

Three Secrets to Happiness

Traci B. Hawkins, MA LLP



We all know that money can't buy happiness but we often act and hope it will. In the pursuit of happiness we often focus on: climbing the ladder of success; purchasing the next latest gadget or toy; or waiting to be thin enough. We think that when we achieve these things, we will then have the "good life" despite the fact that studies have shown that having lots of money, an abundance of toys or a low weight does not guarantee true happiness. It is sad that it could take us decades of pursuing wealth and luxury items before we realize this. There is a difference between the pursuit of pleasure and the pursuit of true happiness.

So what is better than money? Luckily, its three things that do not cost a thing and that have been proven by scientific research.

The Three Secrets to Happiness:

1) Good relationships. We have a human need for close and intimate relationships. Having good, supportive friendships, a strong marriage or close and loving relationships with our family members will make us much more likely to be happy. Action steps: Take time, today, to spend time with your loved ones, tell them what they mean to you, listen to them and nurture your relationship with them.

2) Positive thinking. Not only is positive thinking one of the best ways to achieve your goals, but it also leads to happiness! People with a positive attitude cope better with stress and feel happier than people with negative outlooks. Life events, Good and bad, do not determine how happy we will be; rather it is our reaction to these situations. Negative people construe stressors to be personal, permanent & pervasive. Optimistic individuals interpret these events as external, specific & temporary. Action steps: Make positive thinking a habit. Learn how to be more accurate in your assessment of your successes and failures. Practice noticing your strengths and what went well in your day instead of focusing on what went wrong. Make a list of at least 3 things that made you feel grateful, happy and proud each day.

3) Flow. Flow is the state we enter when we are completely focused on the work or task before us. We are so immersed in our task that we lose track of time. Work and leisure activities get you in this state of flow leads not only to immediate happiness but it creates a reserve to draw from later on. This is in contrast to simple pleasure producing activities which create enjoyment which stops as soon as the activity ends. Flow producing activities creates happiness that lingers long after that activity is over. Action steps: Find work and hobbies that you're passionate about. Turn off the TV and other passively mindless activities — this is the opposite of flow — and do things you are passionate about and that you find truly engaging.

Traci Breniser Hawkins, MA LLP
Clear Reflections Psychotherapy, PLLC
517. 414. 0065
Email: TraciHawkins@TraciHawkins.com