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Do You Make This Mistake With Your Goals?

I'll be happy when _____.

Go ahead, fill in the blank. That blank is your definition of "success."

That is your goal. It's what you are striving for. It's what you think will make you happy. Or will it?

The Happiness-Success Paradox

Here is a surprising paradox for some: To achieve authentic success, you must be happy first. Happiness leads to success, which leads to more happiness, which leads to...and thus the cycle is born. Round and round you go on a positive cycle that seems to self-contain itself in an impenetrable bubble. The same principle works in effect for negativity and unhappiness. Negativity leads to failure, which leads to more negativity and unhappiness, which...and the self-containing bubble grows bigger and stronger and seemingly unbreakable.

Happy people simply get more "breaks." Happy people find jobs easier, they find mates easier, and they find help from others easier. All because they made a choice to be happy.

Let's look at just one typical measure of success...finding a job. If you are hiring someone, which dwarf would you hire? Happy or Grumpy? All things being equal, you will hire the one with the great smile who looks like he actually enjoys life. All things *not* being equal, you will still probably hire him or her. ***Happy people get more breaks.*** Happy people get hired. Happy people get promoted, get raises, and generally advance further, faster in the corporate world. It is an undeniable fact. You want career success? Choose to be happy.

"I'll be happy when" is a backwards way of striving for success. I believe in goals and I believe that feeling unsettled or even discontent until a goal is reached is healthy and effective, but you also must realize that ***happiness is a means to success.***

Today you must choose to be happier; to smile, laugh, and carry yourself in a manner that exudes enthusiasm and joy. It is the first step on your road to success. (But here is the cool thing...if you choose to be happy now, your road TO success will no longer have a destination or an end point. Rather, the road itself will be the fun part. The joy will be in the journey.)

5 practical ways to start being happier today

1. Smile.

Smile at yourself first thing in the morning. Smile at yourself in every mirror that you can. Smile at *yourself* in the car window reflection, rear view mirror, and back of your cereal spoon.

This isn't some delusional self-esteem trick. [I'm not a big believer in self-esteem](#) as defined in most bookstore self-help sections. This is mostly about training your muscles, including your brain, to smile...a lot.

Then take it to the streets...literally. Smile at every single person you meet. Take it to the doctor's office, to the mechanic, and even to the checkout line at Wal-Mart (gasp!).

2. Laugh.

Laugh at yourself. Laugh at others (OK, not in a cruel way, but come on, watching someone trip and innocently fall and not hurt themselves is funny). Laugh at memories. Listen to comedy.

At least five times per day, laugh one of those hearty laughs that leaves you in pain. That's right, FIVE times a day. Talk to a friend who makes you laugh, share a story, listen to a story, find anything that will cause you to laugh in this manner.

Do it early and do it often.

3. Give.

Give of your time, your money, your talent.

Yes, I am suggesting, just as Jesus did, that it is perfectly acceptable to give with the expectation of it making you happier. Not all giving has to be sacrificial and hard.

So, find someone to mentor. Find a cause. Find someone to help and something to do for them...and do it.

4. Think.

Think of things for which you can (and should) be happy. Your family, friends, health, pets, home, electricity, food, the guy who helped you load the freezer in your car last week. Then write them a thank you note. Don't know how? Then learn [how to write a thank you note](#).

Think of recent events and people, general things, memories and even desires. Be grateful even for that which you do not yet have, but strive toward every day. Make a list of reasons to be grateful and happy. Update it daily.

5. Choose.

This is simple, choose to be happy.

All of the above actions and many others that you could take are choices. Declare that “I am happy” and then choose to live a life that reflects that declaration.

So look at that list. Smile, laugh, give, be grateful, and choose to be happy. Pretty revolutionary stuff, right? Surely, I have to be the first person in human history to suggest all five of those in one blog post.

Don't brush them off because they aren't earth-shattering. Instead, ask yourself this question:

I am doing these five things *consciously and proactively*?

Are you choosing to be happy? Is your joy literally contagious? Are you using your smile and your laugh, your resources, and your overall happiness to influence others and achieve your goals?

If you are, that is great. I would love to hear your story below in the comments.

If not, start doing these things today. Choose to smile, laugh, give, and be grateful. Choose to be happy. Make a commitment below in the comments to start today.

If you are already proactively choosing happiness, what are some of the things you are doing?

If not, will you make a commitment below to start today?