

Why Happiness Postponed Is Happiness Lost

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We'll be happy when we land that dream job, find the perfect partner, move into our dream house, have enough money to retire... Many people place conditions on being happy, but the reality is that happiness is not about having, achieving, acquiring, or arriving. Happiness is a choice. And we can choose to be happy here and now!

In *The Top 5 Regrets of the Dying*, author and palliative care nurse Bronnie Ware reports that the dying: "wish they'd let themselves be happier." Why is it that we place so many conditions on our happiness? And why are we so intent on postponing happiness?

When we were children, we greeted each day with a sense of adventure and excitement. We lived in the moment, fully alive and awake in the present. As anyone who spends time around young children will tell you, having a good time is always the number one priority! But somewhere along the way, by the time we've reached adulthood, we've lost our sense of happiness as a daily priority. We work hard, and we're exhausted and depleted at the end of each day. We may not consciously decide to postpone our happiness, but nevertheless, it just seems to work out that we let ourselves down, day after day.

Life takes place in the present... here and now. But we spend a great deal of time in our heads, reliving memories and regrets, or forecasting and dreading worst-case scenarios. When we ruminate, worry, and postpone our happiness, we put ourselves in a less-than-optimal holding pattern. We're like passengers on an aircraft, disconnected from the world, with our happiness on hold.

THE CASE FOR LIVING IN THE MOMENT

When we start to live in the present, we let happiness in. Rather than ruminating over possible worst-case scenarios, we show up for ourselves. We begin to think more positively about our prospects and goals. And we become more aware and in tune with the people around us.

SHOWING UP FOR YOURSELF

Showing up for yourself means just that — taking

care of yourself, and standing up for yourself when life's demands overwhelm and derail you. It means making healthy choices for yourself, and knowing when you need to take a break, or slow down. Showing up for yourself means learning to say no to a request that will drain you of your time and energy. It means taking care of yourself, knowing when you need help, and seeking out help when you need it. Showing up for yourself means making a conscious choice to be happy, not at some point in the future, but now.

CHOOSE IT OR LOSE IT

There's no time like the present. In the present, we learn to trust and love ourselves, and to make choices that will positively impact our lives. Here and now, you can begin living your best life. Give yourself permission to be happy. We choose happiness in the present, or we lose it. Realize that you do not need to wait for your ideal life to be happy. Happiness is a choice, and you can choose to be happy now!

HOW TO BE HAPPY NOW

Happiness is something you can have every day, starting right here, and right now. Here are five steps you can take today to factor happiness into the equation of your life:

- LET GO** of the negative opinions of yourself, your prospects, and other people
- REMOVE** the conditions you place on yourself to be happy
- BRING AWARENESS** to your thoughts throughout the day. When you find yourself ruminating or catastrophizing, pause, reflect, breathe deeply, and bring your attention back to the present
- BE** kind and compassionate, not only to others but to yourself
- DO** at least one thing you love and enjoy every day

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