

BE JOYFUL TO BE SUCCESSFUL

The article provides a comprehensive set of suggestions. However, it is essential, to begin with just a few simple ones you think are most vital for you and do not take much time. Try these for a week or two. After you see beneficial results of these, you may like to include some more.

This article is based on grateful inputs from many spiritual masters and wonderful books, some given elsewhere in abstract form on this web page. It brings out the principles of how to be always joyful. The details of implementing these in a daily routine are given in the "Joyfulness Practice" article. Several more articles describe the application of these techniques in various aspects of student life.

Introduction:

Most of us are anxious, worried, stressed, and insecure due to various reasons unless something good happens. The worst part is that we think this is natural in the modern, competitive world. We don't attempt anything different because of a lack of awareness of an alternative approach or a firm belief that it is not practical for an ordinary person. The purpose of this article is, therefore, twofold. First, it describes an approach through which we remain joyful most of the time unless something bad happens and how to recover faster, stronger, and wiser when that happens. Second, and more importantly, it elaborately shows that getting started with this approach is simple, practical, and requires minimal additional time and effort. Becoming an expert in this is a long and dedicated journey. The beauty of this approach is that the benefits you see with each incremental step create momentum that keeps you going.

Joyful living naturally improves confidence, charisma, creativity, emotional resilience, popularity, courage, and success.

We are unique and still integrated with the rest of the world. Our body, mind, intellect, voice are all uniquely different from others. Our talents and aspirations are also different. Hence, knowing and loving ourselves is essential for the harmony within. We also share common bonds with everything in nature. Hence, understanding and loving the rest of the world is also an essential element of the happiness journey.

The Great Joy Riddle:

Every human being yearns for continuing joy without realizing it. However, the irony is that almost no one gets it. We want sensual and mind-related pleasures (results, money, name, fame, status, etc.), dependent on external factors that we can never control. Hence, these are, by very nature, transient or short-lived. The problem is that we want to be happy tomorrow, a week, a month, or a year later, based on some expected outcomes. So, we are postponing our happiness all the time. It is entirely against the desire for continued happiness. We wish others a happy journey, not a happy destination. Thus, our thought processes, activities, and desires have a contradiction.

We compare past, present, and future circumstances and lose interest in the present if it is not good. Then the mind engages in the past experiences of hurt or joy. Sometimes, it thinks about the future as good or worries that it will be bad. Both good and bad excursions in the past or future have the same effect of reducing the focus on the present (wastage of time and energy) and reducing joy and efficiency.

Effects of Comparison and Competition:

Society has taught us that we must always compare for success and happiness, compete with others, and cheat if required. Everyone accepts that this has made life very stressful, even for school kids. What is worse is that we are told to accept this as natural and inevitable. This approach has led to continued insecurities and unhappiness. We are always looking at the average or highest performance

to decide whether we should be happy or unhappy. With this approach, neither the winner nor the loser is ever happy. The former is always insecure of someone overtaking him and hence will never cooperate with others. If you are already at the top, there is no more incentive to improve further. The latter feels humiliated by others, grudge against the system, and will do almost anything to bring the better performers down. Because of the negativity, he becomes depressed and tends to give up on improvement. Both are then sowing continuing seeds of disharmony. Then how can anyone be happy?

Research by psychologists has proved that performance improves substantially if you can remove how many are competing in the examination or entrance tests.

Past Programming:

Although we may not compare and compete with others, there is another major cause of unhappiness. It arises due to our past (even past lives) experience-based programming, which is so well entrenched in our psyche and tells us that we are not good in some things (intellect, physique, wealth, health, personality, public speaking, etc.). Most of us have some limiting beliefs. While dealing with many situations, this then causes anxiety, insecurity, irritability, and inferiority complex. Since we are not confident about facing situations (fear), we dislike uncertainty. Since continuing uncertainty is a fact of life, our attitude creates continuous stress and unhappiness. We need to reprogram ourselves with a positive attitude and become happy systematically. It truly is our mission in life.

Sometimes, traumas from the past, the memory (physical, financial, or mental harm) haunt us and do not allow us to be happy. Sometimes, past experiences make us worry about our future. The past is frozen and can't be changed, and the future has not yet arrived. We can never go back and create a happy past or be happy in the future. However, we can do our best in the present situation and create a happy present and future. We need to take responsibility and convince ourselves that we have the power to shake free from the hurts of the past, and worries about the future, and be happy every moment.

