

Getting Happy

The experience of pleasure or happiness is one of those general terms we use to say, "I feel good emotionally." People use different terms to describe what feels good for them. For someone it might be excitement, passion, exhilaration, fulfillment, freedom, feeling fully alive with inspiration and joy. For another it might be more peaceful, content, capable, hopeful, satisfied, and comfortable feeling. Whatever you call it, it just feels darn good.

Our natural state of being is to be happy. When you remove all the uncomfortable emotions we humans can experience (and they are numerous), you're left with happiness. So it's easiest to define happiness by what it is not.

Every human that has ever existed has had happiness as their ultimate goal in life. Pretty bold and presumptuous statement, huh? When you put the emphasis on "ultimate", I think you'll find the statement is true.

What is the purpose or meaning of your life? Is your life for you to be happy, or would you prefer your life be for something else? Would that make you happy? Whatsoever you seek, you seek the cessation of unhappiness and the satisfaction of happiness.

Your core motivation to be happy is surrounded by layers of other desires. Like an onion, you must first peel away the layers to reach the core. Let's look at an example.

Happiness does not always appear to be obvious goals because of the intermediate goals we believe are necessary to achieve happiness. But in the end, we do what we do to feel good.

Awareness is the first step in the creation process. As you grow in self awareness, you will better understand why you feel what you feel and why you behave as you behave. That understanding then gives you the opportunity and freedom to change those things you'd like to change about yourself and create the life you want. Without fully knowing who you are, self acceptance and change become impossible.

Having clarity about who you are and what you want (and why you want it), empowers you to consciously and actively make those wants a reality. Otherwise, you'll continue to get "caught up" in your own internal dramas and unknown beliefs, allowing unknown thought processes to determine your feelings and actions.

If you think about it, not understanding why you do what you do, and feel what you feel is like going through your life with a stranger's mind. How do you make wise decisions and choices if you don't understand why you want what you want?

It's a difficult and chaotic way to live never knowing what this stranger is going to do next.

Who's the expert? When we want good, solid information, we turn to the experts. So, who are you going to turn to for information about yourself? Who's the expert? You.

Owning Your Emotions If you're going to work towards happiness, you will need to know who controls your happiness. It's a fairly common belief that a person can make another person feel bad. "She made me angry." "He upset her." "He really pissed the boss off this time."

I am going to challenge this idea and propose that...

You can not, in any way, ever, MAKE someone feel anything.

When I have talked to people about this idea, they inevitably bring up the time when someone had upset them or made them angry. They say to me, "they caused my anger for if they had not been there, and said what they did, I would not have been angry."

I can understand cause and effect in the physical world. I push the pencil and it rolls. I drop a glass and it shatters. But cause and effect don't translate very well into the emotional world.

When someone says something to you, are the words going directly into your brain and switching on your "I'm upset" lever? When someone gives you the evil eye, are they shooting laser beams into your brain pushing your fear button? When someone makes an unfavorable comment about your hair and you become offended, are they sending invisible "offend waves" causing your response? No, of course not. How can words, sent out as sound waves and picked up by your ears then translate into an emotional response? Is there nothing between those sound waves and your response?

I think people have difficulty understand this concept of responsibility for their emotions because they make no distinction between influence and control.

Make Happiness an Intention How often do you base whether you'll be happy or not, on the circumstances and conditions in your life? "When this happens, I'll be happy. When I get this house, car, relationship, job, this problem is solved, have self esteem, get out of this marriage (the list is endless) ... *then* I'll be happy."

Accept Yourself As You Are Right Now Self-acceptance is being loving and happy with whom you are NOW. Some call it self-esteem, others self-love, but whatever you call it, you'll know when your accepting yourself cause it feels real good! Its an agreement with yourself to appreciate, validate, accept and support who you are at this very moment, even those parts you'd like to eventually

change. This is key...*even those parts you'd eventually like to change*. Yes, you can accept (be okay with) those parts of yourself you want to change.

Understanding & Change Your Beliefs are any ideas you think are true about yourself, others, and life. Clarity about what you believe, who you are, what you want, and why you want it can be like a beacon on a clear night, guiding you to the fulfillment of your desires. Unfortunately, most of us aren't aware of our beliefs, many of which we acquired as children. You can live your whole life unaware of how your beliefs are effecting your feelings, thoughts and actions.

Some beliefs are counter-productive to what you say you want. Wouldn't it be nice to identify those beliefs? Examine them for validity? There are so many self-defeating beliefs but here are just a few I've identified in myself and others. Do you believe any of the following?

