

Cultivating Happiness

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*Living Life on
Your Terms*



Cultivating Happiness – Living Life on Your Terms

What is This Thing Called Happiness Anyway?

The word happiness gets thrown around quite a bit these days. You probably don't even give it much consideration. We all "want" to be happy and we all chase this elusive thing called happiness.

Where do you look for happiness? Is it in relationships or in material purchases? If you are like most people, happiness will come when you retire, when you buy that new house, or get that promotion. The list goes on and on. It's human nature.

However, is happiness based on something else "out there", or is it based on how you act and behave throughout your day, your world, and your life? More importantly, does happiness come from what shows up in your world or does it show up in the world you create for yourself?

Most people wait for happiness to come to them rather than nurturing and growing it themselves. Happiness is something that needs your attention and devotion. If you want it, then you have to cultivate it.

Happiness isn't an "Always" Feeling -it is Manageable, Though.

The Peaks and the Valleys

As we all know, just like you have peaks, you have valleys in your life. Just like you have good days, there are bad days. You can go from feeling happy to feeling mad in an instant when something sets you off. However, you can manage, to a certain extent, how happy or not you are.

Once you understand that happiness is manageable, you get tools and techniques to navigate your way toward life. Moreover, you get to navigate your way toward a happier life. It's okay for things to happen and okay to be upset. However, it's not in alignment with true happiness to stay angry, bitter, upset or resentful.

Mental Attitude is within Your Control.

If you really want to cultivate happiness, it's all within your control. You, and only you, can cultivate your mindset. While it may seem difficult at first, it can and does get easier. Controlling your emotions takes lots of practice. It's not a magic wand or quick fix technique. It takes continual practice. The good news, however, is that it can be done, over and over again.

Change Your Thoughts.

Some people think it's bad to change your mind, however, changing your thoughts is an excellent proposition indeed. We all have issues from our past and from our childhood that may still run our subconscious minds today. No one gets away from the past unscathed.

However, you can change your mind by changing your thoughts and creating new perceptions.

Here are a few examples of how to do that:

What are the facts/what actually happened?

When you come from a factual point of view, it takes a lot of the story and drama out of the circumstances.

What kind of story am I creating around it?

Is the person a bully with you as a victim? Are you a martyr and nobody comes to help? Take a deep look at the story behind what actually happened.

Ask yourself if what the person actually did had anything much to do with you.

For example, your boss did not acknowledge you for your hard work because he thinks you are lazy or because he is ungrateful. Or did your boss not acknowledge you because he did so out of human error? Maybe he/she had something on their mind or it was simply an oversight.

Tell the truth.

Do you go off on a tangent that your boss is unappreciative, or that it doesn't pay to be good or to work hard?

Take a look at it from another angle.

Your boss doesn't really compliment anyone at all and it's just his way and has nothing to do with you. Your boss is more of a cold and factual person rather than a warm and fuzzy leader. He/she sticks to the facts and expects you to do a great job without much acknowledgment because, after all, that's what you get paid to do. This may not be in alignment with how you would be a boss or a leader, but recognizing that it is his/her style may take the onus off of you.

Outside circumstances don't have to rule you.

Yes, they are annoying and a nuisance value, but don't let it seep into every other area of your life. If you had a bad day at work, don't let it seep into your night at home.

You can decide how long to stay angry or when to forgive.

It's up to you to change your thoughts to compassion and empathy and even detachment or stay and swim in bitterness.

You can make better choices, learn and move on.

Everyone has experiences that they would rather not talk about, but the key is to learn whom to trust, most especially yourself, and to keep moving forward.

You can incorporate happier things into your life.

You can choose to think about cleaning out the garage as a chore or some fun time with family rewarding everyone with a dinner out.