Essential Elements of the Happiness Journey:

Our body has been created and nurtured from the five cosmic elements (earth, air, water, fire, and space) and will eventually return to the same after death. Similarly, the mind is just an accumulation of impressions gathered from various sources over many lives, as described earlier. When we realize their complete interconnectedness with everything around us, the following things are the only logical things to bring harmony inside and outside. Only then peace and happiness are possible.

1. Love Yourself Immensely:

Love leads to harmony, and harmony leads to peace which is happiness.

Love is the binding force in the Universe. Every cell of our body and mind naturally has a strong affinity for love. Every person craves to love and be loved. It is our primal need after the survival ones. It is also not one time need but a continuing one from birth to death.

For the harmony within, we need to love for ourselves. For harmony outside, we need to have all-encompassing love for all other human beings, living things, environment, nature, and Universe or God. However, to begin with, it is best to start with the simplest and most important one of loving ourselves.

The most important person in our life is yourself. We experience the world through our most important life partners, body and mind. If we are physically unwell, even a paradise outside will not make us happy. Likewise, if our mind is disturbed, physical comfort or outside beauty is of no use. If we are full of love, we will naturally express nothing but love and happiness to others and in our work. Likewise, if we lack love, it will be reflected as unhappiness in everything we do. Hence, if we want to experience a better life, we must be full of love. It is a long but exciting journey and happens with practicing self-love. It is foundational.

The apparent problem of feeling overweight, too tall, too short, too dumb, too ugly, too lazy, timid are all outward expressions of the actual root problem of "Not Loving The Self."

We are all imperfect in many ways. Our duty in life is to lovingly accept ourselves with whatever strengths and weaknesses we have, without judgment. We must have immense respect for ourselves and gratitude for the miracle of our body and mind. We can then systematically take continuous, small steps to improve ourselves in every aspect. Unconditional, steadfast support for ourselves despite circumstances and setbacks is essential, which enhances self-esteem. With self-love, health, money, and relations become better. Creativity improves. All this without even trying.

Self-love is a kind of self-talk in which we assure ourselves about our love. The assurance is for a strong hope for improvement despite the feeling of imperfection we have. It is a motherly or divine kind of love despite our bad performance, mistakes, and limitations. We lovingly accept ourselves as we are, without judgment. However, it doesn't mean that we approve of everything we do. It also doesn't mean that we don't need to improve. On the contrary, we lovingly seek continuous improvement in every area we want.

Self-love means self-approval, self-acceptance, without any criticism. It is a miracle cure. The way we look at our body, touch our body, talk to our body, and mind must reflect deep love. It creates a space of safety, trust and leads to an organized mind.

Self-love means being peaceful despite our mistakes, others' wrong behavior, challenging situations. Without any negativity, we try to do what best we can in small steps. Love and negativity (unhappiness) can't coexist. Hence, the more we affirm self-love, it is truly felt by us inside, and gradually, without even trying, our negativity (unhappiness) starts getting diluted. It is a long and unending journey. Our beliefs, values, and character start getting refined such that harmony between our desires, thoughts, and actions increases.

When you fill yourself with immense love, it starts getting reflected in your better beliefs, values, and character, and your life improves beyond your imagination. Love attracts good things towards you. Work, relationships, health, everything start improving.

For one month, try self-love affirmations with as many feelings as you can, as many times as possible. To begin with, you may feel it is a stupid exercise and that you don't believe it to be true. Continue nevertheless. Your body and mind like it and believes it. Slowly, your experience itself will convince you.

Self-Love Affirmation Exercise: Look into the mirror, into your own eyes, and say with as much feeling as you can, "(Your Name), I love you & approve you as you are." Say 3-4 hundred times a day. Make it your walking mantra. For some persons, this exercise may not work in the beginning. But it forces you to bring out why you don't love yourself. Then we can correct it.

Whenever you get time, make one self-love affirmation. It is so easy and takes so little time that you can practice it anytime, anywhere. You can also use the hourly chime to remind yourself to do one self-love affirmation. Every day you have to wait at many places. At such times, do a few self-love affirmations. It makes you feel calm instantly.

The moment you remember the intention of doing self-love affirmation, you start feeling good. Doing one affirmation is so easy that there is no excuse not to begin. The moment you do one, you think you can do more. Very quickly, the momentum builds up. It is the best addiction to have. It is indeed a master key to Joyful Living.

Few minutes of mindful meditation. Once you are calm, you invite a feeling of kindness towards yourself. Quietly, repeat these phrases to yourself

Also, affirm, "May I be well." "May I be happy." "May I be free from suffering."

Think about what makes you feel good. Do things that make you feel good. Be with people that make you feel good. Eat things that make you feel good. Go to a place that makes you feel good.

