

*Strange is our situation here upon earth,*

*Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why yet  
sometimes seeming to divine a purpose. However, there is  
one thing we know: That man is here for the sake of other  
men. Above all, for those upon whose smile and  
wellbeing our own happiness depends, and the countless  
unknown souls with whose fate we are connected with a  
bond of sympathy.*

*Many times a day I realize how much my own outer  
and inner life is built upon the labors of my fellow men,  
both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert  
myself to give in return as much as I have received.*

**EZYNIWICZ**

## AWAKENING to conscious living

*Giving Thanks – The Key to Happiness by Dr. Gene Basin – an international teacher of The Art of Becoming; a philosophy that weaves science and spirituality into a blueprint for living a conscious life.*

The Dalai Lama teaches that the search for happiness is the main purpose of human life. This intense search for happiness and concomitant avoidance of unhappiness is the motivation for our human experience, and the source for much of the emotional and spiritual drama that we inflict upon ourselves.

Happiness is intangible. It is not some object or person we possess, some place where we live or travel, or something we do or accomplish. It is something we are, a purposeful state of being. How do we become happy and maintain this state of bliss? One way is to develop an "attitude of gratitude" for everything we experience.

In order to choose happiness, we must understand its essence. Perhaps the biggest myth surrounding happiness, the one that most separates us from the experience, is that happiness is the absence or opposite of pain. This is simply not so. Pleasure is certainly the absence or opposite of pain, but pain and pleasure have nothing to do with happiness. Thus, the absence of pain is not a requirement for happiness.

What then is required to attain this prized state? Only one thing: An attitude of gratitude for everything that you experience in your life. It is the failure to understand this winning formula that prevents most of us from attaining and maintaining happiness. We typically incorporate only one-half of the formula into our lives; that is, we express gratitude only for that which we perceive as pleasure. We often fail to understand or appreciate the value of painful experiences, and so we respond to them with low cycle. It also creates resistance in our lives, which gives energy to the painful experience, thereby sustaining it.

How do we learn to reprogram our thinking and express gratitude for painful experiences as we would for pleasurable ones? We can do so only by understanding and appreciation the nature of pain. For human beings, pain is our most important, if not only teacher. Although in theory, we all have the capacity to learn equally from pain and pleasure, we have become so conditioned to functioning in this dream state we call reality, that pain in often the only sensory stimulation that reminds us of the dream. Pain is the driving force of our evolution. Just as physical pain serves as a warning that something is wrong with our bodies, so mental/emotional pain serves as a warning that something is amiss in our spiritual lives. It often provides the opportunity to correct our errant path before too much damage is done. Thus, when pain enters our lives, instead of ignoring it or running from it, we should study it closely, make the necessary adjustments and give thanks to our higher self for its wisdom in providing the opportunity to learn our lesson. This serves to break the pain/pleasure cycle and opens your being up to the experience of happiness.

The measure of our spiritual evolution is our ability to love unconditionally. In practicing the first of the unconditional love principles, Trust, you know you are always in the right place at the right time. Pain, therefore, is a gift from your soul, that aspect of you that knows what you need to experience in the process of evolution. Time, advised that "we have to be twice more grateful for pain than for pleasure." In order to move from pain into healing, you have to recognize pain as a teacher and be grateful for the lesson.

In this duality of reality we are experiencing, pain and pleasure will always exist. When viewed from the perspective of the unconditional love principles of acceptance and non-judgment, one is not preferable to the other. Each condition is neutral. To experience this neutrality, however, it is important to understand that while pain is unavoidable, suffering is optional. Suffering is not a result of pain, but a

response to it. It is a matter of choice. When experiencing a painful condition, you can choose to respond with gratitude over suffering. Only then will the pain start to subside.

For this reason, my friend, make everyday a day of thanksgiving. Begin by practicing "an attitude of gratitude" for each event in your day; big or small, painful or pleasant, from the moment you open your eyes in the morning. Never fall asleep without expressing your gratitude for the day past. This season of Thanksgiving, understand that there is no reason to "count your blessings", for everything in your life is a blessing. Therefore, be grateful.

Life is about ...

Life isn't about keeping score.

It's about whom you love and whom you hurt.

It's about whom you make happy or unhappy purposefully.

It's about friendship, used as a sanctity or a weapon.

It's about what you say and mean, maybe hurtful, maybe heartening.

It's about what judgments you pass and why.

And who your judgments are spread to.

It's about whom you've ignored with full control and intention.

It's about jealousy, fear, ignorance, and revenge.

It's about carrying inner hate and love, letting it grow, and spreading it.

But most of all, Life is about using your life to touch or poison other people's hearts in such a way that could have never occurred alone.

Only you choose the way those hearts are affected,

And those choices are what life's all about.

- Author Unknown

Blessings overflow and are unceasing. Be thankful for robust health to make life and work a joy. & joy abundant to pass on to others. Wealth enough to support our needs and those in need. & determination to make each day better than the day before. Boundless happiness to share with others. Strength and spirit unbridled to overcome all obstacles. & unremitting optimism to vanish all doubts. Grace to overcome and forgive any transgressions. Patience to remain calm while the world races by. Love enough to conquer all. & a caring outstretched hand, especially to young people. To know that in the central place of every heart must be respect for the earth, peace for the people, delight in the good, forgiveness for past wrongs, and passion for new beginnings. And above all, abiding thanks for all our gains, miracle after miracle. To know that our final victories come from hope and faith and love and gratitude. & the greatest of these is gratitude ... because it is the wellspring for all else. Unleash the power within you so you can touch the lives of others in endless and wondrous ways. Make every day a hallowed day of thanks giving.

