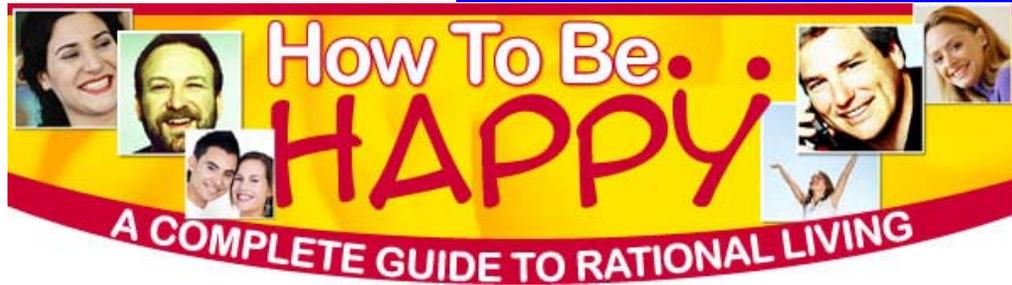


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## **How to be Happy**

### **A Complete Guide to Rational Living**

By Joseph Miller

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## 1. How to be Happy – An Overview

Happiness is an emotion and, ideally, an individualistic view. To you, happiness is something different from what somebody else feels. It is a particular state of mind. Everybody has different views on happiness and so, the ways of attaining happiness will differ from person to person.

Normally, happiness is synonymous with joy, well-being, delight, love, safety, and health.

The term, “happiness’ traces its origins to the Greek ‘Eudaimonia’, which means being a good soul. It refers to having virtuous habits through moral and honorable deeds. However, people define happiness differently. It is a culmination of achievement of specific ideals like (not in particular order) health, family, money, physical appearance, intelligence and humor.

It can be spiritual and refer to attaining certain goals. Every culture has their own idea of what makes them happy. And, every person in that same culture will find happiness in different levels. To some, happiness can be praying that there will be supper and supper appears. Happiness means different things to different people.

You can take for an example, a person with an attractive appearance with clothes of the latest fashion and that person will feel happiness. Now, take a lack of either attractiveness or the latest design clothes and a person can have lower self-esteem, which could hurt their feeling of happiness.

Another group defines happiness as a fulfilling life according to one's ideals. Normally, you can attain such happiness through dedication, hard work, and sacrifice.

It is not possible to define happiness in definitive terms, as it is a subjective feeling. It is an internal experience and characterizing or labeling it in clear language terms may be a difficult, if not an impossible, proposition.

Happiness is often associated with feeling content. Satisfaction is the key to achievement. You find contentment in trusted family, friends, or community relationships. You have to open your feelings, talk, and discuss things to experience happiness. Again, happiness comes by talking about topics of your interest. A music lover may not find sports interesting and may not find happiness in such discussions.

Engaging and immersing yourself in what you excel at is a source of happiness. Such engagement leads to contentment, producing happiness. Looking forward to something like a vacation brings happiness. An optimistic focus of life, with the view that the glass is half-full, creates feelings of happiness.

Happiness is the utmost in giving unto others. Happiness is within you and you can experience it by sharing with others.

Happiness can be momentary, such as setting a goal and reaching it. The feeling of euphoria that one can get with reaching a goal can be happiness.

Let's see what you can do to become a happier person.

## 2. The ABCs of Happiness

Happiness is a subjective feeling. So, you determine happiness by your preconceived views and opinions of what should happen or not, by the incidence of an event. You are guided by your thinking, rather than occurrence of the event.

This is the main determinant of people locating and identifying happy situations everywhere.

In simple language, you should accept events as they happen without giving any credence to pros and cons of the event, its occurrence, implications on future events and so on. Your ideas about happiness or occurrence of events governing your happiness levels fall within certain segments. These segments define your philosophy and beliefs on life.

Such a clear proposition does not engulf you in different negative emotions like fear, anger, and depression or shame. They, therefore, do not preclude the presence of your greatest positive emotion - happiness.

You should proceed by stressing on the 'It could be better' factor rather than 'It should' factor. The first proposition highlights your compromising and rational attitude, while the second tends directly to anger, a negative feeling pulling you away from happiness.

Feelings of shame can arise if you are unable to perform or reach accepted achievement levels in society. This could be about anything like your smartness, reputation, family background, and similar facts.

