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MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

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Joy! We don't hear that word used very much anymore. More and more people seem to get stuck in the dumps of the daily drudge, and seeing people smile is rare these days. So what is joy, and where do we find it?

Recently, I was stuck in the dumps a little myself, and I was wondering how to regain my usual "joie de vivre." I decided to do a bit of research.

First, I looked up the definition of joy. One dictionary defines it as:

1. The emotion of happiness
2. To experience elation
3. Great pleasure or delight
4. A supreme feeling of happiness

Then I found an article that suggested taking some time to think about what usually makes me happy, and to make a list of all the things that give me joy. All through the day, as I thought about those little things that cheer me up, I jotted them down on "My Joy List." By the end of the day, as I reviewed my list, I felt genuinely happy and I was in a great mood. Just thinking about my list now, cheers me up again! I suggest you try it!

You can also read the great articles about finding joy I found for this issue of *Motivated*, which I hope will inspire and remind you of those special things in your own life that cheer you up.

Once you have your list drawn up, I heartily recommend that you share it with as many people as you can. After all, the world could use a little more joy!

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*



Life's Little Pleasures

By Francis Gay

Our friend Thomas is a keen gardener, and it is always a great joy to walk around his garden. Recently, I was admiring some beautiful double he had on show.

“Yes, they’re fine,” he agreed, but seemed to hesitate as he said it. I waited for him to continue. “There have been some wonderful developments—new varieties and all the rest of it. Yet sometimes, you know, I think we brush aside too easily the simple types, the single flowers with their delicate perfection.” He led me across the lawn and pointed out just such an example.

No one, I think, would want to lose some of the wonderful developments that man’s skill and care has brought to all kinds of things, but I think we need to remember Rudyard Kipling’s prayer, “Teach us delight in simple things...” ❀

Possessions, outward success, publicity, luxury—to me these have always been contemptible. I believe that a simple and unassuming manner of life is best for everyone, best for the body and the mind.

—Albert Einstein

Little Things That Make a Big Difference

By Lori Deschene, adapted excerpts

I believe life is in the details. Ongoing small gestures can mean so much more than one grand display of love. Simple pleasures throughout the day can be far more gratifying than one amazing weekend. When you connect the dots between all these little joys, life seems fuller and more satisfying.

I've created a list of some of the little things that fill me with bliss. Here's what I've got so far:

Breakfast in bed. You don't need someone to bring it to you—just make it and then curl back up with your duvet!

A smile from a stranger. Give one and you may get one.

Children playing. They remind you to be joyful. Pass by the park on your way home.

An outdoor lunch. Nothing invigorates a day like the feeling of sunlight on your face.

A small victory. Can you fix that leaky faucet on your own?

A small change to your routine. It can make your day feel exciting.

An opportunity to be creative. Don't wait for one—make one. Start a journal or a scrapbook, or get creative with a routine task at work to make it more exciting.

The moment after the rain stops. Everything smells clean, fresh, and revitalized.

A beautiful sunset or sunrise.

Nothing is more inspirational than tuning into nature's majesty.

An extra half-hour of sleep. Hit the sack a little earlier one night and see how this changes your day.

A thoughtful question from a friend. When she asks, "What's your favorite childhood memory?" she's trying to learn what makes you happy. How beautiful that she cares to know.

A long phone conversation, like you used to have in junior high. Curl up with your cell, call a dear friend, and start reminiscing.

Receiving a hand-written letter. Become a pen pal—even if it's to someone you know in person—so you can both give and receive non-e-communication.

A new recipe that comes out perfectly. Ask your friend for one of her favorites.

A small gesture of support. A tight squeeze of your hand before you get up for your speech. Four simple words: "I believe in you." Minor actions, huge impact.

Extending a small courtesy and watching the effect. Hold the door for someone or thank him or her for something most people wouldn't notice.

The list can go on and on. Have anything to add? ❀

How to Find Joy during the Tough Times

By Tess Reynolds, adapted



Every person, no matter his circumstance, goes through rough times. You may experience the death of a loved one, financial stress, overwhelming problems with your children, or troubles in your marriage. Finding joy through these trials can help you cope effectively and overcome them. Though it may seem impossible to maintain a positive outlook, with patience and perseverance, you can make it through these difficult times and enjoy peace once again.