For the moment, be still. Count the ways you are  
blessed. Be thankful \* Be slow to quarrel.

Search out a forgotten friend. Suspend suspicion, be  
trusting. Write a love letter. Share a treasure. Give a soft  
answer. Encourage youth. Show your loyalty to work  
and deed. Nourish a grateful attitude \* Keep a  
promise. Find the time. Don't harbor a grudge. Listen.  
Apologize if you are wrong. Be understanding. Be slow  
to envy. Forgive. Think first of someone else. \* Show  
appreciation. Be kind. Count on *miracles*.

Laugh more. Deserve confidence. Be gentle.  
Wage war against prejudice. Worship your God.  
Gladden the heart of a child. Decry complacency.  
Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of the earth.  
Make every day a thanks giving. \*

Speak your *gratitude*.

Speak it again.

Speak it still again.

Speak it still once more.

**“It is better to love than to be loved”**  
Saint Francis.

**“You can build your own heaven or hell on earth.”** John  
Templeton

**“You shall know them by their fruits.”**  
Matthew 7:16

**“Wisdom is to the soul as food is to the body.”** Abraham

**“This is the sum duty – do naugh unto to others which  
would cause pain if done to you.”** Manabharoa 5:15:17

**“You create your own reality.”** Jane Roberts

**“Failing to plan is planning to fail.”**

Benjamin Franklin

**“For one who has conquered the mind, the mind is the  
best of friends. But for one who has failed to do so, his  
very mind will be his greatest enemy.”** Bhagavad Gita

**“There is not a single place in all the corners of the world  
where God is absent.”**

## DESIDERATA

*(Found in Old St. Paul's Church, Baltimore, MD, Dated 1692)*

Go Placidly amid noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible without surrender be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even dull and ignorant ... they too have their story. Avoid loud and aggressive persons; they are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain and bitter; for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.

Keep interested in your career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs; for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is: many persons strive for high ideals ... and everywhere life is full of heroism. Be yourself. Especially, do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for, in the face of all aridity and disenchantment, it is perennial as the grass. Take kindly the counsel of years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth; nurture strength of the spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But, do not distress yourself with imagining. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself.

You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and stars ... you have a right to be there and, whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt, the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be; and; whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace with your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world.

Be careful. Strive to be happy.

*If you think you are beaten, you are: If you think you dare not, you don't.*

*If you like to win but think you can't, it is almost certain that you won't.*

*If you think you'll lose, you're lost, for out in the world we find,  
success begins with a person's will — it's all in the state of mind.*

*If you think you are out-classed, you are. You've got to think high to rise.*

*You've got to be sure of yourself before you can ever in a prize.*

*Life's battles don't always go to the stronger and faster man,*

*but sooner or later, the person who wins is the one who thinks he can.*

Here is one good saying for each year.

1. Give people more than they expect and do it cheerfully.
2. Memorize your favorite poem
3. Don't believe all you hear, spend all you have or sleep all you want
4. When you say, "I love you," mean it.
5. When you say, "I'm sorry," look the person in the eye.
6. Be engaged at least six months before you get married and get your parents approval.
7. Believe in love at first sight.
8. Never laugh at anyone's dreams.
9. Love deeply and passionately. You might get hurt, but it's the only way to live life completely.
10. In disagreements, fight fairly. No name-calling.
11. Don't judge people by their relatives.
12. Talk slow but think quick.
13. When someone asks you a question you don't want to answer, smile and ask, "Why do you want to know?"
14. Remember that great love and great achievements involve great risk.
15. Call your Mom.
16. Say "bless you" when you hear someone sneeze.
17. When you lose, don't lose the lesson.
18. Remember the three R's: Respect for self; Respect for others' Responsibility for all your actions.
19. Don't let a little dispute injure a great friendship.
20. When you realize you've make a mistake, take immediate steps to correct it.
21. Smile when picking up the phone. The caller will hear it in your voice.
22. Marry someone you love to talk to. As you get older, their conversational skills will be as important as any other skill.
23. Spend time alone.
24. Open your arms to change, but don't let go of your values.
25. Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer.
26. Read more books and watch less TV.
27. Live a good, honorable life. Then when you get older and think back, you'll get to enjoy it a second time.
28. Trust in God, but lock your car.
29. A loving atmosphere in your home is so important. Do all you can to create a tranquil harmonious home.
30. In disagreements with loved ones, deal with the current situation; don't bring up the past.
31. Read between the lines.
32. Share your knowledge. It's a way to achieve immortality.
33. Be gentle with the earth.
34. Pray - there's immeasurable power in it.
35. Never interrupt when you are being flattered.
36. Mind your own business.
37. Don't trust someone who doesn't close their eyes when you kiss them.
38. Once a year, go someplace you've never been before.
39. If you make a lot of money, put it to us helping others while you are living. That's wealth's greatest satisfaction.



