

# True Happiness

(by necessity includes love, peace, joy, beauty etc)

In much of the Western world we have come to think of happiness as a thing; a possession and prize that we must earn through seemingly endless struggle and sacrifice. We tend to see it as something outside of ourselves, a destination in the distance, or fleeting experience; always there and then, or if and when. We think that life is all about getting happiness, and then holding onto it with a death grip. We believe this hunt for happiness is a lifelong odyssey, an epic search and chase for this holy grail.

We developed habitual patterns of running away from suffering, despair, anger, and loneliness, anything that looks or feels uncomfortable or unhappy in our relationships and world, choosing instead to run after power, fame, wealth, and admiration that appear quick, easy, and painless. When this doesn't work we think running faster and harder is the answer, or perhaps someone else is to blame.

Always running this way, we're not there for ourselves, and if we can't care for ourselves well, we can't take good care of others, so we are also running away from our family and friends. All of this restless energy and running is exhausting and creates stress in our bodies and minds. These habits are deeply ingrained from growing up in difficult or dysfunctional homes, societies, and situations that created dysfunctional coping skills that became automatic and problematic.

Too make matters worse, many of us feel "less than" others, and that we must do, do, do to earn happiness, that we aren't worthy of happiness unless we rush through life, pay our dues, take our licks, and fight the good fight. This fight becomes a battle and war that never seems to end. We were taught that we must win the approval of others to deserve happiness by slaving endlessly to get the "best", "right" or "perfect" education, job, house, car, body, mate, kids and so on.

Even if we are basically good people: good students, workers, parents, sons and daughters etc, we don't feel "good enough" to deserve happiness. Also the bar always seems to be getting higher, so we have to be *super* good in an attempt to achieve and sustain perfection in *every* area of life. And not just in our own lives, oh no, we have to take care of everybody and everything else *perfectly* before we think we will be allowed to relax and enjoy happiness. Obviously, that never happens, so happiness remains elusive.

We may even be afraid we'll look foolish if we *are* happy, that ignorance is bliss, so happy people are somehow dumb or stupid, and therefore the difficulties of life demand a grim determination that won't allow room for happiness. We are often afraid of even *having* happiness; that it will somehow make us vulnerable, so that someone will come along and stomp on our joy and hurt us. Or we think we must suffer now to get happiness later, or if we *are* happy now, we *will* suffer for it later. We can feel we are on the outside looking in on happiness, that we are somehow excluded, because we are different so don't belong.

We think perhaps only rich, beautiful, highly educated, or lucky people get happiness, that it is uncommon and rare, and that life is just too difficult, busy, frantic, and noisy to have time or room to be happy. This is a habitual thought process in which we have identified with problems, troubles, and mistakes; perhaps even feeling that we ourselves are a mistake! We have been taught that we have to make it alone, by ourselves, through rigid self sufficiency, pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps. We often think no one will help us, or even wants to.

Many were wounded as children by parents, relatives, friends, bosses, teachers, and other authority figures; also by society, culture, and religion to the point that we came to believe the world was not a safe place. We internalized voices that created great pain and suffering, and as we grew developed a false self in reaction to this inner critic: a judgmental, negative, and condemning voice in our heads that told us that we had no value; that our happiness was a reward and achievement we didn't deserve or had to work long and hard to obtain.

This inner critic often wages a personal attack on us, proclaiming that we should be ashamed, that we're worthless, a bad person, the lowest of the low. This voice may have been telling us we are a mess, a disease, a waste of air and water, just taking up valuable space, a scourge, a liar, a cheater, and a thief. That we are awful, terrible, a fake, a fraud, and a joke.

The inner critic may scold us that we're ugly, stupid, wicked, guilty, and evil. A piece of crap, small, insignificant, less than zero. That we were a rotten kid, and now a rotten adult. a bad parent, a crummy friend, and incompetent worker or student. We may also hear we can't do anything right, and that we are a disgrace, a loser, a useless user! No wonder we go through so many relationships, the closer someone gets, the more we push them away in fear of them discovering the evil person we may think we are.

**The good news, THE TRUTH IS: THESE ARE ALL LIES!** Everyone deserves happiness! Happiness is a gift we were *all* given before time began, it *is* our inheritance. It has no opposite and is completely natural and fulfilling, it *just is*. We don't have to work, struggle, suffer, fight, wait, or achieve anything to have happiness. It's not a possession, reward, prize, or destination, it is one of the inborn and ingrained infinite aspects of each of us, waiting inside to be discovered and enjoyed. Anyone willing to put in the time and work can take the steps to break these dysfunctional habits, quiet the inner critical voice, and instead make **happiness** habitual.

