

# **Awakening Joy Course**

## **Facilitator's Manual for Awakening Joy Support Groups**

*Suggested Guidelines and Lesson Plans*

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# Facilitator Guidelines for Awakening Joy Support Groups

From James and Jane Baraz

## Welcome!

The purpose of the Awakening Joy Support Groups is to support each person's process going through the Awakening Joy course. Each group will have its own particular identity and style. There's no one "right" way to do it. These guidelines are just a starting point to discover what format works for you. You may copy and use any of these materials in whole or adapt them to your needs.

The Awakening Joy Support Groups are about building community. Rather than the facilitator teaching the participants how to be more joyful, it works best to draw out the wisdom of the participants. Instead of looking to the leaders for answers, members see that they can access their own insights, which are different for each individual.

## Setting Up an Awakening Joy Support Group

We welcome anyone who is enrolled in the Awakening Joy course to set up an Awakening Joy Support Group. We ask that each participant be enrolled in the course. We don't want finances to get in the way of participating. When you sign up you will see payment alternatives and instructions if you need additional flexibility.

It's important that the leader(s) feel comfortable and enthusiastic about the group. This should be a nourishing experience for everyone including the leaders.

## Co-Leading a Group

Co-leading a group with a like-minded friend can make the experience even more rewarding. The energy between co-leaders has a great impact on the group; it's important to keep your relationship honest, kind, respectful and balanced. Make time after each session to explore each other's reactions and discuss possible modifications. Some co-leaders like to rotate leadership while others prefer to share each session. Explore in private any difficult feelings that may surface and get support from a third person if necessary. Co-leading a group can strengthen a friendship.

## Getting Started – Who to Invite, How Often to Meet and Where to Meet

Membership is open to anyone taking the Awakening Joy course. Consider who you would like to have in your group. Some leaders prefer to limit their group to invited friends, women or men only, or members of a pre-existing group such as a church, meditation or YMCA group.

Ideal group size will vary depending on the leader's level of comfort. Even a small group of four can be a very nourishing experience if the level of commitment, safety and support is high. As the group becomes larger, we suggest participants engage in Awakening Joy exercises, have



### Awakening Joy Course Principles

Develop and increase wholesome states of mind.

Notice how these positive feelings are experienced in your body.

Incline the mind towards joy and well-being.



discussions in pairs or groups of three, and then report back to the larger group. Both large and small groups seem to work as long as the attendance is consistent.

Groups will vary in how often they meet. Some may meet weekly, some every two weeks, some monthly. See what works for you in a way that will best provide continuity while not feeling like a burden of "one more thing to do." You can schedule your meeting times to coincide with the five-month Awakening Joy live classes or, if you prefer, work out your own schedule. The online resources are available until the end of December of each year.

You can meet in your home, the home of one of the other participants, or any other place that is comfortable and easily accessible.

Decide on the dates, time and place that best suits your needs and then send out invitations or advertise. Feel free to use the online Awakening Joy Forum to advertise your group.

### **Commitment to Meeting**

Group commitment is important. While some leaders allow for "drop ins," closing the membership, once the group begins to settle, often enhances safety and depth. Some leaders begin with a few more than the ideal number of participants and after the first or second session, ask those participants who want to belong to make a commitment to regularly attend, unless business, travel or unforeseen circumstances make regular attendance impossible.



There are twenty people in our current group in Saskatoon using Awakening Joy with its many options to deepen our community and to find more ways to cultivate well-being. What a gift!

Jennifer Keane, Canada  
*Awakening Joy* group facilitator



The leader should send out a reminder notice on the next meeting date and request that participants R.S.V.P. If a member is frequently absent, the leader might privately explore with that person whether the group is meeting his/her needs.

### **Fees**

It is up to you whether you would like to offer your time and skills voluntarily, by donation, or if you wish to charge a fee. Consider a sliding scale.

### **Responsibility of the Facilitator(s)—Create a Positive, Safe Environment**

The primary responsibility of the facilitator(s) is to create a good environment for open discussion to take place. A major factor toward that end is a feeling of safety for all.

### **Confidentiality**

Since the sharing is personal, rules about confidentiality should be agreed on at the first meeting.

### **Flow and Balance of the Discussions**

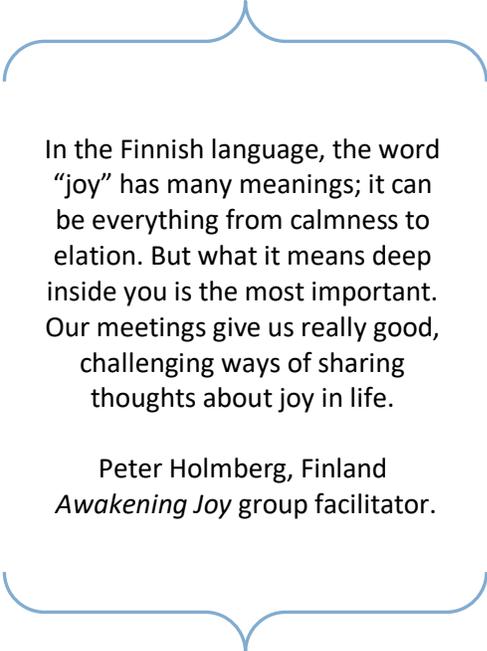
People vary greatly in their ease of speaking to a group. Some are shy, others extroverted.

Make sure that everyone has a chance to be heard and that a few people do not dominate the discussion. This is essential to healthy group dynamics.

Your group may decide occasionally to use a "talking stick" which is held by the current speaker without interruption. This can be helpful, particularly with the group check-in as described in the following Sample Lesson plans. Besides taking a more directive role if someone is dominating the conversation, facilitators should also speak up if the group is getting sidetracked.

Some groups may emphasize personal sharing if there is a sense of trust and intimacy that develops among the participants. Others may prefer to not be as personally revealing, focusing more on general observations about their process of awakening joy. The clearer the leaders and members are on the right balance between personal and general discussion, the better the group will be. If facilitators are willing to be self-revealing instead of acting as if they "have it all together", this can be a model and a boost for intimacy.

Each session may include members who are experiencing hard times as well as those who are thriving. It is not the job of the leader or group members to provide therapy, give advice or fix those who are suffering. The key is to provide a safe, balanced space where members can be heard and understood with compassion. At times, with the consent of the group, it may be necessary to provide some extra time to a member who is suffering. Group leaders should remain aware that this is neither the primary purpose nor the intention of the group. Facilitators or members may be moved to provide supportive follow-up outside the group.



In the Finnish language, the word "joy" has many meanings; it can be everything from calmness to elation. But what it means deep inside you is the most important. Our meetings give us really good, challenging ways of sharing thoughts about joy in life.

Peter Holmberg, Finland  
*Awakening Joy* group facilitator.

The philosophy and practices of Awakening Joy may be significantly different from what the participants experience in the rest of their lives. Encourage group members to form a buddy relationship with another member so they can email, phone, or personally get together to support each other.

### **Welcome Participation**

Invite participants to bring a quote or a reading, or share their talents.

### **No Unsolicited Advice**

Facilitators should discourage judgments or comments about how anyone is doing. Remind members not to give advice unless asked.

### **Monitor the Energy of the Group**

Address any sense that the vitality and commitment of the group members is waning. Members can discuss what's needed to make the group more alive and juicy. Perhaps all members can take responsibility as "vibe watchers" – those who pay attention to the group process.

Don't forget physical considerations such as temperature of the room, physical access to the meeting room, whether people are hungry or thirsty, or need bathroom or stretch breaks.

**Informed Consent Agreement Waiver**

As mentioned, the Awakening Joy Support Groups are not intended to offer personal or group therapy. We ask that you distribute a waiver, have participants sign it, and keep a copy for your records. The waiver will give participants an understanding of what they can and cannot expect. The waiver can be found at the end of this document.

**Suggested Meeting Format**

The meeting format will be influenced by how long each session will be. Decide on a timeframe that will work for as many people as possible. Groups might meet anywhere from one to three hours. Below are some suggested meeting components. You can also refer to the Detailed Sample Lesson Plans in the Appendices of the Support Group Manual.

**1. Start with Silent Meditation**

We strongly encourage that each meeting start with a short period of silent meditation (5-20 minutes) so that everyone can settle in and get in touch with themselves. This also leads to deeper sharing. An 18-minute guided meditation from James can be found in the "For Members" area:

<http://www.awakeningjoy.info/materials.php>.

After logging in choose "Course Materials" and then "Meditation Resources".

**2. Personal Check-In**

The meditation can be followed with a personal check-in by each member. The check-in is a skillful way for each person to share what's working with the monthly practice themes, the challenges, and an issue/question that's coming up, which they would like to discuss as a group after everyone checks-in.

The time spent on the check-in will vary, depending on the number of participants and how long the group meets. The group can decide how much time it wants to spend on this part and how in depth the sharing might be. For instance, the group may decide to let each person take two to four minutes to check in. It is good to have someone set a timer or ring a bell as a reminder for the person to wrap up their check-in. If the check-ins become too drawn out, remind members of how long each person should take for their sharing.

**3. Discuss the Practice Theme**

After the check-in, the discussion of the Awakening Joy practice theme can take place as well as any issues that were brought up in the check-ins. This discussion might also include what people have been doing regarding the supportive practices (meditating, singing, exercising,



The *Awakening Joy* book and principles have been the soil from which our beautiful group has blossomed. The path of practice outlined in the book provides a guiding map for us each to follow and it acts as the meeting place for us all to come together in reflection. It offers us an opportunity to connect across departments in our organization around practices that contribute to our well-being.

Rae Houseman, Massachusetts  
*Awakening Joy* group facilitator



journaling, other nourishing activities such as having Joy buddies, etc.). It's helpful for everyone to have a sense of how long this discussion will be.

#### **4. Experience Awakening Joy Exercises Together**

Try the experiential exercises and practices we present in the live class or those in the homework suggestions in the letters or those in the *Awakening Joy* books. Have participants meet in pairs or small groups and then invite people to share with the larger group.

#### **5. Encourage Statements of Intention and/or What Was Learned**

Before the end of the meeting, participants may want to state their intention with regard to what they think will support them in their practice between meetings as well as any ideas they will take from the group. (For example, "I plan to meditate every day for five minutes."; "I'm going to take a walk in nature this weekend."; "I intend to notice whenever I have fun with my child.").

#### **6. Provide an Opportunity for Feedback on the Meeting**

After the main discussion, take some "process time" for members to express how the meeting was for them. Often this will take just a few minutes, sometimes longer. It gives a chance for people to give feedback about what is or is not working for them in the group. That way everyone can benefit from individual observations and hear any ideas that would make the group stronger, rather than anyone leaving the meeting feeling disconnected from the group. Saying what's truthful and useful, without blame, can make for a deeper sense of honesty and mutual commitment to awakening joy.

#### **7. End with a Song, if the Tone is Right**

Finally, if your members feel up to it, why not end with singing a song together? If the meeting turns into a sing-along that may be the perfect format!

### **Awakening Joy Support Groups Nourish Your Practice between Meetings**

The purpose of the group is to nurture the Awakening Joy practices of all members in an on-going way. Having some accountability to the group will make the course more a conscious part of your and everyone's day. By sharing your experiences, each participant will benefit from the discoveries of all the members. Have fun!

May you be happy!  
James and Jane Baraz

## Designing Your Lesson Plan-Three Examples

The following three lesson plans have been offered by Awakening Joy group facilitators. These outlines offer different approaches for how you can lead your group and explore the Awakening Joy course materials. Each meeting is focused on one of the ten Awakening Joy themes: Intention, Mindfulness, Gratitude, Finding Joy in Difficult Times, Integrity, Joy of Letting Go, Learning to Love Ourselves, Joy of Loving Others, Compassion, Joy of Being. In addition to these plans, you may view two sets of Detailed Lesson Plans in Appendix I and Appendix II.

### I. Focus: Reflection and Awakening Joy Exercises

The following 2.5 hour lesson plan is from Jane Baraz who leads a Saturday morning Awakening Joy Support Group. Jane guides participants to settle, share questions and insights, and then has participants explore the Awakening Joy materials through experiential exercises.

- 9:50 am      Arrival, enjoy a cup of tea and connect with others
- 10:00 am      Greetings
- 10:05 am      Guided meditation
- Jane leads a meditation focused either on breathing or a body scan. Another option is to play an 18-minute guided meditation from James can be found in the “For Members” area: <http://www.awakeningjoy.info/materials.php>. After logging in choose “Course Materials” and then “Meditation Resources”.
- 10:25 am      Check-In based on the current theme for 3-4 minutes each, depending on size and wishes of the group. This includes challenges to practice and Awakening Joy philosophy, personal questions about anything coming up around the current or past themes as well as successes. It’s interesting and encouraging to hear what people are learning from their exploration of Awakening Joy.
- 11:00 am      Jane’s reflections on the theme
- 11:10 am      Group discussion of the theme
- 11:25 am      Break for snack and bathroom - with opportunity for individual connections
- 11:40 am      One or more exercises on the theme from the *Awakening Joy* book, James Baraz’s practice letters, the Awakening Joy app or the live class recording. When it fits with the theme, participants are invited to first write responses in their journal, share in pairs, and then share with the group. There is a check-in and discussion after each exercise.
- 12:25 pm      Process Check-In: How was the group today? Include anything difficult or unresolved from the day’s meeting as well as what was useful and appreciated. Reminder of next session’s meeting time and any suggested home practices.
- 12:30 pm      Good-bye

## II. Focus: Awakening Joy Readings and Discussion

The following 2-hour lesson plan, from Joan Redding, is designed for groups that enjoy discussing the Awakening Joy materials. Joan encourages participants to make intentions and to do homework so that they can report on their experiences when they meet. Joan starts and ends with a simple ritual. She provides a handout for each session that includes readings, questions, song lyrics and the Awakening Joy Cards from the Awakening Joy website. Joan's detailed lesson plans for each of the ten Awakening Joy themes are available in Appendix I.

