

Why can't I be happy

Many people struggle with not being happy and ask, "Why can't I be happy?". We live in a society fixated on happiness, with self-help resources everywhere. Social media amplifies this by showcasing only the happy moments, creating an illusion that everyone else is always happy. This leads to unrealistic expectations and a lack of understanding of what happiness truly means.

Often, people think, "If only I had the right job, salary, friends and partner, then I would be happy." They see happiness as a destination. A peak to reach by achieving all their goals. However, reaching these goals often leads to disappointment because they have little understanding of what happiness really is.

Unpacking happiness

Happiness can be unpacked into two parts: as an emotion and as life satisfaction.



As an emotion, happiness comes from positive experiences such as good food, holidays, and enjoyable activities. However, this type of happiness is short-lived due to hedonic adaptation, whereby we quickly revert to our baseline level of happiness after positive events. Another concern is that focusing solely on positive emotions can lead to the neglect or suppression of negative ones. Life inevitably comes with its challenges, and accepting these emotions instead of pushing them down can result in greater peace. It's crucial to recognise that experiencing a full spectrum of emotions is healthy and that no emotional state is eternal.

Life satisfaction, on the other hand, is more complex. It involves being content and grateful for life. Our mindset determines this. It's possible to be wealthy and successful yet feel dissatisfied or be poor but still feel content. Finding life satisfaction requires a personal journey of self-discovery.

Three key ingredients determine life satisfaction

Purpose

Your purpose is your reason for being and defines the unique contribution you want to make to the world, your community and others. It is an overarching intention that is personally meaningful to you, a guiding force that motivates and gives you direction.

Gratitude

Practising gratitude daily can shift your mindset and make you aware of the positive aspects of your life. It is the quality of being thankful, appreciative and content with what you have. All too often, we only appreciate what we have got when we have lost it.

Presence

Presence is the awareness of what's happening around you and within you. It means being fully engaged and connected with the present moment. It involves being aware of our surroundings, thoughts, and emotions without judgment or distraction, accepting each moment as it is.

Summary

Happiness is not just about positive emotions but also about life satisfaction, which comes from purpose, gratitude, and presence. Understanding the full range of human emotions and finding personal meaning and gratitude can lead to a more fulfilling and happy life.

Ultimately, each of us is responsible for making our own happiness but no matter what choices we make, let us not forget to share happiness with others.

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