

**AWAKENING THE POWER WITHIN YOU
(Enjoy Your Everyday Happy Life)***Self-Enrichment and Inspirational series ...*

“Happiness never come to those who don’t appreciate what they already have. Happiness will not come to you; it can only come from you”

Peter Ng

My son, Jairus Isaac, frequently asked, “Are you happy, daddy?” “I want you to be happy!” But what is happiness? Is it only when his action pleases me? Or he does what I tell him to do? Is it only when things go my way that I am happy? Now, if this is the case, then happiness is more like a win-lose situation, that is, only if he does what I told him to do, and his actions pleases me, and only when things go my way, then I am happy. And if you take a closer look at those phrases, there are lots of Me-Myself-and-I. So, I win and the other party simply has to give in to make me happy. A bit pathetic isn’t it?

On the flip side, it also tells me that self-centered egoistic and prideful people are also never happy – why? Because things don’t always go their way, and people, definitely, will not always want to give in to their demands. And because they don’t give space to others to allow them to be themselves, people started to repel them, thus, causing even more unhappiness.

Dictionaries tend to provide a shallow perspective to the word “Happiness”. The closest definition I like is from Merriam-Webster – a) a state of well-being and contentment; b) a pleasure or satisfying experience. But is this definition suffices? For example, can we define or measured love, beauty, friendship, or decency? Thus, I am not offering any definition of happiness, but rather how can we consistently maintain positive emotions.

Did it ever occurred to you that being unhappy is easy, in fact, it took no courage, effort, or greatness to be unhappy. Anyone can be unhappy. On the flip side, *happiness takes lot of effort and definitely, a decision to be so*. Thus, we need to be aware that what will make you happy demands a great deal of thought; the self-discipline to overcome our natural inclination to do what is most pleasurable at the moment rather than what is most happiness-inducing; and the wisdom to consistently answer the question “Will this make me happier and wiser?”

Human beings need to be happy and they want to be happy; and they have a right to want to be. Happiness is not a selfish or frivolous concern. This is one of the distinguishing features of human beings. Happiness is a *moral obligation*. Reflect this thought for a moment, and it will become obvious. We owe it to our spouse, our fellow workers, our clients, our children, our friends, indeed, to everyone who comes into our lives, to be as happy as we can be. This does not mean acting unreal or faking to be happy or refraining from honest expressions of our feelings to those closest to us. But it does mean that we *owe it to others to work on our happiness*. We do not enjoy being around others who are usually unhappy. Those who enter our lives feel the same way.

We tend to assume that happiness is a feeling and that this feeling comes as a result of good things that happen to us. Happiness is not a search or pursuit. It is *an internal choice*. It is never your circumstances that define your happiness, your future and your destiny, it is your choices. A decision to be happy!

It is important to distinguish your momentary happiness from your enduring level of happiness. Momentary happiness can easily be increased by any number of uplifts, such as chocolate, a compliment, a vacation, or a new dress. The challenge is to raise your enduring level of happiness, and merely increasing the number of bursts of momentary positive feelings will not accomplish this.



Lots of people thought that by traveling a lot and far, they will find happiness, in actuality, they merely increase their number of bursts of momentary positive feelings and when they return home (whatever home be – family, work, country, etc.), the same ‘enduring level of happiness’ or in this case, unhappiness, returns and they become even more disappointed with their circumstance or people around them. Because those momentary happiness is not there to last and we still need to face the reality of our circumstance or the people around us.

Negative emotions – fear, sadness, and anger – are our first line of defense against external threats. Fear is a signal that danger is lurking, sadness is a signal that loss is impending, and anger signals someone trespassing against us. Sadness and depressions not only signaled loss, they brought about the behaviors of disengagement, giving up, and in extreme cases, hopelessness and helplessness. Anxiety and fear signaled the presence of danger, leading to preparations to flee (either physically or mentally), defend, or conserve. Anger signaled trespass, and it caused preparation to attack the trespasser and to redress injustice. In this short paragraph, it actually explains why some people are never happy in their lives. There is a constant ‘battle’ to want to redress injustice brought to them because of previous hurts; angry most of the time as they felt that their rights to be who they want to be have been violated; and living in anxiety of fear thus shutting themselves mentally most of the time, turning themselves away from being happy.

So, what’s the best way to maintain positive emotions?

- Stop dwelling in the past
- Forgive and move on in your own life
- Take accountability and share responsibilities
- Live life with a great sense of gratitude
- Make constant progression in your own life such as skills, knowledge, learning from experiences, sharing of your skills, knowledge, and experience to others, etc.