Here's how...

- 1. Look at the positive aspects of your life.** Your health, home and family members are just a few things to be thankful for. Simply waking up to a sunny day can put a fresh perspective on an otherwise dismal situation.
- 2. Avoid whining, complaining, and irritable attitudes,** which only make the tough times worse.
- 3. Think about what your trial is teaching you.** For instance, if you've lost your job, you may be learning to manage your money better. Every difficulty you endure will increase your ability to overcome other challenges in the future, and your self-esteem will improve when you learn that you can endure difficult times.
- 4. Ask for assistance.** Consult friends or family members for help or advice. Talking to people who love you may ease your burden and help you gain a new perspective.
- 5. Serve other people.** Working hard will help you forget your own troubles for a while. Helping others increases your level of happiness, decreases stress, makes you feel needed and generous, and gives your life a sense of purpose. You may also realize how lucky you are.
- 6. Pray.** Ask God and rely on Him for help, support, comfort, and peace.
- 7. Realize that your trial won't last forever.** The unemployed eventually find jobs, the grief after a loved one has passed lessens over time, and unruly children eventually find their way.
- 8. Laugh often.** Laughter relaxes your body, eases fear and anxiety, relieves stress and pain, and benefits your heart and immune system. ❀



A perfect world

By Chalsey Dooley

It was just a little thing, that smile on my baby's face, but it changed my perspective on life.

As he woke and looked up at me, he was looking at what mattered most in the world to him—me! He didn't care that his diaper needed changing or that I was dressed in mismatched pajamas, my hair a mess. He just loved me and loved being with me. He didn't need perfection; love made it all right. That moment of holding him and taking in those rays of love clarified something

I'd been thinking about earlier.

The lack of perfection in life has always rubbed me the wrong way. When someone said or did something that irked me, I would often argue my case against it in my mind. Why do there have to be things like personality clashes, carelessness, inconsideration, injustice, pessimism, putdowns? These things are real, and they are wrong! I wish these things wouldn't exist. If everyone—myself included—could just get their act together, my life could be

one of blissful perfection. Perfection, I reasoned, was the only thing that could ever relieve my irritations. But I also knew that could never be. This was real life. I needed another option.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that what I really wanted was for the world to revolve around me—my wishes, my feelings, my preferences, my priorities. Something had to change, and this time it had to be me, regardless of the faults of others. But how? I'd tried before.

Then that morning, as I held my baby, a whisper of a thought came to me. Would you want your baby to be perfect right from the start?

After pondering that thought, I couldn't imagine something I would want less. If he had been able to walk and run the day he was born, I would never get to see the look of accomplishment on his face when he took his first steps. If he had been able to talk perfectly from the time he was born, I would never experience the joy of hearing him speak his first word. If he knew everything that an adult knows, I would never get to see him delighted with some new discovery, and I would never have the fulfillment of teaching him something new. So many things I would miss. No, his imperfection makes him just perfect. I wouldn't have him any other way!

What is it then, I asked myself, that makes his imperfection different from the other imperfections around me?

And the answer came. It's love.

That was it! That was what I was lacking. That was what I needed more of

in order to cope bravely and cheerfully when confronted by problems I wished didn't exist.

Think how much you would miss—the unpredictability of life that adds the sense of surprise; the joy of forgiving and being forgiven; the strong, abiding bonds of friendship that are formed through adversity, and the positive character traits that are formed much the same way—if you and everyone around you was perfect from the start.

Adding negative thoughts to a negative situation, I realized, never brings positive results. I determined then to look for and find the positive opportunities and experiences that are hidden behind the mask of imperfection.

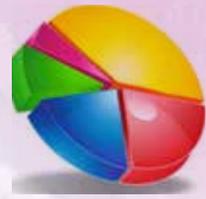
When my baby couldn't sleep later that day, I decided to make the best of a bad situation by putting my new lesson into practice. I put what I had been sure was best for him and me on hold, and my husband and I took some time to sing and laugh with him. It was a perfectly happy moment that we all would have missed had everything been "perfect" that day.

