



Searching for happiness?

Searching for happiness is like riding a taxi in search of a taxi. You wouldn't take a taxi to search for a taxi, would you? Why search for what you already have? The search for happiness is no different. It's a search for something you already have. Granted, it may not be obvious, for your happiness may be hidden in the recesses of your being.



Do you remember the story of the ugly duckling? Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale is a powerful story that strikes a chord with us because we see ourselves; for we are ugly ducklings. At least we think we are. Until we awaken to the fact that we are beautiful swans, we will be unhappy. Happiness is discovering who we really are. We were born as swans, full of potential, in love with the world, and happy. But we were told we were ugly ducklings and came to believe the lies. Like a huge mudslide burying a village, the lies people told buried our happiness. Although unseen, our happiness is still there, ready to reappear as soon as we wash away the mud. The swan is our true self; the ugly duckling is our false self. Another name for our false self is EGO.

What is our ego? Nothing more than negative thoughts we have about ourselves. Examples of such thoughts are: "I'm worthless. I'm lazy. I'm bad. I'm stupid." These thoughts are lies, but after hearing them as young children we came to accept them as true. After repeatedly being told we were stupid, we came to believe it. Because of that belief, we acted stupidly. And that negative behaviour reinforced the negative belief. Before long, whenever we looked in the mirror, all we saw was an ugly duckling.

How do we break the cycle? We start by understanding what led us to believe we are ugly ducklings. We awaken by realizing that we are swans, magnificent beings capable of flight. Awareness of our true self is the beginning of happiness. As we wash away the mud (lies), our true nature will shine forth. As we realize that our actions were not based on "what we are" but what "we thought we were", our potential will have the opportunity to unfold.

True, after holding false beliefs for many years, it is difficult to find happiness in ourselves, but it is not possible to find it anywhere else. So, the time to awaken is NOW. The sooner we change our perspective and thoughts, the sooner we will experience happiness. Our reality is created by the thoughts we focus on. We need to change our focus from what we can't do to what we can, from problems to solutions, from depression to inspiration, from doubt to confidence. Focus on what you want to be, not on what you think you are. Whenever we catch ourselves having a negative thought, it is time to ask, "*Why am I experiencing this thought? What should I be thinking in its place? What action can I take to get back on track?*"

Once we realize our true nature, we won't go looking for happiness in all the wrong places. But as long as we are trapped in our ego, we will feel that we are incomplete and imperfect. Believing that we are inferior, we will search for happiness outside ourselves. After all, the EGO believes that *"Everything Good is Outside"* (E.G.O.). We mistakenly believe we will find happiness when we do something else, move somewhere else, or meet someone else. But no matter where we move, what we do, or who we meet, we will always be in our own company. If we can't be happy where we are, we can't be happy where we're not. Is it possible to be happy if we do not accept and love ourselves?

The surest and easiest path to happiness is to give it to others. This idea is expressed beautifully in the following Chinese proverb:

"If you want happiness for an hour -- take a nap.

If you want happiness for a day -- go fishing.

If you want happiness for a month -- get married.

If you want happiness for a year -- inherit a fortune.

If you want happiness for a lifetime -- help someone else."

Along similar lines, Buddha said:

"Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared."

The Dalai Lama, who is the living Buddha of the Tibetans, has said:

"If you want others to be happy → practice compassion

If you want to be happy → practice compassion"

Happiness is a priceless gift. When we hold onto it, it is a seed; when we share it, it is a flower. When we divide it among others, it grows and multiplies. Where do we go from here? Well, Oscar Wilde describes two types of people, and we need to decide which group we want to belong to:

"Some cause happiness wherever they go; others whenever they go."