40. Remember that not getting what you want is sometimes a stroke to luck.
41. Learn the rules then break some.
42. Remember that the best relationship is one where your love for each other is greater than your need for each other.
43. Judge your success by what you had to give up in order to get it.
44. Remember that your character is your destiny.
45. Approach love and cooking with reckless abandon.
46. Realize that as you get older, you are not approaching death, but heaven.
47. If you know you are getting closer to heaven, make sure you have sufficient treasure in heaven.
48. Throw out non-essential numbers. This includes age, weight and height.
49. Keep only cheerful friends. The grouches pull you down. If you really need a grouch, there are probably family members that fill that need.
50. Keep learning. Learn more about the computer, crafts, gardening, whatever, but never let the brain idle.
51. Enjoy the simple things. When the children are young, that is all that you can afford. When they are in college that is all that you can afford. When they are grown, and you are on retirement, that is all that you can afford!
52. Laugh often, long and loud. Laugh until you gasp for breath. Laugh so much that you can be tracked in the e by your distinctive laughter.
53. he tears happen. Endure, grieve, and move on. The only person who is with us our entire life, is ourselves.
54. Surround yourself with what you love, whether it is family, pets, keepsakes, music, plants, hobbies, whatever. Your home is your refuge.
55. Cherish your health. If it is good, preserve it. If it is unstable, rove it. If it is beyond what you can improve, get help.
56. Don't take guilt trips. Go to a mall, the next county, a foreign country, a Mary Kay trip, but not guilt.
57. Tell the people you love, that you love them, at every opportunity. Remember, life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away. What are you doing to take your breath away?
58. Having big goals, growing, getting out of our comfort zone works great.
59. s it sets a good example for our children and grandchildren.
60. You're constantly being mistreated; you're cooperating with the treatment.
61. You have a constant need to help other people, notice how you must keep them helpless.
62. The one who loves the least controls the relationship.
63. Ultimately you have no choice but to feel what you are feeling.
64. Whatever you are trying to avoid won't go away until you confront it.
65. We fear the thing we want the most.
66. Hurry comes from the belief you are powerless.
67. There are no victims, only volunteers.
68. Our ability to relax is in direct proportion to your ability to trust life.
69. If you stick your head in the sand, one thing is for sure, you'll get your rear kicked.
70. Whatever you are willing to put up with, is exactly what you will have.
71. The angry people are those who are most afraid.
72. What you said is exactly what you intended to say.
73. The thing we run from is the thing we run to.

74. Consciously or unconsciously, you always get what you expect.
75. Others can stop you temporarily; only you can do it permanently.
76. Most of our lives are about proving something, either to ourselves or to someone else.
77. What you can't communicate runs your life.
78. If you worry about what might be, and wonder what might have been, you will ignore what is.
79. Before you can break out of prison, you must first realize you're locked up.
80. When you blame others you give up your power to change.

## **Remember**

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- Remember that your presence is a present to the world.
- Remember that you are a unique and unrepeatable creation.
- Remember that your life can be what you want it to be.
- Remember to take the days just one at a time.
- Remember to count your blessings, not your troubles.
- Remember that you'll make it through whatever comes along.
- Remember that most of the answers you need are within you.
- Remember those dreams waiting to be realized.
- Remember that decisions are the important to leave to chance.
- Remember to always reach for the best that is within you.
- Remember that nothing wastes more energy than worry.
- Remember that not getting what you want is sometimes a wonderful stroke of luck.
- Remember that the longer you carry a grudge, the heavier it gets.
- Remember not to take things too seriously.
- Remember to laugh.
- Remember that a little love goes a long way.
- Remember that a lot goes forever.
- Remember that happiness is more often found in giving than getting.
- Remember that life's treasures are people, not things.

Author Unknown

## JOY

Can you remember your most recent hearty laugh, stolen kiss or unexpected tender moment with a loved one? What about your last uninterrupted reading spree, vision of a perfect sunset or completed crafts project? Reflect on those times for a moment, and realize: that is joy.

You may associate joy with giggling and being carefree. That's not wrong, but it's also not the whole picture. Joy comes from inside — being connected to what matters most in your life.

"I'm learning to see joy a little differently than as a sense of exuberance — it's more just being comfortable and content in the moment," says Salle Redfield, author of *Creating a Life of Joy: A Meditative Guide* (Warner Books, 1999). "It's finding happiness or contentment in each day."

Contrary to popular opinion, joy is possible even during hard times, says Redfield. "Life is learning to deal with what we're given and find our inner peace and happiness from that," she says. "For some of us, having joy will take more work, but it's our right to have it."

So how can you exercise your rights and bring joy into your life, even as you deal with chronic illness? Consider these thoughts:

**DON'T FORCE YOURSELF.** There's no need to push too hard trying to experience joy. It can be found in acts as simple as window shopping, taking a walk with your pet or loved ones, reading a good book or gazing out the window. Any time you are enjoying a moment and feeling good about it, consider yourself joyful.

**TAKE TIME TO APPRECIATE WHAT YOU HAVE.** If a flare sometimes keeps you from participating in a favorite activity, remember joy is a state of mind. Close your eyes and concentrate on your loving family and comfortable home. Recall a particularly pleasant time or experience in your life. Take a warm bubble bath or listen to upbeat music. Above all, focus on the good things about your life, which will help you feel a stronger sense of well-being.