Let’s determine what not happiness is:

Happiness is Not: Feeling Good All The Time

Skeptics have often asked whether a person who uses cocaine every day is “happy.” If feeling good all the time were our only requirement, then the answer would be “yes.” However, recent research suggests that an even-keeled mood is more psychologically healthy than a mood, in which you achieve great heights of happiness regularly — after all, what goes up must come down. Furthermore, when you ask people what makes their lives worth living; they rarely say anything about their mood. They are more likely to cite things that they find meaningful, such as their work or relationships. Recent research even suggests that if you focus too much on trying to feel good all the time, you’ll actually undermine your ability to feel good at all — in other words, no amount of feeling good will be satisfying to you, since what you expect (all the time) isn’t physically possible for most people.

Happiness is Not: Being Rich or Affording Everything You Want

While living below the poverty line certainly makes it hard to be happy, beyond that, money does not appear to buy happiness. Imagine you unexpectedly get a \$10,000/year raise. While you would certainly be excited in the short term, it would only be a matter of time before your expectations change to fit your new budget. Before you know it, you’re just as happy as you were before the raise! This holds true for new houses, new cars, new gadgets, and all of the other material goods that people spend so much time pining for. The only exception to this rule is when you spend your money on experiences with other people so if you took that extra \$10,000/year and spent it on some charitable projects such as buying food for the poor, contributing to an orphanage, then you might get happier. However, this is rarely how people choose to spend windfalls.



Happiness is Not: A Final Destination

The old adage, “Are we there yet?” is often applied to discussions of happiness, as if a person works towards happiness and one day “arrives.” Contrary to popular belief, however, unless you are one of the few who won the genetic lottery and are naturally happy, it takes regular effort to maintain happiness. Most established techniques for becoming happier — keeping a gratitude journal, for example — are habits, not one-shot events, and most life events that make us happy in the short-term, like getting married or being promoted, fade over time as we adapt to them.

So, What IS HAPPINESS?

To me, *happiness is a combination of how satisfied you are with your life (for example, finding meaning in your work, purpose of your life, meaning in parenthood, etc.) and how good you feel on a day-to-day basis (contentment).* Both of these are relatively stable — that is, our life changes, and our mood fluctuates, but our general happiness is more genetically determined than anything else. The good news is, with consistent effort, this can be offset. Think of it like you think about weight: if you eat how you want to and are as active as you want to be, your body will settle at a certain weight. But if you eat less than you’d like or exercise more, your weight will adjust accordingly. If that new diet or exercise regimen becomes part of your everyday life, then you’ll stay at this new weight. If you go back to eating and exercising the way you used to, your weight will return to where it started. So it goes, too, with happiness.

In other words, you have the ability to control how you feel — and with consistent practice, you can form life-long habits for a more satisfying and fulfilling life. You need to take charge of your happiness on a daily basis.

Because human nature is insatiable, our brain, with its rational and philosophical abilities, must be the arbiter of whether we are happy. As my mother used to tell me in my growing years, “*A poor man who can make himself satisfied with his portion will be happier than a wealthy man who does not allow himself to be satisfied with his portion.*” As for my mother and myself, we will acknowledge our dissatisfaction and then not allow it to make us unhappy. Thus, we should be able to say to ourselves, “I can be happy with what I have even though I am not satisfied with it.” By doing this, we maintain awareness of what we are feeling while not allowing it to sabotage our happiness, and at the same time, work on reducing whatever it is that causes us dissatisfaction.

One of human nature’s most effective ways of sabotaging happiness is images of how our lives should be. It might be an image of our work – how successful, famous, or affluent we will be; or an image of how our family’s life should be – how happy, peaceful, and loving, and living in an happy-ever-after images, and many more.

The problem, of course, is that only in rare cases do people’s spouses, work, or children live up to their images. *Images, after all, are perfect, and life is not.* So powerful are these images that you can almost measure your unhappiness by the difference between your images and your reality. Thus, unhappiness can be reduced by either dropping your images and celebrating your reality; or keeping your images and changing your reality.

Another effective way of sabotaging happiness is to look at a beautiful scene and fixate on whatever is flawed or missing, no matter how small. This tendency is easily demonstrated especially during presentation by staff member to a critical director. There was once I sat in a presentation by an employee to his CEO. It was a beautiful presentation, clear and concise slides, and a good flow of his strategy. Then, out of the sudden, the CEO exclaims, “Where’s the page number?” The staff stumbled for a second, realized that he omitted the slide-page-numbering, apologized and continued his presentation. But the CEO kept harping on the page number and that such small detail he shouldn’t have missed. The CEO concentration on the missing “tile” and permit it to affect his enjoyment of the rest of the presentation and the objective of the presentation, definitely is sabotaging the happiness of both the staff as well as his own.



