

Developing the Habit of Happiness by Helen Macdonald

Think back. When was the last time you were truly, deeply happy?

It's an interesting question. As adults, we tend to make this process much more difficult than we need to. As children, we usually didn't need reminders to be happy. It is our natural state. Our right!

Watch a group of children at play. They naturally enjoy themselves, discovering all sorts of wonders and miracles in the very ordinary. They seem to have a buoyancy, an ability to snap out of a bad mood and return to the state of happiness that is their natural right.

Certainly in some unfortunate cases, this right seems inapplicable and circumstances mean that happiness is hard to find. Not impossible, just harder!

However, for most of us happiness is available, as easily as making a choice. A choice to look for, and enjoy, the opportunities for little moments of happiness in our everyday lives. Sure, there are times of intense and extreme happiness - major celebrations; the birth of a baby; and so on. But I'm referring to the minor moments of happiness, which we need to notice to make sure they don't pass us by.

Usually it's a simple thing that does it - this is not complicated. It might be a quiet moment with a loved one; watching a child run through a heap of autumn leaves; finishing a project when the sense of satisfaction is coupled with a happy feeling of completion.

***A happy person is not a person in a certain set of circumstances,
but rather a person with a certain set of attitudes.
- Hugh Down***

Attitudes are simply habits of thought. We develop habits in all kinds of areas and our thinking patterns are no different. Just like developing good habits (for example: eating well or exercising regularly) or bad habits (smoking; eating to excess), we can develop good thinking patterns that lead to effective attitudes or we can develop thinking patterns that are not effective or do not support us in achieving our goals.

Sadly, the world is not perfect and events will occur that are not what we would want to happen. However, it is not the events that happen, but our attitude to them that will determine our response.

***Ultimately, genuine happiness can only be realised
if we make it a personal priority in our lives.
Like any new behaviour, happiness can be learned.
- Sarah Ban Breathnach***

I have encountered numerous people over the years who make statements like "I can't function without my first coffee!" or "I just have to have a _____ (coffee; cigarette; shower; fill in the blank!) before I can get started in the morning." These are people who have developed a routine into a habit that is no longer effective for them. Any time that you create a situation where your level of operating is being affected by whether or not you have been able to complete a particular routine, then you have developed a limiting habit. It might be time for a review!

The key to developing any new habit is to recognise that there is no magic wand. The only way to make a change is to keep practising the new behaviour until it is a normal part of the way we operate. This usually takes at least three weeks - that is twenty-one days in a row - before the new behaviour will have started to replace the old one. It is very important that it is twenty-one days in a row. If you miss a day, then you have to start counting all over again!!

So, start today to develop the Habit of Happiness and watch it become a magnet for more of everything you want in your life!

Helen Macdonald shows businesses how to attract and retain happy, productive employees and satisfied, loyal customers. As a speaker, author and master facilitator, she has worked with companies large and small throughout the Asia Pacific region. This is an extract from her first book, published in October 2002, "SM.I.L.E. your way to Success!". Her message is that happiness is a magnet which will help you attract more of what you want - more customers; profit and success - in your business and your life! For more information, call 03 9533 4568 or visit www.macsresults.com.