**SURROUND YOURSELF WITH SUPPORTIVE PEOPLE.** One of those people might be a mentor or role model, someone you admire who has endured similar situations. How did that person get through his or her trials? What lessons can you learn? How can the way the person overcame difficulties help you be more at peace?

**RELEASE "CLUTTER."** A peaceful, joyful person knows how to let go of negativity, writes Susan L. Colantuono, author of *Make Room for Joy: Finding Magical Moments in Your Everyday Life* (Interlude Productions, 2000). It's OK to be bitter about your pain or anxious about your doctor appointment, but once you recognize those emotions, release their grip and you'll be more open to positive feelings.

**FIND SOMETHING EACH DAY TO LOOK FORWARD TO.** Don't wait for big events like a trip or a shopping spree — you can look forward to seeing friends for lunch or spending time with family after work.

**TAKE A BREAK.** Redfield calls it a mental health break; Colantuono calls it a joy break — whatever you call it, take it. Not only can you physically remove yourself from a difficult situation, but you can also mentally reconnect with your inner self. Close your eyes, take a few deep breaths and picture yourself somewhere peaceful and free.

Joy is not a mysterious, elusive emotion — it is within everyone's reach, once you realize that the power is within you to possess it says Redfield.

"We all have good days and bad days, but you can make it a goal to have more of the good moments than bad moments," she says. "If someone is determined to have more joy or peace in their lives, they will find it."

*"If someone is determined to have more joy and peace in their lives, they will find it." Salle Redfield. "Joy doesn't exist out in the world somewhere; we find it inside." Rev. Mary Mann Morrissey, spiritual leader, Living Enrichment Center, Wilsonville, Ore.]*

## **When Children Learn ...**

When they learn that giving and forgiving are more rewarding than taking and avenging ...

When they learn that suffering is not eased by self-pity, but overcome by inner resolve and spiritual strength...

When they learn that they can't control the world around them, that they are the masters of their own soul ...

When they learn that relationships will prosper if they value friendship over ego, compromise over pride, and listening over advising ...

When they learn not to hate a person whose difference they fear, but to fear that kind of hate ...

When they learn that there is pleasure in the power of lifting others up, not in the pseudo power of pushing them down...

When they learn that praise from others is flattering but meaningless if it not matched by self-respect ...

When they learn that the value of a life is best measured not by the years spent accumulating possessions, but by the moments spent giving of one's self-sharing wisdom, inspiring hope; wiping tears, and touching hearts ...

When they learn that a person's beauty is seen not with eyes but with the heart; and that even though time and hardships may ravage one's outer shell, they can enhance one's character and perspective ...

When they learn to withhold judgment of people, knowing everyone is blessed with good and bad qualities, and the emergence of either often depends on the help given or hurt inflicted by others ...

When they learn that every person has been given the gift of a unique self, and purpose of life is to share the very best of that gift with the world ...

When children learn these ideals and how to practice them in the art of good living, they will no longer be children – they will be blessings to those who know them, and worthy models of the world.

Author Unknown

# Lessons From Aunt Grace



A Victorian lady's diary reveals six surprisingly simple steps to happiness

BY NARDI REEDER CAMPION

**T**HE DAY WE MOVED AWAY I hit bottom. Saying good-bye to my friends and to the house I had loved made me feel as though my moorings had been ripped loose. Now, in what my husband kept calling "our new home" (it wasn't new and it wasn't home), I was so swash in self-pity that I almost ignored the white-leather

book I found while unpacking an old trunk. But something prompted me to examine it.

The gold Victorian script on the cover spelled *My Diary*. Opening the book, I recognized the spidery handwriting of my great-aunt Grace, who had lived with us when I was a little girl. Aunt Grace belonged to a species now extinct—the

## READER'S DIGEST

unmarried, unemployed gentlewoman forced to live with relatives. All the cards had seemed to be stacked against her. She was plain looking; she was poor; she was frail.

Yet the thing I remember about her was her unflinching cheerfulness. Not only did she never complain, but she never seemed to lose her gentle smile. "Grace always looks on the bright side," people said.

I sank down on a rolled carpet to read her diary. The first entry was dated 1901; the last was the year of her death, 1930. I read casually at first, and then with riveted attention.

Three years have passed since my dear Ted was killed at San Juan Hill and yet every day is still filled with pain. Will I ever be happy again?

Ted? I'd thought of Aunt Grace as the complete old maid. She had had a sweetheart! I read on:

My unhappiness is a bottomless cup. I know I must be cheerful, living in this large family upon whom I am dependent, yet gloom haunts me. . . . Something has to change or I shall be sick. Clearly my situation is not going to change; therefore, I shall have to change. But *how*?

I have given much thought to my predicament and I have devised a simple set of rules by which I plan to live. I intend this to be a daily exercise. I pray that the plan will somehow deliver me from my dismal swamp of despair. It has to.

The simplicity of Aunt Grace's rules-to-live-by took my breath

away. She resolved every day to:

1. Do something for someone else.
2. Do something for myself.
3. Do something I don't want to do that needs doing.
4. Do a physical exercise.
5. Do a mental exercise.
6. Do an original prayer that always includes counting my blessings.