The key is to slow down and stop running; whether it is running after happiness or away from unhappiness. It is time to sit with our energy and emotions, to use prayer and meditation to look and listen deeply, to step aside from ourselves and our reactions to others and find where these habitual patterns and energies of dissatisfaction and struggle came from. Then through kindness and gentleness to realize the peace, compassion, wisdom, and understanding that lives within, and start anew each day, hour, minute, and moment. Through this awareness practice our brains are able to create new pathways to innate and profound happiness.

Although we do have difficulties and make mistakes, They are not who we are. Habitual thoughts, feelings, and behaviors can be changed, and we can make amends for past misdeeds. What we consider our life, is better considered our life situation, and not personal, permanent, or pervasive. We can now make the choice to identify with the infinite knowledge, power, and presence that is our loving Higher Power, to which we connect through our inner wonder child, inner loving parent, and *True Self*.

Ultimately, your circumstances and situation are of no consequence in the realm of the infinite of which you are an essential part. In truth, we are not separate from others, nature, or our Higher Power, but rather an important part of all creation, intimately connected to and part of everything that is, was, and ever will be. We certainly don't have to go it alone, it wouldn't work anyway; a full and abundant life is always a group effort. It does take a village to raise and support a healthy child, *and adult*.

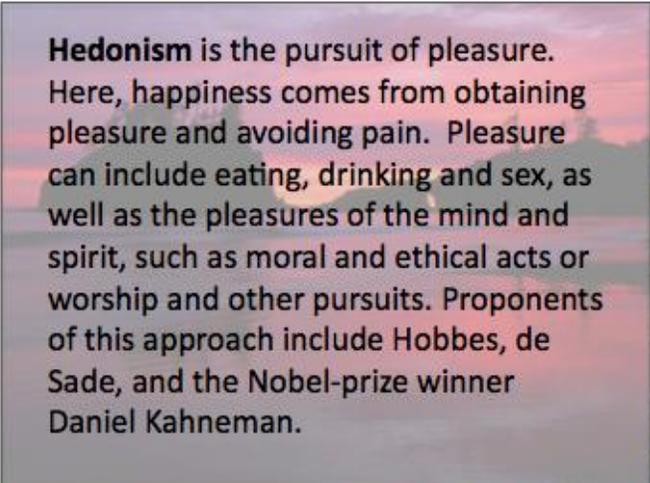
In fact full healing *can't* take place outside of our community of family, friends, and others, as well as with our Higher Power, as this is the split, the wound, and loss that most needs healing. We do this by finding our place in our world, our contribution that connects us with our fellows and creator through greater and higher good that gives our lives real purpose and meaning. We come to find even our dysfunctions and difficulties give us the energy and understanding we need to overcome them to find and live our greatest passion and purpose.

Your job here is to become your biggest, brightest, and best self! To be yourself squared! To be who *you* are, to connect with the joy and beauty of *your* soul and spread it throughout the universe endlessly! There is *nothing* missing, broken, or flawed; you are complete, whole, and perfect as is! You have been suffering from a case of mistaken identity, mistaking yourself for the problems, disease, and insanity of the world. Choose now and everyday and moment to identify with the solutions, well being, and sanity of your inner wonder child, loving inner parent, loving Higher Power, and *True Self*. Then choose again, and again, and again, *whatever it takes*.

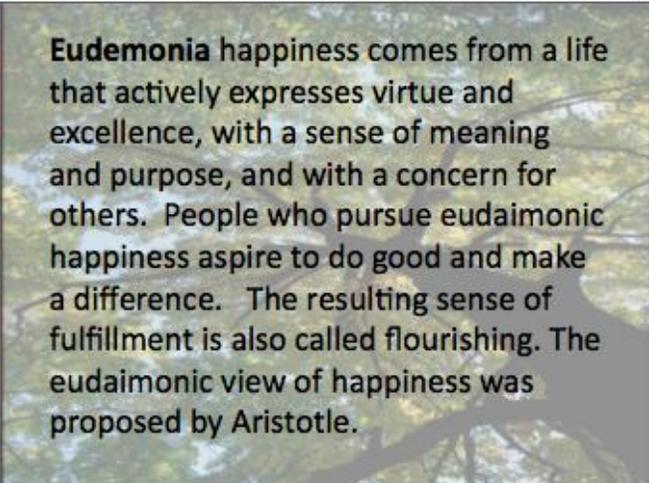
You are not little, alone, or insignificant. You are the greatest, most glorious gift God has to give, a priceless treasure! The most beautiful, awesome, and amazing thing in existence! Not a loser or a slave, rather, a king or a queen with a kingdom you must rule. You are an angel, here to sing the praises of humanity and creation with your own special voice and vision, so everyone who will listen will join in the joyous song. Deep inside you *know* it's true. Tell yourself in the mirror and shout it out to the world through how you live your life.

