

The Promise of Enlightenment

So what exactly is this enlightenment, which the Buddha experienced and which is the goal of his teaching? The waking up that the Buddha said can happen if we follow his program of mindfulness is that greed, hatred, and delusion — hanging on to things, pushing things away, and zoning out — fall away. Pleasure and pain remain, of course. Some experiences are pleasant. Others are unpleasant. But pleasure doesn't create the desire for more pleasure. We don't cling to it so much. And pain isn't met with a version of resistance. So we don't get caught in compulsive or addictive behaviors anymore. Rather, the awakened person moves through the world responding with wisdom and compassion to events as they emerge. Lives become expressions of generosity, kindness, and understanding. We leave behind the greed, hatred, and delusion that marked our previous existence.

Adapted from *The Science of Mindfulness:
A Research-Based Path to Well-Being*,
page 450, Ronald D. Siegel

“Because the commandment that I command you today: it's not too wondrous for you, and it's not too far. It's not in the skies, that one would say, ‘Who will go up for us to the skies and get it for us and enable us to hear it so we'll do it?’ And it's not across the sea, that one would say, ‘Who will cross for us, across the sea, and get it for us and enable us to hear it so we'll do it?’ But the thing is very close to you, in your mouth, and in your heart, to do it.”

Deuteronomy 30:11–14, translated
by Richard Elliott Friedman