Aunt Grace wrote that she limited herself to six rules because she felt that number to be "manageable." Here are some of the things she did—and recorded in her diary—to fulfill her six assignments.

*Something for someone else.* She bought three calves' feet, simmered them for four hours in water, with spices, to make calf's-foot jelly for a sick friend.

*Something for myself.* She trimmed an old blue hat with artificial flowers and a veil, receiving so many compliments that she thought the 35 cents well spent.

*Something I don't want to do.* She "turned out" the linen closet—washed three dozen sheets by hand, sun-bleached them, and folded them away with lavender sachet.

*Physical exercise.* She played croquet and walked to the village instead of going by horse and buggy.

*Mental exercise.* She read a chapter a day of Dickens's *Bleak House*, "which everyone is talking about."

To my surprise, Aunt Grace had trouble with No. 6. Prayer did not come easily. "I can't concentrate in church," she wrote. "I find myself

appraising the hats." Eventually she discovered a solution: "When I sit in solitude on the rock overlooking our pasture brook, I can pray. I ask the Lord to help me bloom where I am planted, and then I count my blessings, always beginning with my family, without whom I would be alone and lost."

When I put down Aunt Grace's diary—aware now that "cheery Aunt Grace" fought the battle against darkness that we all fight—tears were in my eyes. But at first I ignored her message. I was a modern woman who needed no self-help crutches from a bygone era.

Yet settling into our new life proved increasingly unsettling. One day, feeling totally depressed, I lay in bed and stared at the ceiling. Should I try Aunt Grace's formula? Could those six points help me now?

I decided I could continue to be a lump of misery, or I could test Aunt Grace's recipe by doing something for someone else. I could, for instance, phone my 85-year-old neighbor who was ill and lived by herself. One of Aunt Grace's sentences echoed in my head: "I alone can take the initiative to escape from 'the sarcophagus of self.'"

*The sarcophagus of self.* That did it. I would not be buried by my own ego. I got up and dialed Miss Phillips. She invited me for tea.

It was a start. Miss Phillips was delighted to have someone to talk with—and in her musty parlor I listened to details of her illness. Then I heard her say something

that snapped me to attention.

"Sometimes," said Miss Phillips, "the thing you dread doing is the very thing you should do, just so you can stop thinking about it."

I walked home, turning over that insight in my mind. Miss Phillips had cast a new light on Aunt Grace's third rule. *Do something I don't want to do that needs doing.*

Ever since we moved, I had avoided organizing my desk. Now I made up my mind to get the blasted pile of papers in order. I found a portable file and 12 folders, and every paper on my desk went into one of them or into the trash.

Two hours later I put down a new green blotter and a small philodendron plant. I beamed. I had done something I did not want to do and it made me feel good.

At first, "doing a physical exercise" wasn't quite so successful. I signed up for a jazz-exercise class and hated it. I tried jogging, until it dawned on me that I hated it too.

"What's wrong with walking?" my husband asked. He offered to join me each morning before breakfast. We found walking to be wonderfully conducive to communication. We enjoyed it so much that evening walks eventually replaced our evening cocktail. We felt healthier than we had in years.

At "doing something for yourself" I excelled. I began with Aunt Grace's idea of bath therapy. "A bath should be the ultimate place of relaxation," she wrote. "Gather fresh lemon balm, sweet marjoram,

mint, lemon verbena, lavender and rose geranium. Steep the dried leaves in boiling water for 15 minutes and strain into the tub. Lie in the bath with your eyes closed, and do not think while soaking."

Miss Phillips happily supplied me with herbs from her garden. I put the herbal mix in the tub, turned on the water and stretched out to let the tensions of the day melt away. It was sensational.

Soon I started an herb garden of my own and made herbal sachets for Christmas gifts. Doing something for myself had turned into doing something for someone else.

The "mental exercise" was more of a challenge. I couldn't decide what to do until I read about a poetry course at the local community college. The teacher was a retired college professor who made poetry come alive. When we reached Emily Dickinson, I went into orbit. I read all 1775 of her poems and was enthralled. "I dwell in Possibility," wrote Emily. *Marvelous.*

Our professor was big on memorizing, which turned out to be the best mental exercise of all. I began with "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" and progressed to more difficult

poems like "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain." How I've enjoyed recalling these poems while waiting in supermarket lines or at doctors' offices!

Aunt Grace's prayer assignment was the most helpful of all. I try now to make up a short prayer every day, and I always include some thanksgiving in it. Writing a prayer isn't easy, but it's a valuable spiritual discipline. I don't have Aunt Grace's meditation rock, but I do have a peaceful village church where I can attend to that inner voice.

I don't worry how *well* I fulfill Aunt Grace's six rules, so long as I do them *daily*. I will give myself credit for just one letter written, or one drawer cleaned out, and it's surprising how good feelings about a small accomplishment often enable me to go on and do more.

Can life be lived by a formula? All I know is that since I started to live by those six precepts, I've become more involved with others and, hence, less "buried" in myself. Instead of wallowing in self-pity, I have adopted Aunt Grace's motto: "Bloom where you are planted."

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### Traveler's Aid?

HAVING MAPPED OUT his entire vacation trip to upstate New York, Father headed the car for Route 17. When he reached the toll plaza at the George Washington Bridge, however, he found signs for Route 4 only. "Does Four go into Seventeen?" Father asked the toll collector. And the toll collector—who apparently had been asked this before—answered, "Four times, with one left over."

