

“Say yes to even a tiny moment of joy.”

- **Author unknown**

I picked this quote for a very particular reason. The holidays can be rough. Unfortunately, they often remind us of who and what's missing from our lives. It then becomes easy to get wrapped up in the negative instead of the positive. So while it may be difficult, if not downright impossible to feel cheerful this time of year, just take one moment to sense happiness. Hopefully, that moment will multiply into hours, hours into days, days into weeks, weeks into years. Then, you can live life the way it was meant to be lived. So this holiday season, if you're feeling sad and blue, please say yes to just one moment of joy and then watch it multiply.

How Full is Your Glass?



The holidays are a tough time for a lot of people, including me. For those of you with a lot of family, it tends to be happy....a time when you all get together, enjoy each other's company and reminisce about days gone by. You probably even get on each other's nerves. But for those of us without much family, it's a reminder of what's missing. It's been 5 years since I lost my brother right before Christmas. Gregg was a big kid who loved Christmas as much as an adult as he did as a child. For him, it was a magical time and without him, well, the holidays just aren't the same. But it got me thinking about how I often view the holidays as a time to think about what I'm missing from my life as opposed to what I have. But the good news is that I alone have the power to change that mindset.

Does this describe you? Are you feeling sad and lonely right now? If you are, do me a quick favor. Close your eyes and imagine a big glass goblet filled to the halfway mark with water or even better, wine. Can you picture it? How do you see it? In your mind's eye, is it half-full or half-empty? If you're seeing it as half-empty, you're no doubt seeing the world as a difficult place. BEWARE! This is a hallmark of negativity. Therefore, it's important to learn to see the glass as half-full.

Believe it or not, research has found that a negative outlook can contribute to everything from depression to heart disease to lowered immune-system function. It can affect our sleep, our ability to eat right and maintain a healthy weight. It can certainly impact the quality of our relationships, our social lives, our ability to function in our job and even our health. Who wants to give negativity that much power? Not me!

Now I want you to imagine what it would feel like to approach life from a place of positivity, fun and possibility. Think back to when you were a child, when you didn't have a care in the world and you had your whole life ahead of you. Sounds good, doesn't it? But we're not children anymore and we're constantly bombarded by negativity everywhere we turn. So let me give you a few simple tips to help you think in a more positive light and help wipe out some of the negativity in your life. Try one or more of the following action steps. I've written about some of these before, so this is just a gentle and friendly reminder to help get you to a better place.

- **Go complaint-free.** For the next hour, don't complain about anything. Instead, choose to see the positive things in your life. Next, try to do this for a couple of hours, then try a day, a week, and then longer. Will you backslide? Sure. But simply start over with an hour and move on from there. It may help to ask someone you trust to point out when you're complaining. Sometimes, you're so accustomed to doing it, you don't even realize it's happening.

- **Keep a gratitude journal.** I wrote about practicing gratitude in my May 2020 newsletter. Each night before you go to bed, make a list of at least five things (including people) for which or for whom you are grateful. If you can list more than five, that's even better. Don't worry. It's okay to use a couple of the same things every night, but please don't always use the same ones. That would defeat the purpose.
- **Give compliments freely.** Notice the good in others. Each day, praise someone with whom you come into contact. Do it often. When I'm standing in line, I'll often complement the person next to me on the color of his or her shirt or a beautiful necklace. It's so rewarding to watch the face light up from the complement. Chances are, you just made that person's day and it will make you feel good as well.
- **Find the beauty in your world.** Trust me, it's there. It's truly everywhere. You just have to look for it. For me, before I go to bed each night, I go out onto my deck and look up at the sky. I'm rewarded with the beauty of thousands of stars. It's something small, but it reminds me to appreciate what God puts right in front of me that I often don't take the time to see.
- **Share your good news.** Studies show that sharing happy events brings even more happiness to you and those around you. Think about how great you felt when you told someone you were pregnant, you'd met a great guy, or you just aced a final exam. Don't keep happy news to yourself. Your good news may just make someone else's day.
- **Get out of your own head.** Instead of sitting around feeling sorry for yourself, do something for someone else. Give blood, put wreaths on the graves of soldiers who gave their lives so we could be free, shop for an elderly neighbor or call a long-lost friend whose voice you've missed hearing and who most likely missed yours as well.
- **Focus on what you want, not what you don't want.** Make a list of those things. It can really help you hone in on not only what's important, but how you can get there and reach your goals.

Maintaining a positive outlook when things seem bleak can be super difficult. It takes practice, sometimes a lot of it. But I promise you, the more you do it, the easier it gets. The payoff of a happier and more content life is absolutely worth the effort it takes to help get you there. I'm not telling you it's easy, but what I am telling you is that it's possible. It's especially difficult this time of the year, when you're missing people you love who are no longer with you. But I draw comfort in knowing that those who I loved and are gone are in a much better place and there will come a time when I see them again. While I look forward to the day I'm ultimately reunited with them, I have a great deal of living left to do until God decides to call me home.

So in the meantime, until that day comes, I pray that you, like me, will try to focus on the positive. It's a battle I know, but it's a winnable one. With that, I hope the words of my beloved father will help you. He told me that each day when I wake up, I need to look in the mirror, smile at myself and say the following words: *"Welcome to another day in the Magic Kingdom!"*

Enjoy each day and try to make each one better than the last. Love as if you've never been hurt. Work as if you don't need the money. Dance as if nobody's watching. Sing as if nobody's listening and live life like it's heaven here on earth. May your blessings be many, may your sorrows be few and from this day forward, may you always see your glass as half-full.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!