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Article

6 Tips to Being Happy In The Present Moment

We all want to be happy. But we have preconceived notions or beliefs about what needs to happen in our lives before we can be happy. Maybe we need to get that dream job. Or we need to have a million dollars in the bank. Or maybe we need to have the body of our dreams. Or we need the perfect relationship in order to be happy.

The list goes on. Yes, these things may indeed make us happy. Or then again, they may not.

When we set goals, we also have the tendency, once we've achieved them, to replace them with new goals. So you may find that you still don't feel happy after you've achieved that "big goal" because you've just replaced it with an even bigger goal that you now need to achieve before you can be "truly happy".

But by doing this, we stack the odds against ourselves. And if we play this game in order to find our happiness, then there's a good chance that we'll spend the rest of our lives chasing down the dreams that may 'one day' make us happy.

What if I told you that you don't need any of those things in order to be happy in your life and that you can be happy to-day? The key to happiness is learning how to be happy right now, while you work on achieving your goals, instead of waiting until you've achieved those goals to be happy.

Here are 6 simple tips that you can start applying today:

1. Practice Daily Gratitude

No matter how bad we think our problems are, you can almost guarantee that there's someone out there with much bigger problems than us. You may have heard the saying "I cried because I had no shoes, until I met a man who had no feet". We need to be grateful for everything we have in our lives and practicing daily gratitude is a great way to train our minds to have an attitude of gratitude.

One technique for doing this is called "3 good things", where every night, you simply write down three things that went well that day and casually reflect on why they happened. According to a study conducted by Seligman, Steen, Park and Peterson (2005), people who performed this daily exercise for a week, were happier and less depressed at the one-month follow up.

So start making your "3 good things" list today.

2. Be Present Both Mentally & Physically

Whatever you're doing, make sure that both your mind and body are present. Don't eat dinner with your family while you're thinking about work. Don't do work, while you're thinking about what you'll do this weekend. Always be present and let your mind focus 100% on what you're doing.

If you're having dinner with your spouse or partner, then try not to think about anything else but enjoying dinner with them. Even if you're doing something as simple as drinking a glass of water, you can be present. Enjoy the moment and taste of the water as you sip it slowly. Try to find at least one situation every day where you can practice being present.

Simply start by focusing on your breathing. Focus, slow down and appreciate being in the moment.

3. Stop Resisting What You Can't Control

Stop resisting the things in your life that you can't control and aren't the way that you want them to be. Stop worrying about what other people do or say. Start accepting things for how they are, regardless of whether you think it's right or wrong. Accept it as a fact.

Let's say that you are frustrated because a work colleague isn't doing what you think they should be doing. The more you think about that situation, the more frustrated you get. You give them feedback. Maybe you argue with them. But the situation doesn't improve or maybe it gets even worse.

So you have a choice — you can keep resisting or you can accept the situation without judgment. You simply acknowledge it as a fact. There is no right or wrong. It's just the current reality. When you do this, the resistance starts to melt away and the negative emotions inside your head and heart also start to disappear.

Identify one situation where you feel you have some resistance and simply accept that situation for what it is.

4) Avoid Negative People & Situations

Another cause of negative emotions and unhappiness are certain people or situations. You probably already know who those people are — they are the ones who seem to only see the negative side to every situation. They are often pessimistic, angry, critical and rarely have anything constructive to say. These people not only create unhappiness for themselves, but they also often drag down others around them by spreading this negative thinking 'poison'.

If you want to be happy, you have to avoid these people and situations as much as possible. Unfortunately, that's not always so easy, since these people are often our friends or family members. So if you can't completely avoid these people, then it's worth planning ahead and deciding how you'll deal with them in future situations. The next time you find them being negative, you could either politely tell them that you'd prefer not to discuss that particular topic with them and change the subject. Or you could try to guide them into more positive thinking by asking them questions such as "how do you think you could solve that problem?"

Don't allow negative people or situations to also drag you down into unhappiness.

5) Accept 100% Responsibility For Your Life

If we want to be happy, then we have to stop blaming others for what happens in our lives. We need to stop seeing ourselves as victims. I have a family member who I love very much, but she is constantly blaming other people and situations for everything in her life that she's not happy with. She sees herself as a victim and feels helpless about changing things.

In order to be happy, we have to take full responsibility for everything that happens in our life. When we take full responsibility, we take back control of our life and start to acknowledge that our thoughts and actions create the results in our life, not other people or situations. When we take back control of our life, we stop being victims. Instead we feel empowered to start creating a better life for ourselves.

Be honest with yourself, are you accepting full responsibility for what happens in your life?

6) Be of Service To Others.

One really powerful way to increase your happiness is to focus on helping others. You can give money to charity — but there are more fulfilling ways of helping others.

Instead of giving money, give your time. Get involved with a charity or donate a few hours to help with a local community project. Or just perform small random acts of kindness with no expectation of getting anything back e.g. help a struggling mother dealing with her kids and bags of groceries. Or buy a coffee for the person standing in line behind you.

According to Sonja Lyubomirsky, (a professor of Psychology at the University of California, Riverside and author of *The How of Happiness*), research shows that almost any type of random act of kindness boosts happiness. So make a habit of performing at least one small random act of kindness every week.

So if you want to feel happier in the present moment, then start by choosing one of these 6 tips and take action today. At the same time, keep working on your goals, but don't rely on them alone to make you happy. Choose to be happy right now. As self-help author and motivational speaker Tony Robbins says "there's a huge difference between achieving to be happy and happily achieving it".

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