Self-awareness exercise can be done without self-love, and that is also useful. However, with self-love, self-awareness happens in a magical dimension.

By practicing self-love daily, people have been able to sleep better. This training also gives us the strength and skills we need to deal with difficulties and emotional pain. With this, what appears to be painful will be less painful, what is neutral will become more joyful, and what is joyful will become even more joyful. It starts a virtuous cycle.

Love yourself enough to allow yourself the space to suffer without shame or judgment. As long as we possess the human body and live a human life, there will be pain. Love yourself enough to allow space and time to heal. Love yourself enough to cradle yourself in pain, tenderly with kindness.

Love Your Mind: Meditation

Negativity or unhappiness leads to a disturbed mind, and positivity and happiness lead to a quiet and peaceful mind. Meditation is the art of becoming peaceful, harmonious, and happy. It is our natural state. Practice some simple form of meditation, preferably early in the morning. Mindful deep breathing gives you the benefits of Pranayama and meditation: Begin with just two minutes of mindful breathing, and gradually increase the period as per your comfort level. It is meditation at rest and is the foundation. However, we need to extend it to the external world gradually. Here, we notice everything that we see with love, without judgment. In the beginning, our mind frequently wanders from the object of meditation. Just be aware, and bring it gently back without thinking bad about it.

Meditation need not always be place and time-specific. Step counting while walking or "mantra" chanting (as per your own beliefs) while driving/walking are examples. Think that everything in this Universe is helping you to be calm and peaceful. Do meditation frequently. It is just the ability to suggest to the mind to be peaceful. It is the most powerful happiness intervention. Just taking three mindful, deep breaths every hour is very refreshing. Mindfulness is the most important skill to learn in life. It is useful everywhere.

It has been seen that just 10 minutes of meditation has improved GRE scores considerably. It improves decision-making and avoids stupid mistakes. It also improves moods and emotions. Ninety seconds of slow, deep breathing has been proved to provide substantial happiness spikes.

"Just like me" meditation involves observing common things between us and others. It improves harmony. In "Loving Kindness" meditation, we wish happiness for others. In "Compassion Meditation," we wish them to be free from suffering.

Importance of Rest and Peace: Like holding a glass of water- It is not the weight of the glass and water, but the length of time you hold the glass that tires you. The same is the case with life's problems. Holding them for a while is O.K. Hold them for a long time; they begin to ache. Hold them even longer, and they can paralyze you. It is essential to learn to put them down at the end of the day before sleeping. Doing it more often through meditation is even better. Do it even during lunch and tea breaks. It need not be long. Just 2-3 minutes will be O.K.

Thought Conditioning:

Mind is so powerful that it can make heaven a hell, hell heaven. John Milton-Paradise Lost.

Our belief systems have been created by the past programming experiences from the family, society, religion, country, and environment. These are mainly responsible for the quality of our thoughts. These, in turn, generate feelings. Repeated feeling patterns create an attitude that shapes our personality, which eventually creates our destiny. However, it is a continuous process. Earlier, we allowed ourselves to be influenced by all impressions that came our way without our knowledge. With this understanding, we can put filters on these impressions and allow only those beneficial to us. The effect of our companions is contagious. Hence, it is essential to avoid bad company deliberately and have good company as far as possible. Likewise, we should be selective in having positive reading, listening, and viewing as much as possible.

We are all aware that the body gets dirty and gathers germs during our daily activities, and hence, we need to take a bath and wash our hands several times a day to remain fresh and healthy. However, most of us are unaware that our mind also gets dirty and infected due to worries, stress, anxiety, and negative emotions (anger, jealousy, envy, hatred, etc.) as we go about doing our daily work. Medical research has conclusively proved that these can lead to severe diseases. If we understand this and learn some simple mind cleansing techniques, we can improve our health, job, relations, and happiness.

Is it possible to be joyful in every moment of life, including failures, setbacks, ailments, separation, and even the death of dear ones? Yes, if we understand the true meaning of joyfulness. It is just the satisfaction of doing your best in every situation with the strength and wisdom we have at that moment.

Our brain receives roughly 11 million pieces of information per second, while it can process only about 40/second. To manage this overload, the brain has some kind of spam filter. Unfortunately, in a majority of cases, it is unconsciously developed based on our belief systems. However, if we redevelop the same based on awareness, it can be vital to happiness.

Before conditioning, we must understand the nature of our thoughts. These are of the following four types. Pure (positive, selfless). Necessary (neutral about actions and duties). Negative (resentment, hatred, anger). Waste (about past and future).

