

10 COMMON TRAITS THAT KILL HAPPINESS

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When we look for things to bring us happiness we often look outside of ourselves, and we're often looking for things we can gain.

However, instead of looking for external gain, looking inward and giving up some of our self-defeating thought habits and behavioral patterns can bring us as much or more happiness than external gains. See what you think...

1. Give up internal criticism.

We are often our own worst critic. Many times our self-criticism isn't a fair criticism, it's a negative thought pattern that we repeat to ourselves. These thought patterns are often ingrained in us at an early age, even before we learn to think and reason. If we're caught in this trap, we need to realize it's not our fault, and then instead of beating ourselves up, try a little inward kindness instead.

2. Give up external criticism.

It makes sense if we're always looking for what's wrong that we'll find it. Doing so means we're finding things to be unhappy about. Isn't it better to look for the good, and in doing so, find things to be happy about instead?

3. Give up the fear of change.

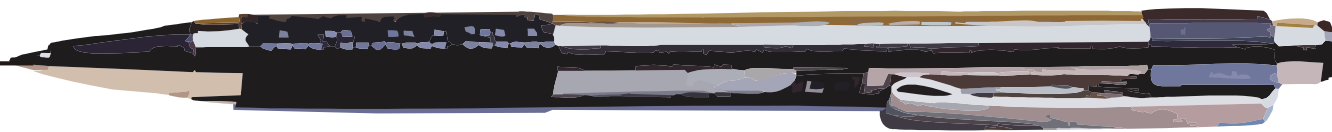
We grow comfortable in our circumstances, and often fear change will bring discomfort. But we don't live in a static world, change is ongoing, and it's often for the better. If we don't fear change, we can often direct how it affects us, thus making change more to our liking.

4. Give up the shadows of past sorrow.

Most, if not all of us, have secret sorrows. A good many of us use them to rationalize why we shouldn't take new risks. For example, if we've had our heart broken by someone we loved, we might use that experience as a shield between us and others so no one can hurt us that much again. That also means we're hanging on to the pain instead of moving past it.

5. Give up trying to please everyone.

When we try to please everyone we inevitably end up denying ourselves. Denying ourselves can be a good trait when it's for a greater good, but it can also turn us into doormats for everyone to walk on. Allowing ourselves to be repeatedly taken advantage of may please others, but it usually displeases us at some level.



6. Give up self-limiting beliefs.

Many of us have old, out-dated beliefs about ourselves. Some date back to childhood and are only valid simply because we still believe them. Most of us are capable of far more than we realize. If our beliefs matched our potential we would likely amaze ourselves at what we could accomplish. Instead of saying things like I can't or I don't know how...ask, "How can I?" You may pleasantly surprise yourself at all you can do.

7. Give up blaming others for our circumstances or results.

We have to own our life. Blaming others is to give away our power. Albert Ellis said it best, "The best years of your life are the ones in which you decide your problems are your own. You do not blame them on your mother, the ecology, or the president. You realize that you control your own destiny."

8. Give up the need to be right.

When we force others to accept that we are right, it usually means putting them in the position of being wrong. No one likes that. Many times there is little or nothing to be gained from being right. Forcing our convictions on others often alienates them from us. Not all victories are worth the cost.

9. Give up the desire to control everything.

It's often better to get along than to get our own way. When we insist on controlling everything we are silently saying to others that their desires, tastes, ideas, and intelligence are inferior to ours, or that they aren't as important as we are. As with insisting we are right, this can alienate others from us, causing unhappiness.

10. Give up comparing ourselves to others.

Comparing our known reality to the perceived reality we have about someone else isn't a fair proposal. The only truly useful comparison we can make is to compare our self to our self. Are we making progress? Are we improving as human beings? Are we wiser than we were five years ago? Are we more understanding? Kinder? More skilled? We can't mark our decay or growth against others because other people are not static.

Any one of those thought habits or behavioral traits can dampen our happiness. Indulging in all of them is likely to result in a strong sense of unhappiness. All can be overcome if we choose.

The happiness we may gain comes at a price though...change. And remember, item three was about giving up the fear of change. That's why those who feel trapped by any of these behavioral traits often remain trapped by them.