Every situation and person we encounter can make our lives a ride of joy and surprise—if we look beyond. Difficulties, losses, hurts, lacks—think of each as a clue in a treasure hunt, the door to a secret vault where you will find beautiful treasures. ❀



The Happiness Quiz

By Alice D. Domar, PhD



Can't remember the last time you did something just because it made you smile? This exercise will help you find room in your overloaded schedule for small but powerful doses of bliss.

Step 1—Map a typical day

Create a pie chart that represents how you spend the 24 hours in an average day. If you sleep eight hours, draw a slice that occupies one-third of the pie. Then calculate how much time you spend doing other things—working, caretaking, cooking, and so on. No need to be exact; rough estimates will do.

Step 2—List what you love

Complete each sentence with a different activity. Don't spend too much time thinking: Jot down the first answers that come to mind because those will typically be the truest.

I could spend an entire rainy afternoon

When I was a kid, I used to love

I've always wanted to become really good at

If I could do one thing every day of my life, it would be

I can lose track of time when I'm

Nothing clears my head like

When I'm feeling drained, all I want to do is

I feel most connected to my body when I'm

In my daydreams, I imagine myself

I get a shot of energy when I

Step 3—Pencil in fun

Redraw your time pie, including at least a few activities from your list; some might not be practical on a daily basis, but others may be more doable than you think. Look back at your typical day and identify time spent on unrewarding or unnecessary activities (think watching TV and chores you could be delegating). Then redirect those minutes to activities that make you light up.

Step 4—Tell someone

Call a trusted friend and share the details of your new schedule. Explain what you intend to do less of and what you aim to do more of, and ask her to check in with you from time to time. Studies have shown that people who share their resolutions are more motivated and more likely to achieve their goals. ❀

It's a *Beautiful Day...* in the Hospital

By Wendy Watkins, CPCS, PCC, adapted



In the spring of 2009, I had major surgery. When I awoke and learned that I didn't have cancer—as my doctor thought I did (yee ha!)—the recovery, even with several bumps in the road, became a great opportunity to practice joy.

Getting up and walking around the day after having my belly sliced was a requirement for healing, but it wasn't easy. Somehow, re-writing the lyrics to Diana Ross' *I'm Coming Out* and singing them each time I did, helped. "I'm getting ... up. I'm inching off the bed, shufflin' across the floor..." Eating the pudding they served with lunch did too. (Hospital food is notoriously bad, but pudding is almost always good.)

A few days after being discharged, I was back in the emergency room with a high fever and an infection.

My sister went with me, and as we waited for tests, and then for the results—dragging on until the wee hours of the morning—she took photos of us on her cell phone commemorating the adventure. One of the residents looked in on us as we giggled and said, "You are far too upbeat for someone

with a 102-degree fever." "Doc," I replied, "I don't have cancer. This is nothing."

Later, waiting on a gurney in a hallway for an MRI, I heard U2 pumping out of a radiologist's office: "It's a beautiful day ... don't let it get away..." and I bobbed my head in a makeshift dance. The attendant gave me a quizzical look as he came to wheel me into the room. "Dancing?" he laughed. "How can you resist this song?" I asked. He slowed down, listened and said, "Yeah, I guess it is a beautiful day."

I wound up being admitted for three more days to fight the infection, but friends brought magazines, I listened to plenty of great music on my iPod, wrote out my gratitude in my journal, and ate plenty of pudding.

Surgery isn't fun, nor is fever or an infection. And joy might have eluded me (for a while, anyway) had the outcome been different, but I saw clearly that when life gets tough, being goofy, upbeat, and joy-filled really can be the sugar that makes the medicine go down. ❀

Learn from the Birds

By Mila N.A. Govorukha

I was awakened early by a choir of birds. Singing, chirping, chanting, chiming, and conversing, their melodies were loud, joyful, and everywhere—nature’s own surround sound. Some friends and I were camping in a wooded area near Mostar, the 600-year-old city that was often mentioned in world news reports during the war between former Yugoslav republics in the early 1990s.

The birds’ notes rose in pitch and volume, then swung to a whisper, then reached a crescendo again, victorious, full of inspiration and joy. The difficulties facing this ethnically divided country were clearly the furthest thing from their little minds. Nearly 15 years after the official end of the war, Croatian Catholics, Bosnian Muslims, and Serb Orthodox are still learning to live in the same cities, how to work together, and how to forgive.

