide:

Accentuate the Distinction

## ASK:

Was King Midas **really** happy when he could turn things into gold?

Was he **really** happy when he got his daughter back?

## SHARPEN the Distinction:

Did he **think** he was happy when he first got the golden touch?

Was he **sure** he was happy when he got his daughter back?

With this kind of accentuation, explain to your child in your own words that the happiness of relationship and sharing is greater than the happiness of things and possessions. Using the following stories, guide them to feel the difference between brief and long-lasting happiness. Develop simple terms such as excited <--> truly happy, 'high happy' and 'deep happy'.

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Remember to let them feel **good** about excitement & pleasure; and feel **better** about empathy & love. The nascent mind **tends to see only black and white**: as if brief happiness is bad, and only long-lasting happiness is good. Guide them to feel both freely and intelligently. Blend this theme into the frustrations of ordinary events.

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## **ASK:**

Can you feel excited and not happy? Like just eating a sweet for sad consolation.  
Can you feel excited and happy at the same time? Like getting something from someone you love.

Is excitement like happiness?  
Which is best, stimulation or love?

Can you feel happy without excitement? Just sitting and doing nothing and still feeling deeply happy?

Is half a piece of cake better than none at all?

Can you feel joy and thirst at the same time?

Can you be happy even if you can't always get what you want?

(Can you, not would you! And yes, play the Rolling Stones song for them, if you want.)

Reward their considerations and listening to your guidance with an embrace or with liberties.

**TEACHERS:** From Big Philosophy for Little Kids, read the classroom game "Even If . . ." and engage it intimately with your child. The game has **two** sections: at first you ask them questions (simple easy questions leading to harder and harder ones), and when they start to question their own strength, turn the tables and have them ask you the hardest questions.

Kids can ask tough questions. When they do so, this is your chance to explain the wisdom you have heard and learned about important issues in your own life to your children. Remember: you can't do these lessons wrong, that is, unless you don't do them. Merely your full-hearted-consideration is sufficient to pass wisdom on to our inheritors.

## Arabian: Ali's Discovery

As a child, I saw this classic Arabian story as a cartoon one Saturday morning and never forgot it.

Long ago, at the foot of the South Arabian Mountains, a quarry worker named Ali was toiling under the hot sun, cutting stone from the mountain. He was not happy and prayed for a great blessing to relieve him of his suffering. The sweat from his brow ran into his eyes and stung them, but Ali wouldn't stop to wipe his face in fear of the foreman nearby. He knew if he tried to wipe his eyes, the foreman would yell at him, and the lazy were often beaten. Now tears ran with his sweat as he pounded away upon the rock.

Suddenly, the water in his eyes began to shine and he looked down towards a golden glow. He blinked the sweat and tears from his eyes and saw a beautiful golden ring!! He quickly grabbed the golden treasure and slipped it on his finger—before anyone else could notice and take it away from him. He was thrilled! The money he could get from the ring could set him up in his own small business with his wife and son. "I would be happy then." His days of unhappiness under the sun would soon be over.

Fear ran through the poor slave as he heard his foreman yell at him to keep working. What if the foreman saw Ali's discovery? He would steal it. Ali hid his fear and his excitement and pretended to just go back to work. He would hide the ring when the foreman was not looking.

"I wish I were the foreman", he thought as he closed his eyes for a moment, "I would be happy then." But as he opened his eyes he looked out upon the work crew, and he noticed that he was sitting where the foreman had been sitting, in the shade with sweet drinks. "This is the life!", he thought, as he sipped his sweet drink.

But Ali's contentment did not last long as he heard the loud voice of the sultan chastise him. "Foreman! What are you doing? Nothing? Do you think your job is to beat the workers while you taunt them with your

stupid comforts? Give all these men a break, and make sure they have water and rest! If I catch you being mean to these men again, you will join them and I'll find a new foreman!"

"Yes Sire, of course Sire," Ali bowed to the sultan and signalled for the men to cease work and take water. Ali's contentment had not lasted long, but as he motioned for the men to come and have a drink of water, he saw the ring still on his finger.

