

FINDING JOY IN DAILY LIFE

Joyce Gerrish, M.A.

The secret to true joy is to keep a joyful attitude. We don't need to wait for someone or something to cause us to feel joy. We can look for joyful nuances in whatever we're doing or whoever we're with.

There is much cause for joy in simply observing nature's beautiful plant life that grows all around us. Maybe it's the tree leaves changing with the seasons. With autumn it gives great joy to watch the leaves turn beautiful colors. In winter I love to see the intricate patterns of the tree limbs and branches silhouetted against the sky. I also adore watching the leaves when they first come out as buds in the spring and then gradually open to their full beauty as mature leaves. I enjoy watching the leaves ripple as the breeze blows through them and then flows on it way.

The ever-changing sky gives me much joy. Who needs alcohol or drugs to get a high when we have the extraordinary beauty of the heavens on which to gaze. The colors of the sky can change from hour to hour. The clouds can provide a panorama of forms and sky-scapes. As we all know, they can look like animals or people or anything one's imagination dreams up. May we take joy in these simple pleasures of observing nature.

What gives you natural joy? Do you love animals? If so, go out of your way to interact with them. If it isn't possible for you to have a pet, volunteer at a pet shelter or pet sit for friends now and then.

When you interact with people, try making a cheerful comment about something going on that day or appreciating something about them. Perhaps tell them an event you enjoyed recently or ask them to tell you about what they enjoyed doing recently. It is important to share life's challenges, but also life's joys. Some people get stuck in brooding over the difficult things in life. Find something to chuckle about if possible when you are with someone. They'll most likely be grateful to you for lifting their day!

What do you most love to do that gives you joy? It is of great importance to honor that and allow yourself to enjoy it frequently, if possible. For now, let this joyful experience not be anything that you put in your mouth, watch passively from your couch, or buy. Do you love to create a craft, or play a musical instrument, sing in a chorus or choir, or visit a spot in your city that is new to you? Do it!



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Joy is a state of mind. It is a decision to find something in every situation that we can appreciate and that lifts our heart.

That doesn't mean that we should be Pollyanna and out of touch with reality. That doesn't help. Ideally, amid having full awareness of the complexity of a situation - - and being completely present for our responsibilities - - may we find room in our heart to be grateful for what is good and beautiful. That can give us joy and help sustain us even when life is challenging, and the next step is not yet completely clear. Gentle joy can help us stay focused to meet each day's events wide eyed and with compassion for the complexities of life. It can help us meet our fellow humanity with comprehension of the depths of life's challenges - - and yet not allow those to weigh us down into depression. That is of tremendous importance in today's complex world.

May we greet each person with whom we interact with a warm heart, keen understanding of life's issues, strength of character, and a gentle sense of humor. Compassionate joy can help keep us afloat when the day may begin to feel heavy. Know your natural sources of joy and allow them to help sustain you from inside out - - rather than from outside in. Sing if you love to sing, dance if you love to dance, walk in nature, create something that expresses how you feel, listen to uplifting music, read a book by your favorite author. Give joy a chance to fill your heart - - and allow it to help you meet life's challenges as a stronger more balanced person.

I encourage you to listen to a song about joy that I composed and sang, "I Whirl Like the Wind." Locate it on my website www.joycegerrish.com. On the same website page enjoy listening to the guided meditation for accessing Divine Joy.

