

ON CHOOSING HAPPINESS.... WHAT'S YOUR CHOICE?

by Jeffrey Gittomer

After is a self-defeating word. It robs you of the present, and resigns you to wait without taking any action.

You convince yourself that life will be better *after* something: After you get a new job, after you get a better job, after you get more money, after you get out of debt, after the economy rebounds, after your stocks go back up, after you get that big order.

You convince yourself that life will be better *after* an event: After you get married, after you have a baby, after you get a new house, after you take a vacation, after you come back from vacation, after summer is over, or some other action-procrastinating “*after*.”

Are you frustrated that the kids aren't old enough, and believe you'll be more content after they're in high school or out of high school? Are you frustrated that you have teenagers to deal with? You will certainly be happy after they're out of that stage. Certainly you'll be happier after they're in college, or is it out of college?

You tell yourself that your life will be more complete when your spouse gets his or her act together, when you get a nicer car, a new house, a raise in pay, a new boss, or worse, after you retire.

The truth is, the fact is, the reality is, there's no better time to be happy than right now.

If not now, when? After the economy gets better?

You may not be able to wait that long.

Your life will always be filled with challenges, barriers, and disappointments. It's best to admit this to yourself and decide to be happy anyway. Alfred Souza said, “For a long, long time it had seemed to me that I was about to begin real life. But there was always some obstacle in the way, something to be gotten through first, some unfinished business, time still to be served, a debt to be paid. Then life would begin. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life.”

There is no *way* to happiness.

Happiness is the way.

There is no *after* to happiness

Happiness is now.

Here's the answer: It's inside your head FIRST and everywhere else second. Happiness is a treasure. Your (missed) opportunity is to treasure every moment that you have.

Stop waiting until you finish school, until you go back to school, until you lose ten pounds, until you gain ten pounds, until you have kids, until after you quit smoking, until your kids leave the house, until you start work, until you retire, until you get married, until you get divorced, until Friday night, until Sunday morning, until you get your new car or home, until your car or home is paid off, until spring, until summer, until fall, until winter, until the first or the fifteenth, until your song comes on, until you've had a drink, until you've sobered up, until you win the lottery, or until the cows come home to decide that there is no better time than *right now* to be happy.

And treasure the happiness of now more because you share it with someone special enough to invest your time in...

Happiness is:

Not a sale or a commission.

Not an economy or a budget.

Not a yes or a no.

Not a game winning hit or a last second touchdown.

Happiness is a way of life that is inside you at all times. It helps you get over the tough times, and helps you celebrate the special times.

Seems pretty simple to define on paper, but real difficult to manifest when the chips are down. My experience has taught me the difference between resign and resolve. You can resign yourself to what is, and hope or wait for a better day. Or you can resolve that you are a positive person who finds the good, the positive, the happiness, the smile, and especially the opportunity in everything.

Happiness is now, not a goal or a destination.

It's not an after, it's a before.

And it's up to you. All you have to do is: decide.

End of article. And I believe it was a good one as far as it went. To take this theme a little further though, and to make it relevant to the situation we find ourselves in, I believe the **decision to be happy** can be executed in our lives by simply LIVING the serenity prayer! There is no "after" in this prayer....it is all about "now!"

- **ACCEPT THE THINGS WE CANNOT CHANGE**

- Accept the principle that WE cannot change our addict's condition; the condition can only be changed by the addict. This is not to say that we sanction or endorse this lifestyle, only that we accept the universal, time-tested, and objective truth that this is the case.
- Accept the unique challenges to “normal living” that this circumstance adds to our daily routines
- Accept the reality of the dangers our loved ones are exposed to
- Accept societal attitudes toward our circumstances
- Accept the principle that our loved ones will be forced to endure consequences and that we are powerless to prevent those consequences from being exacted

“No one can go back and make a brand-new start, my friend; but anyone can start from here and make a brand-new end. --Dan Zadra, author

- **CHANGE THE THINGS WE CAN**

- Change our patterns of enabling and co-dependency in recognition of the principle that our recovery can only begin when these behaviors end
- Change our attachment to detachment, allowing our loved ones to learn from errors and endure consequences as they sort out their life's values; focus more on US and less on THEM.
- Change our attitudes and perceptions by deliberate and disciplined effort; e.g.:
 1. Fear to Courage
 2. Despair to Joy
 3. Pessimism to Optimism
 4. Discouragement to Encouragement
 5. Desperation to Hopefulness
 6. Helplessness to Helpfulness
 7. Emptiness to Fulfillment

“When we can no longer change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.” --Viktor Frankel, Nazi holocaust survivor

- **KNOW THE DIFFERENCE**

- As we learn to better accept the things we cannot change and identify and address the things we can, we will, with God's help, eventually know the difference.

“I do not want the peace that passeth understanding. I want the understanding which bringeth peace.” --Helen Keller