



**The Dalai Lama's message to future teachers:
How to prepare our youth to lead compassionate and ethical lives**

By Pauline Théoret

His presence is disarming, his smile is comforting, his laugh is contagious, and his message is clear: compassion and ethics are at the root of happiness, and happiness can be learned!! This brought a round of applause from 500 teacher-trainees who attended the Dalai Lama's morning presentation at McGill University on Oct. 3.

For the last 50 years, the Dalai Lama has spent time learning from world audiences and sharing his global vision in return — discussing issues of great importance for all humankind, and the common good. In his message, he emphasized *compassion*, *ethics*, and *happiness* as the necessary elements that embody world peace, a reality that has eluded us to date.

He reminded us that we all have one thing in common – we are all reproduced biologically and through pure mother-child attachment at birth, we encounter our first moments of inner happiness – a happiness not derived from external factors. Over the years, the manufactured values of competition, power and self-centeredness trump that inner happiness. As a result we redefine our perception of happiness to one that is tied to our identity in relation to all things material – a physical happiness.

He went on to define *ethics* as the conscious physical and emotional actions of one being that bring long-term benefits to another. In this context, he spoke of all mammals' survival being dependent on the actions of others, and how the outdated concept of wars and its devastating impact on humankind, with 200 million related deaths in this last century alone, are not exercises in ethics. Since actions are conscious, and carry with them positive or negative emotions, then positive emotive actions can be learned. The Dalai Lama believes that we can develop compassion through training and non-biased reasoning once we fully understand the depth of our interdependency on one another.

He believes the successful universal promotion of 'moral ethics' can only be done through the education systems, which are a part of every community in every country. Unfortunately, the education system has never paid sufficient attention

to moral ethics since the foundation for it is based on market and economy. He espouses that ‘moral ethics’ education and training, based on compassion, should start at kindergarten and go on to university. A program of this kind would overshadow the pervasive material happiness so many of us seek and live daily, and return us to being consciously aware of our humble selves, the impact of our actions on others, and reopen the door to our inner happiness. An educational program of this kind could change an entire generation into thinking “what can I do today for my fellow human being?”

The Dalai Lama left us with parting words, both for teachers, and for students: “Teachers must maintain a sense of concern and caring for the student. Some teachers express impatience and intolerance but deep down they have altruistic qualities – it’s what makes a good teacher. In turn, students must maintain a profound aspiration to continually learn about the world around them and the world they live in.

“Learn to recognize and release your inner happiness. From there, ethics will take a life of its own,” he concluded.

The Dalai Lama’s Oct. 3 video presentation can be viewed on www.learnquebec.ca

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