- 7:00 pm      Candle Lighting with Opening Words
- 7:02 pm      Centering  
A short guided meditation following the example given by James Baraz when he starts his Awakening Joy class. Or listen to James' guided meditation in the "For Members" section of the website: <http://www.awakeningjoy.info/materials.php>. After logging in choose "Course Materials" and then "Meditation Resources".
- 7:07 pm      Check-In  
Joan provides seven to eight questions that reflect the Awakening Joy theme and lists the homework suggestions from the previous Awakening Joy meeting. Participants choose which questions they wish to answer. She may ask for a show of hands so that not everyone is required to speak. For example: "Have you had any "aha" moments you want to share?"
- 7:15 pm      Shared Readings on the Awakening Joy theme  
Participants take turns reading quotes Joan has prepared on the Awakening Joy theme. Most of Joan's quotes are from *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps That Will Put You On The Road to Real Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Random House, 2010 (Hardcover); *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps to Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Parallax Press, 2012 (Paperback).  
  
Joan then leads the group in a discussion of questions. For example, "Did any of the readings resonate with you?" Participants respond "popcorn" style, speaking up when they have something to say.
- 8:45 pm      Setting Intentions  
Participants state what practice will bring more joy and well-being into your life until our next meeting. (For example, "I plan to meditate every day for five minutes," "I'm going to take a walk in nature this weekend.")
- 8:50 pm      Closing Meditation  
Joan reads Patricia Ellsberg's Meditation that is available in James Baraz's practice letter sent out with each theme.
- 8:55 pm      Extinguishing the Candle, Closing Words and Singing  
Joan reads a quote and then leads the group in singing songs she's chosen that suit the theme of the evening.
- 9:00 pm      End

### III. Focus: Connecting with the Live Class and Awakening Joy Exercises

The following 2-hour lesson plan is designed to help participants taking the online Awakening Joy course to connect more deeply with the recordings from the Awakening Joy class in Berkeley, California. This lesson plan is from co-facilitators June Fukushima and Brock Brown who focus on Awakening Joy exercises. The group sits in a circle with a centerpiece of flowers, a large candle and small tea lights that are set on a cloth covered table. Participants are invited to silently light a tea light at any time during the session as a way to honour a feeling of joy or sorrow that has arisen during the session. The sessions are held in a setting where there is internet access.

- 7:00 pm      Welcome  
Feel the breath, settle. A candle in the center of the circle is lit.  
Participants are invited to take turns to bring a quote to share at the start of the session. Facilitators bring a quote if someone has forgotten to bring one.
- 7:05pm      Check-In  
Suggest participants report on Awakening Joy practices they have been trying.
- 7:20 pm      Awakening Joy Exercise done in pairs  
In the live Awakening Joy class, James Baraz and sometimes a guest presenter will lead an exercise. Try one of their exercises or choose an exercise that is suggested in the book *Awakening Joy*, by James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander or on the Awakening Joy iPhone app.
- 7:30 pm      Group Sharing  
Participants are invited to share what they experienced in the exercise.
- 7:40 pm      If there is time, Brock and June will show part of the live Awakening Joy course or a recommended Youtube video. For example: Selma Baraz, "Confessions of a Jewish Mother: How my son ruined my life."
- 7:50 pm      Short talk or presentation on the Awakening Joy theme that highlights what the facilitators see as the key teachings.
- 8:00 pm      Stretch/washroom break
- 8:05 pm      Awakening Joy Exercise  
Choose another exercise from the Awakening Joy materials. Encourage participants to pair up with a different person.
- 8:15 pm      Group Sharing- Reflections on the previous exercise  
To deepen the intimacy of the group, participants are invited to use a talking piece which is passed around the circle.
- 8:30 pm      Guided Meditation  
Meditation led by June or Brock, Patricia Ellsberg's guided meditation from the

Awakening Joy class, a recording from a different source, or a meditation read out from a book.

- 8:35 pm If there is time, a self-reflective exercise is planned such as writing a gratitude letter. Or, Brock or June will lead a movement exercise.
- 8:45 pm Homework Review from James Baraz's Practice Letter  
A check-in on how the session was – anything that people would like to continue or change?
- 8:50 pm Singing - Lyrics are handed out
- 8:58 pm Close with a quote and extinguish the candle
- 9:00 pm End

June and Brock's detailed lesson plans for each of the ten Awakening Joy themes are available in Appendix II.

## Appendix I. Ten Lesson Plans by Theme with Quotes and Questions

From Joan Redding

Below are sample detailed lesson plans specific to each of the ten Awakening Joy steps. For these 2-hour sessions, copies of both the lesson plan and the Joy Reminder Cards from [www.awakeningjoy.info](http://www.awakeningjoy.info) are made available to all participants.

### Lesson Plan for Step 1: Intention

#### Candle Lighting and Opening Words: (2 minutes)

"The purpose of life is to be happy". The Dalai Lama.

#### Centering (5 minutes)

#### Checking In (20 minutes)

1. Introduce yourself. How have you been connected to the Awakening Joy class?  
What do you want to experience as a result of participating in the Awakening Joy Support Group?
2. Take five minutes to write down what nourishes you.
3. If you feel comfortable, please share with the group what you wrote on your list.
4. What have you done lately to nourish yourself?
5. Have you been exercising, singing, laughing or writing in a journal?

#### Shared Readings on Intention: (15 minutes)

Joan invites participants to take turns reading quotes.

The following quotes are from *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps That Will Put You On The Road to Real Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Random House, 2010 (Hardcover);

*Awakening Joy: 10 Steps to Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Parallax Press, 2012 (Paperback):

"The journey of awakening joy/creating well-being begins with setting a clear intention. When we consciously intend to be happy, actually saying that intention aloud or to ourselves, we set in motion a radical transformation. Profound changes begin to take place inside us, in our body and mind. The momentum of positive change grows as we learn to choose actions and situations that align us with our intention."

Pg.4 (Hardcover), Pg.5 (Paperback).

"Because everything changes, no circumstance, experience, or object can give us lasting happiness. Our bodies change, our minds change, the seasons change. Everything is impermanent." Pg.7 (Hardcover), Pg.6 (Paperback).

"Awakening Joy isn't about fulfilling goals or changing particular circumstances. It's about training the mind and heart to live in a way that allows us to be truly happy with our life as it is right now. Not that we stop aspiring to grow and change in positive ways, or that we remain in harmful situations, but we begin to find the joy inside us right where we are. As you work with the practices, you will discover that happiness is not a

place you arrive at but rather the result of training your mind to ride with ease and flexibility the roller coaster of life." Pg.7 (Hardcover), Pg.6-7 (Paperback).

"Doing an activity repetitively changes the structure of the brain. However, even just imagining the same activity has an impact on neural structure. By actively imagining feelings of happiness or recalling happy experiences, you can help to make those changes in your brain that can bring more joy into your life."  
Pg.9 (Hardcover), Pg.9 (Paperback).

"The more often you remind yourself that you are actually intending to bring more feelings of joy and well-being into your life, the more you will be open to them when they arise. And when you remain aware of your intention to grow in happiness, you're more likely to make choices to support it." Pg.11 (Hardcover), Pg.10 (Paperback).

"Neuroscience tells us that setting an intention "primes" our nervous system to be on the lookout for whatever will support what we intend to create for ourselves. In his book, *The Mindful Brain*, Daniel Siegel talks about the effect paying "attention to intention" has on our brain and thus our experiences of our surroundings. He writes: 'Intentions create an integrated state of priming, a gearing up of our neural system to be in the mode of that specific intention: we can be readying to receive, to sense, to focus, to behave in a certain manner.' This suggests that when we pay attention to the intention to bring more happiness into our lives, we are more likely to notice the actions, opportunities, people, and things that can bring that about for us. It's sort of like recognizing which piece of a jigsaw puzzle will fit the picture."  
Pg.18 (Hardcover), Pg. 18 (Paperback).

"The intention in our minds at the moment of any action determines whether we are planting seeds of future happiness or future suffering. If we want the seeds we plant to produce huge beautiful blossoms, our intention for greater well-being must be motivated by a big beautiful desire. So don't hold back. Let your intention be about fulfilling your highest potential, or letting your actions come from love, or bringing more happiness into the world." Pg.25 (Hardcover), Pg. 25 (Paperback).

"Aligning our intention with the goodness of our heart keeps us from getting swept up in fear, confusion or negativity. When our intention to be happy is based on our highest values, we can rely upon it to lead us in the right direction."  
Pg. 26 (Hardcover), Pg. 26 (Paperback).

"The point cannot be overstated: Every desirable experience— passionate love, a spiritual high, the pleasure of a new possession, the exhilaration of success-is transitory." David Myers, *The Pursuit of Happiness: Discovering the Pathway to Fulfillment, Well-Being, and Enduring Personal Joy* (Paperback) 1992, Avon Books Inc., pg. 53.

### **Discussion Questions on Intention (50 minutes)**

1. Did any of the readings resonate with you?
2. Do you have a phrase or statement that can remind you of your intention?
3. What do you think your life might look like six months from now if you stay connected with your intention? A year from now? Two years?
4. What gets in the way of your intention to live joyfully?
5. What are some of the inner voices that keep you from being happy?

### **Practices that Support Intention (10 minutes)**

Joan reviews suggestions from the book *Awakening Joy*, by James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, 2010 (Hardcover); 2012 (Paperback).

1. Hearing a New Voice.  
Pg.16 (Hardcover), Pg. 17 (Paperback)
2. Focus on Success.  
Pg.20 (Hardcover), Pg. 21 (Paperback)
3. Nourish Your Intention.  
Pg.23 (Hardcover), Pg. 23(Paperback)
4. Following Your Heart's Desire.  
Pg.25 (Hardcover), Pg. 25(Paperback)
5. Empowering Your Intention to Awaken Joy.  
Pg. 27 (Hardcover), Pg. 28 (Paperback)

### **Set an Intention (5 minutes)**

Choose a practice that will bring more joy and well-being into your life until we meet again.

### **Meditation:** Patricia Ellsberg's Meditation on Intention (10 minutes)

James Baraz sends a practice letter on each Awakening Joy theme. He includes Patricia Ellsberg's meditation.

### **Extinguishing Candle and Closing Words (2 minutes)**

"Whatever you think and ponder upon, that will become the inclination of the mind."  
The Buddha

Invite the group to say the following phrases of loving kindness:

- May I set a clear intention every day.
- May I train my mind and heart to live in a way that allows me to be truly happy with my life as it is right now.
- May I be aware of my intention to grow in happiness.
- May my intention to be happy be based on my highest values.

## **Singing**

"You can get it if you really want it" (Jimmy Cliff)

"Amazing Grace" sung with the words Amazing Joy.

"Go Now in Peace" Don Besig and Nancy Price.

<http://www.shawneepress.com/product/viewproduct.do?itemid=35008009&lid=0&keywords=Go%20Now%20in%20Peace&subsiteid=204&>

## **Supplemental Readings**

Joan adds quotes from a variety of sources. For example, for the theme on Intention, she shared quotes from Dr. Andrew Weil's book, *Spontaneous Happiness: A New Path to Emotional Well-Being*, Little, Brown and Company, 2011.

# Awakening Joy

## Lesson Plan for Step 2: Mindfulness

### Candle Lighting and Opening Words: (2 minutes)

"There is a most wonderful way to help living beings overcome grief and sorrow, end pain and anxiety and realize the highest happiness. That way is the establishment of mindfulness." The Buddha

### Centering (5 minutes)

### Checking In (20 minutes)

1. What three or four things have you done to nourish yourself since our last meeting?
2. Have you been meditating, singing, exercising, dancing or writing in a journal?
3. Have you set an intention every morning?
4. If you're comfortable, would you like to share your intention with us?
5. Do you make choices throughout your day based on your intention?
6. How's it going? Have you had any "aha" moments you want to share?

### Shared Readings on Mindfulness: (20 minutes)

Participants take turns reading quotes on the Awakening Joy theme of Mindfulness. The following quotes are from *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps That Will Put You On The Road to Real Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Random House, 2010 (Hardcover); *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps to Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Parallax Press, 2012 (Paperback).

"The secret to awakening joy is being present with whatever part of life we're tasting right now. The key to this secret is the practice of mindfulness, and it is the underpinning of all the other practices in this Awakening Joy program with mindfulness we live in the present moment. The habit of being a little (or a lot) ahead of ourselves, living in the past or lost in fantasy exacts an enormous price: We miss out on our life." Pg. 30 (Hardcover); Pg. 31 (Paperback).

"Mindfulness has many benefits, but for our purposes the most important is that it can help you live a happier life. You can't make joy or well-being happen, but you can help create the conditions in which those states more naturally arise. This starts with allowing yourself to be right where you are. Mindfulness is a tool that helps you learn to do that." Pg. 31 (Hardcover); Pg. 32 (Paperback).

"Although mindfulness is non-judgmental awareness, this doesn't mean that we abandon the faculty of discrimination. In fact, when we are aware of what we're actually thinking and feeling, we can clearly discern the difference between those thoughts and actions that are harmful and those that are beneficial. Becoming aware of our habits and the automatic ways we react when we're confused or upset is the first step to freeing ourselves from their power." Pg. 34 (Hardcover); Pg. 34 (Paperback).

"The present moment is always changing. Mindfulness directly reveals this truth of impermanence. When we see this truth of change for ourselves, our relationship to experience dramatically shifts. We learn to enjoy pleasant experiences without holding on to them when they pass (which they will) and we are able to remain present with unpleasant experiences without fearing they will always be this way (which they won't)." Pg. 36 (Hardcover), Pg. 37 (Paperback).

