

Simple way to happiness

As 2004 rapidly nears its close, we're going to take a look at the basics -- the elements that we need in order to be happy, positive, focused, and efficient. Today, we're going to look at what it takes to be happy.

I've got a friend who is always happy -- no matter what. Why is he always happy? He concentrates on the simple things of his life -- the things that matter the most.

Look at your own life. If you're at all like me (or most people), you have a number of things that make you happy -- but you spend most of your time concentrating on everything else.

Charles Dickens wrote that people spend their time and efforts trying to impress the people who don't matter, at the expense of the ones who do. Like this, most of us spend our time, our energy, and our efforts on the elements that never contribute to our happiness, at the expense of the elements that help keep us happy and growing.

As an example, in my own life, the elements that make me happy are my wife, my family, my writing, my photography, and friends. However, I often work long hours, leaving my family at home; I don't write as much as I should; I haven't shot any photographs since July, and most of my friends are lucky if they see me every few months.

You see, like most people, I wind up concentrating on the things that don't contribute to my happiness, at the expense of those things that do.

We live in a busy world -- there's no getting around it. The demands of an uncertain economy and a rapidly changing economy help to keep us on our toes -- and sometimes, it seems as if it takes everything we've got just to cope with the uncertainty of a world beset by change. You may find yourself -- like I do -- turning your thoughts to your troubles, your work, your challenges, and to the areas where you may be weak, rather than the areas that give you happiness.

May I suggest a useful technique that may help you -- and me -- out?

Take five minutes and make a list of those people, things, and challenges in your life that make you happy. When you sit down and think about it, it's not that hard to come up with the list -- you'll find that they are readily apparent -- in fact, it'll most likely surprise you how obvious they are.

Now, take that list, and when you're at those times in your day where you have a few minutes to sit and think, concentrate on those "simple things" that make you happy, not on the bills, the troubles, or the detours of life. Keep your mind on those areas that contribute to your life, not detract from it. Think of the beauties of the day, not the darkness of the night. Think of your family, and how much you love them -- and how much they love you.

Concentrate on the simple things.

When you get right down to it, it's those simple things that matter, not the assorted and sundry multitude of elements that keep us from our goals, our dreams, and our desires.

Live your life concentrating on those simple things, and you, like my friend, will be happy. Oddly enough, you'll find you do a better job on dealing with the complicated things of life.

One of the true secrets of happiness -- keep your mind on the simple pleasures that elevate your life.

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