"Hmmm," he thought, "I wonder . . . I wish I were the sultan. I would be happy then," and schazaam! Suddenly, Ali was peering out from the sultan's caravan, surrounded with servants and dressed in the finest clothes. Ali was excited. He looked down at his magic ring and knew he could have anything he wished for.

Ali the sultan was carried back to his palace. He called for the finest delicacies and desserts, he called for the finest entertainment, he surrounded himself with maidens and servants. He forgot about the poor workers whose quarry was making him richer and richer. Ali stepped out onto one of his many verandas overlooking his oasis in the desert and gloated his good fortune. "No one is more powerful than me," he thought proudly to himself.

The sun beat down upon the land and the sultan's palace and Ali began to sweat. He turned to retreat into the cool confines of his palace to be fanned and pampered and he suddenly thought, "I wish I were the sun! I would be happy then, for nothing would be more powerful than me!" He blinked his eyes and schazaam! Suddenly he was looking down upon the whole world!

"I am the sun!!!" Ali exclaimed, "Nothing is more powerful than me." He began to shine and shine, and shine harder and harder, showing everything his power. Men and women began to wail at the sun's heat, the rivers and streams and lakes began to dry up, even the oasis began to wilt. "I am powerful!!" Ali delighted in his strength.

But soon as the waters of the earth evaporated, mighty clouds filled the sky. Ali radiated with all his might, but to no avail. No sunlight could

get through. "The clouds are even more powerful than the sun!" Ali thought, "I wish I were the clouds, I'd be happy then."

Schazaam! Ali was the clouds! "I am more powerful than the sun, more powerful than the sultan, more powerful than anything! Let the world feel my power!" Ali shouted with the clap of thunder and let loose a mighty rainstorm. Rain fell in torrents across the land, and soon a great flood filled every valley. People ran for their lives and prayed for the rain to cease.

Ali did not hear their pleas, so consumed was he with himself. Instead, he blew this way and that, howling and thundering with zeal. Suddenly, however, he was stopped. "What!? What is halting my fun? What is more powerful than a raging storm?"

Ali looked to see that a great mountain had stopped the clouds and no matter how hard he tried, he could not move the mountain nor get around it. Frustrated and unhappy, Ali called out, "I wish I were the mountain, I'd be happy then. Nothing would be more powerful than me."

Schazaam! Ali was the mountain! He felt his great stillness. He enjoyed the view of centuries, and thought he was the most powerful force of all. But then he heard and felt an irritating chink, chink, chink. He looked down and saw the stone cutters, slowly, but surely, taking the mountain down.

"Ah! The stone cutter is the most powerful force of all. I would be happy if I were the stone cutter," and schazzam! Ali was the stone cutter once again. Now he felt the circle of his unhappiness, and the happiness that is only found in the heart. Happiness is not in power, or in wishing for another fantastic time or place. Ali could feel how happiness is the most powerful feeling of all; even though he could be anything, go anywhere, be anyone, he felt no need. He took his ring off and happily dropped it down a deep crack in the earth. He needed nothing now. His unhappiness under the sun was indeed over. Now his happiness under the sun began.

"Get back to work!" the foreman screamed and cracked his whip at Ali. Ali smiled and felt sorry for the unhappy foreman. Suddenly, the sultan

surprised the foreman once again and fired him on the spot. The sultan saw that Ali was not afraid nor glad that the foreman had been fired. "Why have you no revenge in your heart in seeing this petty foreman thrown down?" the sultan called out to Ali.

"I am happy. Why would I let revenge take the place of happiness? My heart has no room for pettiness," Ali answered the sultan.

The sultan's own heart was chastened and gladdened and he made Ali the new foreman. Ali treated his team with kindness, gave them regular breaks and water. He forbade them to work in the midday sun and instead fed them well. Soon Ali's team produced more stone than all the others. And Ali shared his happiness with his wife and family and they all grew in happiness. The sultan soon made him governor. Ali's happiness made him the best governor in all of Arabia and soon he was the sultan's right hand man. The sultan trusted Ali more than anyone else and loved to be near this happy man. And when the sultan was dying he bequeathed his kingdom to the happiest man in the land, Ali.

