

# Cultivating Joy

by [Christine Sarno-Doyle](#)

An emotionally-laden roller coaster ride cycling high on the rails of aspirations and plunging to depths of disappointment eventually came to a stop on disappointment and I disembarked. Details aren't important. It's the ride that is common to us all as is our endeavor to remain centered in the seat as we negotiate life's twists and turns.



At its conclusion I wrote in my journal, "The feelings I'm experiencing are scattered. Some are intense: fear, anger, sadness. Things are not working out as planned-must note 'as planned' - I believe things happen for a reason. We learn and move on from all our experiences. What will come of all of this will lead me in a better direction. I have tried my best."

I had tried my best. I rested in that knowledge.

The following day I choose to be idle and envisioned my day curled up in front of the fireplace lost in a favorite novel. My plan was to let it all go and allow whatever needed processing to process its way through in the recesses of mind.

Life trials have taught me that its futile to ignore uncomfortable emotions. I don't need to act, but it's best that I acknowledge them. A friend once suggested that I observe my emotions like I would passing clouds and let them move on by. So I was doing that, acknowledging the emotional quagmire I was feeling while planning to get on with my day.

It wasn't long into the day before I realized that the rest I sought eluded me. The clouds weren't moving. My emotions remained stagnant, dark and dreary.

Uncomfortable feelings will eventually dissipate. - I know that. Nothing lasts forever. The process will happen, however, whether I choose to stay stuck in the muck or step out of it. I decided to step out. There was no reason to lose the entire day to this process. I would suffer less angst in the long run if I chose to focus my attention elsewhere.

I called a friend and accepted the invitation to lunch I had declined earlier. As I sat across from her at the table I felt my emotions lighten. As she spoke I listened. As I focused on her life and challenges I got out of my own way. Her sharing reminded me that life is not all about me.

Leaving the restaurant I had the good fortune to encounter another friend who I hadn't seen in years. Shared hugs, smiles and a promise to get together lifted my spirit more. A call from another friend upon returning home offered me more for which to be grateful.

There are after all aspects of my life that are near perfect. Now grounded in that reality, I chose to continue with my day working on constructive activities and others that bring me joy.

I lost myself in the cleaning of my office desk and files. Bringing order to the external part of my life helps bring order internally.

I sat and played with my dog. His playfulness is plain fun and his love is unconditional. I tidied my parrot's cage and as I did my little mimic chattered back at me the many phrases he's picked over the years. He brought a smile to my face and more joy to my heart.

Housecleaning isn't a favorite task by any means, but surprisingly this activity can fill my heart too. With every room, with every item I touch, I am reminded of how rich my life has been and still is.

Late in the afternoon, I realized that through all the positive choices I made that day, I was choosing joy. Amid all the uncomfortable emotions that had come center stage, I still had a choice. I could choose gratitude over everything else and fully appreciated that the more I focused my attention on what filled my heart the more joyful my life became.

Ultimately, what we cultivate grows.