The last two constitute 95% of our thoughts. Moreover, we can eliminate information that is of no use, not required right now, and distracting. Imagine the time and energy wastage in this.

We need to be aware of the quality of our thoughts, then check these against the categories mentioned above, and if these are not right, change them. Thoughts come very fast, and hence it is not easy to monitor them continuously. Our emotions and feelings guide us in this respect.

Before anything is created in the physical plane, it is first created in the mental plane. Our subconscious mind can't detect the difference between what is real and what is imaginary. Hence, it is essential to program our minds with deliberate good, happy thoughts to make that happen in our lives, although things may not necessarily be good at present.

What we think consciously and passionately about will manifest. Clarity and awareness are crucial components of conscious thought. The feelings add intensity. If thoughts with feelings are repeated frequently, the subconscious mind gets programmed. It then proceeds to take action. It hastens the process.

Whatever negative we resist will persist. For happiness, focus on thoughts of happiness, not of unhappiness.

Brains perform at their best when we are primed to feel happy by remembering a past good performance.

Techniques to improve positive thinking:

Train mind to see multiple perceptions of the same situation rather than just good/bad, and select the best one. For example, half full or half empty glass is very limited because there could be a water source available.

Slide Strategy: If sometimes some negative thought comes, quickly negate it by using 'but.' For example, if someone says, "There is so much corruption everywhere." We may say, "That appears to be true, but let us all try to improve the same." A most powerful technique is to develop 'Catch Phrases' which suit us and the objective. For example, "God is giving me strength and wisdom to face any situation."

Substitution Strategy: The moment we become aware of a negative thought, deliberately substitute it with a positive one. Instead of saying, "don't be stressed," say, "Relax." Instead of saying "don't shout," say, "speak softly." Always use optimistic and inspirational words. E.g., Instead of "I can't do this work," say "let me see how I can do this work." In the 1st case, the doors are closed. In the 2nd, you are open to higher possibilities.

All of us have a natural tendency to remember negative information much more than the positive. Psychology researchers suggest that we must counter one negative information by at least three positive ones to remain positive.

Observing 'Negativity fast' and 'Worry fast' for a given period also helps develop a positive attitude. Begin by doing this for just one hour every day. Then slowly increase the period.

Write down all toxic negative feelings on paper. Tear it into pieces and flush it.

When we have a positive attitude, we become a magnet for the best solution. What others think about us is not that important; what we think about ourselves is. Our self-image has a significant bearing on our performance. We can't succeed with a bad self-image. It is essential to improve the same through loving affirmations and prayers about our capabilities.

Remove blaming, criticism, abuse, and bad words from your life. Always utter words of blessings, well-being, progress, and prayer. Be a happy thought reporter.

We get so many opportunities to sow the seeds of positivity and hope in others' lives. Be alert and grab those opportunities at home, neighborhood, office, street, market, don't participate in a negative group talk. Instead, after even mildly agreeing with a negative situation, you may say, "It may be true, but let us see what we can do to improve it." We habitually get involved in negative talk about politics, government, corruption, office, society. Always add, "this may be so, but let us all try to make it better."

You must never trust your thoughts when you are in sorrow. Never take any major decision when you are in deep sorrow. If you ever need advice, take it only from happy persons. Only the happiest persons are most reliable, and they give true guidance.

Acceptance:

We face unwanted situations/persons many a time, causing misery, unhappiness. The typical reaction in such situations is a negative feeling like worry, stress, anxiety, anger, hatred. These sap a tremendous amount of energy and make us miserable. Our efficiency also reduces. Since these events are never under control and have already occurred, we need to accept them without negativity and look at what best can be done under the circumstances. Sometimes, the situation is so severe that it is almost impossible to avoid negative feelings. In such cases, instead of resisting the feeling, be aware and accept that you feel angry, hurt, devastated, and so on. Don't bottle up emotions. If the build-up continues, it can create psychological problems.

After identifying and accepting the feeling, just be with this acceptance for as long as you can. Then it will vanish. There might be another feeling; accept that as well and be peaceful. This way, you release the emotion. Do not ever suppress a feeling. Suffer skillfully by just feeling it without judgment, cradling it with love and compassion.

Make peace with your past and future. Focusing on the past (good/bad) is like driving a car looking into the rearview mirror. Similarly, thinking about the future (good/bad) is like looking far ahead rather than focusing on the road ahead. Both are equally dangerous. It is not just about the security, but the life experience itself is always in the present.