But all the while Ali was already happy. He hadn't been made happy by being the foreman, hadn't been made happy by being pronounced the governor or even the sultan. He had learned the difference between getting happiness and sharing happiness.

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## Parent Guide

Talk to your children about how happiness is not something you can get, but something you express; it grows from the heart, and is not acquired by the body or mind.

Let them know how you feel and how you understand this wisdom. Don't preach, moralize, or philosophize, but share and speak slowly.

Share with them favorite simple passages from your own readings that remind you of this universal theme.

"Our argument shows the power and capacity of learning exists in the soul already. Just as the eye was unable to turn from darkness to light without the whole body, only by the movement of the whole soul can the mind can be turned from the world of Change into that Unchanging reality. By degrees, we learn to endure the sight of reality, and of the brightest and best of reality, or in other words, of the Good."

—Plato

## Asian: The Hedgehog's Changing Sight

I elaborated upon this classic Chinese story to re-emphasize the corollary about growing happiness: your perception changes according to how you feel—and when you are happy, your perception is most real.

A hedgehog lost his favorite digging spade and was very unhappy. He suspected the hedgehog who lived next door had stolen it. His neighbor looked like he stole it, he acted like he stole it, he sounded like he stole it, he even smelled like he stole it. He was afraid his neighbor would steal something else.

But then the hedgehog found his spade. Suddenly his neighbor didn't look like he stole it, didn't act like he stole it, didn't sound like he stole it, he even smelled nice again.

This puzzled hedgehog. He told his story to Panda. Panda said "Yes, I have learned that how I feel affects how I see and think. If I am hungry, bamboo looks like food; if I am full, I see its beauty."

Hedgehog told his story and the story of the panda to the old farmer. The farmer said, "Yes, I have learned to be grateful for what I do have, it's no sense being unhappy for what I do not have. If I only have millet left to eat I am not sad, but glad to have something to eat. And if it is harvest, and bounty surrounds me, I am grateful to have something to eat. And so my world is always full."

Hedgehog told his story, the panda's story and the farmer's story to a travelling musician. The musician jumped with glee and began to sing,

"Don't put everything down,  
just so you can feel big,  
it is the world that is big,  
it is the life that is grand;

Let us love and not hate;  
whatever we have,  
whatever we see,  
let our eyes delight the world,  
let us always truly see.

let our eyes delight the world,  
let me carry you home;  
we can be always free,  
and sing happily;  
let us always truly see,  
let us always be happy.”

Hedgehog clapped and clapped and clapped. The musician scooped up the hedgehog, skipped and sang all the way to hedgehog’s house. Hedgehog was very, very happy and his neighbor looked like a very good friend.

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PARENTS and TEACHERS: Co-create the melody to Hedgehog’s song.

## Parent Guide

Give your children examples of how your perception has changed according to how you felt.

From time to time, when they are perhaps exaggerated in their current obsession, gently point out that their perception is colored by their mood and desire.

Praise their happy observances and comments.

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humans see river as water  
animals see as home (fish)  
gods sees nectar  
hungry ghosts see pus and putrid blood  
demons see molten lava.

—Tibetan book of the dead

Still a man hears what he wants to hear  
and disregards the rest.

—Paul Simon

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How you look  
is not as important as  
How you see

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## African/Brazilian/Hindi: The First Lesson

I have heard this same story from every sector around the world, with almost identical versions in the African, Brazilian, and Hindi cultures.

A great warrior named Jaya-ji fell in love with a beautiful young woman named Annamaya and asked her to marry him. But she spurned his request, stating, "You are brave and strong and appealing to my eye, Jaya-ji, but you lack wisdom. I cannot marry a man who isn't wise."

"Then I shall learn wisdom!" declared Jaya-ji.

Jaya-ji travelled until he found a man said to be wise. He approached the sage with vigor and announced, "I have come to learn wisdom."

