



Achieving Happiness

Happiness = What you have
What you want

We concentrate on what we want and that reduces our happiness. Our materialistic society, our advertising industry and our striving for more, all conspire to reduce our happiness.

Happy Planet Index

Nic Marks has developed a Happy Planet Index. For any society it is a measure of the well-being of the people vs its ecological footprint.

http://www.ted.com/talks/nic_marks_the_happy_planet_index.html

For the society as a whole, happy, healthy, people can be measured by their

- Life expectancy
- Sense of Security
- Financial well-being
- Health
- Effective use of their time

For the people within that society their happiness is determined by their

- Connection to others – the time they invest in relationships, sharing interests
- Being active – physically and mentally involved
- Taking notice – their awareness of the world around them
- Continued learning – out of curiosity throughout their life
- Giving and serving – their generosity toward each other, their altruism



In the materialistic West our happiness is determined by “stuff” – our possessions and how we compare with the neighbours. We need to have the newest, biggest, smallest, most expensive, latest version of stuff.

Some countries are starting to measure their GNH (Gross National Happiness) – the happiness of the nation is demonstrated by, amongst other things:-

- The health of their children
- The quality of their education
- The joy of their play
- The strength of their marriages
- Their wit
- Their courage
- Their wisdom
- Their compassion
- The custody of their environment
- The health of their food
- The beauty of their poetry, art and music
- The intelligence of their public debate
- The integrity of their public officials
- The upholding of their culture and values
- The spirituality of their people

At Midlife, we become aware that all is not well in the world, and our disquiet can be found in our happiness (or lack of it). Part of our journey is to re-define what brings us happiness – and that re-definition could include much of what is touched on here.

Peace : The Language of Letting Go

Anxiety is often our first reaction to conflict, problems, or even our own fears. In those moments, detaching and getting peaceful may seem disloyal or apathetic. We think: if I really care, I'll worry; if this is really important to me, I must stay upset. We convince ourselves that outcomes will be positively affected by the amount of time we spend worrying.



Our best problem-solving resource is peace. Solutions arise easily and naturally out of a peaceful state. Often fear and anxiety block solutions. Anxiety gives power to the problems around us, not the solution. It does not help to harbour turmoil.

Peace is available if we choose it. In spite of chaos and unsolved problems, all is well. Things will work out. We can surround ourselves with resources of the Universe: water, earth, a sunset, a walk, a prayer, a friend. We can relax and feel peace.

Today I will let go of my need to stay in turmoil. I will cultivate peace and trust that timely solutions and goodness will arise naturally and harmoniously out of the wellspring of peace. I will consciously let go and let God.

The Serenity Prayer (Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971))

God grant me the serenity,
To accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;
Taking, as you did, this sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it;
Trusting that you will make all things right
If I surrender to your will;
That I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with you forever in the next.