Love Peace:

It is during adverse incidents that peace is most required. It is when wrong things are happening that focusing on happiness and peace is most important. The simplest way to access peace is by saying with a smile on your face, "I love peace." Utter these words with your mind and heart every time you feel disturbed. Initially, it may seem foolish and unreal, but still, continue and do your best. The moment you utter these words, unhappy thoughts get diluted. Continue doing this until happy thoughts reappear. The words inspire you to feel peace. Another very effective way is to do meditation. If that is not possible, at least do mindful, deep breathing. Slowly agitation will subside.

Emotional Intelligence:

Earlier it was believed that intellect was the most important factor in determining success. Later research has shown that Emotional intelligence is also another significant factor for the same. It begins with Self Awareness. The triggers responsible for making us unhappy can be identified through a Journaling exercise. We can understand their waxing and waning by thinking about a painful event and its slow-motion feeling effect on the body. Then it is possible to control the otherwise default, reactive automatic process consciously. That is why it is essential to make emotions your friends who provide us important feedback for improvement.

Love Your Body: Your body is the most important and precious vehicle that you have. Loving your body means showing your gratitude for its cooperation. Proper eating, exercise, even the way you touch your body and look at it should reflect your love. Understand when it gets stressed, tensed, and immediately take steps to relax it. Deliberate deep breathing calms mind and body anytime. It can be done even during an important meeting. If feasible, take a washroom or coffee break or a short walk

outside. Short naps (5-10 minutes) effectively make you feel energetic again when you feel tired. These can be even better than coffee breaks. At least half an hour of vigorous exercise like jogging daily, a brisk walk is a must. Yoga or other body stretching exercises for 10 minutes are also very helpful.

Regular exercise results in brain neuron rewiring, stress reduction, improved immunity, strength, and an attractive body. It releases endorphin chemicals in the brain, creating a feeling of happiness. Choose an exercise that suits you best. Start with the smallest duration and gradually increase the same. Doing it with some positive friends helps in strengthening the good habit.

2. Love Others:

As explained earlier, when we desist from comparison, competition and become responsible for our happiness, with reduced expectations, increased tolerance, love for others becomes natural. However, we need to do it deliberately and frequently. Expressing gratitude for any help, appreciation, kind word, and praying for them are the most important things to do. Rejoice in the good acts of others.

We can help others in need in diverse ways, physically, financially, psychologically (showing respect, motivating, appreciation). Let us do whatever is feasible, keeping our strengths and limitations in mind. Loving others means creating a vast army of well-wishers who help us in many ways. Increased happiness and productivity are then bound to happen.

Social Investment: Having good relationships with family, friends, and colleagues is the greatest asset in times of challenge. It makes you feel energetic, happier, productive, and resilient. Greet known persons with a smile come within 10 feet and say a warm "Hello" when within 5 feet, looking in their eyes. Daily perform five conscious acts of kindness (even simple ones like holding the door.)

3. Love Nature & Universe:

These are immense forces affecting us in a significant way. Gratitude and prayers for their tremendous contribution to our life are essential. It increases their support in our lives. It makes us peaceful and strong.

To de-stress yourself, take a short break and take a walk in a green area whenever you can. Talking to nature brings peace. Share good/bad things with nature. You can even ask for advice.

4. Prayers:

Before we pray for ourselves, we must pray for others. Pray for nature and the Universe as well. Pray for unknown persons, animals you meet everywhere. Pray for persons in the office, then friends, family members, and finally yourself. If you pray for others, you don't have to pray for yourself. Use only positive prayers. The intensity of feeling is crucial. Rather than asking for material things in prayer (which you may or may not get), pray for strength and wisdom in dealing with persons and situations (these things are given). However, it is a long journey involving rigorous mind reprogramming. In prayers, we should first express gratitude before asking. Gratitude is the best prayer.

First, pray for the welfare, love, harmony, happiness of those who hurt you in the decreasing order, then the ones not known to you or are known but neutral to you, and finally, the near and dear ones. All these things are not primarily to help others but to help yourself become peaceful and happy. Prayers should be done continuously.

When you are not clear about the best course of action at any stage, meditate, and then pray for clarity and guidance with love and conviction. Don't insist on any timeframe or the nature of guidance. Keep on doing this, and at appropriate moment guidance will come in some form.