The sage was kind to the young man and assented to Jaya-ji's request, saying, "Come with me, I will give you your first lesson," and led Jaya-ji down to the river. There, the sage pushed Jaya-ji's head underwater and held it there until he was squirming with fear! At last, the wise man let go of his stronghold, and Jaya-ji came up, sputtering and coughing.

"Tell me what you were thinking when your body screamed and squirmed," demanded the old man.

"Air to breathe!" cried Jaya-ji.

"Are you sure? Did you think instead of how brave you are, or how skilled a hunter you've become?"

“No,” said Jaya-ji, “I only thought of air.”

“Well, when you want wisdom as much as you wanted air, you may come back to learn the depth of truth.”

Jaya-ji returned to his village and met with Annamaya.

“Have you learned wisdom?” she asked.

Jaya-ji lowered his head and spoke softly. “No, my beautiful Annamaya. He showed me that I want air to breath more than I want wisdom.”

“In that case,” she said, “I will marry you.”

Jaya-ji was confused. “But it will take me many years before I learn wisdom. I’ll be old and ugly, and have weakness in my legs and eyes.”

“Yes, as I will,” said Annamaya with a smile. “But you have shown me that you have understood your overprouddness and that you value honesty. Wisdom will come naturally.”

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## Judaic: Rabbi Akiba's "Gam Za Letovah"

This is a traditional Talmudic Midrashic Haggadic wisdom-tale.

Long ago, there lived a Rabbi named Akiba, who travelled from place to place teaching happiness and wisdom to the people. His possessions were few, but his happiness was great. His happiness grew everyday as he shared it with his listeners. He never needed anything in order to be happy.

One strange night, he wandered into a town with his donkey, rooster, and knapsack to find lodging. He lived without money, living only on the gifts he was given in appreciation of his happiness. But this night, no one recognized him or his happiness and everyone refused him shelter. But Akiba did not need shelter in order to be happy, and so, with every refusal he encountered, he muttered, "Gam Za Letovah", or "This too, must be for a good purpose." Akiba lived by faith, not by design.

Relishing sleeping under the starry sky, Akiba pitched camp outside the city walls. He tied up his donkey and caged his rooster, then lay down on his blanket and gazed up at the endless stars. The smell of the evening wind and the freshness of the night sky ran ripples of happiness all through him. He breathed deeply the mystery of living and seemed to melt into everything.

Suddenly, a lion prowling the city walls leaped onto his donkey and killed it! Even as Akiba sadly watched the lion drag his donkey away, his faith was not in question. "Gam Za Letovah" he muttered again, and soon his sorrow relaxed into trust.

As his relaxation deepened, he began to feel a sweet rapture rumble upon him again, but then was suddenly jolted into concern and tense

attention again as a cat stole into his rooster's cage and killed the poor bird!

"Gam Za Letovah" was all he could say and again Akiba contemplated the strangeness of this evening. He had no shelter, no animals, no money, but he didn't need anything to notice the awe of life. Like a child hearing a fairy tale, he wondered how the night would all come out, and soon swooned into a greater mystery. As if he had just been kissed by his mother, Akiba's heart shone into the night. Floating on an ocean of feeling, rising and falling breaths and waves, he felt set free, and fell into a blissful sleep.

Waking with the morning sun, Akiba found out how true his words were. During the night, a band of robbers had broken into the city and had carried all the inhabitants away into captivity. If he had found shelter the night before, it would have been tragic. And the baying of his donkey and the crowing of his rooster did not lead the robbers to him, for their voices had been silenced by the Mystery.

This Mystery moved Akiba on and a new dawn sprang from his heart to meet the rising sun.

## Parent Guide

Tell your children stories about when you were deeply happy. Then ask them to tell you about a time they were deeply happy.

Tell them your own tales of camping or hiking and noticing the Mystery of life in the great outdoors. Ask them about their tales.

Look up into the starry sky together with your children. Wonder together, appreciate together, praise the feeling of wonder, within and around.

Let your children know that we live within a great, vast, benign, mysterious process, and that we can trust It, even when we can't comprehend it—just like Akiba.