This unhappiness-making tendency to focus on what is missing can be found everywhere. If you are overweight, all you see are flat stomachs and perfect physical specimens. Women who have difficulty getting pregnant walk around seeing only pregnant women and babies. People who grew up in dysfunctional family always think that every other family is happier. Thus, allowing merely perceived flaw to diminish your own happiness.

We need to acknowledge how powerful the missing “tile” perception may be in our lives and identify as precisely as possible what that missing “tile” is. This enables you to gain clarity about what – or at least what you think – is troubling you. Determine whether having this tile is central to your happiness – or whether it is but another one of your insatiable longings. If the tile is not crucial to your happiness, the best solution is to forget it. Life presents too many real obstacles to happiness to allow yourself to be troubled by insignificant ones. A word of caution, your missing tile cannot be someone’s happiness. As mentioned earlier, happiness is a choice and decision. Thus, if you are happy only when the other person is happy, but is constantly unhappy, and that’s making you unhappy, and by so doing you forfeited your moral obligations to be happy with every else around you, then that is one tile you definitely need to replace it with a positive thought – that is, doing what you need to do, but you cannot make the decision for them to be happy. Doing good for others is a great source of happiness, because it does brings inner peace, which brings greater happiness.

Last but not least, controlling our nature is the single greatest step toward happiness. In fact, everything we want is impossible without self-control. If you want financial success, you need self-control to do things that contribute to your personal and professional development. If you want happy and healthy children, you need the self-control to spend a great deal of time with them. Self-control gives you something else that is crucial to happiness – freedom. Unfortunately, many people define the great value of freedom incorrectly, that is, doing whatever they want. But doing what you want usually means doing what your body and nature wants, and this is not only not freedom, it is actually more akin to bondage. *Freedom is being able to do what will bring you happiness* – and that takes constant self-control.

To develop self- control, the first thing is to develop habits of self-control. We are so much creatures of habit. If you habituate yourself to exercise self-control, you will find it difficult to stop, and if you habituate yourself to lazy habits, you will find it equally difficult to stop. The second thing is to never lose sight of your goal. If you never lose sight of your goal, you will always know what you have to do to achieve it and therefore be less likely to give in to your nature and do what it wants rather than what your goal demands.

For example, if you want to write a book. Constantly keep the prize (goal) – the happiness you will derive from having written a book – in mind. Then you are more likely to exercise the self-control you need to make a habit of sitting down regularly to write your manuscript.

Keeping your mind on the goal you most desire in order to maintain the self-control necessary to achieve the goal is another example of our mind, not our immediate feelings, dictating our behavior in order to be happy.

In a nutshell, to be happy consistently:

- Enjoy the benefits derived from self-reflection and self-deliberation.
- Not letting your heart be troubled with insignificant issues.
- Live your life by helping others, do your part in every situation.
- Be on good terms with others, but don’t surrender your own principles.
- Express your thoughts and ideas clearly, and listen to others without any form of prejudice or allowing your mind-noises to create distractions.
- Do not become envious or resentful by comparing yourself with others.
- Joyful and thankful attitude in life, even in the midst of trials.



In conclusion, let me leave you with the wise words of Stacey Charter, “Don’t rely on someone else for your happiness and self-worth. Only you can be responsible for that. If you can’t love and respect yourself – no one else will be able to make that happen. Accept who you are – completely; the good and the bad – and make changes as YOU see fit – not because you think someone else wants you to be different.”

Trying to live a happy life is not about denying negative emotions or pretending to feel joyful all the time. We all encounter adversity and it’s completely natural for us to feel anger, sadness, frustration, disappointments, and other negative emotions as a result. To suggest otherwise would be to deny part of the human condition.

Happiness is about being able to make the most of the good times – but also to cope effectively with the inevitable bad times, in order to experience the best possible life overall. Or, in the words of Matthieu Ricard: “Happiness is a deep sense of flourishing, not a mere pleasurable feeling or fleeting emotion but an optimal state of being.”

Happiness go deeper than mere feelings, it is indeed a spiritual experience our souls desires. Thus, we need to live our life with love, grace, and gratitude. As Denis Waitley put it, “Happiness cannot be traveled to, owned, earned, worn, or consumed. Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace, and gratitude.”

Remember, happiness can only come from you... It’s a decision you have to make, and the choice to be on a daily basis.

Your Joy is My Inspiration; and Your Success is My Reward!

Cheers ☺

Your Favorite Author and Speaker

Peter Ng

Signing off with a blessing of peace, joy, and love to reign in your life and for your household. (With peace comes power to progress; with joy brings happiness to every one; and with love, making all things possible.)