5. AFFIRMATIONS:

Affirmations are vital mind programming techniques that develop a positive attitude. These are auto-suggestions that get recorded on the subconscious mind. Through this, we replace the

existing, negative programs recorded in a default, auto-pilot mode without our realizing it. Before affirmations, meditate. Select a few affirmations in areas of life requiring improvement. Repeat each affirmation a minimum of 3 times, every morning and evening, until you have internalized it. Read them aloud, softly, with rhythm, love, and joy. Let it ring in your mind throughout the day. Visualize your affirmation as a goal that has already been achieved. Write these affirmations on cards and keep them at a place where you can see them regularly. Daily, reflect on what has already been achieved and record progress in a special notebook.

Following are some examples of affirmations. You may modify these to suit your requirements at a given moment, depending on what you want to improve.

I am serene, tranquil, and happy.

I am in love and harmony with everything within and around me.

6. GRATITUDE:

Happy persons are always grateful. However, studies have conclusively shown that consciously practicing gratitude improves happiness significantly. The more grateful you are, you get more things to be grateful for.

Show gratitude, appreciation, and admiration at every possible opportunity every day. The idea is to be in a positive frame of mind as much as possible, starving negativity.

1. After waking up in bed, think of a few things to be grateful for from the following list. God, Universe, Earth, Nature: Plants, animals, people, Body and health, Work(Studies/job), Money, Relations and friends, love, happiness, Home, and other material goods like a car, phone, etc.

2. Before going to sleep, think of the three good things which happened during the day. Think of the reason for the same and say 'Thank You' with feeling. If you could not find even a single good thing today, look at the previous day(s) for the same. These could be from any area of life and need not be big things. Anything that made you smile is O.K.

Writing down a positive experience in a journal for 10-15 minutes a few times a week has resulted in significant improvement in happiness.

Meditation, prayers, love, gratitude are baths for the mind. Like we have to take baths daily, sometimes more than once, the mind also needs these baths. It removes dirt and germs from negativity.

Love, prayers, affirmations, gratitude, and acceptance are the foundations of the happy journey. These should be all-pervading in life. Do it everywhere, whenever an opportunity arises. Do it in the washroom, walking, in bus/metro, car, station, airport. Even create deliberate breaks for washroom etc. Wash your face. Look in the mirror and say, "I love you very much." "I love peace." While in the office or walking, take mindful deep breaths.

Love, prayers, and gratitude may or may not benefit others, but these benefit us immensely. Likewise, forgiving others and ourselves for any wrongdoing does not favor others but a great favor to ourselves. It removes the poison of negativity inside us which hurts our mind and body. However, just forgiving is not enough; we must also forget that we have forgiven. Otherwise, we think of ourselves as superior, which increases ego.

Joyful Action:

If we were to do our work of any kind joyfully, we don't have to wait for results to be happy. We are then happy every moment. But then, how do we work all the time joyfully, irrespective of the nature of the work. We have been accustomed to labeling some actions as important and many others as not important. For example, simple things such as household work, taking a bath, eating food, buying groceries and vegetables, and studies for students are treated as a nuisance rather than an enjoyable activity. We want to get over these as quickly as possible and spare more time for work, which we think will give desired rewards, bring happiness, or do other enjoyable things like watching a movie, match, or favorite serial. This approach of resisting what needs to be done always creates

stress and continued unhappiness. Hence, everything that needs to be done must be done with immense love. Then life blossoms with happiness in every moment. It is also known as living in the now.

Happiness is an Inside Job:

It is easy to see that continued happiness can only come from things that we can control all the time, not the external factors beyond our control. We can only control our attitude and response to persons and circumstances, and never the latter. That is why happiness is entirely an inside job, a choice, and hence, fully our responsibility. What we have been doing is exactly the opposite. We want persons, circumstances, and results to change to suit our desires and provide happiness. We are like a king sitting on a throne of happiness but completely ignorant about it and hence have become beggars of happiness.

Serenity Prayer:

The practice of the following Serenity Prayer (slightly modified) can lead to joyful living.

"God, give us strength and courage to change whatever should be changed lovingly; grace to lovingly accept with serenity, the things that can't be changed; and the wisdom to know the difference."

It means that we must respond to any situation, person, or challenge to the best of our ability. This satisfaction is true happiness. Since there is no comparison, competition, no win/lose situation, there is no insecurity/fear about the outcome. We then act spontaneously, with joy. We don't even worry about how much we can change or whether things can change for the better. We even accept happily, with love, and graceful surrender, the things we can't change at all or can change just partially. Since we drop all resistance, we are not anxious, worried, and have no feeling of inadequacy. The peace and tranquility which comes with this attitude allow us to be most alert, wise and efficient. God is also giving us the wisdom to discriminate the difference between the two situations. Joyfulness is an attitude that allows you to respond to any situation described above, not a destination.