Shame is self-disapproval or criticism for not being able to attain accepted norms. Accept such incidents as occurrences in life and look ahead to overcome obstacles on your way to achieving happiness.

Dwelling on past mistakes is not the road to happiness. You must learn to forgive yourself for mistakes and learn from them as a lesson in life. Punishing yourself over and over for mistakes is painful and will hinder future attempts at finding happiness.

Depression arises from irrational thinking. It is also a culmination of all negative emotions, leading to lack of self-confidence. The underlying cure for depression lies within you. You have to love yourself first to be able to love and receive love from all. This opens doors to your happiness and success.

Fear is worry about your ability. You should be brave enough to allay your fears and confront them. Do not lie low and accept everything. Instead, strive to do beyond your expectations. This focus is more likely to bring you happiness.

### 3. The Secret of Happiness

The secret of happiness lies in your decision to be happy.

Happiness is missing in you if you fill your mind and heart with weary and dreary thoughts. You disturb your state of mind with doubts and set preconditions for attaining a level of happiness.

If you are able to meet your conditions, you are happy. If not, you may be unhappy and depressed. Hence, you decide about functioning of your brain and set preconditions for your feelings of joy or happiness. However, the irony is that once you meet the said conditions, you decide on another set of conditions. This goes on and so, happiness evades you or, rather, you do not allow happiness to come near you.

The secret of happiness lies in your continuous decision to remain happy, whatever be the circumstances. You should enjoy your journey to reach your set goals.

Some people tend to stress over the activities and behavior of other people as determinants of their happiness. Your happiness is yours and you must not blame others for the lack of your happiness. You control your mind, your thoughts, and hence, you hold the sole decision toward your own happiness.

Simple solutions to secure happiness are to be optimistic and look to the present without worrying about the future or the past. Boost your confidence levels to attain higher self-esteem by being true to self, and always striving forward.

## **4. Where to Begin Your Quest for Happiness**

Happiness does not only mean feeling joy; it can be a feeling of peace, serenity, and tranquility. Rather, happiness is something, which pushes away all negative emotions like stress, sadness, anger, guilt, depression, and apathy. All these stressful emotions are often the cause of many illnesses like cancer, cardiovascular diseases, AIDS, and other infections.

### **Possible Locations for Happiness**

You could look for happiness at different locations like your family, friends, career, and education. Your aim is to do away with negative occurrences like illness, poverty, failure, rejection and other difficult situations. Hence, your key to happiness lies in striving and rising above such negativities to attain the level of happiness.

### **Where to start your Quest**

The foundation of your happiness lies in your choice to be happy. You have to commit yourself to be happy and make it the most important aim of your life. The onus of your happiness is with you and you cannot transfer this responsibility to anybody else. You also cannot hold anybody else responsible for causing you unhappiness. Both happiness and unhappiness lies within you and you alone can make the right choice of the two.

Although there are different social organizations, self-help books, and counselors to help you in your quest for happiness, nothing works better than your own effort for your quest for happiness. The first step towards this quest lies in prioritizing your personal growth.

Set goals, achieve, and then set higher achievement levels for yourself. Do not overdo your goals as then it could lead to more unhappiness if you keep setting goals one after another. Focus on realistic and practical goals.

Consider an obstacle as an opportunity to grow and reach closer to your goals. Your failures are your steps to your success. Do not brood over your disappointments and look beyond them. Learn from your mistakes and proceed towards your main goal of being happy.

Become mentally strong to deal with all hurdles and become capable of dealing with difficult situations. Locate role models like happy and successful people to start with your quest for happiness. Look deep into their attempts to overcome depression, stress, and other negative emotions and come out as a highly successful person in life.

## 5. Characteristics of a Psychologically Healthy, Happy Person

A psychologically happy and healthy person achieves happiness and strives to go beyond through process of self-actualization. Dr. Abraham Maslow, father of humanistic psychology, has shed light on various characteristics prevalent in a healthy and psychologically happy person. Of course, Dr. Maslow was himself a self-actualizing person. Most such happy persons are the key contributors to the health and happiness of the society and community as a whole.

