

I Can Be Happy Without Him/Her/It

Last month, I wrote about my new mantra, 'I can be happy here.' This month I would love to share with you a variation on this theme, 'I can be happy without him/her/it.'

Most of us truly believe that although we long for lasting happiness, we cannot find it, because something crucial is missing from our life. That 'something' might be the right parents, the right partner, the right amount of money in our bank account, the right job, or even the right government. But whenever we convince ourselves that we cannot be truly happy without someone or something like this, we are basically causing our own suffering.

This month, I have some important news to impart to you. Any thought you have that you cannot be happy 'without...' or you cannot be happy until...' is a lie. Or not so much a lie, as false programming that you absorbed like a sponge when you were little.

Let me show you how we actually make ourselves unhappy with our 'I cannot be happy without...' thoughts with a true example from my own early life. When I was 22, I fell deeply in love for the very first time with one of my lecturers on a postgraduate course I was taking, and he briefly fell in love with me. Sadly - or tragically as I thought at the time - this intense love affair only lasted a month or two before he broke it off. I then spent 15 years (Yes dear reader, *15 years*, telling myself that I could not be happy unless we got back together again).

Why did I make myself so unhappy like this for so long? Well, the programming that was triggering this crazy thought ran deep. For example, my belief that I needed to find my Prince Charming in order to be happy was programmed into me by my love of fairy stories when I was little, particularly Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty. Plus of course, the society in which I was raised still strongly believed that a woman could only be fulfilled if she married the man she loved and had his babies.

But all this programming was totally wrong. I never met Mr Right. I never did get married. I never had children, and yet now I am one of the happiest and most fulfilled people I know.

What has changed? I have changed. In particular, I have changed my beliefs big time. I no longer believe that a woman needs a man or children to fulfil her or to give deep meaning to her life. In fact, I no longer believe that anything I might think I need or desire in this world can bring me lasting happiness and fulfilment. I now see clearly that the feeling of being in love is always available to anyone who goes on a deep internal search to find true, lasting love in their own hearts. I am also beginning to see that it is not our endless egoic desires that cause us so many problems, but our insistence that unless a particular desire is fully met we will be unhappy that keeps us stuck in so much emotional pain and suffering.

30 years of meditating and 20 years of healing, awakening and practising *A Course in Miracles*, have gradually assisted me to move from being neurotic and unhappy to becoming much more emotionally mature, wise and content with life. But it was not until I read Anthony de Mello's *Rediscovering Life* recently that the penny finally fully dropped. *Rediscovering Life* is choc-a-bloc with radical spiritual truths such as this:

Has it ever occurred to you that what you call your happiness is your chain? For example, are you calling somebody your happiness? As in, 'You are my joy.' It could be your marriage, your business, your degree, whatever. In whom do you find your happiness? Whatever the answer, that is your prison.'

The world is full of sorrow. The root of sorrow is attachment. The uprooting of sorrow means the uprooting, the dropping of attachments...No attachment, no fear.

Now some of you reading this may well object that if we had no attachments to anyone in this world we would be cold or lonely. But the amazing truth is that when we drop our addiction to being with special individuals who are supposed to make us happy, we find that everyone can make us happy. Even sharing a moment with a cat a bird or a tree can feel blissfully loving. So, in my experience, letting go of this addictive need for external love or approval is the absolute opposite of living a cold detached life in an attempt to shield ourselves from more emotional pain.

Living our lives beyond egoic neediness and attachment means that we can always be in love regardless of our circumstance - and being in love is always blissful. 'What you mean is I can still be in love even if my lover leaves me or if my partner of 50 years dies?' Yes! Your personality-self will certainly grieve when a loved-one leaves you or dies, but once you know how to rise above all your needy, neurotic attachments, you can still live in love and peace even in the midst of loss.

I worked this out for myself only very recently, but the impact on my life and my state of mind has been huge. Instead of constantly worrying about whether I still have certain individuals' love or approval, I am discovering the joy of freeing myself from my special egoic attachments so that I can finally love without conditions.

Do I still have my moments when my old, old programming pulls me back into fear or even panic when someone I am attached to looks like they disapprove of me, or that I might never see them again? I certainly do! But the real blessing of reading and re-reading Anthony de Mello's liberating message is that I now catch myself a lot faster when I am caught up in a crazy egoic attachment of some kind. Then, I can gently practise bringing myself back to dwelling in peace and love regardless of my current worldly circumstances.

If you found this idea of letting go of your addiction to others' love or approval interesting, I strongly recommend that you read Anthony de Mello's *Rediscovering Life*. As de Mello says in this book, some people may instantly get his message about letting go of all our attachments in order to find lasting happiness, whereas others may need to mull it over for quite some time. But in my opinion, it is absolutely worth pursuing this idea until it finally clicks so that your life can become a joyful odyssey, rather than a painful, or at the very least disappointing slog.

Peggy Foster
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