—Contributed by Michael Luser

# ARE YOU HAPPY?

*We asked best-selling author Dennis Wholey, whose new book "Are You Happy?" is to be published next month by Houghton Mifflin Co., to describe for PARADE readers how he came to answer the question most of us ask.*

**I**

WAS MISERABLE. MY life wasn't working, personally or professionally. After 20 years of therapy, I was afraid I was never going to be happy.

In the most important meeting of my life, I talked with Father Vaughan Quinn, director of the Sacred Heart Rehabilitation Center in Detroit. For three hours, I poured out my life's story of anger, loneliness, hopelessness and thoughts of suicide.



Joyce Rand

Father Quinn listened to it all without interruption. When it was his turn, he said it simply: "The problem in your life is alcohol." He was right.

My father was an alcoholic. Like millions of others raised in any kind of dysfunctional home, I wrongly believed as a child and later as an adult that I was not someone who deserved to be, or could be, happy. I handled my frustrations and disappointments with liquor and Valium.

I looked to other people to make me happy and sought their approval and love through my accomplishments and success. For most of my adult life, I've worked as a television interviewer. When a job ended, as jobs always do, or when people moved out of my life for their own reason, I would isolate and drink.

Fortunately, six years ago, with the help of others, I was able to get the alcohol and pills out of my life and begin my journey toward happiness.

As the host/interviewer of the PBS television series *LateNight America*, I learned from experts that only 20 percent of Americans are happy, which prompted me during the last year to talk about happiness with psychiatrists, psychologists, educators, religious leaders and many other successful Americans. All agree that happiness comes to us as a direct result of high self-esteem, a positive attitude and the way in which



Dennis Wholey says he is learning about happiness: "I've discovered that only 20 percent of all Americans can say, 'I'm a happy person.'"

BY DENNIS WHOLEY



Perhaps the greatest cause of unhappiness for most of us is self-pity. When we are feeling resentful toward life, chances are it narrows down to a resentment toward other people or another person. When we attempt to shore up our own self-esteem through others, we become angry when they fail to deliver. We blame others for our unhappiness, but we really need to change ourselves.

The happiness we are looking for, I've learned, is already inside of us. Our mission is to discover our own individuality, uniqueness and goodness and to affirm the goodness and wonder of other people. We must love each other unconditionally, without thinking. "What's in it for me?" We must love others for their own good and not ours. If we do good things for others unselfishly, they will love us in return, which will make us feel wonderful about ourselves—and that's happiness.

My first book, *The Courage to Change: Personal Conversations About Alcoholism*, was a labor of love. The purpose was to offer hope and help to alcoholics and their families. Two years later, not a week goes by without hearing from people who tell me how that book changed their lives. I wrote the book for others—not for me—but their positive feedback makes me happy.

Are you happy?

Loving others unconditionally may require some effort at first, but once you get the hang of it, you'll be happy. Begin today!

we relate to other people. It's not as complicated as we make it out to be. But happiness may be different from what we think it is.

Happiness, I have learned, is a feeling of contentment and peace of mind. Life is a mixed bag of joy and sadness, laughter and tears, pain and growth. Happy people accept the whole package, realizing that happiness is only a part of life's puzzle.

Unfortunately, too many Americans have swallowed a bill of goods which states that happiness can be achieved 24 hours a day and will be found in success, fame, possessions, and marrying or having a relationship with the right person.

I've discovered that, to be happy, we must have something to do, someone or something to love, and something to hope for. Our work must give us a sense of pride and satisfaction, use of our special talents and abilities, and provide us with the opportunity for recognition and contribution. If we work only for money at a job we hate, we deny ourselves the chance to be happy.

To be happy, we must live for something outside of ourselves—another person or people, a cause, or belief in God. To live only for ourselves is to exist in a world of one—and that brings misery. To be happy, we must have hope, which is our commitment of time and energy to the future. We need to dream. To have no dream is to have no hope, and to have no hope is to have no reason to live.

## Rules of Life

**Rule #1: There will be only two requirements for me to love and respect myself. The only conditions for my self-love (and my self-esteem) will be that I will try my best to do what is morally right.**

Since we were three years old, most of us have been taught by our parents or teachers or friends that we should base our self-esteem on performance – perfect performance. We were taught if we did not do things perfectly we should not love ourselves and our parents, teachers and friends would not think as well of us. Many of us, therefore, feel less self-worth or worthless if we make a mistake, if we don't look a certain movie-star way, if we don't talk a certain way, or if we don't earn as much as expected. We should have been taught that if we were trying our best and also doing what is morally right, then that's enough for us to love ourselves and have self-esteem.

If your son dropped the ball in a critical play in his high school football game, would you love him any less? Of course not. If your daughter made a mistake at work and she was fired, would you love her any less? The answer is plain. It is important for us to have the same compassion for ourselves as we would have for our own children. Next time you're in a self-critical frame of mind, imagine your own child (now grown) in the same situation and ask yourself if you would still love that child. As long as a person is acting in a morally correct way and trying as hard as they can to do their job or whatever they are doing well, that person deserves our respect and deserves self-respect. Many people are "perfectionists" and are very hard on themselves (and others) because being perfect is the only way they feel they can deserve the respect of others and themselves. Society encourages this because it is a very good thing to have "perfect" citizens who will be perfect air-traffic controllers and perfect doctors, etc. The fact is nobody can always be "perfect." We can only try our best and be good to others. That should be enough. So let's cultivate less "conditional love" for ourselves and take the heat off ourselves a bit.

