

# SOLUTIONS

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## IS HAPPINESS OVERRATED?



Happiness is usually a main objective in all our lives, and is often thought of as the absence of sadness, pain, or any undesirable emotion. However, many researchers believe that we are going about happiness the wrong way. That in fact, happiness is often a long-term side effect after experiencing something negative. So-called negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, guilt, and envy are often exactly what we need to fuel us for change and improvement. These negative emotions have the power to let us know something is wrong, allow us to experience the full spectrum of ourselves, and teach us to navigate on a more complex level.

**Here are a few things to consider when experiencing those less than pleasant emotions:**

**Don't deny them.** Studies have shown that suppressing thoughts and feelings lowers our ability to cope with stress, and often increases our dependency on maladaptive coping skills like alcohol consumption and smoking. Absence of negative emotion most often leads to complacency, but can also lead to ignoring dangers or profitable instincts.

**Feelings are like floating clouds, they will pass.** Despite popular belief, acknowledging them will not make them "more real" or permanent.

**Negative emotions aid in self-perseverance.** They can offer us clues that our health, relationships, or jobs may need attention.

**Acceptance is key!** Acknowledge your feelings without labeling them as "good" or "bad," they just are. Opening up honestly to a trusted friend, expressing yourself through writing, or speaking to a therapist are all healthy ways to confront uncomfortable emotions.

If you are having trouble dealing with your negative emotions, your EAP is here to help. Call Solutions at (337) 310-2822.

*Remember, one of the primary reasons we have emotions in the first place is to help us evaluate our experiences.*

~Alfred Adler

# *When It Rains...*

It happens to all of us – one unexpected thing occurs, then, before we can catch our breath – here comes the next thing, and then the next. This can lead to feeling overwhelmed, inefficient, and ineffectual.

## **What to do? Here are some suggestions:**

### **Make a list.**

Write down everything you can think of that you need to do. Most people find when they know something is written down, they don't worry about it as much. Only the things you can actually do something about go on the list. If you are waking up in the middle of the night worrying about things you need to do the next day, put them on the list so subconsciously you know they are safe and secure.

### **Consider the worst.**

So many times we worry about things that might happen: What if I lose my job? What if my spouse cheats on me? What if we're hit with another hurricane? Then, we stay stuck on the "what ifs" of the situation. You need to take it to the next step – let's say that horrible thing does happen. What will you do? Once you've allowed yourself to think all the way through the worst case scenario and realize you lived through it, you can begin to move forward.

### **Say "no."**

Begin to look at all the things on your plate and decide which ones can go off (or go onto someone else's plate). And for goodness' sake, don't add anything new to your plate right now. If you're having a difficult time managing your current situation, don't make it even more complicated. A simple, "No, I am not in a position to be able to do that," will suffice.

### **Stay in the moment.**

When you are stressed and overwhelmed, try to take a break by truly "being" wherever you are. As you are driving, notice your surroundings. As you are playing with your kids, stay focused. Tell yourself your worries will still be there when you get back to them.

### **Take control of something else.**

If you're feeling overwhelmed at work, go home and clean out a closet. When you are feeling helpless about a situation, go to another area in your life and do something productive. You are feeling out of control, and it helps to feel in control of something – anything.

Remember, your EAP is here to help you successfully manage your life if you feel these tips aren't quite enough for you.

*For caring and confidential help for personal and family problems, call Solutions Counseling & EAP.*

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