"We are creatures of habit. The practice of mindfulness interrupts the habits that put your mind on automatic. With mindfulness you begin to develop the freedom to make choices that lead to greater happiness and well-being instead of suffering and regret." Pg. 38 (Hardcover), Pg. 39 (Paperback)

"Changing negative habits depends upon paying mindful attention to what is happening inside us when they arise. The mind and body are interconnected, each affecting the other." Pg. 47 (Hardcover),Pg. 47 (Paperback).

"The Buddha was a preeminent mind researcher 2,500 years ago. As he investigated his mind in meditation, he noticed different categories of thoughts: those that led to suffering and those that led to happiness. The first group included thoughts connected with blind desire, ill will and cruelty which led, as he put it, 'to my own affliction and the affliction of others.' The other set of thoughts—those of contentment, kindness and compassion—had just the opposite effect. Not only were they harmless to himself and others, but they actually led to happiness." Pg. 49 (Hardcover), Pg. 49 (Paperback)

"While what arises in our mind is somewhat random and out of control, we do have control over which thoughts we choose to dwell on. By training ourselves to pay attention to what is happening in our mind and body in any situation, we make it more likely that we will empower those thoughts that support our well-being." Pg. 49 (Hardcover), Pg.49 (Paperback).

"We strengthen habits of thought through repetition. If you often think unkind, negative, or depressing thoughts, you'll tend to continue thinking in that way. If you choose thoughts that uplift, nourish and bring kindness to yourself and others, your mind will increasingly lean in that direction." Pg. 49 (Hardcover), Pg. 50 (Paperback).

"Mindfulness teaches us to incline our mind toward joy by helping us wisely choose our thoughts and actions. And the more we do this, the more readily it happens. Research psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky says in her book, *The How of Happiness*, that 'an unhappy person spends more than twice as much time thinking about unpleasant events in their lives, while happy people tend to seek and rely upon information that brightens their personal outlook.'" Pg. 51 (Hardcover), Pg. 51 (Paperback)

### **Discussion Questions for Mindfulness (50 minutes)**

Joan uses these questions to stimulate discussion.

1. How do you define mindfulness?
2. Are you aware of being mindful throughout the day?
3. Did any of the readings resonate with you?
4. Which of your habits serve you well?
5. Which of your habits don't serve?

6. When you find yourself in a contracted state, what do you notice in your body and mind?
7. When you're feeling expansive, what do you notice in your body and mind?

### **Practices that Strengthen Mindfulness (5 minutes)**

#### 1. Mindfulness Meditation.

Instructions are found in the book *Awakening Joy*, by James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, 2010 (Hardcover), pg. 45; 2012 (Paperback), pg. 46.

#### 2. Taking in the Good.

Whenever you're experiencing a moment of joy or contentment, pause and take in the good. Dr. Rick Hanson says that if you take in the good for thirty seconds, six times a day, you will notice greater well-being and notice a real difference within just a couple of weeks. *Awakening Joy* live class presentation by Dr. Rick Hanson, author of *Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love and Wisdom*. New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2009.

#### 3. Practice being in the present moment.

From the exercise titled, "Just As It Is".

*Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover) pg. 33; (Paperback), pg. 34.

Wherever you are, notice how you're feeling, physically and mentally.

Notice sounds and what you see.

Observe the thoughts going through your mind.

Notice when you feel contracted or expanded in your body and mind.

### **Setting Intentions (5 minutes)**

State what practice will bring more joy and well-being in to your life until we meet again. (For example, "I plan to meditate every day for five minutes," "I'm going to take a walk in nature this weekend.")

### **Closing Meditation (10 minutes)**

Joan reads Patricia Ellsberg's Meditation – On the Breath found in the *Awakening Joy* Practice Letter.

### **Extinguishing the Candle and Closing Words**

Joan reads a quote she has found on the theme. She then invites the group to say the following phrases of loving kindness:

May I be present with whatever part of life I'm experiencing right now.

May I be aware of what I'm actually thinking and feeling so I can clearly discern between those thoughts and actions that are harmful and those that are beneficial.

May I empower those thoughts that support my well-being.

May I choose thoughts that uplift, nourish and bring kindness to myself and others.

### **Singing**

Standing in a circle, holding hands, Joan leads the group in singing.

"I Can See Clearly Now", Johnny Nash; Jimmy Cliff

"Amazing Grace" sung with the words Amazing Joy.

"Go Now in Peace" Don Besig and Nancy Price

<http://www.shawneepress.com/product/viewproduct.do?itemid=35008009&lid=0&keywords=Go%20Now%20in%20Peace&subsiteid=204&>

### **Supplemental Readings**

Joan adds quotes from a variety of sources. For example, for the theme on Mindfulness, she shared quotes from:

Jack Kornfield, author and Buddhist teacher <http://www.jackkornfield.com/>

Dr. Rick Hanson's book, *Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love and Wisdom*. New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2009.

Mary Oliver's poem "Mindful", from her book of poems, *Why I Wake Early*, Beacon Press, 2004.

Newsweek article written by Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction teacher Amy Gross.

<http://www.newsweek.com/mindfulness-meditation-rediscovered-64203>

# Awakening Joy

## Lesson Plan for Step 3: Gratitude

### Candle Lighting and Opening Words: (2 minutes)

"There are two ways to live your life: One is though nothing is a miracle, the other is though everything is a miracle." Albert Einstein

### Centering (5 minutes)

### Checking In (20 minutes)

1. Did you focus on your intention to bring more well-being into your life?  
If you did have an intention, what was it?
2. Have you been meditating, singing, exercising, dancing or writing in a journal?
3. What did you learn about mindfulness?
4. Have you been aware of being in the present moment?
5. How's it going? Have you had any epiphanies you want to share?

### Shared Readings on the Gratitude: (15 minutes)

Participants take turns reading quotes on the Awakening Joy theme of Gratitude.

The following quotes are from *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps That Will Put You On The Road to Real Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Random House, 2010 (Hardcover); *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps to Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Parallax Press, 2012 (Paperback)

"Each day of your life, you have many opportunities to develop a grateful heart by paying attention to the blessings, big and small, that are all around you."  
Pg.61 (Hardcover), Pg.61 (Paperback).

"Negative states like anger, bitterness, and resentment dissolve in the presence of gratitude."  
Pg. 62 (Hardcover), Pg.61 (Paperback).

"When we feel grateful, our receptors are wide open to receive the abundance available to us. The very act of appreciating someone or something instantly calls forth joy."  
Pg. 62 (Hardcover), Pg.62 (Paperback).

"Gratitude grounds us in the present. Having a positive vision of the future is healthy, but in order to get there, it helps to appreciate and build on what's good in our life right now."  
Pg. 64 (Hardcover), Pg.64 (Paperback).

"Scattering gratitude spreads a joy that encompasses us as well as those to whom we are grateful. Expressing our appreciation and gratitude to others not only feels good, but it helps make the world a friendlier place." Pg. 79 (Hardcover), Pg.78 (Paperback).

### **Discussion Questions to Explore the Topic of Gratitude: (50 minutes)**

1. Who are some of the people you feel grateful for in your life?
2. What are some of the things you feel grateful for?
3. Do you experience gratitude in your daily life?
4. Do you have a gratitude practice?
5. Have you ever written a letter of gratitude?

### **Practices that Strengthen Gratitude (5 minutes)**

From: *Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover); 2012 (Paperback).

1. Exercise: From "Have To" to "Get To". Choose a particular task or situation in your life that feels like a burden. Try changing "have to" - to - "get to" and see if you get a different perspective. Pg. 71 (Hardcover), Pg. 70 (Paperback).
2. Exercise: "And my life is really very blessed." Each time you find yourself worrying or complaining, try adding on that little phrase. Pg. 74 (Hardcover), Pg. 74 (Paperback).
3. Exercise: "Deepen Your Happiness Groove." Spend five minutes at the end of each day writing down what you are grateful for. You can do this in your private journal or set up an email exchange with a Joy Buddy. Pg.77 (Hardcover), Pg. 76 (Paperback).
4. Exercise: Gratitude Letter. "Psychologist Martin Seligman is an expert on what makes people happy. In his book, *Authentic Happiness*, he reports that of all the exercises he has developed for his Positive Psychology classes, one is particularly effective—writing a gratitude letter." Pg. 78. (Hardcover), Pg. 77 (Paperback).

### **Set an Intention (5 minutes)**

Choose a practice that will bring more joy and well-being into your life until we meet again.

### **Meditation: Patricia Ellsberg's Meditation on Gratitude (5 minutes)**

#### **Extinguishing the Candle and Closing Words**

"You can complain because roses have thorns, or you can rejoice because thorns have roses." Ziggy, Comic Strip Character

Invite the group to say the following phrases of loving kindness:

May I practice gratitude every day by paying attention to the blessings, big and small, that are all around me.

May I express my appreciation and gratitude to others.

May I take a few moments each day to open to beauty.

#### **Singing**

"Oh, what a Beautiful Mornin" by Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein, from Oklahoma.

"Amazing Grace" sung with the words Amazing Joy.

"Go Now in Peace" Don Besig and Nancy Price.

<http://www.shawneepress.com/product/viewproduct.do?itemid=35008009&lid=0&keywords=Go%20Now%20in%20Peace&subsiteid=204&>

### **Supplemental Readings**

"Take a few moments each day to open to beauty. Really look at the things around you. Recognize the beauty in others, in their character, choices, sacrifices, aspirations. See the beauty in the face of someone at the very beginning of this life, and see it in the face of someone at the very end. Recognize the beauty in your own heart. As others are beautiful, so are you. Make beauty with your hands, your words, and your actions. Even the breath is beautiful. Breathing in beauty, let beauty breathe you." Dr. Rick Hanson, *Just One Thing, Developing a Buddha Brain One Simple Practice At A Time*, New Harbinger Publications, 2011.

M. J. Ryan, *Attitudes of Gratitude*, Conari Press, 1999.

Poem titled "Otherwise", by Jane Kenyon. *Otherwise: New and Selected Poems*, Graywolf Press, 1996.

# Awakening Joy

## Lesson Plan for Step 4: Finding Joy in Difficult Times

### Candle Lighting and Opening Words (2 minutes)

"Your joy is your sorrow unmasked. And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was often times filled with your tears. And how else can it be? The deeper that sorrow curves into your being, the more joy you can contain." Khalil Gibran

### Centering (5 minutes)

### Checking In (20 minutes)

1. Did you focus on your intention to bring more well-being into your life?  
If you did have an intention, what was it?
2. How have you been nurturing yourself?
3. Have you been meditating, singing, exercising, dancing or writing in a journal?
4. Have you set an intention every morning?
5. Have you been aware of being mindful?
6. Have you been aware of gratitude on a daily basis?
7. Have you been taking in the good?
8. Have you been seeing the good in your own heart and other people?
9. Are your choices creating joy and well-being for yourself and others?

### Shared Readings on Finding Joy in Difficult Times (15 minutes)

From: *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps That Will Put You On The Road to Real Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Random House, 2010 (Hardcover); *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps to Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Parallax Press, 2012 (Paperback).

"It's not a question of *if* the hard stuff comes but *when* it comes. Suffering and stress are part of the fabric of life. While some of us have easier lives than others, if each of us lives a normal life span, not one of us can escape old age, sickness and death."  
Pg. 87 (Hardcover), Pg. 86 (Paperback).

"The fourth step in *Awakening Joy* shows that by being open to the suffering that comes into your life, rather than resisting it, you can learn to let the pain of life's inevitable challenges move through you rather than get stuck in you."  
Pg. 89 (Hardcover), Pg. 88 (Paperback).

"Mindfulness is the primary tool because the resistance that intensifies our suffering is in our mind. Mindfulness can ease what we're going through in hard times and it releases us from mental states that cause suffering."  
Pg. 89 (Hardcover), Pg. 88 (Paperback).

"Mindfulness gets to the root of suffering and frees us from its power. As we stop trying to protect ourselves from our painful experiences and mindfully open to them, all those positive qualities within us— understanding, compassion, kindness -can also come to life." Pg. 89 (Hardcover), Pg. 88 (Paperback).

Dealing with difficult times is “learning how to keep going. ‘It’s all about putting in the baby steps.’ That’s really the key—repeating your intention, sitting through the hard stuff consciously when it happens, staying inside the good stuff for longer periods and really appreciating it, practicing loving kindness for yourself, not becoming discouraged or impatient, and then getting up tomorrow and starting all over again.”  
Pg. 91 (Hardcover), Pg. 90 (Paperback).

"Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional." Proverb attributed to M. Kathleen Casey, on pg. 97 (Hardcover), pg.94 (Paperback).

“To diminish the suffering of pain, we need to make a crucial distinction between the pain of the pain and the pain we create by our thoughts about the pain. Fear, anger, guilt, loneliness, and hopelessness are all mental and emotional responses that can intensify pain.” Dalai Lama quote, pg. 98 (Hardcover), pg. 96 (Paperback).

“The thoughts spinning around and around in our minds can be very convincing. We build elaborate scenarios of failure and chaos and believe them to be true. This may be very creative, but it’s not conducive to happiness. Worry is a very real kind of mental suffering.” Pg. 100 (Hardcover), Pg. 98 (Paperback).

“I have been through some terrible things in my life, some of which actually happened.” Mark Twain quoted on pg. 101 (Hardcover), pg.99 (Paperback).

"Mindfulness interrupts the tape loop by bringing us back to the moment so we can respond to what is actually happening right now."  
Pg. 101 (Hardcover), Pg.99 (Paperback).

"Sometimes the most overpowering illusion the mind can create is fear and it is important to recognize that you are caught in thoughts that are giving rise to fear."  
Pg. 103 (Hardcover), Pg.100 (Paperback).