One of the reasons why prayer helps us is that we often realize after praying that God loves us as long as we are trying to do what is right, not because we are "perfect." If we can laugh at ourselves, like President Reagan could when he made a mistake, and not have to be infallible, like President Nixon thought he had to be, that would make us more human. The more we like ourselves, the more lovable we become. We then become happier with ourselves and suddenly less critical of others. If we have to be perfect, we will have "performance anxiety," which is really the inability to forgive ourselves if we fail. If we have to be perfectly what we think people demand us to be, we will always feel like a child in an adult body. That child needs to *defend* his or her self-esteem constantly so nobody will "find out" that there is still an insecure little child inside. We could, without shame or fear, show others that "imperfect" child, and find we really connect with a lot of people because, after all, we all have the same insecurities. Remember, true self-esteem is not from feeling pride and superiority to others, but from our ability to love ourselves and also know that we are good people with a value system based on kindness and love.

Respect yourself for these reasons and also always remember to respect your own uniqueness. It's okay to be different, to feel differently about things than others, to look or dress differently. Remember, there will never be another person exactly like you in the next million years. Respect your uniqueness and your values. As the song goes, "*everyone is beautiful in their own way. If you learn to like ad respect yourself, you will feel beautiful or handsome no matter what you look like.*"

**Rule #2: I will achieve a balance between trying to control the "monsters" in my life and accepting whatever they can do to me.**

The fact is that if we wake up in fear, we are never really living, we cannot play and we feel little joyfulness. Our entire psyche is consumed by worry, fear and guilt. Often, we cannot even identify what it is we are anxious about.

The first thing to do is define the monster exactly. Do not be afraid to look it full in the face and describe exactly what it is you fear. Be sure to visualize every detail no matter how horrible. Then, decide what will happen if it happens and what will happen after that and what finally will happen in the end. Get the real bottom line to the event. Then say to yourself (even though you don't believe it) "If it happens, I'll *accept* it." This is what is called "intellectualizing the fear." You are bringing it from your gut to your brain. The fact is we would never be able to function in this life if we didn't accept the worst in some way. We could never cross a street if somewhere in our minds we could not accept getting hit by a car. We could never hit a home run if we could not accept striking out. Anxiety and fear occur because we want to control the monsters – every monster – all the monsters. We stay alert, watching, waiting for the next monster to strike. We have been carefully taught to do this either by cautions given to us by our parents or by watching our parents' emotions when dealing with strife. It is ingrained in our scientific Western philosophy to try to make life perfect, to control disease, to advance our standard of living, etc. This is not a bad thing, but it must be balanced with acceptance. We will never control every monster that lurks around to eventually hurt us. We must have some acceptance of the worst and essentially acceptance of this universe as it has been given to us by God.

The path to less fear is the daily practice, even the moment-by-moment practice of this "I accept it if it happens" philosophy. The best example of someone who has done this is Melvin Green. I heard him on a radio talk show once discussing this very thing. He had agoraphobia and panic attacks, and did not leave his house for three years until he developed the philosophy of whatever happens he will accept it. Now he tours the country and wrote a book. A patient in my practice could not go over the Mississippi River Bridge unless she lay on the back seat of the car and covered herself with a blanket. Now, she drives over the bridge herself by saying, "If I swerve, go through the railing, fall hundreds of feet, hit the water and die, I fully accept it. In fact, let it happen right now. I fully accept it." Sounds ridiculous, but it works, because she has changed her philosophy of life, and she is no longer anticipating something nebulous that she dared not describe to herself. So what is it you fear – something to do with death, disability and social embarrassment? Define it exactly and practice daily what you will say to yourself when the monster threatens. Social embarrassment (failure when others are watching) is a tough one. For that, you must remind yourself of Rule #1 and Rule #2. Pray for the courage to practice these rules and pray for the ability to practice acceptance. How, you say, could I ever accept the death or injury of a child? I would have recurring nightmares of my own children getting hurt until someone said to me, "They're God's children, not yours." That embodied for me the fact that I could not control every danger they would face (though I'd do my best to warn them and protect them) and *I would have to accept* whatever happened. Excess worry would not help them and could in fact hurt them by teaching fear. In the end, it's all in God's hands. The fact is we all lose everything we have, our possessions, our health, our family and our life. If we are constantly fearing and being concerned every minute about the losses, we truly cease to live and enjoy what we have now.

**Rule #3: Happiness equals appreciation. I will choose to appreciate every moment of my life as if it is the last moment of my life.**

This is the easiest of all the rules to follow. That seems odd since so many people are depressed and searching for happiness. "They are looking in all the wrong places," as the song goes. If they only had more money, a bigger house, a different wife, they would be happy. If only they were not alone, they would be happy. People think that something or somebody will make them happy. The secret is happiness comes from inside ourselves and not outside ourselves. It comes from choosing to appreciate every moment of our lives. The best way I know to remind yourself that you appreciate every moment is a little morbid, but it works. Pretend each moment is your last moment on this earth. "This is the last tree I will see" "This is the last cookie I will eat." This is the last conversation with this person whom I love." This will make you very aware and make you admit to yourself that you really do appreciate each and every moment. Once you admit it, you are happy. Simple.