What do we do when the weather is bad? If it rains, we carry a raincoat or umbrella. If it is cold, we wear thermals or warm woollens. If it is hot, we put on a/c. In short, instead of complaining about the weather, we protect ourselves and get on with our job. If the weather is too bad, we may skip going to work/market to protect ourselves. Instead of waiting for the weather to improve, we must learn to enjoy every weather. With the shifting weather patterns of life, we must apply the same protection first and then do our best in our situation.

Every situation and person we encounter is designed to teach us something in our evolution and are equally important. Terming a situation or a person good or bad is equally dangerous because of the clinging (to good) and aversion (to bad) it creates. It is extremely detrimental to learning. Win and loss, success and failure both teach us different aspects of life. No one is superior to the other. Loving acceptance of the situation and persons and doing our best is the key.

A Joyful Alternative:

In this approach, irrespective of where you are in the performance spectrum, you look at only your performance and see how you can do better. In this case, there is no competition, and hence, there is no friction and stress. With this approach, the top performer and the lowest performer are both happy. Both look for doing their best, whatever be the result. The top performer has no insecurity and is prepared to help lower performers because that gives him joy. He doesn't bother about the marks/awards but wants to improve the joy of doing things at every step in life. The lower performer also looks at his performance objectively and looks for help in joyfully improving his performance all the time. There is a natural spontaneity and joy in everything that we do. We then respond with joy, to the best of our ability in any given situation, without worrying about the result. Then we find joy in helping each other without fear of losing. There is no cheating, jealousy, envy, anger, or hatred, which

sap so much energy. We synergize our strengths, empower each other, and grow much stronger as individuals and as a group/organization.

Happiness is not a goal. We have to enjoy the journey towards any goal. Happiness is also a skill that anyone can develop. It is important to note that happiness level is a variable for any person depending on internal and external factors (because we are not yet fully evolved) and different for everyone (depending on their happiness skill). Love and joy bring a passion for working and making it feel effortless. We are most creative when we are joyful because we are relaxed and alert at the same time.

Law of Attraction:

It has been proved that we generally attract circumstances and persons consistent with our dominant thought pattern to ourselves. Hence, happy persons attract happy persons and events and vice versa. As discussed earlier, if we carry negative emotions about others, others also automatically do the same about us. Any form of negativity reduces our efficiency in dealing with events and persons. It leads to frustration, and with a negative mindset, we hold others responsible for our mess. It becomes a vicious cycle. If we understand this dangerous cycle, we can break this and start a new healthy, positive evolution cycle. For this, we need to stop the 'complaint factory' and start a 'gratitude factory.' A grateful person attracts a large no. of supporters who help him in succeeding in his endeavors.

If we are apprehensive of a failure in an exam, interview, a game, a stage performance, our mind and brain get a negative signal (what's the use type), reducing the efficiency of the preparation, as well as the final performance, and more often than not, failure will happen. Whereas, if we remain calm and confident, we can do our best with whatever we have prepared, and the chances of success brighten. It applies to all aspects of life like jobs, relationships, etc.

Seed First Crop Later:

It is the universal law of life without exception. It applies to studies, business, relationships, and joyfulness as well. It says that you have first to plant a seed of whatever you seek (love, respect, happiness) and nurture it to get it back multiplied. You can't be happy all alone without caring for others. You have to think and act, keeping the happiness of others in view. You can't necessarily make others happy. However, this is a prerequisite for your happiness.

Practice Happiness:

In studies, games, business, bodybuilding, music, we need to prepare and practice what we want (exam results, winning matches, profits, good physique, performance). In this, we overcome our weaknesses and develop expertise. The same approach is required for happiness. We need to practice happiness to become good at being happy. It is like acting in a drama or a movie. For every role, we want to give our best and make it appear natural. Same thing we do in preparation for JEE, GRE, CAT, GMAT, or regular semester exams. Hence, we need to think and behave the way a really happy person would do for happiness acting. Over some time, our performance becomes real and natural. The Music maestros do 'Riyaz' or practice lovingly, every day, whether they have a concert scheduled or not. Both practice and performance give them the same happiness. It is, in fact, a lifelong, continuous journey. Today, we are practicing unhappiness (comparison, competition, pessimistic, negative talk all around) and hoping to become happy because of the constant exposure to negative news/discussion in the media, society, family, and colleagues about almost everything around us. If you want to be better at cricket, you can't practice hockey.