### **Discussion Questions on Finding Joy in Difficult Times (50 minutes)**

1. Do you allow yourself to be right when you are going through a difficult time?
2. What lessons did you learn when you went through a challenging situation or difficult period in your life?
3. When going through difficult times, do you remember that everything is impermanent?
4. Do you practice holding your suffering with kindness and compassion when you are going through a difficult time? How do you nourish yourself?

### **Practices that Support Finding Joy in Difficult Times (5 minutes)**

From: *Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover); *Awakening Joy*, 2012 (Paperback).

#### 1. Keeping Perspective

“Keep in mind that everything is impermanent, including negative mind states, and notice

any moments of well-being that arise. Be grateful of any blessings in your life.”  
Pg. 92 (Hardcover), Pg.91 (Paperback).

## 2. Having Known Them

“Recall an experience of losing a loved one. Allow yourself to feel the sorrow with tender awareness. Open to the gratitude you feel for having known him or her and focus on sending that beloved being your thoughts of love and appreciation.”

Pg. 95 (Hardcover), Pg.94 (Paperback).

## 3. RAIN: Recognize, Allow, Investigate and Non-Identification

Pg. 111 (Hardcover), Pg.109 (Paperback).

**Recognize** what you are feeling and name it. Is it anger, fear, sadness, confusion or something else?

**Allow** the feelings to be present, without pushing them away and without getting lost in them.

**Investigate** the feelings in your body and mind. Explore the landscape of the emotion with curiosity and interest. Where in your body do you feel it? How does it feel in your mind—heavy, tight, open, agitated?

**Non-Identification** is the key to freeing yourself from the emotion's grip. Don't take it personally. What you are feeling is a human emotion that arises and passes away. It does not define who you are.

## 4. Overcoming Overwhelm.

“By shifting your focus from the intense emotion, you can wake up from the dream your mind is creating and wisely address what needs to be attended to.”

Pg. 115 (Hardcover), Pg. 113(Paperback).

## Set an Intention

Choose a practice that will bring more joy and well-being into your life until we meet again.

**Meditation:** Patricia Ellsberg's meditation on Finding Joy in Difficult Times

## Extinguish the Candle and Closing Words

“Suffering is grace.” Neem Karoli Baba, quoted on pg. 117 (Hardcover), pg. 116 (Paperback).

Invite the group to say the following phrases of loving kindness:

May I be open to the suffering that comes into my life, rather than resisting it, so that the pain doesn't get stuck in me.

May I hold my suffering with kindness and compassion when I'm going through a difficult time.

## Singing

"Amazing Grace" sung with the words Amazing Joy.

"Go Now in Peace". Don Besig and Nancy Price.

<http://www.shawneepress.com/product/viewproduct.do?itemid=35008009&lid=0&keywords=Go%20Now%20in%20Peace&subsiteid=204&>

# Awakening Joy

## Lesson Plan for Step 5: Integrity

### Candle Lighting and Opening Words: (2 minutes)

"Integrity feels good. When I act with integrity, I feel lighter in my body, and I can simply go on to the next thought or action".

Awakening Joy Course Participant, *Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover)

### Centering (3 - 5 minutes)

### Checking In: (10 minutes)

1. What was the intention you focused on to bring more joy into your life?
2. What have you been doing to nurture yourself?
  - Have you been meditating, singing, exercising, dancing or writing in a journal?
  - Have you set an intention every morning?
  - Have you been mindful?
  - Have you been writing down what you're grateful for every day?
  - Have you been taking in the good?
  - Have you been seeing the good in yourself and in other people?
  - How's it going? Have you had any "aha" moments you want to share?

### Shared Readings on Integrity (15 minutes)

Participants take turns reading the quotes.

From: *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps That Will Put You On The Road to Real Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Random House, 2010 (Hardcover); *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps to Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Parallax Press, 2012 (Paperback).

"Every choice we make has a consequence. As Jesus put it, 'As you sow, so shall you reap.'" Pg. 125 (Hardcover), Pg.123 (Paperback).

"Living with integrity is a practical strategy for Awakening Joy. It's also considered a 'skillful' one, because it makes our lives work better. In Buddhist teachings, thoughts and actions are not categorized as good or bad but rather as 'skillful' and 'unskillful'". Pg. 125 (Hardcover), Pg.123 (Paperback).

"To be skillful means to think and act in ways motivated by the desire to enhance the well-being of yourself and others. To be unskillful means to intentionally think or act in ways that harm you or others." Pg. 125 (Hardcover), Pg.123 (Paperback).

"The Buddha referred to the happiness of integrity as 'the bliss of blamelessness' and he offered us a set of guidelines to take us there:

1. Honor all life.
2. Share your time and resources.
3. Take care with sexual energy, respecting boundaries.
4. Speak kindly.

5. Develop a clear mind and healthy body.”

Pg.128; 137-143 (Hardcover), Pg.126; 135-140 (Paperback).

“Meditation teacher Ruth Denison puts it, ‘Karma means you don't get away with nothing, darling!’ Because karma is not an easy teacher in delivering to us the consequences of our actions, the humbling process of waking up requires genuine compassion and kindness for ourselves. That begins with forgiveness.”

Pg. 131 (Hardcover), Pg.130 (Paperback).

“Sometimes the hardest area of integrity is being truthful with ourselves. Integrity is not just about following guidelines for morality. On a deeper level, it's about being true to yourself.” Pg. 149 (Hardcover), Pg.147 (Paperback).

“Wise speech not only applies to interactions with others, but also to our relationship with ourselves. Be watchful of how you speak to yourself.”

Pg. 141 (Hardcover), Pg.139 (Paperback).

“And this above all, to thine own self be true and it must follow as the night the night the day, thou canst not then be false to anyone.” William Shakespeare

**Discussion Questions on Integrity:** (50 minutes)

1. What does it mean to honor all life?
2. What does it mean to share your time and resources?
3. What does it mean to take care with sexual energy, respecting boundaries and offering safety?
4. What does it mean to speak kindly and carefully?
5. What does it mean to develop a clear mind and healthy body?
6. Do you keep commitments to yourself?
7. When you have spoken or acted in ways you later regretted, what contributed to that choice?
8. When you have spoken or acted wisely in a challenging situation. What supported you?
9. What helps you forgive yourself?

**Practices that support Integrity** (10 minutes)

From: *Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover); *Awakening Joy*, 2012 (Paperback).

1. Remembering the Gladness of the Wholesome.

Pg. 128 (Hardcover), Pg.127 (Paperback).

“Think of a time when you reached out and were kind to someone. Let yourself recall the pleasure you felt in your mind and body as you saw how happy they were. Take these positive feelings in and let them motivate you to continue to choose skillful actions.”

2. Forgiving Yourself.

Pg. 134 (Hardcover), Pg.132 (Paperback).

“Think of an incident from your past that you still regret or feel guilty about. Consider what conditions, inner and outer, might have motivated your words or actions. Was fear a part of what motivated your choices?”

Now imagine yourself as a wise and kind being who understands and forgives you. Notice if there is any change in your body or mind as you take in that forgiveness. Is there any way you might act differently if a similar situation presents itself in the future?”

3. Cultivating Habits for Happiness. Pg. 144 (Hardcover), Pg.141(Paperback).

“Choose one of the five habits or precepts that you would like to cultivate as a way to bring more joy and well-being into your life, and commit to doing it for one week. Brainstorm ways you might act in alignment with this guideline. Write them down and place the paper in a prominent location where you can readily see it every day.”

4. A North Star. Pg. 148 (Hardcover), Pg.147 (Paperback).

“If you're facing a decision that could compromise your integrity, imagine how you will feel five months or five years from now looking back on your choice.”

### **Set an Intention (5 - 7 minutes)**

Choose a practice that will bring more joy and well-being into your life until we meet again.

### **Patricia Ellsberg's Meditation on Integrity (5 – 7 minutes)**

#### **Extinguish the Candle and Closing Words (2 minutes)**

“You do not become good by trying to be good, but by finding the goodness that is already within you, and allowing that goodness to emerge.”

Eckhart Tolle from, *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*. New York. 2005.

Invite the group to say the following phrases of loving kindness:

May I act in ways that will enhance the well-being of myself and others.

May I be true to myself.

May I honor my life.

May I share my time and resources.

May I take care with sexual energy respecting boundaries and offering safety.

May I speak kindly and carefully.

May I develop a clear mind and healthy body.

May I keep my commitments to myself.

May I forgive myself for the mistakes I have made.

### **Songs to Sing Together (5 minutes)**

Get Together - Jesse Colin Young and the Youngbloods.

"Amazing Grace" sung with the words Amazing Joy.

## Lesson Plan for Step 6: The Joy of Letting Go

### Candle Lighting and Opening Words (2 minutes)

"The highest happiness comes from developing 'a mind that clings to naught.'"  
The Buddha

### Centering (5 minutes)

### Checking In (20 minutes)

1. Are you prioritizing happiness in your life?
2. What was the intention you focused on to bring more joy into your life?
3. What have you been doing to nurture yourself?
4. Have you been meditating, singing, exercising, dancing, being mindful, practicing gratitude?
5. Have you been taking in the good?
6. How's it going? Have you had any "aha" moments you want to share?

### Shared Readings on the Topic of Letting Go: (15 minutes)

From: *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps That Will Put You On The Road to Real Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Random House, 2010 (Hardcover); *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps to Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Parallax Press, 2012 (Paperback).

"One of the secrets of happiness is learning to distinguish what we want from what we truly need. Wise letting go leads to joy when we realize we don't have to hold on to extra baggage, whether it's in our garage or the closet of our mind."  
Pg. 155 (Hardcover), Pg.153 (Paperback).

"Let go of the illusion of control in a world of change."  
Pg. 155 (Hardcover), Pg. 153 (Paperback)

"Generosity is an active form of letting go, and it is a sure avenue to happiness. You're not only giving away something, you're connecting lovingly with others through the act of sharing." Pg. 174 (Hardcover), Pg. 172 (Paperback).

"When we give to others—whether a beautiful or useful object, our time, or a word of encouragement—we get at least as much as we give."  
Pg. 175 (Hardcover), Pg. 173 (Paperback).

"Letting go is like weeding. When you get rid of the weeds, it makes room for more of the beauty to be seen and enjoyed. In the same way, when we let go of our extra stuff—whether material or mental clutter—it gives space for our creativity and full potential to flower." Pg. 179 (Hardcover), Pg. 177 (Paperback).

### Questions for Discussion on the topic of the Joy of Letting Go (50 minutes)

1. What readings resonate with you?
2. What are you holding on to in your life that you don't really need?

3. What is making your life complicated or out of balance these days?
4. What would you need to simplify or let go of to bring your life more into balance?
5. What story do you believe that keeps you from experiencing well-being or joy?
6. What would it be like if you saw your troubles just as a story and could let it go?
7. What do you give of yourself?
8. Do you receive generously?

### **Practices that Support the Joy of Letting Go** (15 minutes)

From: *Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover); *Awakening Joy*, 2012 (Paperback).

1. Letting Go of Busy-ness. Pg. 162 (Hardcover), Pg. 160 (Paperback).  
“What can you let go of in your schedule-or put into it—to have more ease and fulfillment in your life? What do you believe about yourself or about life that makes you do more than you are healthy or comfortable with?”
2. Lightening Up. Pg. 164 (Hardcover), Pg. 162 (Paperback).  
“Even a few minutes of mindfulness meditation each day carries over into your life. During meditation, each time you notice that you’re thinking, no matter how interesting or important the content of the thought may seem, practice letting it go. Little by little you'll feel less rigidly attached to your thoughts in daily life.”
3. Letting Go of Expectations. Pg. 166 (Hardcover), Pg. 161 (Paperback).  
“For one week, each time you are about to begin an activity, notice if you have an expectation of how it's ‘supposed’ to turn out. As you engage in the activity, notice how you feel in your body and mind when you let go of your expectations.”
4. Letting Go of Your Story. Pg. 171 (Hardcover), Pg. 169 (Paperback).  
  
“Whenever you find yourself getting caught in an inner struggle, ask yourself, ‘What story am I believing right now?’”
5. Letting Go of the Soap Opera. Pg. 173 (Hardcover), Pg. 171 (Paperback).  
“One area where we tend to hold on is that of our personal story, the running narrative that tells you who and what you are.” Catherine Ingram at Awakening Joy Course, Berkeley, 2008.
6. Feeling Generous. Pg. 176 (Hardcover), Pg. 174 (Paperback).  
“Breathe into your heart and let go to the spirit of generosity. Pay attention to the good feelings that accompany contributing to the well-being of another.”
7. Receiving Generously. Pg. 177 (Hardcover), Pg. 175 (Paperback).  
“Whenever anyone is generous or thoughtful with you, receive their kindness fully and graciously.”

### **Setting an Intention** (10 minutes)

Choose a practice that will bring more joy and well-being into your life until we meet again.

**Meditation:** Patricia Ellsberg's Meditation the Joy of Letting Go (5 minutes)

**Extinguishing the candle and closing words** (2 minutes)

"May you let go of what you don't need. May you share your love well." James Baraz

Invite the group to say the following phrases:

May I let go of what I don't need in my garage and the closet of my mind.

May I bring more balance into my life.

May I let go of the negative stories I tell myself that are a major source of my suffering.

May I be generous to others.

May I receive generously.

**Singing**

Let It Be - Paul McCartney

<http://www.paulmccartney.com/albums/songs/16191-let-it-be>

# Awakening Joy

## Lesson Plan for Step 7: Learning to Love Ourselves

### Candle Lighting and Opening Quote: (2 minutes)

“Imagine meeting someone who laughs at all of your jokes, has similar tastes and really grasps your take on things. This person understands all your hopes and fears. In short, this is someone who really gets you. How would you feel? Probably ecstatic. There is only one person in the world who completely fits that description and he or she is right inside your own skin. This is someone you can learn to love.”

