

How would you define happiness for yourself? What makes you truly happy? For me, happiness would be having my loved ones, those I care about, be all right, be safe and healthy, have what they need; and my having peace with myself. "Peace" isn't being satisfied with myself; I'll always have shortcomings, make mistakes, and have a list of things I need to improve on. But having peace with oneself is having some poise and perspective on life; knowing life is what it is, we'll experience what we will experience, we're here for a short stay, and life rolls on with or without us. I also find if I assess, if I differentiate, my wants and needs and go with what I need as opposed to what I want. This shifts my expectations and then I can figure out how to meet my needs or modify them. This helps keep me balanced and "happy."

We could also consider that the poise and perspective I noted comes from attitude. Here is a selection from Inayat Khan on attitude. Listen for the following themes:

1. Look to justice and truth to make our choices, our decisions.
2. Be discerning. Take the higher perspective.
3. The impulse for every human thought, word, and deed is connected to God.
4. Human beings have a limited point of view.
5. We have responsibilities toward ourselves and toward others.

One might wonder what is meant by the right attitude, and how it can be acquired. One can have the right attitude by right thinking, and by keeping one's mind focused on what is just and true.

Wrong always attracts wrong, and right always attracts right. What is right and what is wrong? What you think to be right at the moment is right for you. And what you think to be wrong at the moment is wrong for you. It does not mean that what another person says is wrong for you is wrong, or that what another person says is right for you is right. The real basis is what you are thinking yourself at the moment. Never for one moment think that those who do wrong believe it to be right. It is not true; they do not believe it. They know it is wrong and yet they do it, out of weakness, lack of power, or lack of discrimination. They are not clear in their minds. There are not many who do wrong thinking that it is right. But the one, who thinks that it is right today, may tomorrow think that it is wrong. Well then, tomorrow it will be wrong, though it is right today.

All one says, does, and thinks comes from an impulse; one end of it is in one's own mind and the other end is in the mind of God. Therefore whatever people think about it, whether they think it right or wrong, one end of every impulse is in the heart of God. It is the spark that manifests in the heart of God first. Then it manifests outwardly.

One might say, 'God cannot guide a person wrongly, because God is just and good and perfect.' God's justice and goodness and perfection cannot be compared with what we consider just and good and right. It may be that God's justice and what is considered right and perfect by God is thought imperfect and unjust by people, for the horizon of their vision is very narrow. A person cannot imagine what God means

by every action that takes place. In the Quran it is said that there is not one atom that moves without the command of God.

All things are wrong or right, perfect or imperfect from our point of view. But our point of view is a narrow, small, limited point of view; we see and hear according to our eyes and ears; our ears cannot hear more than they can, our eyes cannot see farther than they can. If from our limited point of view we judge God's right and wrong, it is the greatest pity. On the other hand we cannot say that we should let everything happen as it does because everything happens according to God's right point of view. As individuals we have a certain responsibility, towards ourselves and towards others. And since the idea of justice and of what is right is given to us, we are responsible for acting in accordance with that idea. It may be that tomorrow there will be a greater light given to us so that we shall act still better. And in this way, by acting thus every day, we shall prove a better instrument for the work of God.

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We should continually remind ourselves of our own power and potential to create the life we live. Let's return to the Buddhist scripture that began: "What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: our life is the creation of our mind." Therefore, attitude is everything. This teaching on attitude makes me think of something Pir Shabda Kahn often emphasizes: "Make friends with your

life." Developing an attitude of friendliness towards one's own life can generate happiness. Now, of course, life isn't easy and there are difficulties, challenges, deep sorrows, and disappointments that come along. But can we work with our mind, with our attitude, to, say, "make a pearl" out of our pain? Here's an example of that.

I was already working this service with its theme of happiness when on this past Thursday (https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/09/books/lily-ebert-dead.html?unlocked_article_code=1.SU4.ia3b.YHF-O4yFcsZp&smid=url-share) in the New York

Times there was an obituary for Lily Ebert. The headline read "Lily Ebert, Holocaust Survivor, Author and Tik Tok Star, Dies at 100." She was part of a prosperous Hungarian family with four sisters and a brother, then as the obituary reads:

"In 1944, the Nazis invaded Hungary and occupied towns throughout the country, including Bonyhád. Soldiers imposed a curfew on residents and confiscated anything of value. Then on May 15, with only an hour's notice, Hungarian police officers, guns drawn, forced the town's Jewish residents into a ghetto.

"Weeks passed as Ms. Ebert and her family lived in cramped quarters and worked weeding fields. Then, in July 1944, the officers forced all of the Jews in the ghetto onto cattle cars, squeezed together in fetid air, with two buckets in each car — one for water, and one to use as a toilet.

"They were among the roughly 440,000 Jews deported from Hungary between May 15 and July

9 that year, with the majority sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

“After the train carrying Ms. Ebert’s family arrived at Auschwitz, soldiers dragged away those who were too weak to move. The rest lined up, and two of Ms. Ebert’s younger siblings, Bela and Berta, and their mother were sent to the left. Ms. Ebert and her two other sisters were sent to the right.

“Smoke rose from a large chimney in the distance, and Ms. Ebert was told that her family members had been killed in the gas chambers and burned in a crematory. The reality seemed impossible to comprehend.”

She, two of her sisters, and her brother survived the concentration camps and were eventually liberated by Allied troops. While in the concentration camp she “promised herself that her mother and younger siblings would not have died for nothing. If she survived, she would tell the world what had happened to them, and to those who had no one to tell their stories.”

She did go on to write a memoir and speak about her experience in schools and at other venues. In 2020, her great-grandson got her involved in making Tik Tok postings. Again, from the obituary:

“The goal of the TikTok account, (her great-grandson) said in an interview, was not only to share Ms. Ebert’s past and keep her stories about the Holocaust alive, but also to show that she had gone on to build a family and live a normal life.”

In a very moving story, “to show that she had gone on to build a family and live a normal life” really touched me of how one can overcome or process or whatever we want to call it to progress beyond a true horror and find happiness in life.

Now, we shouldn’t beat ourselves up, be judgmental, if we’re going through difficulties and just can shake them to be happy. It takes time and effort and may require professional counseling and/or deep work with a spiritual guide to deal with what we have to deal with. But let’s at least consider the *possibility* of coming to happiness.

Here we are in a worship service. Inayat Khan gave a talk on how religion should yield happiness. Here’s what he said:

“A person may follow a religion and yet not come to the realization of truth. But of what use is religion to a person if one is not happy? Religion does not mean depression and sadness. The spirit of religion should give happiness. God is happy. God is the perfection of love, harmony, and beauty. A religious person should be happier than one who is not religious. If a person who professes religion is always melancholy their religion is disgraced. The form has been kept, but the spirit lost. If the study of religion and mysticism does not lead to real joy and happiness, it may just as well not exist, for then it does not help to fulfill the purpose of life. The world today is sad and suffering as the result of terrible wars. The religion which answers the demand of life today is one which invigorates and gives life to souls, which illuminates the heart of humanity with the divine light which is already there. Not

necessarily by any outer form, though for some a form may be helpful, but by showing that happiness which is the desire of every soul.”

May we accept the gift of happiness. May we recognize happiness when it enters our lives. May we build happiness upon happiness.

I've shared before the following affirmations which expand on a teaching Pir Shabda gave: “God loves us and wants us to be happy.” Here's the practice which you're welcome to try:

God loves us and wants us to be happy.

God loves me and wants me to be happy.

I love me and want me to be happy.

I love others and want others to be happy.

I love all and want all to be happy.

God loves all and wants all to be happy.

God loves us and wants us to be happy.