

So, You Want to Be Happy?

By Patricia Morgan © 2006

“All I want is to be happy.” “All I want is for my child to be happy.” “All I want is for my partner . . . my mother, friend and the world.” Resilient people know that you can’t feel happy all the time. Feeling happy is but one emotion that comes and goes. It gives us the information that in that moment we have what we want. Feeling sad tells us that we don’t have what we want, and can provide the emotional energy to make a difference and scared informs us that we are at risk of losing what we want

In the end we don’t want to feel happy all the time but want an overall sense of living a happily satisfying life. One feeling that can trip us up is fear. According to Dan Baker, author of *What Happy People Know*, we lose life satisfaction when anxiety drives us into believing we don’t have enough possessions or are not important enough. A broad definition of a “happy person” includes acceptance of feelings, including insecurity, while creating his or her own life meaning.

Baker and other researchers such as David Niven, author of *The 100 Simple Secrets of Happy People* and Martin Seligman, author of *Authentic Happiness* offer ways to transform your days into a full and happy life. Here are a few tips to get you started:

1. **Count your blessings.** Researchers discovered that wealth makes no difference to happiness after people live above poverty levels. Make a concerted effort to express appreciation for what you have and consider keeping a gratitude journal.

In a study using surveys and daily observation, the availability of material resources was nine times less important to happiness than the availability of ‘personal’ resources such as friends and family. David Niven

2. **Use Your Strengths:** Learn your strengths by going to <http://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu> and taking the Signature Strengths inventory created by Martin Seligman. Then acknowledge your strengths, use them and volunteer them to make a difference.

The road to happiness lies in two simple principles: find what it is that interests you and that you can do well, and when you find it, put your whole soul into it -- every bit of energy and ambition and natural ability you have. John D. Rockefeller III

3. **Live a balanced life:** Make wise and healthy choices that are within your power and control. Nourish yourself emotionally, physically, mentally, socially and spiritually.

Weigh up your life once a year. If you find you are getting short weight, change your life. You will usually find that the solution lies in your own hands. Roberson Davies

4. **Change your language to change your perception.** What we think, we articulate. What we articulate often becomes our perception of reality. Years ago yours truly ended up in a psychiatric ward after repeatedly saying, “You are driving me crazy.” I had programmed myself into being a crazy woman. According to most people’s reports I’m now re-programmed into an optimist.

The inner speech, your thoughts, can cause you to be rich or poor, loved or unloved, happy or unhappy, attractive or unattractive, powerful or weak. Ralph Charell

5. **Open yourself to life’s absurdities and humor.** Victor Frankl, author of *Man’s Search for Meaning*, used levity to help him survive the Holocaust. Erma Bombeck, one America’s most loved journalists and authors used humor to bring sanity to herself and her readers. Her book titles reflect a wink and smile at every day contradictions: ***If Life Is a Bowl of Cherries, What Am I Doing in the Pits?, Motherhood: The Second Oldest Profession*** and ***A Marriage Made in Heaven...Or Too Tired for an Affair.***

Laughter rises out of tragedy, when you need it the most, and rewards you for your courage. Erma Bombeck

Patricia Morgan is an author, speaker and workshop leader. She helps people develop light hearted strategies for strengthening resilience. She can be reached at 403-242-7796, patricia@lightheartedconcepts.com or www.lightheartedconcepts.com