

**“Some days, you just have to create your own sunshine.”**

- **Sam Sundquist**

I love this quote and it's so appropriate right now. It's been a bit of a rough month emotionally. One of my dearest friends was diagnosed with breast cancer and another friend lost someone he loved to Multiple Sclerosis. Negativity is all around us and this quote was a great reminder that when we're surrounded by loss, sadness, bad news and negativity, it's up to us to find happiness. My dad always told me that *“happiness is an inside job.”* No one else can make us happy, though we often think someone else has that power. The reality is that no one can provide us with happiness. My boyfriend often tells me that he wants to make me happy. But the reality is only I have that power. I can CHOOSE to be happy and it's not always easy. This is especially true when those around us, those about whom we really care, are hurting. I have to remind myself that their happiness is completely up to them. All I can do is be there to support them with whatever choices they make, whether I agree with them or not. The pain of those I care about really got me thinking about how important it is to live a happier and healthier life. It's truly our CHOICE how we choose to live it and how we CHOOSE to deal with circumstances outside of our control. The reality is that happiness depends upon us. No one else has or should be given that power. If you want to be happy, just be happy. It really is that simple. Forget about everything going on around you, because most of it is out of your control. Happiness really is a CHOICE and so is health. We can CHOOSE a healthy lifestyle and CHOOSE to be happy. Most people tend to forget that happiness doesn't come from getting something you don't have. It's ultimately recognizing and appreciating what you do have.

Yours in health,

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### Tips for a Happier and Healthier Life



As I mentioned above, it's been a bit of an emotional month for me and I've lost quite a bit of sleep over it. I've had to remind myself many times that I have to *“Let Go and Let God.”* He is the one in control and when I feel as if I don't have any control, which is how I've been feeling, I have to give it over to Him. I can't force my friend who has breast cancer to try and trust the treatments I've studied since my dad died from an overdose of chemo. I can't help my friend who lost someone he loved just because I once lost someone that I loved. Everyone grieves in his or her own way and in his or her own time. Everyone has to make decisions about his or her body that seems right and I can't and shouldn't stress about it, even though I do. The worst thing we can do is make decisions based on fear. That's how bad decisions are made. The COVID shot is the perfect example of that. People got the shot out of fear because of all the propaganda put forward 24/7, rather than relying on the immune system that God gave to each and every one of us. But I digress. Because I've really been struggling with some of this for the last month or so, I thought it was important to share some positive thoughts with you about how to be happy and healthy during difficult times.

- **CHOOSE to be Happy.** I've written about this many times before. Happiness really is a CHOICE and we have to CHOOSE to be happy. We also have to CHOOSE to be healthy. In my opinion, the opposite of happiness isn't sadness, but rather, it's stress. Both actually come from things happening around you. I think a good example of this is how you feel about a challenge you choose to take on versus one that was imposed upon you. These are actually two very similar situations that can result in a completely different mental state based on how you perceive them. But it's important to keep in mind that stress can negatively impact your immune system. It's the body's equivalent of running an engine for too long. I personally think the best way to alleviate stress is to replace it with activities I enjoy, like hiking, and spending time with people who give me happiness, like good friends or my boyfriend.
- **CHOOSE to Exercise.** Engaging in regular physical activity is truly one of the most important things you can do to stay healthy and happy. Additionally, exercising on a consistent basis has been shown to help prevent chronic disease. It doesn't matter what you do. What's important is that you find something you enjoy doing so that you make it a habit. It should be something that you look forward to doing on a very regular basis. For me, that's going on a walk or a hike. Being outside in the sunshine does wonders for both my physical and mental well-being.

- **CHOOSE to Eat Healthy Foods.** More and more research is coming out about how the consumption of ultra-processed foods had a direct correlation with negative health conditions such as obesity, cardiovascular issues and metabolic syndrome. It's not really all that difficult to make healthier choices. For example, you can replace seed oils, which have many negative health impacts, with oils like coconut, olive and avocado. It's a simple substitution. You can replace rice with quinoa, regular beef with grass fed/organic beef and milk with raw milk, which provides so many more benefits. Substitute Equal, which is toxic, with stevia or monk fruit. Being healthy doesn't mean you have to deprive yourself of foods that taste good. You just need to choose the healthier version of things you love.
- **CHOOSE to Get Enough Sleep.** Most of us are sleep-deprived, but sleep has a critical role in our health. Unfortunately, it's not as easy to control our sleep as it is our diet, but there are still choices you can make to help have more of a positive impact. It's super easy to go to bed and wake up at pretty much the same time every day. If you get your body on a schedule, it will reap the rewards. Another helpful hint is to limit screen time at least an hour before you go to bed. This includes the TV as well as the computer, phone or iPad/tablet. You may also want to try taking a warm bath or shower to help relax you before getting into bed. Naps are also a great thing to help refresh you when you're feeling tired. Don't be ashamed to take them.
- **CHOOSE Mindfulness and Meditation.** Both of these can help reduce stress, improve focus, and enhance emotional resilience. Start with just a few minutes each day and increase it with time. Find a quiet space, focus on your breath and make sure to gently bring your mind back when it wanders, which it will try to do. Apps like Headspace or Calm can be great tools to get started. When I'm feeling overwhelmed, I stop what I'm doing and pray. Prayer and meditation can go hand-in-hand. The important thing is to shut off the world around you and focus on within.
- **CHOOSE Strong Relationships.** Meaningful connections with others contribute to a sense of belonging and emotional support, both of which are crucial for both health and happiness. I've made a concerted effort over the last few years to get negative people and relationships out of my life. It's ok to let people you once cared about and spent time with go. Don't forget that strong relationships are cultivated by communication, so be sure to share what you're thinking and you're feeling. Don't shut out people you care about. I have a really bad habit of putting up walls when I've been hurt and shutting people out. That's truly the worst thing you can do to someone you care about. Open and honest communication is tough, but it's critical to having successful and strong relationships.
- **CHOOSE to Learn.** Keeping your mind active through learning new skills or hobbies can boost self-esteem and keep you engaged with life and help boost both health and happiness. Explore new interests, take up a hobby, or enroll in some type of class you always wanted to take. Whether it's learning to play an instrument, learning to play something like pickleball or studying a new language, the key is to stay curious and open-minded. Your heart and your mind will both thank you for it.
- **CHOOSE Self-Compassion.** This is potentially one of the most important suggestions. We're often our own worst critic. Keep in mind that being kind to yourself can improve your mental health and overall happiness. Self-compassion helps you cope with challenges and setbacks in a healthier way and it lets you off the hook when you make a bad decision. Remember, that's how you learn.

I truly hope these tips inspire you to make positive changes and find more health and happiness in your everyday life. Remember, the journey to a happier and healthier you is a constant process and every step counts. Sometimes, for every step forward, you may take two steps back, but that's ok. The important thing is that you stay positive, healthy, and that you keep smiling and CHOOSE to be happy and healthy! Don't ever forget that happiness will often come in waves. If it leaves you, it will certainly find you again....and it is your CHOICE. At the end of the day, happiness is something that comes into our lives through doors we don't even remember leaving open. That's God. In closing, I'll say this one last thing. Being happy doesn't mean that everything is perfect. It means you've decided to look beyond those imperfections and find happiness anyway.

Have a wonderful month.