



If Happiness Is A Choice, How Can You Create It?

Abraham Lincoln once said that *"People are just as happy as they make up their minds to be."* This statement is extremely powerful, as it makes each of us responsible for creating our own happiness. We can not obtain happiness from other people or from material objects; it has to start within us. The following provides some steps as to how you can create happiness in your life.

1. First, **acknowledge** that happiness is a choice, that you do have options as to how you live your life, and that you can be happy if you choose to. Don't think about yesterday or the past. Today is a new day! Just start there and let that sink in until you're ready to take the next step.
2. Next, **believe** in your heart that you can be happy, despite any negative experiences you may have encountered in the past. Many people don't believe that they can be happy or have the right to be happy, especially if they never had a good role model, grew up in a highly dysfunctional family, were abused, were made fun of and picked on in school, etc. What is holding you back from being happy? If you can't change it, then acknowledge that and begin to work through it by talking to a friend or therapist, reading a self-help book, or attending a self-love/self-esteem workshop/seminar. After all, it doesn't matter what you experienced in the past, as you can't step back and change it. You can only move forward. So, create your future with the belief that it can be filled with joy and happiness.
3. Now you are ready to **take action** to create happiness in your life. Make a list of those things which make you most happy and post them to your bathroom mirror so that you see them each morning when you wake up. Do whatever is necessary to create your definition of happiness. Know that you can create happiness wherever you go. Below are some examples of actions you can take to create happiness:
 - a. Develop a list of affirmations. Post them in a location where you will see them daily. Affirmatives are positive statements that you review and repeat daily. For example, I am happy, I am beautiful, I have many skills and abilities, I am loved, I am strong, I am in control of my life, I have much to offer the world, I am grateful for all that I have, etc.
 - b. Wake up each morning with a smile on your face. Smile at everyone you see throughout the day, strangers included. Smile when you're speaking with someone over the phone – you'd be amazed at how much better it makes you feel.

- c. Laugh often. Be around people who make you laugh. Find things that make you laugh. Be around children. Watch funny programs and movies. Laugh at yourself.
 - d. Surround yourself with positive, happy people. Negative, unhappy people can bring you down. Be around people you love and who love you.
 - e. Appreciate nature and the beauty around you. Take time to literally smell the flowers.
 - f. Engage in activities that make you feel good, physically or otherwise.
 - g. Take time for yourself. Life is busy and you could get lost in working, raising children, doing household chores, and a myriad of other activities. Remember to set aside some time for yourself every day, even if it is just 15 minutes.
 - h. Perform a kind deed for a neighbor or friend.
 - i. Give a gift to yourself - buy your favorite candy bar, go see a movie, take a vacation, read a good book, start an exercise regimen, go shopping (yes, indulge in retail therapy), get a new haircut, hire a personal trainer, see a counselor/therapist, join a group, get a massage, ride your bike, try a new restaurant, visit a good friend, etc.
 - j. Develop a list of all of your skills, abilities, and talents. You will begin to see what a beautiful and unique person you are...that you have many gifts to offer the world.
 - k. Donate to or volunteer for an important cause – there are many nonprofit organizations that could use your time, skills, or money.
 - l. If you work but are not in a position with which you are happy, look for another position within the same organization or find a new job. If you are satisfied with your current position but the work environment isn't fun, develop a plan to create a more positive work environment. You could start an employee appreciation/recognition program, schedule a monthly luncheon with co-workers, etc.
 - m. Don't sweat the small stuff. If something has happened that makes you unhappy, think about whether this will be important a month from now or a year from now. If it won't be, then it isn't worth your time.
4. There are times when life will throw you a curve ball. Just remember that even in difficult times, you will always have the choice and power to be happy. Acknowledge your value and uniqueness, appreciate your individual qualities and gifts, and be thankful for what you have, as there is always someone less fortunate than you.

The following are two exercises designed to help you think about and create happiness in your life:

1. List five things that make you happy. What comes to your mind first? Can you incorporate any of these items into your daily life? If so, what action steps are you prepared to take to do so? How committed are you to taking these steps?
2. Name five times in your life when you were the happiest. What were the experiences or events that made you most happy? Can you repeat any of these experiences/events? If so, what would it take in order for you to re-create these experiences?

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If you want to make positive changes in your professional life, and create the job or career you desire and deserve, then working with Executive & Life Coach, Sharon L. Mikrut, is the solution. Although her specialty is in partnering with nonprofit executive directors and managers to maximize their resources in a competitive environment, she is passionate about working with all individuals committed to personal and/or professional growth. Visit her website at <http://www.createitcoaching.org> or Nonprofit Professionals blog at <http://www.createitcoaching.com>, and sign up for her free monthly newsletter that provides information and resources designed to help you manage your nonprofit organization in a more effective and efficient manner. You can also visit her Empowerment blog at <http://www.createitcoaching.net>, and sign up for her free monthly life coaching newsletter.