



## **Happiness: Everyone can Have it but few Cultivate It**

Believe it or not, everyone has the ability to experience being happy. If you are someone who feels that happiness is difficult to sustain or that it is eluding you altogether, here is a crash course in chipping away at the barriers that keep you from enjoying life right now.

### **1. Take nothing too seriously.**

Nature doesn't stand still and neither do you. All of your experiences, whether great or crummy, will pass. Everything that happens is just an instant of time. We give it meaning and can choose how we want to feel about it. Typically, survivors of even the most tragic events say that although they've experienced huge losses, they're happy and most grateful to be alive. Whatever happens, choose to be happy anyway..

### **2. Eliminate the phrase, "But it's so hard ..."**

This type of statement may seem harmless, but keeps you stuck in the past. Justifying yourself keeps you from where you want to be. Better to take the same energy you invest in recreating your old habits and use it to benefit you by aligning your thoughts and feelings with how you want to feel instead. If your goal is to be happy, then make sure your thoughts, feelings, and actions are congruent with your goal. Each moment, each hour, each day can be a new beginning with a fresh slate.

### **3. Take Charge of Your Own Happiness.**

It's been said that the fastest road to failure is to try to please everyone. People-pleasing behavior will make you feel miserable because it's impossible to sustain pleasing others without sacrificing your needs. Know what you need and value; make decisions based on what's important to you. If you don't, you'll be living someone else's life, not yours.

Making choices that allow you to enjoy your life and cause you to feel happy when others are miserable can seem to be egotistical at first. Have you noticed that when you are happy, you have increased energy and feel a greater connection to

others? It's true that you cannot give what you do not have.

#### **4. Let go of your "shoulds."**

Shoulds generate negative thinking. If you can't turn your shoulds into wants, drop them. Also, be aware of the shoulds you have for others (i.e., He or she should do this or be that...). When you think in this way, you are arguing with reality because it isn't that way. If you insist on keeping these shoulds because you are "right," then you are making another wrong. It's actually a judgment. A judgment is comprised of emotion and lack of information. Think of it this way, unless you are omniscient, you can't really know what's best for others.

The next time you are tempted to be right, ask yourself, "Do I want to be right or do I want to be happy?" Make wrongs do not generate happy feelings.

#### **5. Choose to feel good moment by moment.**

If you are like most people when you receive unwelcome criticism from others, you tend to feel bad. And when someone compliments you, you feel great. In both cases, an automatic reaction takes place. Don't let others determine your "happiness barometer." How can you take control of this emotional roller coaster? Be willing to fully accept yourself right now, as is. When a negative thought shows up, treat it as you would a pop-up on your computer, simple delete it!

#### **6. Learn to value yourself.**

It is important to take time for yourself every day-time out to reflect, meditate, relax, work-out and/or do something fun just for you. This is not being selfish. Anyone who goes to extremes to put everyone else first (family, friends, the job, etc.) is actually doing themselves and others a disservice. How can you be at your best when you are exhausted and depleted?

Give yourself something to look forward to everyday. Don't wait until your body shuts down to increase your level of self-care. Cultivating self-care is not just a gift for yourself, but for others too.

#### **7. Be in control of yourself not others.**

Do you fixate on what's wrong with others or the world at large? If so, you know firsthand how much frustration this creates. When you realize you can't force others to change, you can begin to cultivate happiness. When you are in good spirits, you can take the same time and energy to develop worthwhile solutions for the consideration of others, without

being attached to having it be a certain way.

In summary, happiness is a state of mind, not an event. Know that your happiness is within you right now, waiting for you to give it permission to surface. To be happy, be willing to choose it. If you don't feel happy right now, you can still create it. You are not doomed to be unhappy, unless you give in to it. By focusing on and applying each of the steps listed above, one at a time, you'll soon be feeling your own rays of happiness.

Wishing you savvy success!

Barbara McRae, MCC  
The Savvy Success Coach

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