

# **Know How Inconspicuous Benefits Can Move You Towards**

## **Happiness?**

“The real benefit of the Mystic Law is inconspicuous. Just as trees grow taller and stronger year after year, adding growth rings that are imperceptible to the human eye, we too will grow to a victorious existence. For this reason it is important that we lead tenacious and balanced lives based on faith.” For Today and Tomorrow, p. 11

When connected with the Mystic Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, you can trust that every life experience you are having, is leading you to happiness. That doesn't mean that every experience is easy. Some of them are hard and we have lessons to learn by going through them. We have to give up our negativity for example. But when we've learned those lessons, we have taken steps towards our happiness.

When we start practicing, we're told to chant for goals. By getting concrete results we prove the practice to ourselves and come to understand that we can move our lives in the direction we want to go. These are conspicuous benefits – ones everyone can see.

At the same time, something else is going on under the scenes while we are paying attention to what is happening on the surface. I discovered this when I was asked to do a talk on Buddhism for Kiwanis. Since I was going to be discussing Buddhism, I suspected that the group might ask me what the practice had done for my life, and so I looked back over my then 18 years of practice and literally had an epiphany.

I saw that I had received one inconspicuous benefit after another. .At the time they happened I didn't recognize them as benefits. But looking at them over many years, those benefits had unobtrusively moved my life one step at a time into the mainstream of my life's work, my mission, the work that would make me the happiest. I am going to show you how this worked in my experience, because I am sure it is happening in the lives of each of you.

### **Experience:**

As a psychotherapist I was always fascinated by what worked and what didn't in the growth and development of people. I felt that spirituality should be part of that growth.. But my license didn't allow me to bring my spiritual practice into my work with clients. As a result, I always felt split.

When I encountered Buddhism, as I went through the process of proving the practice to myself, I listened to the experiences of people, who had used the practice to overcome obstacles and problems in their lives. Through the inconspicuous benefit of those meetings, I was being given a demonstration that not only did the practice work but that the practitioners had become happy, just as promised. I realized I had found what I had been looking for as a therapist, a way that anyone could become happy.

One day my sister suggested that I join her to take an online writing course. After that, we joined a critique group together. It just seemed like something fun and interesting to do at the time,

as I had enjoyed writing as an adolescent. As I looked back, it was clear these two events were inconspicuous benefits. I was being guided into learning the craft of writing. These two events were the first small steps. I had absolutely no vision of where it was to lead me.

What I did know was that people were becoming happy and successful with the practice. I was enjoying introducing people to the practice.

Then I was invited to teach Buddhism at Shutter Creek, a prison in Oregon. In each class there were ten or so brand-new people, who knew nothing about Buddhism. This was an inconspicuous benefit, as I got to hear their experiences and see how the practice worked with a different type of population. There I practiced explaining Buddhist concepts to new people.

That was when the writing and Buddhism came together and I began writing my first book to introduce new people and to give practitioners who were introducing people to Buddhism something to use.

While in the process of writing the book, I was a member of a critique group of eight people, who knew nothing about Buddhism. Although I didn't realize it at the time, this was an inconspicuous benefit, a perfect training ground. They were a demanding group and didn't hesitate to give me detailed feedback. I discovered the book I had started writing didn't work for them. They said it was too abstract and I needed to simplify my explanations. I took their feedback seriously because I knew that if I couldn't communicate with them, I would not be able to communicate to a wider audience. It was due to their feedback that I learned to describe Buddhist concepts in simple words. When, 3 years after I'd started to write the book, I had the idea of a fiction story with a short vignette at the end of the chapter describing the Buddhist concept shown in the chapter, they loved it. I had the format for the book. It took me another 3 years to finish writing it.

I was invited to help with a Buddhist group at an addictions center after one of their clients read my book, started the practice, and wanted to attend a Buddhist group. This was another inconspicuous benefit, another step in my life's work. My experience at Shutter Creek helped with this as I had ideas for a syllabus. I ended up writing *Stepping Stones, a Guide to Buddhist Practice* as a step by step guide for anyone who might want to teach a group, or who wanted some ideas to help a new person. Both at Shutter Creek and the addictions center, I loved working with new people and seeing what happened in their lives when they started to chant.

I decided to expand my reach by setting up a website for new people. The people who wrote me mostly were not new people but were struggling with major life problems and not being successful. These emails in a way were an inconspicuous benefit to me. They led to four years of daily Buddhist study on what makes the practice work and what hinders it from working. I think that understanding this is a major step to mastering the mind. Nichiren Daishonin enjoins us to "Become the master of your mind rather than let your mind master you". WND, Vol 1 502

Mastering the mind will allow us to manifest our lives on purpose and not do things that hinder us by accident There is a lot of information on this put together by 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century thinkers and scientists, that is not developed in our Buddhist tradition but is hinted at here and there in the writings

I am fascinated by the topic of mastering the mind. I believe that it is a necessary and important part of our growth and development as human beings It pulls together my spiritual

training and my training as a psychotherapist. I have been presenting what I have been learning from our Buddhist tradition in my videos. My third book is also going to include some of the thinking about the mind from scientists and thinkers since Nichiren.

What I want you to know through this experience is, that no matter what is happening in your life, trust that if you are connected to the Mystic Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, you are being guided in the direction of happiness.

At some point I hope you might suddenly see the hidden footprints of inconspicuous benefits guiding you there.

Summary:

In this video I showed through my personal experiences how inconspicuous benefits guided and focused my life in the work I am doing in hopes that you might recognize them in your journey.

Comments: As always I'm interested in what you are thinking as long as you are talking about the topics on this website. I'm not going to debate different Nichiren practices. See you in two weeks.