*You* are the divine creative principle that built the pyramids, mapped astronomy, discovered chemistry and mathematics, dared surgery, painted every masterpiece, and wrote every symphony. In fact, you and your life *are* a masterpiece and symphony, an ecstatic celebration of music, dance, and poetry; **YOU are the greatest work of art ever made**, and all of creation gives you a rousing cheer and standing ovation!

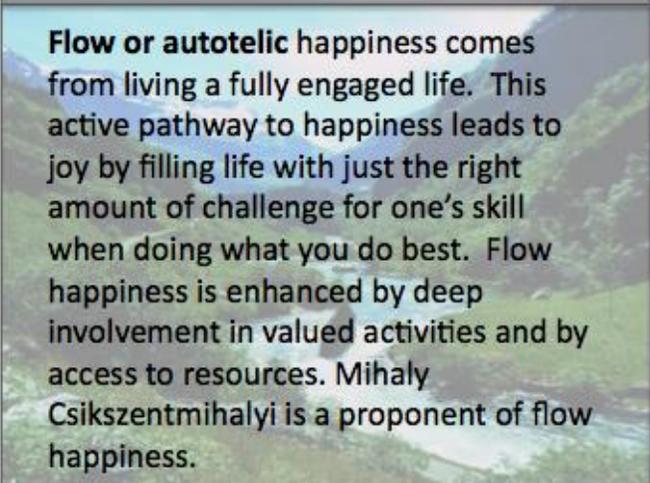
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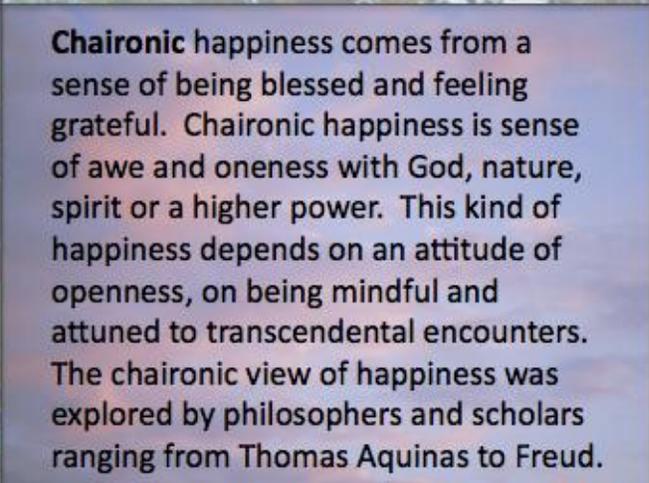
**Hedonism** is the pursuit of pleasure. Here, happiness comes from obtaining pleasure and avoiding pain. Pleasure can include eating, drinking and sex, as well as the pleasures of the mind and spirit, such as moral and ethical acts or worship and other pursuits. Proponents of this approach include Hobbes, de Sade, and the Nobel-prize winner Daniel Kahneman.



**Eudemonia** happiness comes from a life that actively expresses virtue and excellence, with a sense of meaning and purpose, and with a concern for others. People who pursue eudaimonic happiness aspire to do good and make a difference. The resulting sense of fulfillment is also called flourishing. The eudaimonic view of happiness was proposed by Aristotle.



**Flow or autotelic** happiness comes from living a fully engaged life. This active pathway to happiness leads to joy by filling life with just the right amount of challenge for one's skill when doing what you do best. Flow happiness is enhanced by deep involvement in valued activities and by access to resources. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi is a proponent of flow happiness.



**Chaironic** happiness comes from a sense of being blessed and feeling grateful. Chaironic happiness is sense of awe and oneness with God, nature, spirit or a higher power. This kind of happiness depends on an attitude of openness, on being mindful and attuned to transcendental encounters. The chaironic view of happiness was explored by philosophers and scholars ranging from Thomas Aquinas to Freud.