*Awakening Joy*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Random House, 2010 (Hardcover), pg. 182; 2012 (Paperback), pg.180.

### Centering (5 minutes)

### Checking In (20 minutes)

1. What was the practice you focused on to bring more joy into your life?
2. What have you done to nurture yourself?
3. Have you been meditating, singing, laughing, exercising, dancing, being mindful, practicing gratitude?
4. Have you been taking in the good?
5. What have you practiced letting go of? Stuff? Negative thoughts and stories?
6. Have you been looking for the good in your own heart and in other people?
7. Are your choices creating joy for yourself and others?
8. Have you had any “aha” moments you want to share?

### Shared Readings on Learning to Love Ourselves (20 minutes)

“Self-love is the most altruistic of all practices. When you are free to be kind and loving to yourself, the world and all of the people in your life are touched.” Dr. Mark Abramson, Stanford University. <http://www.esalen.org/content/abramson>

“When we love ourselves, we don’t hurt ourselves or others.” The Dalai Lama

“Be yourself, everyone else is taken.” Oscar Wilde

“It is of practical value to learn to like yourself. Since you spend so much time with yourself, you might as well get some satisfaction out of the relationship.” Norman Vincent Peale

From *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps That Will Put You On The Road to Real Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Random House, 2010 (Hardcover); *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps to Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Parallax Press, 2012 (Paperback):

“There’s only one of you, and if you let yourself be the best one of yourself possible, you may also like what you see.” Pg. 182 (Hardcover), Pg.180 (Paperback).

“Learning to love yourself is a process that evolves over time. It begins with letting go of self-criticism and forgiving yourself for being who you are.”

Pg. 183 (Hardcover), Pg.181 (Paperback).

“As you stop focusing on what you don’t appreciate and start seeing yourself as a unique, mysterious, changing being, you allow your best self to shine through. And the joy of that radiates out to the world.” Pg. 183 (Hardcover), Pg.181 (Paperback).

“Instead of getting caught up in judgment and self-hatred, which only feeds a negative state of mind, you can begin by shifting your focus to more positive ways of regarding yourself.” Pg. 186 (Hardcover), Pg.184 (Paperback).

“Even the tiniest opening of seeing the goodness in ourselves can begin to break through a lifetime of self-judgment. By inclining our mind toward looking for what is good and wholesome in us, we stop feeding the negative and start bringing our positive qualities to life. As we do this, we cultivate a new way of regarding ourselves, so that over time the old voices inside that belittle us are replaced by others that are kind and supportive.” Pg. 189 (Hardcover), Pg.187 (Paperback).

“For years I had been looking for love and fulfillment outside myself – loving others, looking for love from others. I now understand that no matter how much love came to me from ‘out there’, until I could truly love myself, I couldn’t really take it in.”

Pg. 195 (Hardcover), Pg.192 (Paperback).

“True love for yourself comes whole and unconditional. The love that embraces the whole package encompasses both compassion for the confused parts and love for the goodness.” Pg. 196 (Hardcover), Pg.193 (Paperback).

“Take good care. This phrase holds a clue to cultivating love for ourselves. Love is taking good care – of your body and your mind, nourishing them with healthy foods, kind and effective healing methods, enough exercise, adequate rest and quiet time, creative self-expression and play. When you take care of yourself out of love, your love for yourself increases.” Pg. 197 (Hardcover), Pg. 194 (Paperback).

“We all long for kindness and care, and we are the ones who can give that to ourselves at any and every moment.” Pg. 199 (Hardcover), Pg. 196 (Paperback).

“Speaking kindly to yourself is one of the most important ways to bring more joy into your life. Learning to recognize the harsh voice of judgment inside your head, and in its place cultivating the gentle voice of compassion and support, can help you stay in touch with what you need in order to love and care for yourself.”

Pg. 199 (Hardcover), Pg. 196 (Paperback).

“Your ability to love yourself evolves as you evolve, but when you finally love yourself, you have passed a watershed point in your spiritual practice. You no longer are trapped in looking to others to prove that you are okay.”

Pg. 204 (Hardcover), Pg. 201 (Paperback).

### **Discussion Questions on Learning to Love Ourselves: (50 minutes)**

1. Which readings resonated with you?
2. Why is self-love the most altruistic of all the practices?
3. What do you appreciate about yourself?
4. Were you raised to believe that you are good enough?
5. What would you need to understand in order to truly forgive yourself?
6. What do you do to take good care of yourself?

### **Patricia Ellsberg's Meditation on Learning to Love Ourselves (5 minutes)**

#### **Practices that Support Learning to Love Ourselves (10 minutes)**

From *Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover); 2012 (Paperback).

1. Seeing What You Like. Pg. 189 (Hardcover), Pg.187 (Paperback).

"Look into a mirror and tell yourself what three specific good qualities you know you have."

2. Seeing Yourself with Love. Pg. 195 (Hardcover), Pg.193 (Paperback).

"Bring to mind someone who genuinely loves you. Imagine yourself as that person and look at yourself through his or her eyes. What qualities do you see in yourself from that perspective?"

3. On the Lookout for Goodness. Pg. 204 (Hardcover), Pg.201(Paperback).

"Be on the lookout for those moments when something good expresses itself through you – a spontaneous urge to call a distressed friend, an impulse to give a donation to charity. Be sure to pause and let those thoughts, feelings and sensations register in your awareness."

#### **Set an Intention (5 minutes)**

Choose an Awakening Joy practice that will bring more joy and well-being into your life until we meet again.

#### **Extinguish the Candle and Closing Words**

"Searching all directions with one's awareness, one finds no one dearer than oneself."  
The Buddha

Invite the group to say the following phrases of loving kindness:

May I be for myself.

May I support my best interests.

May I see myself the way people who love me do.

May I see the good in myself.

May I appreciate myself.

May I forgive myself.

May I be healthy in mind and body.

May I take good care of myself.  
May I be kind to myself.  
May I love and accept myself just as I am.

**Singing:**

"This Little Light of Mine", Harry Dixon Loes.

"How could Anyone Ever Tell You that you are anything less than beautiful?"

Libby Roderick.

"Amazing Grace" sung with the words Amazing Joy.

"Go Now in Peace", Don Besig and Nancy Price

# Awakening Joy

## Lesson Plan for Step 8: The Joy of Loving Others

### Candle Lighting and Opening Quote: (2 minutes)

"Our most prized possessions don't compare in value to loving and being loved."  
From *Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover), pg.207, (Paperback), pg.203.

### Centering (5 minutes)

### Checking In (15 minutes)

1. What was the practice you focused on to bring more joy into your life?
2. What have you done to nurture yourself?
3. Have you been meditating, singing, laughing, journaling, exercising, dancing, setting intentions, being mindful, practicing gratitude?
4. Have you been taking in the good?
5. Have you been appreciating yourself and the good you do for other people?
6. Have you had any "aha" moments that you want to share?

### Shared Readings on the topic of Forgiveness (10 minutes)

From *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps That Will Put You On The Road to Real Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Random House, 2010 (Hardcover); *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps to Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Parallax Press, 2012 (Paperback).

"According to the Dalai Lama, an essential component of compassion and forgiveness is realizing that the other person's words and actions are not about you. But about their internal reality, which has intersected with yours."  
Pg. 217 (Hardcover), Pg. 214 (Paperback).

"Forgiveness does not change the past, but it changes the present. Forgiveness means that even though you are wounded, you choose to hurt and suffer less. Forgiveness is for you and no one else. You can forgive and rejoin a relationship or forgive and never speak to the person again." Dr. Frederic Luskin, *Forgive for Good*, Harper Collins, 2002, quoted on pg. 217 (Hardcover), pg.213 (Paperback).

"When my husband is angry and in a bad mood, it is really helpful for me to recognize that he is confused and suffering, and that he doesn't realize this is not the way to happiness. This completely changes my state of mind from blaming and criticizing (and from being just as angry as he is) into compassion and acceptance. I have found that I can just let him be mad and still be happy myself." An Awakening Joy Course Participant. Pg. 218 (Hardcover), Pg. 214 (Paperback).

"True forgiveness is based on understanding what might cause someone to act in ways that hurt us. Whether it's someone close to us or politicians we read about in newspapers, we are all products of forces beyond our control—genetic makeup, upbringing, influences of people we spend time with, and life circumstances."  
Pg. 219 (Hardcover), Pg. 216 (Paperback).

**Questions for Discussion – suggest speaking in pairs (10 minutes)**

1. What gets in the way of your forgiving someone?
2. What supports you forgiving another?
3. What tools do you use to forgive yourself and others?

**Loving Kindness Toward Others - Shared Readings (10 minutes)**

"My religion is kindness." The Dalai Lama

From *Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover); 2012 (Paperback).

"Love is love wherever it's found, and it starts inside each of us as we let the barriers to connection dissolve. Rather than expecting relationships to make you happy, if you focus on getting in touch with the joy inside you, you will create happier and healthier relationships of all kinds." Pg.209 (Hardcover), Pg. 206 (Paperback).

"Love is a movement of the heart that opens and radiates out. Attachment is contraction of the heart as it closes in fear. Love is not painful." Ram Dass quoted on pg.211 (Hardcover), pg. 207 (Paperback).

"Love a little and you will have a little joy. Love a lot and you will have a lot of joy." Pg.210 (Hardcover), Pg. 206 (Paperback).

"The most important criterion for females and males alike in their search for love, an overwhelming universal across the thirty-seven countries surveyed, is kindness." Dacher Keltner, from *Born to Be Good*, W.W. Norton & Co. Ltd., 2009, quoted on pg. 208 (Hardcover).

**Questions for Discussion (10 minutes)**

1. Do any of the readings resonate with you?
2. Do you consciously send thoughts of loving kindness to others?
3. Do you consciously look for the good in others?

**Practice of Sympathetic or Altruistic Joy**

**Shared Readings (10 minutes)**

From *Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover); 2012 (Paperback).

"We see a baby squeal with delight and we feel delighted. We watch a movie and feel satisfied when the good guy finally gets the gal. Someone we love succeeds at a project they were nervous about, and we feel happy for him or her. There is a Sanskrit word used in Buddhist practice for the feeling of happiness at the joy and good fortune of others: Mudita. Mudita, translated as sympathetic joy, means resonating with the happiness of another. It's the joyful feeling we have when we're cheering for others or celebrating their success." Pg. 233 (Hardcover), Pg. 229 (Paperback).

"Surely This is Love: I am intimately connected with all that is. When you water your roots, my heart blossoms. When I see you smile, that's when I know I'm fully alive.

As you are able to live in truth, I raise this roof on this house I am exploring. I throw the doors wide, let the breeze-blow in the window. When you grow, I know it as my own opening. You stretch, I breathe. I give, and you receive. Just beneath the fabric of our lives, coiled, ready to spring or budding like a rose, reaching out to embrace, or sitting, bathed in grace and stillness—this singing, circling, radiant, one with everything—surely this is love.” Danna Faulds, *Go In and In, Poems from the Heart of Yoga*, Kingdom Books, 2002, quoted on pg.233 (Hardcover).

"When we focus on the good fortune and happiness of others, we are entertaining positive images in our mind, which makes us happy. The moment we think, *Oh, but I don't have that*, we drop into negative comparison, the mind tightens and we're unhappy." Pg. 234 (Hardcover), Pg. 229 (Paperback).

**Questions for Discussion:** (10 minutes)

1. Do you keep your radar out for happiness around you?
2. When do you find joy through other people's happiness?

**Connection through Playfulness, Love and Laughter** (10 minutes)

From *Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover); 2012 (Paperback).

"Playfulness and humor are actually ways of loving others and they are a direct link to joy. Here are some of the ways course participants said they have let the love flow through playing: Laughing, adopting a pet, skipping, making music with friends." Pg. 237 (Hardcover), Pg. 232-233 (Paperback).

"David Elkind, Professor Emeritus of Child Development at Tufts University, says in his book, *The Power of Play*: 'Decades of research have shown that play is crucial to physical, intellectual and social-emotional development at all ages.'" Pg. 237 (Hardcover), Pg. 233 (Paperback).

**Questions for Discussion** (5 minutes)

1. What do you do for fun?
2. What makes you laugh?

**Practices that Increase Connecting with Others** (10 minutes)

From *Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover); 2012 (Paperback).

1. Feeling the Love. Pg. 211 (Hardcover), Pg. 208 (Paperback).

"Think of someone you love dearly. As you imagine that person or being here with you, notice what happens in your body. A beloved one may awaken that experience of love, but the love is inside you. You can cultivate a loving heart by strengthening that feeling through mutual attention."

2. From Agenda to Love, Pg. 216 (Hardcover), Pg. 212 (Paperback).

"Bring to mind someone you love and how good it feels to simply love that being. Now turn your attention to something you want from him or her—attention, reassurance, affection, a certain behavior. Notice if the feelings in your body and your state of mind shift from

openness to contraction. When you notice that you're closing down to someone you love, stop for a moment and ask yourself whether you are attached to a particular agenda for that person.”

3. Asking Forgiveness. Pg. 219 (Hardcover), Pg. 216 (Paperback).

“Bring to mind someone you have harmed in some way. Imagine that person right here with you. Allow any feelings of remorse to arise. Reflect on the confusion or ignorance that may have caused you to act in that way, not to excuse yourself for your behavior but to awaken compassionate understanding. You might silently say, ‘I’m truly sorry for any harm I might have caused you. I ask your forgiveness.’ Imagine that person hearing your sincerity, taking in your words and forgiving you.”

4. Offering Forgiveness. Pg. 220 (Hardcover), Pg. 217 (Paperback).

“Bring to mind someone who has harmed you in some way. Imagine that person in front of you. Reflect on the confusion or ignorance that may have caused him or her to harm you—again, not to overlook the actions but to open your heart to compassion.