Teach your children the Spanish song, "Que sera sera". Notice the similarities to "Gam Za Letovah".

## Hindi: Hanuman-ji's Lesson

This story is a combination of a traditional Hindu tale, a personal lesson, and a description of Sai Baba of Shirdi, great sage of nineteenth century India.

There once was a thief named Hanuman-ji, who lived in the town of Shirdi, who thought he could get happiness from stealing. He did not deserve the name of the great monkey god Hanuman, who never forgot the true happiness of the heart. The thief forgot to see and love the wonder that always surrounded him, and looked only to get excited by tricking others. Hanuman-ji's devotion to excitement was really devotion to happiness, only he did not know it.

One beautiful spring day, Hanuman-ji stood at the entrance to the city, watching the parade of valuables passing him by. He didn't see people, only their worth. He weighed everything and everyone for value and cost, deciding what he might steal. Then came an old man dressed quite simply, carrying a simple staff, yet walking with an uncommon elegance. He must be royalty in disguise! Hanuman-ji heard coins in his pocket and looked to see the man's hand go into his pocket. The strange old man pulled out a coin and rubbed it with his fingers and thumb. The coin glistened in the sunlight and dazzled Hanuman-ji's eyes.

The thief began to follow the simple man, and soon caught up with him. Hanuman-ji pretended to be friendly and the old man pretended to believe him. The old man was wise and knew what the thief wanted, and decided to teach him a lesson.

The thief and sage sat down near the fountain at the village center, and the simple man pulled out his bag of coins and sorted through them until he came to one in particular. Now Hanuman-ji could see that the coins were not made of gold, but of copper, and it wasn't worth spending anymore time with the old man. Hanuman-ji thought that while the old man was looking at his coin, he could excuse himself.

Just as Hanuman-ji started to get up, the simple man asked him, "What is your name?" The old man's eyes were so clear that Hanuman-ji became uncomfortable.

"Hanuman-ji" he answered, looking away, thinking that the old man had not seen his discomfort. Hanuman-ji was nervous, but pretended to be polite by asking, "And yours?"

The happy man did not answer him, but instead looked back at his coin and spoke to it, "Hanuman-ji, so that is your name, I have always wondered."

Hanuman-ji thought that the old man was a bit weird and stood to leave, "Well, must be going, enjoy your stay here in Shirdi." He thought the old man was smiling at the coin and would not notice him leaving.

"Why, thank you for not stealing my coins. My treasures shall be yours, but first . . . ", the happy man smiled and held up his finger as if to give a lesson, " I shall give you what you want in hope that you will want what I want to give you." Mysteriously he paused, brought his hand and body to rest, then added, "And when you need me, I'll be sitting right here." The man pulled out a begging bowl and began to chant the names of life and light.

Hanuman-ji realized how wrong he had been! The old man was neither rich nor royal, but a crazy, holy man! He had no money! And he acted quite strange.

Hanuman-ji hurried back to the city gate. Hopefully, he could befriend another traveler and at least get a meal, for he was getting hungry and it was getting late. But he met no one he thought would feed him or from whom he could steal something, and became hungrier and hungrier. So he sat in the lazy afternoon sun and wondered about the old man and the crazy things he had said.

The young thief began to rest in the sunlight and, while pondering the riddle of the blissful old man, fell asleep. Even in his sleep, Hanuman-ji was frustrated and called out, "I wish I could have whatever I wanted!" when suddenly a tiny, well-dressed spirit appeared.

The magic being bowed deeply to Hanuman-ji and offered, "I will make you a deal. I will be your devoted servant, I will grant you whatever wish you want, but you must keep me busy for when you run out of wishes, then you must serve me."

Hanuman-ji thought he had it made. He had lots and lots of wishes. "Sure thing" he said, and they shook hands.

Hanuman-ji's personal servant bowed deeply and said, "So what is your first wish?"

"I'm hungry!" Hanuman-ji shouted. "Feed me the finest curries and breads in all of India!" His servant smiled, raised his hand, snapped his fingers, and presto! The finest meal in all the land appeared before him! Hanuman-ji dove in! He gorged on curries and paneers, breads and drinks, flowers and sweets. When he had eaten, his servant bowed deeply and said, "So what is your next wish?"

