

Happiness is Something you Decide on Ahead of Time

October is a wonderful time of the year, what a truly beautiful, colorful and energizing month. I tell my grandchildren the story of Jack Frost and how this month he will paint our valley with all the gorgeous shades of fall. Going from tree to tree with his magical paint brush and creating a world of vivid fall colors that are a delight to the eye with a background of pure blue sky. I remember a couple of years ago Madison calling me and saying "Pap, he was here, but he missed a few trees." I assured her he would return and complete the job, and he did.

We can find ourselves this time of year in a mad rush and this can cause our irritation and complaint levels to increase. Being irritated can be a good thing. It can cause us to become motivated and to create something beautiful. What's not a good thing is to take our irritation out on other people. Here's a story about irritation and the oyster.

The most extraordinary thing about the oyster is this irritation gets into his shell. He does not like them. However, when he cannot get rid of an irritation, he uses the irritation to do the loveliest thing an oyster ever has a chance to do. He makes a pearl. We all know people when a little sand or grit comes their way they can become pretty irritable. Some people get out of bed this way and appear to make it their life's work to win the prize for "Most Irritable." Being irritable and how you behave when in this state is by choice and your attitude plays a big part in your behavior.

Have you ever stopped to think how attitudes and how choices influence the use of each day? How attitudes and choices affect the way you view the activities of the day and your over all happiness, and the way you feel toward other people. Did you know you choose your attitude and no one can make that choice for you or make you happy? Complain or make a Pearl?

When you choose to have a positive attitude for what lies ahead you will experience more self-confidence, a feeling of courage for tackling the more difficult problems, and a feeling of friendliness and good will toward the people with whom you are associated, Chances are you will also do the best you can, and therefore will not be depressed, irritated, or frustrated because you will have done your best.

Have you ever thought seriously about your choices and how you affect those around you? How they are influenced by what you say, what you do, and how you feel toward them? Have you ever considered the idea that what children do, or do not do, may reflect the attitudes and choices of their parents and adults? And that the training children receive in their early years is likely to affect their choices and attitudes—how they react to their peers, family and friends, and how they are able to face the realities of life. Children sense when adults are irritated and they watch to see how we react. Do we make a pearl or a fuss? Being happy is also by choice. A 92-year-old, petite, well-poised and proud man, who is fully dressed each morning by eight o'clock, with his hair fashionably coifed and shaved perfectly applied, even though he is legally blind, moved to a nursing home. His wife of 70 years recently passed away, making the move necessary. After many hours of waiting patiently in the lobby of the nursing home, he smiled sweetly when told his room was ready. As he maneuvered his walker to the elevator, he was provided a visual description of his tiny room, including the eyelet sheets that had been hung on his window.

"I love it," he stated with the enthusiasm of an eight-year-old having just been presented with a new puppy.

"Mr. Jones, you haven't seen the room; just wait."

"That doesn't have anything to do with it," he replied.

"Happiness is something you decide on ahead of time. Whether I like my room or not doesn't depend on how the furniture is arranged ... it's how I arrange my mind. I already decided to love it. It's a decision I make every morning when I wake up. I have a choice; I can spend the day in bed recounting the difficulty I have with the parts of my body that no longer work, or get out of bed and be thankful for the ones that do. Each day is a gift, and as long as my eyes open I'll focus on the new day and all the happy memories I've stored away. Just for this time in my life. Old age is like a bank account. You withdraw from what you've put in. So, my advice to you would be to deposit a lot of happiness in the bank account of memories."

Remember the five simple rules to be happy:

1. Free your heart from hatred.
2. Free your mind from worries.
3. Live simply.
4. Give more.
5. Expect less.

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