

Choosing to Be Happy Right Here, Right Now

One of the great tragedies of human life is that we are all searching for lasting happiness, but hardly ever finding it. Most of us spend our whole lives - probably right up until the moment we die - telling ourselves, 'I will be happy when/if...' or 'I cannot be happy now because...'

But what if we could be happy right here and right now simply by changing our mind about the causes of happiness? What if lasting happiness is not created by external events such as winning the lottery, or even by finding our 'soulmate' or 'twin flame'? What if a state of lasting happiness can only be attained by cultivating a particular state of mind and heart? First, we decide to be unconditionally loving and joyful whatever this life seems to throw at us, then we cultivate this state of mind through some kind of meditative or mindfulness practice, and finally – and this may take some time and effort – the bright energy of our new unconditionally positive approach towards life is projected out into the world around us and appears to create a happier world.

Most of us believe that if we finally find Mr Right or Ms Right we will be happy, but maybe we can only find lasting love in this world if we first find an inexhaustible well of unconditional love in our own hearts? Most of us also believe that we will only feel abundant once we have accumulated a load of funds, but I am now pretty convinced that life actually works the other way around. If we sit quietly for a while each day cultivating a deep sense of love, gratitude and abundance in our hearts, somehow we will find ourselves with all the resources we need to lead a truly fulfilling and happy life.

All of that may sound rather lofty and not particularly helpful or practical if you are feeling anxious or depressed at the moment, so let me try and turn this lofty spiritual truth into something much more practical and useable.

Suppose as soon as you woke up every morning, you were to say to yourself, 'I can be happy today whatever happens.'? Suppose whenever you walked into a new place you quietly reminded yourself, 'I can be happy here!'? I read about this practice in a lovely book by Lee Jampolsky entitled 'Smile For No Good Reason'. Jampolsky's version of this practice was to drive around town saying to yourself from time to time, 'I could be happy here.' I loved this idea, but I was not sure that 'I *could* be happy here' was a strong enough statement for me so I changed it to 'I *can* be happy here.'

Then I started to use the mantra 'I can be happy here.' in a variety of places. First, I found myself entering Rome Airport at an extremely busy time and instead of moaning or panicking I quietly said to myself, 'I can be happy here.' I then miraculously got through check-in and security in record time before deciding that I was going to find a beautifully peaceful corner of the terminal to rest in for a while. I not only found a really comfortable recliner chair to sit in, but I also discovered a new iced coffee drink that was delicious when

consumed in very slow sips. Now it could be that I was happy in that airport because I was on my way home from yet another wonderful retreat in Assisi, but I like to think that my new mantra of 'I can be happy here' also played its part in my joyful experience.

Since returning home from Assisi, I have also been playing a game which I invented after reading about a similar game two people once played. This game is entitled, 'Let's pretend we are in heaven.' The game begins when you find yourself in a supermarket, a restaurant, your place of work, or even a doctor's or dentist's waiting room. As you look about you, you imagine that you are in heaven and that all the people you see are angels playing a game of 'Let's imagine we are humans living on planet earth.' You then score points whenever you notice how kind, loving and joyful all these angels are to one another. By the way, if you do see an angel who appears to be angry or upset, you simply remind yourself that they are just play acting and each time you remember to do this you score double points.

I promise you that if you play this game for a while, and do not cheat by telling yourself it is silly, you will begin to see everyone in a new light. You will also notice loads of kind and compassionate exchanges between 'angelic beings' that you never noticed when you insisted on playing the egoic game called, 'Let's all complain about how hellish it is here and how horrible other human beings are.'

Basically, I now believe that we all have only one choice to make in this world moment to moment. We can either choose to drown in fear, or we can choose to dwell in love. That's it. If this choice sounds too simple to be true, it is only because the ego likes to make everything fiendishly complicated so that it never finds whatever it is seeking.

The egoic voice in your head will always tell you that you are crazy to believe that you can be blissfully happy right here and right now, without doing anything to improve either the world around you or yourself.

Do not listen to this horribly paranoid and crazy voice. Whenever you notice it nagging away inside your brain, take a few deep calming breaths and tune into your loving, intuitive heart. Feel the love, peace and joy at the core of your heart, or if you cannot feel these heavenly qualities yet, simply reassure yourself that they are always there, but that some of us still have some more self-healing to do before we can tune into them all of the time.

Keep calming your mind, tuning into your loving heart, and gently reminding yourself that life on earth is not meant to be an endless struggle. It is meant to be joyful. Our spiritual birth right is to live in love, peace and joy eternally. I cannot tell you when the day will finally come that you totally get this. I certainly do not yet live every moment of my life in peace, love and joy, but it's a lot better than it used to be!

I do hope the day will soon come when you experience being in heaven whilst still living on this earth. But in the meantime, please try reciting the mantra, 'I can be happy here' and please join me at any time in a game of 'This is heaven and all these strangers I see around

me are angels in disguise!' If we all played this game together all of the time, I am convinced we could soon turn an apparent fantasy into a lasting, heavenly reality.

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