Behave Like a Joyful Person:

Observe how a joyful person looks and behaves in different situations, and imitate him as much as you can. Such a person is always relaxed and smiling. Laughter comes easily to him. He may not wear expensive clothes but is smartly dressed. Clothes are clean, he takes a bath, shaves, and smells good. His body posture while standing or sitting is that of a confident person. His voice is not

loud or too soft. He doesn't need abusive words to impress others. He always cares and inquires about others instead of bragging about himself.

Three types of happiness last for different periods. The pleasure-based one has the shortest time frame. The passion (for work) based one lasts much longer. However, the one

Doing something good for others (the larger the group, the better) lasts the longest. Knowing this helps us in selecting our goals.

Smile and Laughter:

Success brings smiles and laughter. However, such events are very few. Our capacity to have a smile on our face almost regularly, and our capacity to laugh frequently, makes us and others happy. This helps us in remaining calm and positive even under adverse conditions. Then, we can do whatever is best under the circumstances. Efficiency and the outcome also improve with this approach. People have used love and laughter therapy to heal themselves from serious ailments, without medicines

Winning and losing:

We usually always like to win and hate to lose. But do these lead to happiness as we expect? Let us examine.

If we play with weak players continuously, we may always win. But we never learn to improve because we win with lesser and lesser efforts. Our actual potential reduces over time due to a lack of practice/challenge. On the contrary, if we play with stronger opponents all the time, we may mostly lose. But with every outing, we improve. We may have lost the first few games very badly, but we start winning more and more points with practice. After more practice, we may begin winning an occasional game. But the moment we win, if we want to improve further, we must start playing with the next level person. Then the same cycle described earlier will repeat. Hence, it appears at first sight that we are almost losing continuously in life, but in reality, we are happier because of the continuous improvement.

In life also, we face the predicament of choosing between tough and soft options at every step. In student life, taking easier courses, easier projects, and shortcuts are such options. After education, we like easy-going jobs with more salaries. However, challenging options enhance, and soft options reduce our capability. These have a tremendous impact on our careers. These are like workbook problems of different degrees of difficulty. Success and happiness always come from our ability to tackle tougher problems.

Goals:

For joyful and effective action, we need to clarify what we are doing and why we are doing it. This is possible only through setting up SMART goals for the long, medium, and short term.

Happiness and effectiveness must be in harmony with our mind, body, and spirit (for details, please see the article on Goals). Since time and energy is limited, we must know how to allocate and use them most effectively. The Pareto principle says that 80 % of results come from 20 % of actions. Find out such actions in every time frame. Hence, we need to identify these as top priorities (for details, please see the article on Time management). We also need to do a sincere audit of the goals and achievements in every timeframe and record comments on the differences.

Habits:

Whether we are aware or not, we are slaves of our habits. Habits are designed into our system for efficient action. However, most of our habits have been developed unconsciously, and these are likely to be very detrimental to our happiness. We need to first become aware of our habits in all spheres of life. We need to incrementally challenge ourselves in many ways to break free from bad habits and substitute them with good ones. This is a slow but very important process.

Frequently and consciously exercise your special skill or strength, such as punctuality, truthfulness, mindful listening, to improve your self-esteem.

Self-Talk and Visualization:

The stories we tell ourselves about our past and future affect our happiness. This is called Self-Talk. Most of our mind excursions in the past and future are uncontrolled, negative, and obsessive. This makes us unhappy due to pain from the past and fear and worries for the future. Deliberate, positive self-talk for planned, short durations many times a day rectifies this. This is achieved by deliberately recalling our (or our role models) past best performances. This gives a psychological repeat order for them in the future. For the future as well, we can think of doing our best in selected scenarios. Instead of just thinking, visualizing the good past and future with details is a far more effective tool that has been used by great persons in all spheres of life. These actions boost our confidence and self-image, which is so vital for happiness and success.

Happiness Practice Is A Journey:

It is essential to understand that the transition from the old, negative, unhappy ways to the new, positive, happy ways is not like a switch. It's a gradual process. Moreover, there is a continuous war raging within us between good and bad forces. To begin with, bad forces often win. With practice, goodwill wins more often. With very long practice, we may lose to bad forces only occasionally. Hence, continuous vigil is required. A similar-minded group of friends is a big help in this journey.

Saying that "I don't have time for this in my busy schedule" is like saying, "I don't have time for a pit stop for a car on a long journey." The car will get overheated and have a breakdown. The driver and the car need periodic breaks to check car condition, cool down, and feel refreshed. The same thing happens with the human body and mind in a stressful, hectic life. Moreover, the time you spend on these activities will be more than compensated by the improved efficiency in all matters.