Developing Your Own Happiness

- **Happiness is an inside job** and does not stem from outer sources – once you recognize that we are all walking around led by the nose by our subconscious beliefs and stories, it gets easier to create new stories. If you have a relative, for example, who always seems miserable, do you internalize that? Once you recognize that another human being's faults, traits, and personality have nothing to do with you, you have begun to lay the foundation for inner happiness.
- **Learning the happiness habit** – The same way someone can choose to be a miserable sort of person throughout their entire life, you can choose to create the habit of being happy, as well. There are techniques and tools you can import into your life. For example, you can choose to use gratitude as a way to offset the human desire of lack consciousness. It's so easy to focus on what we don't have under the guise of setting goals, but we mustn't forget to remember to be grateful for all that is already present, which bring us to our next tool of happiness.
- **Being present in the moment** – Take a moment to realize that where you are right now in this moment will never come your way again. Do you realize how important and powerful this is? You won't ever get this moment back again. Once you take on the practice of being in the moment and recognizing that you will never have it back again, you will begin to feel happy for what is in the moment. Take a minute to watch your child's mannerisms when they don't know you are watching. Take a moment to watch your spouse's lips move when he/she is talking. Every once in a while, stop and be present to what is right in front of you and recognize it as a moment in time.
- **Another great happiness technique is to set goals** that are small and achieve them. Once you truly understand that creating building blocks of smaller goals to reach a bigger goal is the way to feeling happy, fulfilled, and accomplished, you will begin to feel content, happy, and satisfied. Take small action steps outside your comfort zone and you will begin to build confidence. Once you see taking smaller steps outside your comfort zone as a way to grow into happiness, you'll be taking giant leaps before you know it.
- **Be giving** – When you want to feel badly about a certain situation in your life, don't let anyone tell you it's not okay. Go ahead and feel bad, but just don't feel bad for too long. Get out of your head for just a little while and give your "feel bad" vibes a rest. Go help someone else. Giving back has enormous benefits to the person receiving the help, but even bigger results for you. The hormones and feel good vibes released while giving back can lift you out of that sour mood in no time.
- **Learn how to receive** – If you are like most people, you have a hard time receiving help or even asking for it in the first place. Ask for help, delegate, learn how to say no and sit back and receive. There's nothing wrong with receiving love, help or just a listening ear when you need. Make receiving a habit.
- **Self-love and self-nurture** – When you find there is a shortage of someone to give to you, then give to yourself. Everyone is multi-tasking and busier than ever these days. Give yourself a treat. It doesn't have to be extravagant. It could be something as simple as a chocolate bar or a cup of coffee with a magazine. Treat yourself how you want other people to treat you.
- **Volunteerism** – If you don't have anyone in your close tribe to give assistance or help to, there are plenty of organizations needing help. You can choose to volunteer in a

nursing home or in a pet shelter. No matter the scale, big or small, there are plenty of open arms waiting for your contribution.

- **Have new experiences** that you've never had before. So many people are under the misguided idea that happiness comes in the form of a new home, new car or some toy or gadget. Studies are now proving otherwise. Happiness comes from experiences, not things. So, go out and get involved in a new adventure. Of course, you don't have to jump out of a plane, but you can take on a new cultural dining experience or hobby that is a bit more adventurous than who you have always been.

Skills You Need to Not Let Life Get in the Way

It's one thing to have knowledge on how to get and stay happy, but quite another to learn the skills. Just like anything else in life worth having, happiness skills are important to incorporate into your daily life. Here are a few:

- **A good mental attitude** – Everyone has up days and down days. It's only natural and a part of life. Here's the key: If you stay stuck in how bad your day is, your day is only going to get worse. Go through the motions of the day, and deal with just the facts. Your car got swiped in the supermarket parking lot? Yes, that is frustrating and annoying. Deal with it methodically and don't invest too much story or emotion into it. Put your energy into calling the insurance company, filing a report and you'll be on your way to having a better day in no time flat.
- **A good support group** – When life gets in the way of happiness, and things do happen, a good support group, otherwise known as a tribe, is essential to keeping your happiness in check. Your clan will tell you the truth, be sympathetic, and listen to you over and over and over again. They can also spot things you keep in your blind spot. When you manage other people's lives and do too much, your friends will tell you that you're acting like an enabler – and they might just be right. This is something you might not otherwise see.
- **Resourcefulness** – when plan A doesn't pan out always have a Plan B, and Plan C, for that matter. When life tumbles you down, it's important to get back up and keep moving forward. In order to be happy, you have to not allow things to hold you back. You can choose to sit and wallow or you can give yourself enough time to go through the emotions and then keep moving. When you are faced with a closed door, start looking for that open window.
- **Tap into your talents and gifts** – We all have them – our own set of talents and gifts. For some it's the ability to crunch numbers and for others it's leadership skills. Tap into your talents and gifts and go where they lead you instead of the other way around. Highlight your greatest talents and gifts and lead with those and you will be so happy to find where they take you.
- **Don't put all your eggs in one basket** – either professionally or personally in relationships – When you put too much happiness in one arena of your life you are not cultivating happiness. Imagine having a garden and putting all the different flowers, vegetables, and fruits in one hole. The next thing you know a gopher or a rabbit comes by and eats up all the seeds. You are left with nothing but a hole. It's the same way in

relationships and business ventures. Don't put everything in one place. Spread your happiness circle around.