Self Defeating Beliefs

- I can't change. This is just the way I am.
- My feelings are natural reactions, not something I can control.
- If I control my feelings, I'll be a robot.
- I have to have [love, sex, or money] in order to be happy.
- If I don't feel guilty, I'll continue to do "bad" things.
- You have to do some things you don't want to do in this life.
- No pain, no gain.
- If I was happy all the time, I'd look like an idiot.
- People who are optimistic aren't realistic.
- You can't have your cake and eat it too.
- If happiness was my priority, I'd be inconsiderate of others.
- It's a dog-eat-dog world out there.

Experience & Express Gratitude

Stop for a moment and think of someone in your life that you're grateful for. Have someone in mind? Now really focus on that person. What do you appreciate about them? What specifically do you really like about them? Think of nothing else but your gratitude for having them in your life and what you appreciate about them. Close your eyes and focus on what you love about them.

Now, how did you feel when you did that? Felt pretty good, didn't it? When we focus on our appreciation and gratitude for the things and people in our lives, we encourage our own awareness and happiness.

Gratitude is one of those characteristics that are almost always present when feeling happy. What you focus on becomes more impactful in your life. Make gratitude a larger aspect of your thoughts. You can end the pain by simply changing your focus.

ACTIVITY: Try an experiment. Take 10 minutes of your time and make a list of all the things you're truly thankful for in your life. The things you appreciate and are really grateful for. Stay away from the "I should be grateful for this" type of items and stick with only those things that in your heart you feel thankful for. Then notice how you feel afterwards. You'll be surprised.

If you're not in the habit of experiencing or expressing appreciation, you may have to set notes around your home to help remind you. If you keep a journal you may want to list one thing you feel grateful for every day. At first this you may have to *actively look* for things to appreciate. After a while, it becomes second nature.

Be Mindful...Live life in the Present, the Now Unhappiness lives in the past and the future, there is no unhappiness in the present. What are you unhappy about? Is it about something that might happen in the future or something that happened in the past? When we spend time regretting the past, or worrying about the future, there isn't room for happiness in the present.

"The secret of health for both the mind and body is not to mourn for the past, not to worry about the future, not to anticipate troubles, but to live the present moment wisely and earnestly." ~ Buddha

When you bring your awareness into the moment of now, all worries of the past and all imagined fears of the future gently fade away until all that's left is the vivid experience of the present. It is in this state that you actually start to see life. You'll see colors you never saw before. It is in this awareness where appreciation grows.

Happiness is not experienced in the past or in the future. Happiness is always experienced in the moment. If you are waiting to be happy sometime in the future, you might be waiting a very long time.

Expand Your Perspective

Is the world cruel or kind? Filled with pain or joy? Is it hostile or friendly? Brutal or gentle? Is it filled with misery or hope? Which is it?

It is all those things. This world contains all perspectives and evaluations. Expanding your perspective isn't about becoming blind to the cruelty, it's

choosing a perspective that is mostly likely to help you create the life you want, one that encourages happiness and joy.

Neither optimism nor pessimism are the more correct or accurate view of life. Neither is more realistic than the other. Both are true. If you're one of the many pessimists I've talked to about this, understand, your perspective is no more realistic than optimism. Cold is no more true than hot. Dry isn't more realistic than wet. They both exist.

But you have a decision to make. Which are you going to focus on? Which are you going to pay the *most* attention? Which perspective are you going to see in its totality? Which perspective are you going to make the most dominant?

I don't think it's such a wild claim to say an optimistic perspective is more encouraging of happiness than pessimism. What you look for, you will find. If you look for hatred in the world, you will find it. If you look for love in the world, you will find it.

When you change your perspective, you change your experience of the world. It's all a matter of intention. Which perspective do you intend to focus on? We're not talking about some Pollyanna view where you deny all sadness and pain. Which are you going to LOOK FOR? Which are you going to emphasize?

It seems that it's not a matter of IF the opportunity or advantage is out there, but simply a matter of SEEING it. You can only see it if you expand your perspective. When you make a decision that you will find the good in this world, it expands your vision to see opportunities that were out of sight when you were looking at the hopelessness.

The idea that we ourselves create who we are can for many, be terrifying. We associate responsibility with guilt and blame. At first we want to turn away from this responsibility and the power suggested in that concept. The power over who you are. It can be overwhelming to some. But with that responsibility comes a freedom that no country can offer you and no man can give you.

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure...It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us...As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fears, our presence automatically liberates others.”
~Marianne Williamson

The center of your universe begins and ends with you. You are the source of everything you experience. You are foundation and common denominator to all aspects of your life, including your environment, your relationships, and your belief system. Without you, your world would cease to exist. Therefore, if you want to make any real and significant changes to your life, the only place to start is with yourself.