There is the story of the rich man who was very depressed and offered half his fortune to anyone who could make him happy. People brought him horses and jewels and new clothing, and did not make him happy. Finally, an old man came to him and gave him an ordinary lemon. The rich man did not understand until the old man said, "If you cannot appreciate this lemon, you will never be happy." The rich man suddenly was happy because he immediately understood that happiness was an active choice – the choice being to appreciate or not appreciate the lemon; the choice in life being to appreciate or not appreciate the moment. Each moment here on earth is a God-given gift to us and we should appreciate it. That's another reason prayer helps us – we thank God for what we have, for his blessings to us. Happiness does not come from "more" or "different."

There is a book written by Dr. Richard Alpert called "Remember, Be Here Now." In it, he exhorts us to learn to extract pleasure from every moment of our lives. We can do that by admitting to ourselves that we do appreciate every moment. We can do this and have this philosophy of life *no matter what is in the moment*. This is a logical jump. If life were perfect, lots of people would be killing themselves out of boredom. Since it's not perfect, we never know what will happen next. We could win the lottery or our house could flood (it you're in Louisiana). Life is an opera and we have been given a role to play. The story is often sad and frightening, but at least it's exciting and unpredictable. Enjoy (appreciate) each moment of it.

I know a man who is quadriplegic, unable to move his arms or legs, who is happy. This sounds impossible. How could a man who can only move one arm weakly and has no possibility of a cure be happy. Worse even, how could Christopher Reeve, who had so much, accept life now without bitterness. The answer has to do with appreciation (or gratitude) for each moment, acceptance of life, acceptance of ourselves, and also the following rules #4 and #5.

**Rule #4: A life dedicated to our values rather than to ourselves is a satisfying life.**

A person who spends his life accumulating things, toys, money, etc., or whose only reason to work is to retire as soon as possible so he can play or lounge around is destined to an unsatisfied and empty life. People who have dreams and goals based on dedication to others come to the end of their lives feeling fulfilled. The dream might be to raise healthy, well-balanced kids by giving them the time and energy

they need from you. The goal may be to take care of your wife and give her the dedication and devotion she needs. The covenant might be to perform your job with as much energy and dedication as you know how, so that society (other people) benefit from your dedication, whether you are a teacher, doctor, janitor, pilot or whatever. If you have this attitude, whenever you get really tired at work, remember your value system (the real reason you are working) and you will find that a sudden terrific boost of energy occurs. I like to say that when work becomes play, you've arrived at psychological health. It becomes play when you remember rules #1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. The simple fact is the more ideals you have, the happier you are. Consider taking the one-day FRANKLIN PLANNER course available through any Franklin Quest store. During the course, you will learn the skills necessary to bring your life's goals and values into a prioritized daily list of things to do.

Strange is our situation here upon earth. Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose.

However, there is one thing we know. That man is here for the sake of other men... Above all, for those upon whose smile and well-being our own happiness depends, and for the countless unknown souls with whose fate we are connected by a bond of sympathy.

Many times a day I realize how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the labors of my fellow men, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself... to give in return as much as I have received.

Albert Einstein

#### **Rule #5: Connect with people through love and compassion.**

There is a wonderful course called "PAIRS" that teaches "intimacy." It teaches that our greatest fear is intimacy. You learn to risk loving someone and to have compassion for their feelings, even if you don't agree with them. You learn to see things from their perspective, while maintaining your own self-esteem. We all have experienced the "river of pain" and the joys that flow through each and every one of our lives. Ask for the details from people about their lives so that you can connect with them through love and compassion.

#### **CONCLUSION**

I believe that psychiatrists do not have all the answers to depression because in most people depression is not a "disease," but an individual's perspective on life. Practicing these "rules" can give on a different way of looking at things, thus improving their philosophy of life. Perhaps people will be happier, less anxious and less likely to fall into addictive or abusive behaviors when practicing these "rules." This is my wish for you.

Sincerely,  
Edward M. Gaber, MD

Regarding the rules of life:  
Dear Patient,

Because I am a "holistic" physician, I also address issues concerning our emotions, relationships, and philosophy of life. The following letter is about all this.

I believe the key to happiness and freedom from anxiety is not found by spending years with a psychiatrist exploring our childhood pains or by taking mood-altering drugs. The key involves active choices we make on a moment by moment basis, keeping these choices as rules of our lives. Drug companies making billions of dollars a year on mood-altering drugs would have us believe that we all have chemical disorders or deficiencies in our brains causing anxiety, depression, anger and frustration. I believe these chemical deficiencies, which can be measured, occur after years of these bad feelings and that all of us have the same capacity to get depressed or anxious. They only rarely occur beforehand. Consider the following as rules of life and practice and remember them moment by moment, and I guarantee they will help you be happier and less fearful. Consider them as part of your new "philosophy of life". Choose them. Pray for the strength to choose them. In quiet moments, visualize yourself choosing them. Choose these rules every moment from now on and you will bring joy to your life.

"It is better to love than to be loved

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yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose.

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