### Specific and Evident Characteristics of Self-Actualizing People

A happy and healthy person dispels following individualistic uniqueness in his personality and character:

Stoic acceptance of the facts of life without questioning their occurrence

Humanity encompasses not only family and friends but also everyone and everything interacting with human existence

Perceiving, believing, and reasoning truth and dwelling deeper in to the surreal realities to develop accurate perceptions in life

Such perceptions help understand and mark clear discriminations between right and wrong or good and evil

Resolving conflicts easily because of their easy acceptance of the basic philosophies of life

An aura of calm and peace with themselves and therefore able to focus on higher realms of life and consequent happiness

Avoiding being self-centered and being more creative due to intense naivety and spontaneity

Placing greater importance on the character and values of a person rather than materialistic parameters and concentrating on problem solving rather than on its occurrence.

Simple, spontaneous, and natural existence placing high value on essential habits and emphasizing higher-level values like Meta values

Dr. Maslow stressed that you need to meet and satisfy lower and basic needs like safety, health, belonging, love, and status before proceeding to higher Meta values. Such higher Meta values include simplicity, perfection, completion, goodness, uniqueness, honesty, justified approach, and a feeling of continuing aliveness invigorating everything.

Psychologically healthy and happy people support a free mind and proceed towards a more productive and peaceful phase. However, if there arises any danger to their basic values in life, they still proceed ahead toward their higher goals without perceiving any danger to their basic values. The broader perspective of such happy people differentiates them from the other commoners.

## **6. Is Happiness a Conscious Ultimate Concern?**

Your ultimate concern in life determines your goal in life. The same is true if you say it the other way round. Your goal in life determines the ultimate concern in life. Hence, you have to analyze your inner self to arrive at what is your topmost concern in life. You obviously work concentrating towards attainment of this sole aim or goal in life.

### **Your Goal fixes your happiness level**

Following from that, your aim or ultimate concern determines your happiness level. Hence, you are making a conscious effort towards attainment of happiness by arriving at your main goal in life. Paul Tillich, theologian and philosopher of the modern era, stresses that your entire existence, personality, and life itself depends on attainment of happiness through satisfaction of your goals.

Different individuals place importance on different ideals in life like money, love, happiness, family values, education, and the list goes on. The underlying functioning of your instincts finds governance through such ideals. If at any time something comes in your way towards attainment of your main goal, your main aim will be the eternal winner of this conflict.

### **Is it possible to make Happiness your Conscious and Ultimate Concern?**

Sure, why not?

Often people decide from many goals like money, social status, or career status their main goal in life. They feel that fulfillment of

these goals can bring them happiness. It sure can. Nevertheless, if you place maximum stress on attainment of these goals alone as your end happiness, then any disturbances in attaining or if you are unable to attain set goals, you become unhappy.

You lose your level of happiness. You remain so very much focused on attaining set goals that you forego many happy experiences on your path to happiness. Hence, you trade happiness for your goal in life. Ultimately, non-attainment of desired levels of goals in life only contributes to your unhappiness.

Therefore, making happiness your ultimate concern is a better proposition. Here you evaluate every activity as to which yields you more happiness. Therefore, you only trade happiness for more happiness.

## 7. Why is it Wrong to Make Happiness Your Top Goal?

**M**aking happiness your goal in life is a subjective fact. Yet, many are reluctant to disclose that happiness is their ultimate concern in life. In that case, you need to understand the route to your happiness or the means you adopt to achieve happiness and satisfy your most important goal in life.

Immanuel Kant poses a maxim for attainment of happiness. Kant stresses that the end universal aim of all rational beings is attainment of happiness. The underlying fear of making happiness the sole aim in your life stems from the probability of turning selfish and centered on achieving happiness through any means. Here you need to distinguish between your means of attaining happiness.

Happiness and success go hand in hand. If you are ready to sacrifice your happiness for the sake or success of others, then you cannot be happy, as the other person would also try to sacrifice his happiness for yours. Ultimately, no one is happy.

There is a subtle but clear line of demarcation between pleasure and happiness. Lower brain centers function to meet the needs of these centers like hunger, touch, thirst, and others. However, making pleasure the main goal in life makes you addicted to such thrills. It does not yield happiness. Pleasure also assumes the character of selfishness and at times, transforms you into a criminal. This is because pleasure is irrespective of any care for other's needs or feelings.

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