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The Pursuit of Happiness

By Kali Munro

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Imagine someone holding a glass full of clean, fresh water and complaining about thirst. Likely you'd suggest they first take a sip from the glass in their hand.

Happiness is similar. Everyone wants to be happy, but not everyone knows how to recognize and stay with it; they're always looking for more. The search for happiness is lost when it becomes an insatiable pursuit for getting more.

The difference between the two is like the difference between savouring and lingering over the sweetness and flavour of a mango, and quickly gobbling it up before eating the next sweet. The pursuit becomes the focus, rather than the experience or the satisfaction that comes from what we do have.

This endless pursuit for happiness can consume us for all of our lives. We may think that once we have more money, a relationship, or that perfect job we'll be happy, yet when we get there we find it's not what we'd hoped for, or we don't take the time to really enjoy it.

There is always something more to be pursued, bought, owned, done, that we rarely enjoy what is in front of us. Even the search for spirituality is pursued in this manner. People go from spiritual leader to leader searching for meaning, often going as far as India to find fulfillment.

The pattern is easily recognizable, and we can all fall into it with thoughts like "when I do...own...have...get...go to... I'll be happy", or "if only...would happen." But the truth is once whatever is sought after is obtained, we're off looking for the next thing. We rarely stop and simply enjoy what is happening right now or fully appreciate what we have.

Some believe this constant desire and pursuit for more is rooted in our biology — that it helped us to survive when we didn't have all the conveniences that are available to us today. Some believe that this pursuit is rooted in a society that emphasizes consumerism, and another view is that it reflects an alienation from ourselves and one other.

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Regardless of what we believe to be at the root of this constant wanting, it seems to take conscious and deliberate effort to experience contentment or satisfaction in our lives — to fully appreciate life, people, and the activities we engage in. And, this doesn't mean appreciating things that are hurtful, wrong, or violent, because that would reflect not fully appreciating ourselves or other people.

Instead, it means taking a new look at ourselves, life, and the world around us and seeing the beauty that is there. It doesn't mean ignoring what isn't right, like violence in our and other countries, but it also doesn't mean denying the good we do see.

It means getting in touch with the awe of a child who see magic in everything, who notices the simplest of things and takes great pleasure in them. It means appreciating and valuing yourself, the people you know, what you've done, and what you are doing. It means slowing down and savouring every

moment, or as many moments as possible rather than hurrying along to the next task.

By noticing more, and by appreciating what is good in their lives (like the glass full of fresh clean water), many people find that they begin to feel more content — they find what they were searching for all along.

Kali Munro, M.Ed., is a psychotherapist in private practice in Toronto, Canada. She has twenty years experience specializing in a variety of issues including sexual abuse, relationships, sexuality, eating disorders, and body image. She provides individual and couple therapy in Toronto, as well as online. She offers free healing resources at her web site about relationships, abuse, sexuality, and much more. Check out her inspiring and healing site www.KaliMunro.com

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A Formula For Happiness?

By Deanna Mascle

Did you know that psychologists have now come up with a formula for happiness?

They call themselves "positive psychologists" and led by Professor Martin Seligman of the University of Pennsylvania, who has been described as the father of positive psychology, they have a formula for happiness.

It is simply: Pleasure + engagement + meaning = happiness.

I do not have a degree in psychology but I am a student of human kind and it seems to me that while it seems simplistic (and these "positive psychologists" will be the first to admit it is overly simplistic) it actually touches on the central issues that I have expressed to my readers over the years.

In order to be happy we need pleasure in our lives. We need the small pleasures of a tasty treat, a

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beautiful sunrise, or laughter. We also need larger pleasures found in success and love.

We also need engagement to be happy. This means that our lives must include activities or enterprises that capture our wholehearted interest. You know, the level of engagement when we forget about the clock, the outside world, and just about everything but the object of our focus.

Finally, we must have meaning in our life. We must feel that we matter and that what we do matters. We must know that we are valuable, valued and that our lives make a difference.

One of the faults with this simple formula is that it does not include an urge to balance. It would be too easy to focus on one area to the detriment of others. While engagement and meaning are essential to the formula, for example, overlooking the need for pleasure could make happiness impossible to attain.

While some may mock this "happiness formula", I would argue that it can be useful in the pursuit of becoming a happier person. We all need reminders that being happy is not serendipity but rather an active choice. In fact, more than a choice, being happy really is an action that must be taken every day.

Are you happy most of the time? Then share your own secret formula! But if you are not happy then it can be well worth your time to consider the "happiness formula" and how you can apply it to your life. Remember, it is not enough to wish for or think about happiness — but rather you must live it.

You can live a happier life with the help of the happiness formula as well as your own active pursuit of happiness.

Deanna Mascle hopes you will find more inspiration and motivation with her ezine at [www.deannamacle.com](#) which offers inspirational, motivational, and thought-provoking quotes.



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