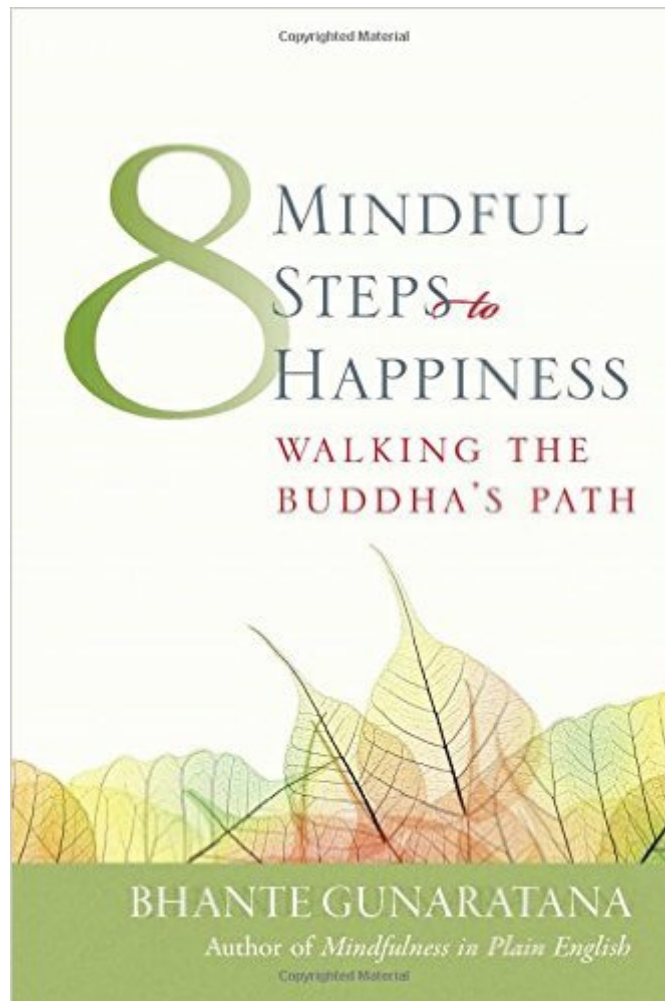


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Eight Mindful Steps To Happiness: Walking The Buddha's Path



Synopsis

From the best-selling author of *Mindfulness in Plain English*! In his classic and engaging style, Bhante Gunaratana delves deeply into the noble eightfold path, the Buddha's most profound teaching on bringing an end to suffering. With easy-to-understand and specific advice, *Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness* offers skillful ways to handle anger, find right livelihood, cultivate loving-friendliness, and overcome the mental hindrances that prevent happiness. Whether you are an experienced meditator or someone who's only just beginning, this gentle and down-to-earth guide will help you bring the heart of the Buddha's teachings into every aspect of your life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Bhante Henepola Gunaratana has summarized all of the Buddha's path to happiness, everything we know about affecting change in our lives, and everything that psychology teaches us about healthy living into a single, easy to read, easy to apply manual for happiness. This book is a gem! It can be used for inspiration, or instruction. It can be read countless times for added insight. If you are inclined toward Buddhism, or at least are taken with the Buddhist perspective, you will appreciate the straightforward approach he takes to describing the eight steps. If you are not Buddhist or so inclined, you might be put off with some of what you read (the Author clearly believes that the Buddha's way is THE way, and you might be inclined to think of Jesus as the way, or someone else), but I think any rational person would recognize the power and potential for creating change that is captured in this book. The eight steps are: 1. Skillful Understanding - recognizing the roles of

cause and effect, and truly understanding the Four Noble Truths as taught by the Buddha². Skillful Thinking - Emphasis on understanding how our attachment to things is the source of our suffering (letting go), the practice of loving-friendliness, and practicing compassion.³ Skillful Speech - Special emphasis on truth-telling, gentle speech, and avoiding useless chatter.⁴ Skillful Action - Particular attention to the Five Precepts, namely abstaining from killing, stealing, speaking falsely, sexual misconduct and misuse of intoxicants.⁵ Skillful Livelihood - Understanding that how we make a living can have negative or positive impacts (skillful or unskillful) on our path to happiness.⁶

Gunaratana's book is an excellent introduction to living according to the Noble Eightfold Path. Its ethical wisdom and in-depth coverage of the Path itself will undoubtedly have a positive impact on any reader. The language seems deliberately pared down, clear and simple, making it almost a kind of "Buddhism for Dummies" approach, suitable for persons with any level of understanding.

However, I would not recommend this either as a first book on Buddhism or as a self-contained overview of Buddhist principles. It makes a fine supplement to a more rigorous introductory presentation of Buddhism, such as Walpola Rahula's *What the Buddha Taught*, which is where I would send readers first. This book is one of a handful to turn to next, especially for practical purposes and to expand one's knowledge of the Path, but I see a few problems with it that make me urge both caution and skepticism. First, Gunaratana equates enlightenment with being "free from any speculative views or theories about reality, about the past, present, and future, about the existence of the self, and about the universe." This seems to make Buddhism not only unscientific (nothing wrong with that as empiricism can't directly address experience or wisdom) but anti-science (that is a problem). This emphasis places Buddhism too close to other religions that claim their teachings are more important than empirical discoveries about the nature of reality. An antidote to this way of thinking is provided by the Dalai Lama's new book, *The Universe in a Single Atom*. His Holiness looks to the intersection of science and Buddhism, which I accept as the way forward. Second, Gunaratana places too great an emphasis on quelling doubts about the Buddha's teachings. He treats doubt and skepticism as undesirable rather than productive.

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