- **A good grasp on the past** – don't let the past rule your future – When you find yourself getting upset, stop and ask yourself an important happiness measuring question. Why am I really upset or angry? What has triggered me? More often than not, you were thinking about something or someone who upset you or were triggered by past evaluations stuck in your head. Take the time and do the work to heal your past so you can have a happy present.
- **How to roll with the punches** – Sometimes life throws you a curveball and you need to be able to play the game effectively. Staying still for too long is ineffective and is counter-productive to happiness. Any time you are stuck in a certain place, you thwart your own growth.
- **Train your brain to look at the small stuff** – When you are doing a chore or having a conversation, look for the nuances of what's great about that particular event. While no one relishes the thought of doing laundry, isn't it wonderful to be able to walk over to your washer and dryer and have clean and dry clothes in no time at all? Start to train your brain to think and view little things differently.

Stories, reasons and excuses that keep happiness at bay

We all have our own stories from our past that seep into our present. We all also make up excuses at some time or another. "I don't feel like it, I'm tired, it's too late, I'll never, I can't, it's too hard."

Sometimes just naming your excuse or story gives it room to move into full view and to walk right through it to the other side.

- **If you're lonely, join a group**, book club, exercise class or volunteer. Don't sit around waiting for your doorbell to ring. That never works.
- **Take responsibility for your life.** Stop saying "Someday" or "I don't have time." These are just excuses keeping you in your comfort zone. Take one small actionable step today toward a goal. Want to write a book? Write a paragraph. Want to learn a skill? Buy a book or take a webinar on it. No excuses.
- **If you have a story** from your past like "woe is me" or "everybody else has it easier/better", it's time to examine that and recreate it. If you walk around feeling and believing that everyone has it better than you, then that is what will show up in your life. Recreate it that everyone has blessings and struggles and we are all one and the same.
- **Waiting for...**retirement/the big move/when the kids graduate. While you're waiting around, time is saying see you later. Time waits for no one. Get busy, get active and get moving. You have some happiness to cultivate.

Top Tips on How to be Happy when you are Surrounded by Difficult/Toxic People

Hopefully, by now, you are getting the message on how to manage your happiness quotient and how to take responsibility for your happiness factor. However, there's another question needing an answer.

What about other people and their moods? Yes, it's true sometimes family members or co-workers are toxic and we can't escape them, not completely anyway. However, we can learn to manage them and keep our happiness quotient levels higher.

- **Managing difficult people** – Sometimes we can certainly choose to keep toxic people out of our life. Other times, not so much. We have to work, network, and mingle with family members and co-workers, as well as others frequently. So, that means we have to take responsibility for managing our circles. If we don't manage them, we fall into the trap and get sucked in by them.
- **Where to place toxic people in your life** – For those you can remove gracefully, go ahead and do so in a kind and gentle manner. For those you have to tolerate, try to make arrangements to interact with them in a group setting. For example, if it is a family function, a meeting, an office setting or a networking event, make sure you talk with several people, therefore limiting your exposure to the one toxic person amongst many fine and intriguing ones. When you are face to face with someone you feel uncomfortable with, just smile and nod a lot as this keeps interaction at bay.
- **How to manage relationships better** – Happiness depends a lot on the quality of your relationships. When you take 100 percent responsibility for your part, you can bring all of yourself to the table in relationships. Communication, of course, is key in relationships. You can communicate sometimes by being better at listening, too. Relationships are powerful parts of your life and your happiness might only be as good as your relationships. So, it's important to do your part in keeping relationships alive and healthy.
- **How to take time outs** for yourself and give yourself a break in order to be happy – It's important to notice when you are feeling drained and fizzling out. It's your responsibility to take care of yourself and that could mean taking a nap, saying no or just taking a time out to daydream, get fresh air or hydrate yourself.
- **Breaking through the martyr/victim cycle** – If you write a story that you are a martyr or a victim, you give others permission to treat you that way. Rewrite a different story and start asserting yourself a little bit here and there. It's not as scary as you think it is. What does this have to do with happiness? You will cultivate happiness when you send a message about how you want to be treated. Going forward, people will automatically know how to treat you and you will be that much happier. Less work for you to do in maintaining boundaries.

