

10 Ways to Bring Joy Into Your Life

We are all usually our own worst critics. That is a good thing. It brings about self-awareness, progress and personal improvement.

However, at the end of the day, you need to be able to look in the mirror and smile at the guy looking back at you.

How do we bring joy into the forefront of our lives? How can we shake off the stress and strain every day can bring and discover true happiness? Here are a few ideas to get you started on the path to robust joy.

1. Simplify. We all have that closet at home—the one that you can barely get the door shut because it's so overstuffed. You can't possibly fit one more shirt on the rack. We clean that closet out and donate the clothes to charity, right? The streamlined result brings about big smiles.

Your life is the same way. Over time, we become maxed out in capacity. This leaves us stressed and unable to be productive. Streamline your life on occasion, the same as you would that closet. Drop the things you are holding on to that are no longer necessary or fit who you are. Time is limited, and so are you. Simplify your priorities to a level where you shine to the brightest of your abilities.

2. New perspective. Life is filled with blessings. The sound of your children laughing. The look in your wife's eyes. The deep feeling of satisfaction that comes with hard work. At times we tend to only see the negative things around us. Gain a new perspective and really start picking out all the blessings you have been given. Joy surrounds us even at our darkest moments. Open your senses and receive it. Cultivate thankfulness.

3. Get outside. The smell of newly cut grass on a summer morning. The exploding blends of color all about as spring arrives. Fresh fallen snow creating a storybook landscape. The rich sights and crisp feelings of autumn. During any season, no matter where you are, nature always leaves an open door, asking you to enter and experience her wonders. Go hiking, ride a bike, or simply walk hand-in-hand with your beautiful wife. Get outside and fill your spirit and lungs with this amazing creation we call earth.

4. Come down to your child's level. One thing children are very good at is finding ways to have fun. They can take a simple cardboard box and turn it into Disney World. You still have that same ability inside you—it just got stuffed way down inside after too many boardroom meetings and mortgage payments. Unleash him! Get in there and mix it up with your kids. Make funny noises. Laugh at ridiculous things. Smile so big your cheeks hurt.

5. Passion. Passion equals joy. Always. We are not all fortunate enough to make a living doing a job we feel deep passion for. That's OK. Find your passion elsewhere. Anything that will make you come alive and stirs your mind into full activation counts. Joy will always follow. This is a family website, but suffice it to say, passion with your wife is included. Skip paying the bills on a Saturday morning and instead grab her and go sneak off somewhere. You get the picture.

6. Lay your burdens down. Worries can be awfully heavy. This new century certainly has no shortage of them. Without warning, they can begin to drag you down as they accumulate. Yes, it is important to be aware of the world around you, to know the issues that are bigger than ourselves. It is equally important to balance that awareness with reality. You are not Superman, and you do not own a cape. Do what you can do and let it go. As Mom used to say, "Look on the bright side of things." Optimism is essential to happiness.

7. With a little help from your friends. We are social creatures. It might seem impossible in this day and age, but some people can feel isolated and alone. There is no need to feel that way. Social opportunities are everywhere. The explosion of online networking sites provides a great way to connect with friends old and new, to express who you are as a person. People are ready to love you if you give them the chance. Make time for your friends on a regular basis, and connect with them openly. Life is meant to be shared.

8. When the rain falls. The world is not out to get you. It only seems that way sometimes. The car broke down on the interstate. You did not get the raise in pay you need. Your teenager just told you he hates you. Life happens. In order for a beautiful flower to reach full glory, it must endure a good amount of rain. When rain falls in your life, realize that it is designed to help you grow. Use those moments to strengthen your character. See them as the challenge they truly are. Soon the rainbow will appear as the sun breaks free from the clouds.

9. Rise up. You were in the office for 10 hours. You drove home in horrible traffic for another hour. All you want to do is crumble in a heap on the couch. That is OK from time to time. Watch a great movie and order take-out. This can be very therapeutic as long as it doesn't become habit. The couch potato is rarely a happy soul. Rise up! Go throw the football outside with your son. Take your daughter to get ice cream after dinner, and then window shop with her. Work out. Take a walk. Get the blood flowing and the pearly whites shining.

10. Seek a personal relationship with God. We have a Father in heaven who loves us, who cares for us, just as you do with your own children. He is always outside of our door, knocking. Open the door. Talk to God about your life. Seek His will on direction and purpose. God desires His joy to permeate your life.

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