

Joy

Self-Coaching Guide

How can I be more joyful?

Joy is a by-product of a life well lived and is different from happiness. Joy is more consistent and cultivated internally, resulting from accepting 'who, why and how' you are. Happiness is more transient and tends to depend on external circumstances: other people, things, places, and events. Cultivating joyfulness is more beneficial than seeking happiness.

The Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu's '*The Eight Pillars of Joy*' help us to experience joyfulness. The first four pillars are qualities of the *mind*; the second four pillars are qualities of the *heart*.

- 1) **Perspective**. Changing the way we see the world changes the way we feel and act, which in turn changes the world itself. Taking a wider and larger perspective enables us to see the bigger picture and our connections to all others; we can look beyond our narrow-minded and self-centred points of view.
- 2) **Humility**. Considering everyone we meet as human, just like us, helps us to deal with our pride. Reminding ourselves they have the same potential for positive and negative emotions, and the same desire for a happy life and the right to achieve it. Also, recognising we can't solve everything or control all aspects of life, and that we may sometimes be in need, encourages us to seek support from others.
- 3) **Humour**. Laughing, joking and not taking ourselves too seriously relaxes us and those around us. It breaks down barriers, brings people together, helps people communicate more honestly and compassionately, and defuses tense situations. Humour reminds us all of our shared humanity.
- 4) **Acceptance**. Accepting the reality of everything that happens to us helps us to fully engage with life, rather than protesting that life isn't as we would wish. We can only succeed by accepting what exists; it's the only place where change can begin. When we're able to accept real life, we're able to ease the suffering we cause ourselves from our reactions to the people, places, things, and circumstances in life.
- 5) **Forgiveness**. Choosing to heal ourselves and free ourselves from the past, so we can focus on and appreciate the present. It doesn't mean forgetting, not responding appropriately, or not seeking justice. However, without forgiveness we remain tied to the person who harmed us; they will control our happiness until we can forgive them. When we forgive, we take back control of our life and our feelings.
- 6) **Gratitude**. Shifting our perspective towards all we have been given and all that we have; towards an abundance and away from a sense of scarcity. It helps us appreciate each moment we experience, the opportunities we have and a desire not to waste them, and encourages our compassion and generosity.
- 7) **Compassion**. Having a sense of concern when we are confronted with another's suffering and feeling motivated to see that suffering relieved. Being concerned for others' wellbeing connects our feelings of empathy to acts of kindness, generosity and other selfless behaviours. Being kind to others brings us joy and also encourages others to be compassionate too.
- 8) **Generosity**. Giving to others brings us more happiness than just giving to ourselves. Sharing our time, money, gifts, knowledge etc. brings joy to others which in turn brings us joy. Having a generous spirit makes us easy and fun for others to be with.

Further reading: *The Book of Joy* by Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu & Douglas Abrams (2016).

"The ultimate source of happiness is within us." Dalai Lama

More Information

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