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## Happiness - The Search For ?

By Jeanne Dowell

Webster's dictionary defines happiness as "pleasurable/satisfaction, a state of well being and contentment."

There is a ground swell of the need for happiness in our lives; a void that makes us aware something is missing.

"Laughter Yoga" classes are growing in popularity. There are more comedy movies, new comedians on the rise, and a new theme park in El Cerrito started by Richard Track, who wanted to preserve the fun things of the past with a museum dedicated to "happy fun things to do" with the original "laughing Sal" from San Francisco Playland at the beach.

On opening my mail, I found a brochure "Happiness and its Causes - An Exploration of Human Happiness in San Francisco at the Westin Hotel. The DMV holds comedy drivers classes for negligent drivers. There is also a website called the "Happiness Project."

What is happiness? Is it possible? What holds us back from it? How to find happiness in the midst of suffering and sadness? What is the role of introspection? How to bring happiness to others?

Introspection techniques such as meditation, and combined with Yoga have been found to help in overcoming depression and anxiety. Kindness and compassion can aid us into a happy state of being. Happiness can be a learned behavior. Abraham Lincoln once said "most of us are about as happy as we make our minds to be." Lincoln had suffered bouts of severe depression and anxiety for years.

Last summer I took part of June, July and August off to mentally "catch up" and attended a wonderful Yoga and meditation retreat, went hiking with friends in the high Sierras and had enjoyable times with my grandchildren, my house, garden, pets and realized I needed this reconnection with nature and family to preserve my sense of well being. I plan to continue this program I discovered that worked for me.

- Spend more quality time with my family and grandchildren
- Spend more time in nature
- "I won't cry because it is over - but smile because it happened"
- Enjoy the process
- Do it now
- Stay present
- Live with compassion and kindness

Happiness is an attitude and a process we can all learn, but it must be practiced continually to make it work.

Jeanne Dowell is a certified Yoga instructor with an emphasis on the Iyengar-Anusara method. She has taught at Moraga's Hacienda de las Flores for over 30 years and currently teaches through the Moraga and Orinda Parks and Recreation Departments among other venues. She recently founded, with her daughter, an eco-friendly line of clothing and accessories, [www.thegreenbuddha.net](http://www.thegreenbuddha.net). She believes in practicing the Attitude of Gratitude.

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