

SOUL SPACE

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CELEBRATING

LIFE



The meaning of life is to find your gift,
the purpose of life is to give it away



Listen Up: A Better Way to Pursue Happiness

People don't choose what makes them happy. Huh? I know that may sound ridiculous but hear me out. Unfortunately, that statement is not an opinion. It's a finding discovered by scientists. Of course this isn't true for every individual, but research confirms that the majority of people don't choose what will make them happy. How can this be? Why wouldn't we choose what makes us happy—especially since, when researchers ask us what we want most in life, the consistent answer we report is "Happiness for myself and for those whom I love."

The phenomenon that people don't choose what makes them happy is surprising/absurd/perplexing/counterintuitive/concerning (insert your own adjective here). Do you notice this phenomenon pertaining to your family members,

friends or even yourself? How about your co-worker who complains about his job most days, your childhood friend who complains that her partner doesn't express appreciation for her, or your own thoughts and feelings regarding what you hoped an experience would be but it actually disappointed you.

Perhaps that finding can partially explain why millions of people suffer from depression and spend billions of dollars every year on psychotropic and recreational drugs. There's a better way to make yourself happy, satisfied and fulfilled. A reliable way. A healthy way. An honest way.

The reasons for why we usually don't choose and do what will make us happy are complex. Science

explains that the reasons are due to our decision-making biases—most of which prevent us from making accurate predictions about our future experiences and happiness. And when our decisions are accurate, our inability to self-regulate our impulses and emotions prohibit us from following through with the choice that actually would make us happy.

Perhaps people don't choose what makes them happy—much less, know what will fulfill them because they don't listen to the information and guidance that is best for them. What guidance might this be? Where does this guidance come from? Other people? No! The guidance I am speaking of can be called many things: gut, the unconscious, intuition, voice, the divine, and any non-secular term.

Unconscious or gut feelings have even been examined in scientific research, and more than conscious feelings, our unconscious or gut feelings are found to accurately reveal what we feel and, when listened to and followed, these feelings accurately predict future outcomes. Researchers also note that people often ignore their gut, despite research showing that it is more accurate.

So why don't we listen to the voice inside? Any number of reasons can be supplied—from thinking you don't have a wise inner voice, to being in the habit of looking at what others say or do for guidance as to how you should behave (this, by the way, is one of the biggest predictors of unhappiness), to not being taught how to identify and listen to that voice.

It's time to disturb your habitual patterns of thinking that keep you trapped in cycles of experiencing unpleasant thoughts, emotions and feelings—which lead to actions and behaviors that produce unhappiness and nonfulfillment. It's time to disrupt the conscious by building awareness of the unconscious.

Here are seven strategies you can practice to cultivate and strengthen your ability to listen to your wise inner voice. Each of you is capable of implementing these strategies. Before you try any of these, I encourage you to engage in one important moment. In this moment, make a promise to yourself that you will never again ignore the voice inside you and instead, you will listen to it. I committed to this some years ago, and can tell you that I have kept my promise. And not once have I felt that my voice guided me anywhere but exactly where I am meant to be. No more regrets, guilt, uncertainty...you name it. Trade those for integrity, love and confidence.

1. Sit quietly and ask yourself the question: What do I want to experience today? Then, listen to the answer.

2. When you are faced with options and need to make a decision, engage in the following visualization: Imagine your future self in front of you.

Your future self is completely fulfilled and happy—in all the ways your soul desires. Take a moment to feel this in your body. Once you feel this sensation, imagine your current self walking up to your future self and asking "What did you just do?" Then listen. You've got your answer for what step, decision or action to take.

3. If you are looking for an answer for how to solve a problem you have been contemplating, then before you go to sleep at night, ask that the guidance be revealed to you in your dreams, and then request that you remember the answer in the morning. Like each strategy, this method strengthens with practice.

4. There is a moment between sleep and waking up when your unconscious is still highly active. This period is called Yoga Nidra. In this state of consciousness, pay attention to the information that is presented to you.

5. Get your hands on a photo of yourself as a baby or young child. Look at that child in the eyes. Ask "Why are you here?" And "What do you need?" Then, listen to the answer. As the adult, take care of the child that lives inside you by giving her/him what s/he needs.

6. Reflect on what nags at you. If you're like most people, you put some things off...and off...and off, instead of just listening to and following the voice. It's telling you to do even mundane things for a reason. Do them. You will feel greater ease, and more possibilities will open to you.

7. Remember that everything coming your way is information. Information is neutral. For example, an event has no negative or positive value or meaning until humans choose to label it. Practice observing events as neutral information that simply indicates what is present in that moment. Listen to what the voice says. And without judgment, notice how observing information in this way affects your perceptions, acceptance and love states.

Become a master of listening to your Self. With intentional effort and commitment over time, you will notice and experience the maturation of your voice. You will hear and feel the essence of your true Self.

If you want, begin these strategies now. You will never again have to wonder, worry or regret a decision if you simply commit to honoring and listening to your inner voice, and then following its guidance. Remember: nobody knows you better than your Self.

There is a grand, honest and dependable wisdom inside you. No matter the situation. No matter the time. No matter how loudly or softly it communicates with you. Listen to it. Trust it. This, my fellow human, is your inner voice, always guiding you towards the love, truth, integrity, fairness, trust, compassion, creativity, belief, joy and fulfillment that is your nature.



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