



7 Easy Ways to Be a Happier Person

As much as you want to have a healthier, more connected relationships and want someone to fill the void within, you must first understand that you are responsible for your own happiness. The truth is, we all miss out in certain ways when it comes to our emotional development, and instead of going back and reinforcing what we missed out on, most of us end up putting the burden on others to make us happy. As a result, we find ourselves on a perpetual quest for love and attention, and eventually lose the ability to love ourselves, to self-soothe, and to become happy, healthy adults. Instead we blame others for our unhappiness and start looking for “stuff” outside of ourselves to make us happy.

“Money can’t buy happiness” is an age-old cliché, and the funny thing about clichés is that they are often true – even though we are still inclined to dismiss them as being overly simplistic and optimistic. This cliché, for instance, is certainly true, but its potency isn’t about money specifically. The truth is, nothing external can buy, bring, give, or deliver happiness. You are responsible for your own happiness, and you create it, starting with making a commitment to yourself to be honest about your needs and desires, even if that means getting a little uncomfortable. It also means taking risks and stepping outside of your comfort zone. Last, but not least, it means setting higher standards for yourself and setting goals to reach these new heights.

In my case, it wasn't until I accomplished my goals and got most of the things I thought would make me happy that I finally understood the wisdom behind this cliché: happiness cannot be found in a house, a car, a new computer, or through the intoxicating experiences of sex, drugs, alcohol, making money, a relationship, high status, food, whatever. Any of these things might make you feel good for a few hours, a few days, or even a few weeks, but that satisfaction won't last. Don't get me wrong, I'm not advocating that you move into a cardboard box with a yoga mat. I have nothing against wanting to get a good job, looking for an amazing relationship, or spending money on “stuff”. But if it feels like your happiness depends on something happening or not happening, it will always be a fleeting illusion and you will remain stuck in an unproductive and unhealthy cycle of restlessly seeking happiness in external circumstances.

Unfortunately, most people have bought into this illusion. They believe that the pursuit of material gain will ensure their peace, freedom, and feelings of adequacy. I can't tell you how many times clients tell me, “If I only had X, Y, or Z, then I'd be stress-free and happy.” But without fail, when they get what they want, something else comes up causing them to continue to be unhappy. We all need to understand that chasing happiness creates emotional toxicity that fuels the vicious cycle of insecurity, and reinforces our limiting belief that happiness must exist outside of ourselves. One of the most common examples of this is winning the lottery: people believe that if they win, they'll be endlessly happy, but research shows that “lucky” lottery winners are in fact as dissatisfied (if not more so) after hitting the jackpot than they were before. If you don't believe me, take an honest inventory of the things you thought would bring you happiness over the last ten years and see if they actually did in the ways you expected. You might be unpleasantly surprised, like I was. Believe me, if you don't break the cycle now, you'll spend the next ten years (or more) chasing the illusion. And

while this may be a disheartening realization, your awareness is fundamentally empowering. With this awareness, you now have options because you understand that your happiness is ultimately your choice. You can remain trapped in your current state of stress, thinking all of your problems would be solved if only you “won the lottery”. Or you can choose to step out of the illusion and commit to the process of uncovering your highest self through the healing, acceptance and integration of your body, mind, and spirit. If you want to discover happiness from within so that you can start showing up to your life as the best version of you possible, then start by consistently applying these 7 principles to your life:

1. Make happiness your #1 priority.

Sometimes it’s hard to believe that almost everything in life is a choice, including your happiness, but if you truly want to be happy, make it your #1 priority. Throughout the day, if/when something happens to disturb your sense of happiness, ask yourself a few questions:

- Am I choosing this situation?
- Are my own thoughts contributing to this feeling of unhappiness?
- Is this worth my health and happiness?
- How can I restore my sense of internal happiness, regardless of external circumstances?

