



Happiness or Contentment?

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Several times over the years I have had clients who stated that they just wish they could be happy. But when I asked them to describe what they are looking for; they have been unable to do that. People who are looking for happiness often chase things that they think will improve their lives but soon become tired of the chase.

Are you thinking that you would be happier “if only” you?

1. **Had the right partner** – Author Florence Littauer states that we marry at the level of our own hurts. When we think that another person will make us happy and meet all our needs, we are not being realistic – especially if we aren’t willing to do anything more than being a taker. Those who enter one relationship after another need to look in the mirror and realize that they are the common denominator in all the failed partnerships.
2. **Won the lottery or had a large inheritance.** Money doesn’t buy happiness and, in fact, can be very temporal – especially if you don’t have any skills or wisdom. History shows that many of those who won large amounts of money have blown it all by the end of the first year. The term “shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves” describes new business that are built, and wealth gained by the first generation but lost by the third generation.
3. **Lived in a different country** – Every country has challenges – economic, leadership, environmental or cultural. You might trade a lower cost of living for an area that experiences frequent tornados, flooding or earthquakes. The grass may seem to be greener on the other side of the fence but once you get there, someone has to water and cut it!
4. **Are drunk or “high”** – There isn’t any empirical research that proves substances will cure illness or solve problems. However, many individuals avoid life by escaping into addictions when they don’t want to face the realities of life.
5. **Were in the “right” career** – How do you know what field will be the better until you try alternatives? It doesn’t make sense to stay in a job that you dislike for years while complaining about it. Take a chance and try something different or consider a retraining program that will lead you to a new career.
6. **Received more attention and respect from others** – Respect is earned, and friendships require work. Sitting and staring at the wall thinking that “no one cares” is just a form of victimization. If you are lonely just find someone who is also lonely, and you will solve two problems.
7. **Could have your own way** – Well, most people don’t like to be around bossy, spoiled or controlling people. It takes maturity to consider other people’s ideas and to compromise. Perhaps you just need to “grow up”.

Instead of chasing happiness consider embracing contentment. This might not be as exciting, but drama is replaced with peace. There are two things that bring contentment:

1. Considering the things that you already have in your life and begin to enjoy them
2. Adopting an attitude of gratitude.

Think about the people who are surrounded by expensive material things but are miserable. Then consider those who appear to have very little but are always smiling.

What would you prefer to do: Chase happiness or embrace contentment? The choice is yours.