Offer forgiveness by silently saying ‘For any harm you may have caused me, intentionally or unintentionally, I \_\_\_\_\_ forgive you. I forgive your confusion.’

Imagine that person taking in your words and feeling your forgiveness. Notice how that feels.”

5. Looking for the Good. Pg. 226 (Hardcover), Pg. 222 (Paperback).

“Seeing the goodness in someone brings something real, alive and uplifting out of them. For one week, practice looking for the good in everyone you come in contact with. Keep looking for the positive qualities. Notice what effect this has on how you feel toward other people. Notice the effect it has on your own state of mind.”

6. Loving kindness for all Beings. Pg. 234 (Hardcover), Pg. 230 (Paperback).

“Begin by sending wishes for well-being to everyone in your home and immediate family. Gradually expand outward in your mind to include your neighborhood, your city, state, country, continent, and the entire planet.

You might say: *As I want to be happy, so may all beings be happy. As I want to be peaceful, so may all beings have peace in their lives.* Notice how it feels in your body and mind to wish well to all without omitting anyone from your heart.”

7. Joy in the Joy of Another. Pg. 235 (Hardcover), Pg. 231 (Paperback).

“Imagine someone you are fond of smiling or laughing in happiness. What happens to you? Take in those good feelings and send them out to that person: *May your happiness continue. May your happiness grow.* Now imagine all those people in a cheering section rooting for you. Direct the feelings of well-wishing toward yourself, taking in the feeling of support from them.”

**Setting an Intention** (2 minutes)

**Patricia Ellsberg's Meditation on Connecting with Others** (10 minutes)

**Extinguish the Candle and Closing Words** (2 minutes)

"It is important to understand how much your own happiness is linked to that of others. There is no individual happiness totally independent of others." The Dalai Lama.

Everyone recites together:

May I forgive myself for hurting others.

May I forgive others for hurting me.

May I forgive myself and others for choices that were made from ignorance, unskillfulness, immaturity, fear and confusion.

May you be happy and well.

May you be safe from harm.

May you have inner peace.

May your joy and happiness continue.

May your happiness grow.

May you have ease of well-being.

May good fortune follow you everywhere.

May all beings be filled with joy and laughter.

May all beings have wholesome fun.

**Singing:**

"Shower the People" by James Taylor.

"Amazing Grace" sung with the words Amazing Joy.

"Go now in peace." Don Besig and Nancy Price.

# Awakening Joy

## Lesson Plan for Step 9: Compassion

### Candle Lighting and Opening Quote: (2 minutes)

“The only ones among you who will be truly happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.” Albert Schweitzer.

### Centering (5 minutes)

### Checking In (15 minutes)

1. What was the practice you focused on to bring more joy into your life?
2. What have you done to nurture yourself?
3. Have you been meditating, singing, laughing, journaling, exercising, dancing, setting intentions, being mindful, practicing gratitude, loving yourself and connecting with others?
4. Do you stop and take in the good for thirty seconds?
5. Have you been appreciating yourself and the good you do for other people?
6. When did you find joy through other people’s happiness?

### Shared Readings on Compassion (15 minutes)

From *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps That Will Put You On The Road to Real Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Random House, 2010 (Hardcover); *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps to Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Parallax Press, 2012 (Paperback).

“In English the word compassion means ‘to suffer with’, but a beautiful and perhaps more meaningful definition of compassion in Buddhist teachings is ‘the quivering of the heart’ in response to suffering. At its core, compassion is a recognition that we are all interconnected, that your suffering is my suffering, that when I see you in pain, my heart trembles.” Pg. 245 (Hardcover), Pg. 240 (Paperback).

“Compassion is not the same as pity, although they are sometimes spoken of interchangeably. Pity carries a subtle quality of distancing and aversion.” Pg. 245 (Hardcover), Pg. 240 (Paperback).

“Neuroscience is revealing that we literally ‘feel with’ others through what are called ‘mirror neurons’ in our brain. In his book *Field Notes on the Compassionate Life*, Marc Barasch describes this process: ‘One study showed that the same cells that light up when a person’s finger is jabbed with a pin also light up when someone else’s finger is pricked. We wince when we see someone stub her toe and hop painfully on one foot. We know how it feels. Perhaps we have a ‘Golden Rule nugget’ containing the neurological ground rules for compassion itself.’” Pg. 245 (Hardcover), Pg. 241 (Paperback).

“When asked what compassion feels like, some participants in the Awakening Joy, course responded:

- I feel uplifted and fulfilled as I give, a peaceful warmth.
- I feel very present and softer in my mind.

- I feel soft and a bit teary.
- My heart hurts in a good way, and I am pleased to be feeling that connection to another.”

Pg. 246 (Hardcover), Pg. 241 (Paperback).

“The deep caring that suffering evokes in us, the greatness of heart, is actually an uplifting state. It feels good to care. This capacity to care about others and about life is the essence of the compassionate heart.” Pg. 246 (Hardcover), Pg. 242 (Paperback).

“Modern neuroscience corroborates the fact that focused meditation is one of the most direct ways to activate and strengthen those areas in the brain that increase empathy.” Pg. 247 (Hardcover), Pg. 242 (Paperback).

“When asked what unites the ethics of the world’s religions, scholar Karen Armstrong responded with the simplest of answers: ‘compassion’. If faced with their own version of the question – What is the central moral adaptation produced in the evolution of human sociality? – evolutionists would converge on a similar answer: ‘compassion.’ On this, the religiously inclined and evolutionists would agree.” Dacher Keltner, *Born to be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life*, W.W.Norton & Company Ltd., 2009, quoted on pg. 247 (Hardcover).

“Thich Nhat Hahn, Buddhist teacher and activist, makes the point that compassion does not stop with letting our hearts feel the suffering of others. ‘Compassion is a verb,’ he stresses. Compassion and action go hand in hand. In the MRI scans of monks meditating on compassion, neuroscience researcher Richard Davidson discovered that the areas of the brain responsible for planning action also lit up.” Pg. 251 (Hardcover), Pg. 246 (Paperback).

“When we don’t know what to say in response to the suffering of another, sometimes just being present is enough. A story submitted for Canfield and Hansen’s *A 3<sup>rd</sup> Serving of Chicken Soup for the Soul*, has since become a popular example of the value of this response. The writer Leo Buscaglia was asked to be a judge for a ‘most compassionate child’ contest. The winner was a four-year-old boy whose mother told the following story. Her son noticed that his next-door neighbor- an elderly man whose wife had just died – was sitting outside in his yard crying. The boy went over and climbed into the man’s lap. When he returned home, the mother asked, ‘What did you say to him?’ Her child replied, Nothing. I just helped him cry.’ Offering our compassionate presence not only helps another but deeply nourishes us as we do it. And we don’t need to know how to do anything other than be present.” Pg. 252-253 (Hardcover), Pg. 248-249 (Paperback).

### **Discussion Questions on the topic of Compassion (20 minutes)**

1. Did any of the readings resonate with you?
2. How do you think compassion and pity are different?
3. What actions do you take when you feel compassion?
4. Do you feel compassion for yourself?

### **Shared Readings on Equanimity (15 minutes)**

From *Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover); 2012 (Paperback).

“Vowing to keep your heart open to suffering doesn’t mean that you add to it by getting overwhelmed or burning yourself out. The point of the teachings is to create balance and well-being in your life, not overwhelm and chaos. You are one of most important recipients of your compassion. This can be hard to remember, but it is essential.”  
Pg. 257 (Hardcover), Pg. 253 (Paperback).

“What helps with this is the practice of equanimity, the ability to remain composed and balanced, even in the face of challenges. Equanimity means neither getting caught up in the desire for circumstances to be a certain way nor pulling away from them in disgust or annoyance. While it can sometimes look like indifference, equanimity is actually based in a deep and compassionate understanding of the nature of life – that all things change, and that reacting from frustration or anger rather than responding with wisdom only creates more suffering.” Pg. 257 (Hardcover), Pg. 253 (Paperback).

“President Obama is sometimes criticized for his equanimous disposition, especially by some who want more bluster and bravado to his reactions. But in my eyes he is a good example of equanimity in action.” Pg. 257 (Hardcover), Pg. 253 (Paperback).

“Compassion doesn’t mean rescuing everyone we see from suffering. It means doing what we can, while also honoring our own limits. As the Serenity Prayer, used in the twelve-step program of Alcoholics Anonymous, says: ‘Grant me the courage to change the things I can, the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, and the wisdom to know the difference.’ Equanimity teaches us to care deeply but not be overwhelmed by our caring.”  
Pg. 258 (Hardcover), Pg. 254 (Paperback).

“Thich Nhat Hanh, who was deeply involved in trying to alleviate the suffering in his country during the Vietnam War, often talks about the importance of equanimity for acting effectively in the face of danger. As an example, he refers to the boat people, refugees who risked the high seas and other dangers as they attempted to escape the war. Many were lost. Those boats that made it to safety, he reports, were the ones that had at least one calm person aboard. Their energy was enough to inspire others to find that place of courage, determination, and calm within themselves.”  
Pg. 259 (Hardcover), Pg. 254 (Paperback).

“Some of us may be temperamentally more equanimous than others, but like any other quality, equanimity can be developed. Each moment of mindfulness, nonjudgmental awareness, strengthens equanimity. As with lovingkindness, there is also a practice to develop this facility. The phrase traditionally used is: ‘Your happiness or unhappiness depends on your actions, not only on my wishes for you.’ Once again, the practice is intended to help us accept the way things are. Over time I began to understand that I can’t prevent people from suffering, even those I love most deeply. I can only honor their life’s journey.” Pg. 261 (Hardcover), Pg. 256 (Paperback).

“Serving is different from helping. Helping is based on inequality. When we help we may inadvertently take away from people more than we could ever give them...When we serve, we serve with ourselves.... The wholeness in us serves the wholeness in others...Service is a

relationship between equals.” Rachel Naomi Remen, “In the Service of Life”, Noetic Sciences Review, 1997 quoted on pg. 266 (Hardcover).

“Recent scientific studies are identifying the kinds of environments that cultivate compassion. This moral emotion is cultivated in environments where parents are responsive, and play, and touch their children. So does an empathic style that prompts the child to reason about harm. So do chores, as well as the presence of grandparents. Making compassion a motif in dinnertime conversations and bedtime stories cultivates this all-important emotion.” Dacher Keltner, *Born to be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life*, W.W. Norton & Company Ltd., 2009, quoted on pg. 267 (Hardcover).

“The vagus nerve resides in the chest and, when activated produces a feeling of spreading, liquid warmth in the chest and a lump in the throat...Physiological psychologist Steve Porges has made the case that the vagus nerve is the nerve of compassion, the body’s caretaking organ.” Dacher Keltner, *Born to be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life*, W.W. Norton & Company Ltd, 2009, quoted on pg. 270 (Hardcover).

“I think if you’re only thinking about yourself, your life becomes diminished. The way to live a full life is to think about: What can I do for others? How can I be a part of this larger project of making a better world?” President Barack Obama, Responding to a Question at Strasbourg, France, Apr 2009, quoted on pg. 272 (Hardcover).

#### **Discussion Questions on the topic of Equanimity (20 minutes)**

1. What does equanimity mean to you?
2. How do you develop equanimity?
3. Who in your life models equanimity?
4. Do you use equanimity when family members are suffering?

#### **Practices that Increase Compassion and Equanimity (10 minutes)**

From *Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover); 2012 (Paperback).

1. Creating your own Bodhisattva Vow. Pg. 244 (Hardcover), Pg. 240 (Paperback).
2. Developing the Compassionate Heart. Pg. 248 (Hardcover), Pg. 246 (Paperback).
3. In the Field of Compassion. Pg. 253 (Hardcover), Pg. 248 (Paperback).
4. Caring for the World. Pg. 256 (Hardcover), Pg. 251 (Paperback).
5. Inviting Equanimity. Pg. 258 (Hardcover), Pg. 253 (Paperback).
6. Equanimity Practice for a Loved One. Pg. 262 (Hardcover), Pg. 257 (Paperback).

#### **Setting an Intention until we meet again (5 minutes)**

## **Patricia Ellsberg's Meditation on Compassion (5 minutes)**

### **Extinguishing the Candle/Closing Words**

“Awakening Joy in ourselves is also a way to serve others. By remaining in touch with your own aliveness and appreciation for life, you remind those around you of their own capacity to do the same. Rather than being self-indulgent or frivolous, to be joyful is a gift we give to those we meet and to the world. Joy awakens our love for life, and it’s contagious. This is what the planet needs in order to heal and thrive. This is what we all need in order to blossom and to live fulfilling lives. For the sake of all of us, be happy.”

From *Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover), pg. 273; 2012 (Paperback), pg. 267.

Everyone Recites together:

May I be free of suffering and pain.

May I be free of fear and anxiety.

May I have compassion for myself.

**Singing** – “You’ve Got a Friend” by Carole King.

# Awakening Joy

## Lesson Plan for Step 10: The Joy of Being

### Candle Lighting and Opening Quote: (2 minutes)

“When you are not hungry, threatened or in pain, your brain’s natural state has three characteristics: it is conscious, calm, contented, caring and creative.”

Dr. Rick Hanson, author of *Buddha’s Brain*.

From *Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover) pg. 275.

### Centering (5 minutes)

#### Checking In (20 minutes)

1. What was the practice you focused on to bring more joy into your life?
2. What have you done lately to nurture yourself?
3. Have you been meditating, singing, laughing, journaling, exercising, dancing, setting intentions, being mindful, practicing gratitude, loving yourself and connecting with others?
4. Have you stopped to take in the good for thirty seconds?
5. Have you been appreciating yourself and the good you do for other people?
6. Have you found joy through other people’s happiness?
7. Have you been practicing equanimity when feeling stressed?