2. Don’t avoid unhappiness.

Let me be crystal clear on something: Life is not about being happy ALL of the time. There are good reasons we are equipped with other emotions. For example, when going for a job interview, we feel nervous - that's normal. When confronted by a bear, we feel scared, as it is an evolutionary response to danger. I’ve had people in counselling sessions telling me they are depressed, only to find out that their best friend recently passed away. I find myself clarifying, “You’re grieving. This is a healthy reaction to what is going on in your life, not a psychiatric condition.” But because we so desperately want to avoid pain, we reach for alcohol, food, or whatever other numbing activity or vice that we can think of. Some of us feel that we need medication to mask our uncomfortable emotions, and would rather take antidepressants uncritically than dig through the mess of our own limiting beliefs, self-judgments and other insecurities. Instead of avoiding pain, find the courage to talk to someone who can help you work through it.

3. Set yourself up for happiness.

Start the day out right by developing a morning routine that is conducive to a state of peace and happiness. Many rush out of bed in the morning (after hitting the snooze button three times) and get straight to worrying about what the day might bring. While worrying, they pound back a few cups of coffee, check emails and try to figure out how they will meet all of the demands of the day. So instead of pressing the snooze button, take that ten to fifteen minutes and before getting out of bed in the morning, start your day as follows:

- Thank your higher power for giving you one more day on this planet. Be thankful that you woke up and have an opportunity to experience life again.
- Ask yourself: How can I be of service to myself and others today? Do not try to answer the question, just sit with it for two or three minutes, trying to keep your mind free of any other thoughts.
- Breathe. It’s hard to believe that we often forget to breathe, or at least breathe deeply. Take a moment in the morning to take at least 3 deep breaths.

4. Be grateful.

Being grateful is incompatible with unhappiness. In other words it's almost impossible to be in a state of gratitude and unhappiness at the same time. For the next 21 days, ask yourself: What am I grateful for? Make sure you are not rephrasing the question to something like: Why can't I just be grateful for what I have? Remember, your mind is sneaky, and will try to answer any question that you ask it — so with the latter question, it will find many reasons why you can't be grateful. Asking better questions will give you better answers.

Before going to sleep at night, it may be tempting to review all that went wrong throughout the day, but resist the urge. Instead, think about what you are grateful for, and take the time to write down what's working well in your life. Remember, it is your choice whether you focus on the positive or the negative and that choice will significantly impact how you feel. Remember to truly feel your feelings of gratitude (versus just thinking about it).

5. Set up time to worry.

Our bodies were not made to endure a chronic state of stress and unhappiness. In fact, when we allow ourselves to remain in this state, our bodies start to shut down. This is often referred to as “burnout.” When you are simulating stories in your mind about how unhappy past events were, how stressful things are right now, or how worrisome the future might be, then you are creating a great deal of internal stress, and you (and your loved ones) will suffer the consequences. So pace yourself by setting up "worry times". To do this, consciously decide on two times during the day when you will be allowed to contemplate your problems. These worry-times should be no longer than 20 minutes each.

6. Put your problems away.

Take a sheet of paper and in point form, write down all of the problems in your life. Then fold the paper and place it in a small box. Close the box and put it in a safe place. When a new worry comes up, write it down and add it to the box. If your mind wanders back to your problems after you've put them away, simply remind yourself that your problems are safely stowed away and do not give yourself permission to re-visit them until the next designated worry-time. You may be wondering what's the point of putting your problems on hold. Well the point is that you can deal with problems much more effectively from a place of peace and centeredness than from a place of chronic stress and unhappiness.

Once you have a clearer perspective on what is causing your unhappiness (what's in the box), then it's time to develop a plan and take effective, immediate and massive ACTION to make some changes where possible. The worst thing you can do is nothing. Doing nothing leads to a sense of helplessness and hopelessness, which leads us to become victims in our own lives.

7. Take Responsibility.

Stop being a victim and take responsibility for: Finding out who you are, what brings you joy, what's working and not working in your life, examining how you're showing up (or not showing up) in your life and why? Find a life coach or counsellor who will help you own your stuff, set new standards/goals and teach you to get out of your own way.

Finally, I'd like to remind you that if you truly want to be happy, you'll need to work at it. I learned this the hard way – I always wanted to take shortcuts, but they always led me back to square one. Eventually I had to come clean with myself about my own self-destructive mental, emotional and behavioural habits, and gain the courage to make significant changes in my life. Now, I am reaping the benefits and you can too.

About the Author:

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