"Gold! Gold! Gold! A mound of gold coins! Mounds and mounds! And fabulous jewels to match!" Hanuman exclaimed.

His servant smiled, raised his hand, snapped his fingers, and presto! Looking like the grandest autumnal harvest of grains and fruits, riches of gold and jewels ran in long piles across the fields. "Whoopie!" Hanuman-ji shouted and jumped onto the piles and rolled around in delight. "Whoopie!" he shouted again and again.

When Hanuman-ji had run himself silly, shouted himself hoarse, and adorned himself heavily, he sat down on a gold stool to take a breath. His servant bowed deeply and said, "So what is your next wish?"

Hanuman-ji was rolling now. "Surround me with friends, with maidens and entertainment, with food and drink for everyone, let's have a grand party! In my palace! And put all my riches in the cellars!" Hanuman-ji shrieked with glee.

His servant smiled, raised his hand, snapped his fingers, and presto! A palace appeared around him, beautiful and magnificent, with revelry and servants everywhere. Maidens competed to be near him, fellows looked for his glance, entertainers and servants strived to please and delight him. Hanuman-ji lost himself in an endless party.

The next day, Hanuman-ji awoke with great pain. Once again his magic servant bowed deeply before him and inquired, "So what is your next wish?"

"Dung, I feel terrible. Take this pain away." Hanuman-ji pleaded.

His servant smiled, raised his hand, snapped his fingers, and presto! Hanuman-ji felt fine. The magic servant bowed deeply and said, "So, what is your next wish?"

"Oh, let's have another party like that!" Hanuman-ji smiled with glee.

His servant smiled, raised his hand, snapped his fingers, and presto! The party raged as before. And again, Hanuman-ji's pain was taken away the next day and again, another party was thrown. This went on for days and days.

Hanuman-ji was surprised. He began to get bored of partying all the time. So, the next time the magic being bowed deeply and said, "So, what is your next wish?" Hanuman-ji asked to be given all knowledge.

His servant smiled, raised his hand, snapped his fingers, and presto! Hanuman-ji's head was swimming in knowledge.

The magic servant again bowed deeply and said, "So, what is your next wish?"

"Uh-uh," Hanuman-ji began to run out of wishes. He thought a thousand thoughts at once and could not decide on any one.

The magic being rose from his deep bow and inquired, "So, has my service ended and has yours begun? Are you done with your wishes?"

Fear overwhelmed Hanuman-ji. He tried to think of something he didn't have or something that would take the magic being a long time.

Hanuman-ji muttered, "Uh, I want a road, a solid gold road, uh, from my palace across the Himalayas, bridged across every river, tunneled under every ocean." He thought that this would take the magic being a long time.

His servant smiled, raised his hand, snapped his fingers, and presto! The road instantly appeared everywhere!

The magic servant again bowed deeply and said, "So, what is your next wish?"

Hanuman-ji couldn't think of one wish and even if he did, he knew it would only hold the deal off for a second. Hanuman-ji realized that the magic being was in fact a demon and that he had made a deal with a demon.

The magic being again rose from his deep bow and inquired, "So, is my service ended and has yours begun? Are you done with your wishes?"

Hanuman-ji didn't know what to do or say or wish for. Terror ran through his heart. Suddenly, he remembered the old man and his coins. Hanuman-ji also remembered the strange things this man had said about getting what you want. Hanuman-ji turned to the demon and said, "I wish to take a walk. I'll be back at sunset."

Hanuman-ji raced back to Shirdi and found the happy, simple man. He fell at his feet and cried, "Oh blissful one, I have made a deal with a demon and suddenly realize that all my wishes do not make happy. Please help me."

"What is it, then, that you want?" the simple man inquired of the troubled Hanuman-ji.

"I want true happiness, not things," Hanuman-ji pleaded, then told the open-minded sage about what had happened with the demon.

