



THE DALAI LAMA

MESSAGE

Illness, suffering and death are part of the reality of human existence. It would be as foolish to pretend that we are not sick when we are, or that we will never die, as it would be to deny the possibility of ever getting well.

As living beings, we all wish for happiness and seek to avoid suffering. However, our basic attitude towards suffering makes a great difference to the way in which we experience it. An important factor in dealing with serious illness, whether we ourselves are sick or caring for someone who is, is to train the mind. On one level this means cultivating a sincere compassionate motivation and performing positive actions, serving other sentient beings. At another level it means calming and controlling the mind, which is a more profound way of preparing for the future. Identifying negative states of mind like anger, hatred, frustration, jealousy and pride, we can work to eliminate them. At the same time we can cultivate positive attitudes like compassion and love, tolerance and contentment. Training the mind in this way is both useful and realistic. Love and kindness are not a luxury, but a source of health and happiness for others and ourselves.

Real care of the sick does not begin with costly procedures, but with the simple gift of affection and love. In the practice of healing, a kind heart is as valuable as medical training, because it is the source of happiness for both oneself and others. People respond to kindness even when medicine is ineffective, and in turn cultivating a kind heart is a cause of our own good health.

I am happy to learn that a project to set up a Buddhist Hospice has been launched in conjunction with the Jamyang Buddhist Centre in London. Helping others wherever you can according to their need is the true expression of compassion and I am always encouraged when people take practical steps like this to put such positive motivation into effect.

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