How to Finally Stop People Pleasing to get and Stay Happy

What does people pleasing have to do with being happy? When you people please, you forget about yourself in the mix.

What is people pleasing?

People pleasing comes about when you put other people before yourself, your needs and your wants.

Why do we do it?

People pleasing also comes about when you want to be liked and loved so much that you will do anything to make someone else happy in order to be liked and loved.

How to stop yourself in your own tracks.

In order to stop people pleasing, you need to stop internalizing, and stop caring so much about what other people think. Look fear in the eye and confront it. Once you realize the thing you are so afraid of is not going to happen and even if it does, you can shrug your shoulders and say welcome to being human, you can then move on from there.

Why Letting Go is one of the Biggest Keys to Happiness

We've all heard the expression about letting go. We know it's healthy to let go of stuff that no longer serves us. So, why do we still continue to hold on? How does letting go equate to being happy? Here are a few answers to this question.

- **You don't have to know all the answers all the time** – Sometimes we hold onto stuff until we have it figured out. That's why we can't let it go yet, because we won't until we have all the answers. Sometimes, as difficult as it is to grasp this concept, you don't need to know all the answers. Maybe you shouldn't know.
- **Forgiveness is healing for you and letting go is a gift for yourself** – True happiness comes from forgiveness. A lot of people think forgiveness is letting someone off the hook, but it's not. It's simply detaching negative energy from that person so they can no longer bind you.
- **Releasing anger and negative feelings** impacts your overall health and well-being, both mentally and physically. When you let go of toxic feelings, you make room for positive vibrations and experiences to enter.
- **Being resentful is the polar opposite of being peaceful.** When you are in a state of resentment, you cannot operate on a peaceful vibration. Holding onto resentment only damages your health, well-being and the life you are intending to live. If you want to be happy, you have to give it up.
- **Take responsibility for the reason** you are holding on. Is it familiar? Is it fear? Is it exciting and exhilarating to have the drama in your life? Once you uncover the reason you are holding onto anger, bitterness, unforgiveness or resentment, you can then see how useless an emotion it is.
- **What does drama do to your adrenal glands?** When you are in flight or fight mode there is no way you can be happy. Having too much adrenaline is shocking to your nervous system and damaging to your health.
- **How peace is the best medicine for your soul and body** – Walking around in a state of peace does not mean that you are a doormat and that life doesn't get tricky now and again. It does mean, however, that you get to choose how you react and for how long. When you walk around like the voice of reason, chances are your body, mind, and spirit will reap the rewards and so will your happy life.

As you can see, there are multiple ways to cultivate, create and manage your happiness quotient. While it may seem like a lot of work, it really isn't. In the beginning, when you are changing your way of thinking, you may slip back into old habits, patterns and beliefs and that is expected.

However, once you get on the right track of changing your thoughts, monitoring your reactions and managing your emotions, you'll see how easy it is to create a new habit. When you think of habits, you probably think of exercising or quitting smoking, but incorporating happiness into your lifestyle is a habit as well.

Just like any other habit, happiness can be cultivated as well. When you have done the work and found that cultivating happiness is getting easier and easier, then you can trust yourself enough to manage the happiness of others - not in the way of being responsible for other people's happiness, but in a way where the unhappiness of others doesn't have a trickle-down effect on you.

When you view happiness not as this elusive thing out there, but something absolutely within the realm of your control, you get to see that you can create it, manage it and manifest it. When life gets off balance, it's important to remember to keep yourself balanced.

Lack of sleep, too much stress, too much sleep or even too much overeating are all examples of being out of balance. When your life is out of balance, it doesn't necessarily mean that you have to be as well. Keep yourself nourished, hydrated, well-rested, social and responsible and your inner world will be in balance, even when it seems your outer world is temporarily spinning out of control.

Happiness is your own creation. What will you craft – a world of chaos or a world of peace, a boat always ready to capsize or a peaceful easy journey on a serene lake with a few ripples here and there?

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