I went for a walk along the narrow river and took in the scene—the potholed asphalt road lined with benches with no seats, the bridge that had been all but destroyed, the small café without doors or glass in the windows, the flowerbeds overrun with weeds. Don’t step into the grass, I remind myself. There could be mines! For a few moments I forgot about the birds. Why did this happen? Who was responsible for this mess?

As I neared the teetering remains of the bridge, I saw a bird on one of the

rails. Could she remember? Could she have seen someone die here, or have heard the shooting?

Then the bird began to sing, and I forgot about all those questions. Her tiny body quaked as her song burst forth. The music seemed to come from all of her. The sounds poured out with such force and conviction that I wanted to sing too. She seemed to be singing about the rising sun, about a new morning, about the blue sky, about a new day full of hope, about beautiful flowers and the gentle forest, about cool, flowing, sparkling waters that wash the old away. She wasn’t thinking about how she looked or her performance. She was just singing with all of her being.

I don’t know how long I sat there watching her, but I forgot about everything else. I listened and sang along. I sang about the feeling of freedom I felt rising in me, about new possibilities, about new ways of looking at life, about a new day full of hope, about the beauty of creation and its gentle Creator, about a great love that washes away mistakes of the past. It felt good, it felt great, and it felt liberating.

Forget about ethnic differences.
Forget about broken relationships.
Forget about the other person’s mistake that never ended in an apology. Learn from the birds. With all your being, with all your strength, just sing! ❀

What Makes People Happy?

The top three list

Web Reprint

The one thing most studies on happiness agree on is this: family and relationships are the surest way to happiness. Close behind are meaningful work, positive thinking, and the ability to forgive.

What does not seem to make people happy are money, material possessions, intelligence, education, age, gender, or attractiveness.

Here are the top three factors that make us happy, and what you can do to increase happiness in your life.

1. Family and relationships

The happiest people spend time with those they love, including family, partners, or friends. Contact with others fulfills two basic human needs—the need for social connections with others of our kind, and the need for personal growth, which makes us feel fully alive.

A simple strategy for happiness is to accept social invitations whenever possible, or to initiate social gatherings with family and friends. Face-to-face meetings make us happier than online networking, especially because different forms of physical contact release endorphins. So use technology to set up meetings, but get out there and meet up the old-fashioned way.

2. Meaningful work

We are happiest when engaged in activities that make us forget ourselves and lose track of time. This can happen when making music, gardening, playing with children, practicing sports, writing, or even pouring over a spreadsheet.

We experience a sense of fulfillment when using and developing our skills, talents, and abilities. When we complete a challenge or task that we are pleased with, we are happy with our achievement.

3. Positive thinking

One attitude contributing to happiness is the refusal to compare with others. Be content that the house you have is “enough of a house” instead of envying your neighbor’s bigger house. If you really have to compare, compare down and not up. For example, Olympic bronze medalists who consider themselves lucky to get a medal are happier than silver medalists who feel that they missed the gold medal.

A subset of positive thinking is gratitude. Grateful people are happy people. Keeping a gratitude journal or saying prayers aloud every night is a surefire way to increase your happiness. ❀



Joy

Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy.—**Thich Nhat Hanh**

To get the full value of joy you must have someone to divide it with.—**Mark Twain**

Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God.—**Pierre Teilhard de Chardin**

Joy and sorrow are inseparable... together they come and when one sits alone with you... remember that the other is asleep upon your bed.—**Kahlil Gibran**

Joy is what happens to us when we allow ourselves to recognize how good things really are.—**Marianne Williamson**

I slept and I dreamed that life is all joy.
I woke and I saw that life is all service.
I served and I saw that service is joy.
—**Kahlil Gibran**

Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day.—**Henri J.M. Nouwen**

Beauty is whatever gives joy.
—**Edna St. Vincent Millay**

There is not one blade of grass, there is no color in this world that is not intended to make us rejoice.—**Jean Calvin**

Joy multiplies when it is shared among friends, but grief diminishes with every division. That is life.—**R.A. Salvatore**

We could all do with a bit more joy in our lives, couldn't we? The wonderful thing is that when we start spreading joy, we begin to actually experience more joy in our lives too!—**Steve Goodier**

Scatter joy!—**Ralph Waldo Emerson**