You must first know what materials you have to work with before creating the life you want. You have to have self awareness before moving into self acceptance. Once that foundation is established, you can then build yourself anew using your wants and desires as the building materials to shape yourself and your world.

Self-acceptance is being loving and happy with whom you are NOW. Some call it self-esteem, others self-love, but whatever you call it, you'll know when your accepting yourself cause it feels great. Its an agreement with yourself to appreciate, validate, accept and support who you are at this very moment, even those parts you'd like to eventually change. This is important...*even those parts you'd eventually like to change*. Yes, you can accept (be okay with) those parts of yourself you want to change some day.

“Acceptance allows change. The 'acceptance mode' includes everything, even my judgments. It allows me to be okay now, even before I reach my goals.”

“When you begin to accept yourself the way you are right now, you begin a new life with new possibilities that did not exist before because you were so caught up in the struggle against reality that that was all you could do.”

Self creation is about creating yourself all over again. Starting fresh and rebuilding yourself to become the very best you, you've ever imagined. It's about becoming the person you want to be and creating a life that reflects that vision.

Taking Ownership You cannot create yourself and your life anew without taking personal responsibility for who and where you are right now. I do not mean responsibility in a sense of blame or judgment, but responsibility so far as ownership and control.

For many, it is a major paradigm shift when they begin to see themselves and everything in their lives as a direct result of themselves. The idea that we alone create who we are can be overwhelming, particularly if you associate that responsibility with guilt, blame or shame. Taking ownership isn't about judging your life, but simply seeing what's there and knowing your part in it all. This is not about finding fault, making judgments of right or wrong, good or bad, but simply one of ownership.

Yes, other people and events do have influence on our lives, but it is us, and us alone who determine which influences to emphasis, what meaning we give to those influences, and what beliefs we'll create based on those influences. You are responsible for your beliefs, thoughts, and actions.

Become clear about who you really are. Uncover the enormous warehouse of beliefs you've acquired from other people and our culture and challenge those beliefs. Transform your self-doubt into acceptance, your self-pity into self-actualization, your anxiety into peace, your confusion into happiness, and your fears into love. The first step to know what you want to be, do and have.

So, what is it you want? Who you want to BE, what you want to DO, and what you want to HAVE.

Begin by eliminating the “should’s” from your vocabulary.

This is an exercise of the adult or thinking part of you. You have no parents, no friends, no relatives, no responsibilities, no commitments, no obligations, and no one is expecting anything from you. What would you want then?

ACTIVITY: Who Do You Want To Be?

Get a pen and paper, and for the next few minutes write down every person that you admire and respect. It can be anyone, a friend, family member, co-worker, celebrity, politician, author, scientist, musician, philosopher, and teacher, anyone at all. There are no limitations. They don't even have to be real, you can write down fictional characters. For the next 2 minutes, list everyone you like or admire for some reason, it doesn't matter why for now. Then return to this page.

Now, next to each name, write the characteristic(s) or quality you like about that person. After you've done this for each person, go through the list of qualities and compile them into a condensed list. Put the qualities that repeat at the top of your list. Here's an example of the process.

List of Qualities: Honesty, Courage, Powerful, Humorous, Creative, Intelligent, Wisdom, Inspiring, etc.

Look at the list of qualities you're left with. Are those the qualities that you yourself wish you had? Do you not already have some of them? Which do you want to make stronger? Which do you want to develop more? Are there any qualities on your list that you don't think you possess? Do you want to be the person that has all those qualities? Many times simply being aware of the qualities you want to possess brings them out in you.

ACTIVITY: What Do You Want To Do?

Lets take the next 15 minutes and identify what it is you enjoy doing. Brainstorming is a very useful technique for identifying your wants by throwing all caution to the wind. Be wild and free. Forget being realistic or practical. Pretend you've just been given a license that for the next 15 minutes, you don't have to take anyone else into consideration, you don't have to worry about time, space or money, and you have total freedom to be self indulgent. This isn't about finding you a career, although it may eventually become one. It's about identifying what you enjoy doing. I've created a list of activities you might enjoy doing that might help you get started. Write down every activity you enjoy doing.

ACTIVITY: What Do You Want To Have?

Take another 15 minutes and do the same for the things we would like to have in your life. Try to be as specific as you can. What would you like to have? Here's a list of items you might want to have that might help you get started.

Getting to Happiness

- Awareness that you want to feel good
- Owning your own emotions (people don't make you anything) we **Think** >> **Feel** >> then **Act/Behave** a certain way
- Intend to feel good
- Accept self as you are
- Understand and accept beliefs that you hold and others hold without judging them
- Change what is not Working
- Experience and express an *Attitude of Gratitude*
- Live in the Now--live life mindfully
- Expand you perspective of life