#### Shared Readings on The Joy of Being (15 minutes)

From *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps That Will Put You On The Road to Real Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Random House, 2010 (Hardcover); *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps to Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Parallax Press, 2012 (Paperback).

“The joy we’re looking for is inside us. Each step in the Awakening Joy program has focused on cultivating positive mind-states, such as gratitude or compassion, that allow our inherent capacity for joy and well-being to arise. But there is another way to access joy – letting go of trying to make any particular state of mind happen, and connecting with your innate joy and aliveness.” Pg. 275 (Hardcover), Pg. 269 (Paperback).

“The key to this deeper level of joy is learning how to relax body and mind. As you do, your natural capacity for well-being and happiness emerges. I once heard a great Tibetan master say that the whole of spiritual practice could be summed up in two words: ‘Be Spacious.’ That is what the joy of being is about – entering into a spacious relationship with the moment. You let go of agendas and let your mind settle into a sense of presence. This state of ease and openness – this place inside I like to call our true home – is waiting for you all the time.”

Pg. 275 (Hardcover), Pg. 269 (Paperback).

“Our culture invariably supposes that action and accomplishments are better than rest, that doing something – anything – is better than doing nothing. Because of our desire to succeed, to meet these ever-growing expectations, we do not rest. Because we do not rest, we lose our way. We miss the compass points that would show us where to go, we bypass the nourishment that would give us succor. We miss the quiet that would

give us wisdom. We miss the joy and love born of effortless delight.” Wayne Muller, *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal and Delight in our Busy Lives*, Bantam Books, 2000 quoted on pg. 276 (Hardcover).

“In describing the state of *being*, course participants most commonly use words such as: aware, spacious, peaceful, smooth, restful, and light.”

Pg. 278 (Hardcover), Pg. 271 (Paperback).

“In the right frame of mind, we can be in awe of just about anything and be transported through our attention into the moment of being. This is essentially an attitude of deep appreciation. We might find it in viewing a painting, washing dishes, or watching a superb actor at work. While there are endless things to appreciate, poets and scientists would agree that being in the natural world rivets us to the moment in a special way, and we find ourselves in a profound state of being.”

Pg. 281 (Hardcover), Pg. 274 (Paperback).

“The voice of wisdom, that inner guide, is hard to hear when the mind is filled with distractions, conflicting desires, and self-doubts. Throughout this book we’ve seen many instances of people’s lives descending into chaos when they believed a particular ‘story’ they were telling themselves. And we’ve also seen that although these stories are programmed into us, they are not our only guide. A deeper wisdom is always available. It might be covered by a lot of static, but it’s there, and we hear it when we drop into being present when we get past all the noise, relax our grip, and tune into the clarity that arises from the stillness within.” Pg. 285 (Hardcover), Pg. 278 (Paperback).

“Part of trusting life is knowing that what you need in order to live in harmony with yourself and with life is always available. As Ram Dass says in *Be Here Now*, ‘Whenever you’re ready, you’ll hear the next message.’ You might not always hear it inside you. Sometimes the message we recognize as the truth comes from someone else. Your best friend or your grandmother offers some sage advice, or you get an astrology reading, or you open up a fortune cookie, and you immediately have a sense that what you are hearing is just for you. You are brought back from a confusion of thoughts and into the moment. Once again you realize that you can trust in life.”

Pg. 288 (Hardcover), Pg. 281 (Paperback).

“As you become increasingly familiar with the stillness and contentment of being, you lay the ground for a deep, abiding happiness. The last time I saw Ram Dass, he told me he was writing a book on contentment. When I asked him if he could sum up the secret of contentment, he said ‘Plumb the depths of this moment.’”

Pg. 294 (Hardcover), Pg. 287 (Paperback).

### **Discussion Questions on the topic of the Joy of Being: (50 minutes)**

1. Do any of these readings resonate with you?
2. How would you describe the Joy of Being?
3. How do you create the Joy of Being?
4. When do you get thrown off balance?
5. In your wisest moments, how do come back to balance?
6. What helps you remember to keep things in perspective?

7. What would you need to remember to let go of the pain of attachment and develop balance and equanimity?

**Practices that Increase the Joy of Being** (10 minutes)

From *Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover); 2012 (Paperback).

1. Being Aware. Pg. 278 (Hardcover), Pg. 272 (Paperback).
2. Setting Up a Ring Tone. Pg. 287 (Hardcover), Pg. 282 (Paperback).

**Patricia Ellsberg's Meditation on the Joy of Being** (5 minutes)

**Extinguishing the Candle and Closing Words**

"It only takes a reminder to breathe, a moment to be still, and just like that, something in me settles, softens makes space for imperfection. The harsh voice of judgment drops to a whisper and I remember again that life isn't a relay race; that we will all cross the finish line; that waking up to life is what we were born for. As many times as I forget, catch myself charging forward without even knowing where I'm going, that many times I can make the choice to stop, to breathe, and be, and walk slowly into the mystery."

Danna Faulds, "Walk Slowly", *Go In and In: Poems from the Heart of Yoga*, Peaceable Kingdom Books, 2002 in *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps That Will Put You On The Road to Real Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Random House, 2010 (Hardcover), pg. 34.

**Say together:**

May I be conscious, calm, contented, caring and creative.  
May I let go of the control I don't have.  
May I honor my life's journey.  
May I be filled with peace.  
May you be conscious, calm, contented, caring and creative.  
May you let go of the control you don't have.  
May you honor your life's journey,  
May you be filled with peace.  
May all beings be conscious, calm, contented, caring and creative.  
May all beings let go of the control they don't have.  
May all beings honor their life's journey.  
May all beings be filled with peace.

**Singing**

"Let it Be", Paul McCartney  
"Amazing Grace" sung with the words Amazing Joy.  
"Go now in Peace", Don Besig and Nancy Price.

## Appendix II. Ten Lesson Plans by Theme with Awakening Joy Exercises

From June Fukushima and Brock Brown

Below are Sample Detailed Lesson Plans specific to each of the ten Awakening Joy steps. These 2-hour sessions were led by co-facilitators June Fukushima and Brock Brown. These sessions were designed to reinforce the teachings from the online course and to experience the Awakening Joy exercises.

The group met in a circle, with the facilitators sitting across from one another so that they could pay attention to each side of the group and to one another. The sessions were held in a room that had Internet access which made it possible for the recordings from the live Awakening Joy class to be shared via computer and LCD projector. Participants did not know each other prior to joining the class and were more inclined to speak in pairs or small groups than to share in the larger group. Brock brought his guitar to play songs related to the Awakening Joy theme. Song lyrics were handed out.

### Lesson Plan for Step 1: Intention

7:00 pm      Welcome, Introductions, Lighting of Candle.  
Read the following quote:

“The feeling of well-being I’m calling joy comes in many different flavors. And it can look very different from person to person, from a quiet sense of contentment to bubbly enthusiasm. For some people it’s an energetic radiance; for others it’s a quiet feeling of connection.”  
*Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover), pg.xxvii; 2012 (Paperback), xviii.

This opening ritual gives time for people to settle. If you are with a group of meditators, feel free to start with a 5 minute meditation after welcoming people and introducing yourself.

7:05 pm      Ask each participant:  
Say your name. Why did you decide to take this course? What brought you to the Awakening Joy Support Group?

7:15 pm      June and Brock's intentions for the Awakening Joy Group – Personal sharing.

- Overview of the main thrust of Awakening Joy - that we have a choice of how we incline the mind.
- Review the length of the course, expectations to attend the Support Group.
- Explain how the sessions will be structured and suggest agreements for being together. Offer basic ground rules:
  - a) speak one at a time, b) share your own experience rather than offering comments on what others have said, c)allow time for others to speak.

Give a brief overview of the focus for this evening:

**What Joy means to each of us and the exploration of the theme on Intentions.**

- 7:20 pm Meet James Baraz – play James’ introduction and welcome from the recording of the live Awakening Joy class.
- 7:30 pm Invite participants’ comments, thoughts to share, questions?
- 7:35 pm Exercise, titled “Inviting Happiness into Your Life”  
from *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps That Will Put You On The Road to Real Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Random House, 2010 (Hardcover) pg. 10;  
*Awakening Joy: 10 Steps to Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Parallax Press, 2012 (Paperback), pg. 11.
- Think of a time when you felt real joy. How does it feel in your body and mind?
- Instructions: Make notes and then share what surfaced with you with one other person.
- Instructions for listening: kindness, compassion, attentiveness
- 7:55 pm Share with the Group  
Depending on how expressive the participants wish to be, this time can be extended and the second exercise at 8:15 can be suggested as homework.
- 8:00 pm Stretch/washroom break
- 8:07 pm Guided Meditation: Play Patricia Ellsberg’s meditation from the recording of the live class
- 8:15 pm Awakening Joy Exercise: Take 4 minutes and Write What Nourishes You
- 8:20 pm Group Exercise: from the live Awakening Joy class
- 8:35 pm Ask everyone to comment: How was it for you tonight? Any requests? Questions?
- 8:40 pm Homework - Review what is in James Practice letter. i.e. 6 Suggestions from James Baraz:  
Meditate, sing, do some movement, do nourishing activities, start a journal, notice joy.
- Ask for someone to bring a quote for the next meeting.
- 8:45 pm Sing a song. Lyrics are handed out. Brock brings his guitar.
- 8:50 pm Closing – candle is extinguished and end with a quote.

8:51 pm Help with Online Registration, Joy Buddies, and Carpooling.

9:00 pm End

# Awakening Joy

## Lesson Plan for Step 2: Mindfulness

- 7:00 pm Welcome, Introductions  
Feel the breath, settle. Lighting of Candle (Participant).  
(Participants were invited to bring a quote to share at the start of the session.)
- 7:05 pm Ice-Breaker: Introduce self and say something about yourself – where you were born, or where you went to school
- 7:10 pm Check-In  
Last month's topic was looking at and thinking about our Intentions for the course and for our lives in general.  
Are you incorporating any of the suggestions?  
-Noticing moments of well-being, contentedness, feeling ok, not feeling miserable  
-Quiet periods, meditation, sitting with tea  
-Exercise, healthy movement  
-Singing or creative expression  
-Joy buddy?  
-Intention - experiment with inclining the mind towards joy
- 7:20 pm Group Exercise  
-Make name tags,  
-Identify three words which describe your intention,  
-Put the words on the name tags and separately on post-it notes.  
(June collected the three words and created a word cloud from these words. The word cloud was printed and given as a gift at the last class.)
- 7:30 pm Group Reflections - what three words came up? Anything surprise you?
- 7:40 pm Watch Selma Baraz Youtube: "Confessions of a Jewish Mother: How my son ruined my life."
- 7:50 pm Short talk on Mindfulness from Brock  
Exercise: "Mindfulness of the arm exercise" that James Baraz offers when he teaches the Awakening Joy course:  
  
Hold out your arm in front of you.  
Close your eyes.  
Notice what you are feeling. Is there movement? Are there sensations?  
Is there fear or worry about tomorrow or yesterday?  
Feel in to your arm. Notice that this moment is complete.
- 8:00 pm Stretch/washroom break

- 8:05 pm Mindfulness exercise - eating chocolate (dried fruit as an alternative)
- 8:15 pm Sharing of experience - whole group, or break up into groups of fours, use a talking stick
- 8:25 pm Guided Meditation - Patricia Ellsberg's presentation at the live class
- 8:35 pm Movement exercise - if there is time. The following exercise is an adaptation of Tai Chi and Chi Kung exercises:
- Stand or sit.  
Bring your attention to your feet. Now with your mind, imagine roots growing from your feet, going deep in to the ground.  
Let your body move from this place of being firmly rooted to the earth.  
Feel the support of the earth and the freedom of movement.  
Imagine a string from the top of your head being gently pulled upwards to the sky.  
Feel this connection of being grounded and uplifted – your body connected between the earth and the heavens.  
End by wiggling your toes, stretching your fingers, rotating your wrists and ankles.
- 8:45 pm Homework Review from James Baraz letter  
Check-in on how the session was – anything that people would like to continue or change?
- 8:50 pm Singing - Lyrics are handed out
- 8:58 pm Close with a quote and extinguish the candle
- 9:00 pm End

# Awakening Joy

## Lesson Plan for Step 3: Gratitude

- 7:00 pm Welcome, Lighting of Candle (Volunteer)
- 7:05 pm James Baraz guided meditation instructions on Gratitude, titled "Feeling Gratitude"
- From: *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps That Will Put You On The Road to Real Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Random House, 2010 (Hardcover) pg. 63; *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps to Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Parallax Press, 2012 (Paperback), pg 63.
- 7:10 pm Getting to know each other. What is important for you as a participant in a group? Establish common agreements for how we wish to be together.
- 7:15 pm Ask each participant:  
What has been happening in your Awakening Joy journey so far?
- The following examples from James Baraz's Practice Letter were mentioned to prompt participants' responses:
- Notice moments of well-being, contentedness, feeling ok, not feeling miserable?
  - Quiet periods, meditation, sitting with tea?
  - Exercise, healthy movement?
  - Singing or creative expression?
  - Intention: Experimenting with inclining the mind towards joy?
- 7:30 pm Exercise on Complaining and Feeling Gratitude from James Baraz  
Instructions:
- Pair up with shortest hair person talking first and partner giving full, silent attention.
- For 90 seconds Partner A complains about one or more things or people in his/her life.
- Both Partner A and B then pause and rate on a scale of 1 to 10, their mind, body and emotional states.
- Reverse roles.
- For 90 seconds Partner A talks about one or more people or things she/he is grateful for.

Both Partner A and B then pause and rate on a scale of 1 to 10, their mind, body and emotional states.

