

WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

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What is happiness? Many people when asked this question define it in terms of something that is attained when something in life is achieved i.e. when I win the lottery I will be happy, when I buy the big house I've always wanted then I'll be happy. Is this truly what being happy encompasses? If this were true then once we received these external happiness triggers then our lives would be fulfilled but we know from the experiences of others who do attain these achievements that this is not the case and quite often they lead to disappointment and sadness, quite the opposite to what they lead themselves to believe.

Happiness is so often associated with people and material things and being so defined leads people to feel as though they do not have enough happiness. Yet even when people actually possess all that they desire they still feel unhappy. Why is this? It is because true happiness cannot be given by another or received from an external source. It is not something that we work towards and cannot be postponed "until", until I buy that house or win that money.

Happiness, I believe, is a state of mind, a state of being. It is something that is generated from within us and is dependent on our sense of self-worth. How we feel about ourselves and the associated thoughts and emotions that are generated dictates our level of positivity and thus happiness. If we feel great about ourselves then this translates to our external reality and we feel great about others. In this state of mind happiness is an integral component of our lives and it doesn't take much to make us happy because we already feel it within us as a natural state. Conversely, if we have very little love for ourselves then we feel negativity and sadness and happiness will continue to elude us because it is not fundamental to how we feel about ourselves.

That is not to say that happiness cannot be influenced by external factors, it can e.g. someone expressing their love for you will strengthen your feelings of happiness, someone who calls you names or puts you down may temporarily decrease your sense of happiness but a strong self love means that these external factors will not influence your core happiness. Others are not able to create or maintain our happiness only we can do that, but they can share it once we feel happy.

The best way to achieve happiness is to develop a love and respect for self. One has to establish a relationship with the most important person in their lives, themselves. When you love and respect yourself, you live your life from a place of inner truth. Your actions will reflect the light of your soul and when living with such respect and integrity you will attract positivity and respect to you. Like attracts like so what we put out into the world in our words, attitudes and behaviours will be mirrored back to us. Thus happiness out = happiness back.

To develop love for yourself requires dedication and commitment. As with any relationship it needs constant nurturing and monitoring to ensure needs are met. We can do this through a variety of ways:

- Meditation techniques
- Counselling
- Retreats
- Quiet contemplation
- Nurturing yourself - massage, body work, beauty therapy, baths etc.

And so on. These are all designed to slow us down so we can hear our inner voice and to enable us to look at our lives and behaviours and make changes in those areas where we are deviating from our truth.

So we can see that happiness is not something we can “get”, it comes from within us. Everyone has the potential for true happiness. Instead of wasting energies looking and searching for other people and things to give it to us, all we need do is look inside and it is awaiting us.

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