"You can get excited by getting things and you can get excited by pleasures. You can get excited by power, by knowledge, and by getting what you think you want, but you cannot buy love. You cannot steal a gift, or take heaven by storm. True peace cannot be acquired as part of any deal," the free one explained wisely.

Hanuman-ji was confused. How could he get out of his mess? Hanuman-ji begged the sage, "Please help me, I don't know what to do."

The wise man smiled. Finally, Hanuman-ji's pleasures and knowledge and power were nothing compared to happiness and love. "Well, I cannot undo your deal with the demon, but perhaps this will help," and he handed Hanuman-ji his danda or staff.

"What will this do?" Hanuman-ji was puzzled.

"If you have realized that happiness cannot be gotten magically, that love cannot be bought, then you can live straight, like my danda, and

not take all the detours. When you receive love and give love, then you are happy. You cannot buy or get great Happiness. That's the crooked way; the straight way is to give and receive. The deepest Happiness is not in the body or mind, but in the heart."

Hanuman-ji realized that he was hearing the truth and bowed gratefully at the sage's wisdom. His heart sprouted and he knew that he wanted to learn more, but he still did not quite understand how the danda would help him with the demon. He held the staff and began to ask, "But how will this . . ."

The blissful one stopped him, "When you get back to the demon, and he bows and asks you for your next wish, take this staff and drive it into the ground with all the force of your heart. Tell him that you want him to climb up and down this danda until you get tired of watching him. Then sit down and contemplate this great lesson. When you begin to get bored or unhappy or wish you had something, look up at my staff and be grateful that you have learned that happiness cannot be gotten magically. Then meditate only on the real happiness you find in love and in wonder. Persist in happiness, no matter what. Soon, the demon will tire of your happiness and will beseech you to undo the deal. Then bring my staff back to me and I will teach you all the excellences of blissfulness. In the meantime, I will mediate on you." He took out his coin purse and withdrew a single coin to rub and bless.

Hanuman-ji carried his teacher's danda and felt its straightness and beauty. He did as he was told by the simple sage and before too long, the demon was crying for release. Hanuman-ji's happiness undid his deal with the demon and set him free to learn the ways of the heart.

Suddenly, Hanuman-ji awoke from his sleep and found himself at the gates of the city, beside the parade of visitors and merchants. He had been awakened to a new life, liberated from the torments of his dream-like selfishness. Hanuman-ji ran to the center of the town and found the simple man, smiling and waiting for him. Hanuman-ji bowed deeply, as his heart was overwhelmed by the loving company of the one already awake.

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The Awake share a common world,  
the asleep turn aside,  
each into a world of their own.

—Heraklitos

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## Parent Guide

Key points to accentuate:

Talk about how perception changes. Recall Hedgehog's and Hanuman-ji's changing perceptions. Ask your child if a particular thing ever looked totally different at different times. What does a glass of water look like to someone that just had a big party or to someone crawling across a dry desert? POINT OUT HOW We are always making judgements about what we see. We can perceive our perceptions! NOTICE: How we see is determined by how we feel: therefore, happiness is the foundation of wisdom.

When a pickpocket meets a saint,  
all he sees are his pockets.

We see what we have in mind.

Lies, bigger lies, and statistics.

Still a man hears what he wants to hear  
and disregards the rest.

## Parent Guide and Saws

Can't Buy Me Love—THE BEATLES  
Can't Get No Satisfaction—THE ROLLING STONES

Joyous Classics  
Mozart's 23rd piano concerto  
Beethoven's Fifth & Ninth Symphonies,  
Pacobel's Canon  
Bach's Fifth Brandenburg

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If there is light in the soul,  
There will be beauty in the person.  
If there is beauty in the person,  
There will be harmony in the house.  
If there is harmony in the house,  
There will be order in the nation.  
If there is order in the nation,  
There will be peace in the world.  
—Chinese Proverb

A loving heart is the truest wisdom.  
—Charles Dickens

Remember this: very little is needed to make a happy life.  
—Marcus Aurelius (121-180)

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It is only with the heart that one can see rightly,  
What is essential is invisible to the eye.  
—Antonine de Exupery