Partners discuss exercise and then discuss as a group

- 7:40 pm Exercise on Deepening Gratitude:
- Meet with a new partner in the group
- For 5 minutes each, relate in more detail something you feel gratitude for  
Use your senses – seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting, sensing  
Partners can ask the speaker questions to invite more details
- 7:50 pm Share in the Large Group  
What are you noticing? What did you experience?
- 8:00 pm Stretch/washroom break
- 8:10 pm Guided Meditation – Patricia Ellsberg’s meditation
- 8:20 pm Write a Gratitude Letter or list all things you are grateful for
- 8:35 pm Brock shared a personal story about Gratitude
- 8:45 pm Homework. Candle lighter next month? Next meeting dates.
- 8:50 pm Singing
- 8:58 pm Closing - candle extinguishing– read a quote
- 9:00 pm End

# Awakening Joy

## Lesson Plan for Step 4: Finding Joy in Difficult Times

Participants were asked to bring an object to place in the center of the circle as part of their Check-In for this month.

- 7:00 pm Welcome, time to settle – invite time to meditate
- Lighting of Candle and quote
- Check-In and say one thing you are grateful for
- 7:10 pm Agreements for being with each other. e.g. Confidentiality, no cross-talk.
- 7:20 pm Share item for Center of the Circle  
What is happening in your Awakening Joy journey?  
What does this object represent?
- 7:40 pm Read a story from Jack Kornfield, “In the Temple of Forgiveness”, *Bringing Home the Dharma. Awakening Right Where You Are*, Shambhala Publications, 2011, pg.56 and pg.57.
- 7:50 pm In pairs, share what strategies you've used in the past or present to be with difficulties in your life.
- Practice listening - kindness, compassion, attentiveness
  - Practice mindful speech
  - Use a talking piece (marker, stone)
- 8:00 pm Share with the Large Group: Comments? Thoughts to share? Questions?
- 8:10 pm Stretch/washroom break
- 8:20 pm Guided Meditation - “Buddha in Difficulties”, a recorded meditation by Jack Kornfield, from the CD included with the book, *A Lamp in the Darkness*, Sounds True Inc., 2011.
- 8:35 pm Check-out. How are you right now? Anything you liked? Would you like something different to happen when we meet?
- 8:45 pm Review homework. Candle lighter next month?  
Give next meeting date.
- 8:50 pm Song
- 8:58 pm Closing - candle extinguishing and read a quote
- 9:00 pm End

# Awakening Joy

## Lesson Plan for Step 5: Integrity

- 7:00 pm Welcome, time to settle. Invite to follow one's breath  
Group Participant Lights the candle  
Note that we are half-way through the course
- 7:05 pm Check-In. What is Creating Greater Joy or Authenticity in your life?
- 7:15 pm Any questions or comments about Working with the Difficult, the previous theme?
- 7:20 pm Introduce the theme of Integrity and Reinforcing the Good
- 7:25 pm Exercise:  
Reflect when you were less than skillful - how did it feel? What contributed to this happening?  
Reflect on when you were acting authentically - from a place of integrity. How did it feel? What contributed to this happening?
- 7:30 pm In pairs, share what was different between the two reflections above
- Practice listening with, kindness, compassion, attentiveness
  - Practice mindful speech
  - Use a talking piece (marker, stone)
- 7:40 pm Share with the Large Group: Comments? Questions?
- 7:50 pm Guided Meditation – Patricia Ellsberg's meditation
- 8:00 pm Stretch/washroom break
- 8:10 pm Exercise: Holding to the Truth.  
Read Patricia Ellsberg's account of standing with her husband Daniel Ellsberg as they released documents known as the Pentagon Papers to the press, found in *Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover), pg. 145; 2012 (Paperback), pg. 143.
- Invite participants to reflect on a time in their life where they were called to hold to their truth.
- Ask each person to share a little about the story and to pay attention to what it feels like in their bodies as they recollect these memories.
- Ask participants to privately reflect on what areas of their life they would like to hold their truth more closely or consistently? Encourage participants to make notes in their journal.

- 8:45 pm Candle lighter next month? Remind of next meeting date. Check-in on what worked/what people would like.
- 8:50 pm Sing a song related to Awakening Joy
- 8:58 pm Close with extinguishing the candle and reading a quote.
- 9:00 pm End

# Awakening Joy

## Lesson Plan for Step 6: The Joy of Letting Go

- 7:00 pm Welcome. Take time to settle – breathe. Participant lights candle
- 7:05 pm Check-In  
Invite sharing from past months' themes - Integrity, Being with the Difficult, Mindfulness, Generosity, Intention
- 7:30 pm Letting Go Exercise. In pairs, reflect and answer the question:  
What have you let go of in the past that has brought about greater happiness or peace in your life?
- 7:40 pm Group Reflection and Sharing
- 8:00 pm Stretch/washroom break
- 8:10 pm Small group exercise. Discuss:  
What makes life complicated?  
What would I need to simplify or let go of for my life to have more balance?  
What limiting story can I let go of about my past, my abilities or who I now am, that will bring me into more balance in my current life?
- 8:30 pm Group Sharing
- 8: 40 pm Guided Meditation - Patricia Ellsberg's meditation
- 8:45 pm Candle lighter next month? Next meeting date.
- 8:50 pm Singing
- 8:58 pm Close. Extinguish candle
- 9:00 pm End

# Awakening Joy

## Lesson Plan for Step 7: Learning to Love Ourselves

- 7:00 pm Welcome. Lighting of Candle. Follow the breath for a few minutes
- 7:05 pm Check-In: How are you doing in your life with the Awakening Joy topics?
- 7:20 pm Forgiveness Practice: Asking Forgiveness and Offering Forgiveness
- Awakening Joy: 10 Steps That Will Put You On The Road to Real Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Random House, 2010 (Hardcover), pg. 219-220;  
*Awakening Joy: 10 Steps to Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Parallax Press, 2012 (Paperback), pg. 216 -217.
- 7:30 pm Exercise: Seeing the Goodness in Oneself  
Adapted from the exercise: "Seeing Yourself with Love."
- Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover), pg. 195; 2012 (Paperback), pg. 192.
- Invite participants to reflect on a good friend or mentor in their lives – now or from the past. Then have participants consider what that good friend or mentor sees in them.  
Ask yourself: "What qualities would the friend describe about you?"
- Share in pairs – take turns speaking and listening.
- 7:40 pm Group Reflection – How was that? Easy? Difficult?
- 8:00 pm Stretch/washroom break
- 8:10 pm Patricia Ellsberg's Meditation
- 8:20 pm Homework Review  
From *Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover); 2012 (Paperback).
- Smile in the mirror. Pg. 189 (Hardcover), Pg.187 (Paperback).
  - Practice the phrases of loving kindness to yourself.  
Pg. 190 (Hardcover), Pg. 190 (Paperback).
  - Letting go of your story. Pg. 171 (Hardcover), Pg.169 (Paperback).
  - What ideas or suggestions do the participants suggest?
- 8:25 pm Explore one of your "inner stories"
- Exercise based on  
"Letting Go of Your Story", Pg. 171 (Hardcover), Pg. 169 (Paperback).
- Reflect on a story that you know you tell yourself frequently.

For example, if you forget where your keys are, do you have a story about how forgetful you are, or do you have a story about being a disorganized person?

Now see if you can put the story down.

Speak with a partner and explore these questions:

Is your story always true? How dependable is your “inner story”? What would it be like to let go of the story?

- 8:35 pm Share with the group
- 8:50 pm Close with a quote and extinguish the candle
- 9:00 pm End

# Awakening Joy

## Lesson Plan for Step 8: The Joy of Loving Others

This lesson plan is for a 1.5 hour meeting.

- 7:00 pm Welcome and light candle Settle in with breath meditation.  
Read:  
“It is important to understand how much your own happiness is linked to that of others. There is no individual happiness totally independent of others.”  
Dalai Lama.  
*Awakening Joy: 10 Steps That Will Put You On The Road to Real Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Random House, 2010 (Hardcover), pg.206;  
*Awakening Joy: 10 Steps to Happiness*, James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander, Parallax Press, 2012 (Paperback),pg.203.
- 7:05 pm Check- In: What is happening with your Awakening Joy journey?
- 7:15 pm Review previous theme: Learning to Love Ourselves.  
Read quote:  
“Searching all directions with one’s awareness, one finds no one dearer than oneself.” The Buddha  
*Awakening Joy*, 2010, pg. 180 (Hardcover), 2012 (Paperback), pg. 178.  
Did you try any of the suggested practices?  
From the book, *Awakening Joy*, 2010 (Hardcover);2012 (Paperback).  
- Smile in the mirror. Pg. 189 (Hardcover), Pg.187 (Paperback).  
- Practice the phrases of loving kindness to yourself.  
Pg. 190 (Hardcover), Pg. 190 (Paperback).  
-Letting go of your story. Pg. 171 (Hardcover), Pg.169 (Paperback).  
Any insights from your homework?
- 7:25pm Reflections on Metta or Loving kindness  
Review how loving kindness is offered to others and how this practice is linked to feeling more connection and joy.
- 7:30 pm Exercise done in pairs.  
Share one story about a person with whom you have challenges  
Share one story about a person with whom it is easy to feel ease, love, connection
- 7:50 pm Large Group Reflection. Use a Talking Stick and go around twice  
Questions:

What supports you to have an open heart?  
What limits you to have an open heart?

- 8:05 pm      Stretch/washroom break
- 8:10 pm      Exercise in working with the difficult  
June shared an exercise on considering the challenging and positive qualities of someone with whom you have difficulties. This is an exercise she experienced with Christina Baldwin and Ann Linnea, of PeerSpirit Inc.  
<http://www.peerspirit.com/index.html>
- 8:20 pm      Metta or Loving kindness meditation led by Brock  
Resources:  
Awakening Joy materials  
Recorded guided meditations available from <http://dharmaseed.org/>.  
Search for the subject: metta meditation  
Jack Kornfield, *A Path with Heart*, 1993, pg.19.; Jack Kornfield, *A Lamp in the Darkness*, 2011 comes with a dvd with guided meditations.
- Loving kindness phrases to repeat silently to oneself:  
May I/you be filled with loving kindness  
May I/you be safe from inner and outer danger  
May I/you be well in body and mind  
May I/you be at ease and happy  
from Jack Kornfield, *The Art of Forgiveness, Lovingkindness, and Peace*, Bantam Dell, 2008, pg. 117 - 120.
- 8:30 pm      Close with Blessings handout  
June compiled quotes from John O'Donohue <http://www.johnodonohue.com/>

# Awakening Joy

## Lesson Plan for Step 9: Compassion

This lesson plan is for a 1.5 hour meeting.

7:00 pm Welcome. Lighting of Candle. Body scan meditation

7:05 pm Check- In: What is happening?

7:15 pm This month's theme: Compassion For Oneself  
- What comes up when you consider the concept of Compassion? What does this mean to you? Is compassion accessible?  
-When is it hard to have compassion for oneself?

### List of Positive and Negative states

Read out a list of feelings and ask what participants feel when they hear these feelings. E.g. calm, tender, downcast, restless, inspired, mellow, indifferent, shaky, blah, expectant.

Recommended source for list of feelings: Marshall Rosenberg, *Non Violent Communication*, Puddle Dancer Press, 1999.

Question: Are you able to identify those feelings in yourself? In others?

7:30 pm Exercise  
In small groups:  
Share a time when you were on the receiving end of a compassionate response - either you were compassionate with yourself or someone was compassionate with you.  
What made it feel like compassion?  
What stayed with you from that experience?

7:45 pm Large Group Reflection on the Exercises

8:00 pm Stretch/washroom break

8:10 pm Compassion for Others  
Read story "When Somebody Knows" from Rachel Naomi Remen's book, *My Grandfather's Blessings*, Berkley Publishing Group, 2000, pg. 161. Dr. Remen recounts a personal story of experiencing her physician's compassion at a very difficult point in her illness.

Discussion Question: How do you know when you are being compassionate for others?

8:20 pm Guided Meditation— on Compassion

8:30 pm      End

## **Lesson Plan for Step 10: The Joy of Being**

This lesson plan is for a 1.5 hour meeting.

7:00 pm      Welcome. Light Candle. Participant reads a quote

7:05 pm      Meditation and Check-In: How are you?  
What insights or observations would you like to share at our last Awakening Joy class?

7:20 pm      Hand Out:  
A list of the monthly Awakening Joy themes

Awakening Joy Themes

Intention

Mindfulness

Gratitude

Finding Joy in Difficult Times

Integrity

Joy of Letting Go

Learning to Love Ourselves

The Joy of Loving Others

Compassion

Joy of Being

Exercise:

Ask participants to take some time and make notes about the different themes with the question:

What if anything was significant as you reflect on the themes of Awakening Joy?

7:30 pm      Large Group Sharing.  
Each person is asked to speak about their reflections on taking the course.

8:00 pm      Social time with Tea and Goodies

8:30 pm End with a final Check-Out:

What Intentions do you have for the future? Your Hopes and Wishes?

June created a word cloud from the intentions each person identified in Class 2 and gave the following as a parting gift. <http://www.wordle.net/>



## **Appendix III. Awakening Joy Support Group Informed Consent Agreement Waiver**

**Please print the wavier on the next page.**

Ask group participants to sign it.

Keep a copy for your files.

## **Awakening Joy Informed Consent Agreement**

In joining an Awakening Joy Support Group I realize that I am solely responsible for any personal decisions or actions I take as a result of what I learn at the group and through attending the Awakening Joy sessions with James Baraz either in person or on-line. This course emphasizes accessing my own wisdom and I will not hold any other person, including my group leader, responsible for my decisions or actions.

I understand that I am under no obligation to engage in any techniques or exercises and if for any reason I think it is unwise to engage in such, I will not do so.

I also agree to hold what it said at meetings in complete confidentiality, will attend all meetings possible, and will let the group know when I need to be absent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Group Leader's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Name – please print

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date