



## **Are You Content or Happy?**

By Dr. Linda Hancock

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email [office@drlindahancock.com](mailto:office@drlindahancock.com)

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Often, I have people tell me that they just want to be happy and think that I can give them a formula! My first response is that first you have to decide to be happy!

Sitting and worrying about what you don't have or the problems in your life will not resolve anything. In fact, they will just work you up until you might think that you have a brain tornado going on.

There are several things that you can do if you want to improve your lot in life as follows:

1. Consider your motivation - Are you a person who thinks that you have to please others? If that is the case, then you will likely find that you are constantly failing and maybe even feeling resentful. You cannot change another person and the older you get the more you will realize that you certainly can't please everyone. If you are constantly on the giving end of a relationship the time will likely come when you will begin feeling resentful as your own needs are not met.
2. Examine what you can control - There are so many things that are beyond our control and so there isn't any benefit in investing time and energy into them. Perhaps you need to turn the television off because most of the news is really opinion about things that are bigger than we are. When it comes to trouble in other countries, we are really helpless observers. Your direct impact on politics is limited to one vote in each election. You can try to influence others, but they have their own votes to cast. Focus on the things in your world that you can control - your career, home, intake, finances and choices and you will soon find that you have a healthy feeling of being organized and making progress.
3. Establish boundaries - Just as you can't control other people, they can only control you if you let them do so. It is important to know where you stop and others begin. Frequently I hear parents talk about how they think that they are obligated to make the dreams of their children materialize by their own sacrifice only to realize that even adult children might not be thankful for your efforts. When you recognize that people grow from experience, even if it is difficult, you will allow your children and others to mature through their own walk in life.
4. Take action - When your emotions start to take over your day, doing things that will distract you can help you to improve your world. Clean a drawer, write a letter, volunteer for a project, exercise, search for and make a new recipe, work on a hobby. Starting this can be the most difficult thing but after just a few minutes I think you will find that you are enjoying yourself.

Choose contentment - To me happiness is often viewed as something people chase such as a trip to Vegas, a Hallmark moment, peak performance. Feeling content, however, means being satisfied with a life that has little stress or chaos. Once you organize your life and let go of negative feelings you will be able to adopt contentment