



Stepping Stones

Get On and Stay On the Path to Happiness

This is some basic advice about choices you can make to experience greater happiness and fulfillment (ataraxy). Being happier isn't selfish, because happy people are also healthier, more productive, and nicer to be around!

The Bird's Eye View of the Path to Happiness

- Make happiness a worthy goal, for achieving it is entirely within your power. It isn't what *happens* to you that determines your feelings, it's the *story you tell yourself* about what happened that controls your happiness. You can change the story and change your feelings.
- Use your feelings to tell yourself when things aren't working for you. Recognize them as signals that something needs to be changed to regain your serenity.
- Let go of what you cannot change: other people, the past, the future.
- Focus on what you can change: your thoughts, beliefs, expectations, and behavior. Changing them will change how you feel.

Healthy Attitudes and Beliefs

- Appreciate the moment. Notice the good things that are happening right *now*.
- Focus on what you *have* so that you experience abundance, remembering that unhappy people focus on what they want, and feel deprived.
- Be grateful. Remind yourself of your good fortune by thinking of others who have less than you do. Believe there is a gift in *everything* that happens.
- Be curious. Take off the blinders of your expectations and see the world through new eyes. Don't take this amazing life for granted.
- Lower your expectations since high expectations set us up for disappointment. Instead allow yourself to be surprised and delighted by things turning out better than expected.
- Let go of your "Shoulds." If you think or say *I should* do something, stop yourself. Examine the consequences of not doing it, and see if you *want* to avoid the consequences.
- Live your values. Think about the kind of person you want to be, then make every decision in alignment with those values.
- Take chances. Be bold and take a stand since people's biggest regrets were not things they did, but things they didn't do.
- Remember that if you ask for what you want and accept what you receive, you will get what you need.



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Relationships – With others AND with yourself

- Remember that other people's actions are almost always about them, not about you.
- Stop assuming you know what others think and feel -- no two people see things exactly the same way, and each of us interprets what we perceive in a different way.
- Communicate, ask questions and listen. Don't assume which belief(s) led to the behaviors of others; ask without judgment because when you listen, you learn.
- Accept others as they are: valuable, loveable, unique and *imperfect*.
- Believe that all people are equally valuable and worthy by virtue of being human, and that makes *you* valuable and worthy.
- Do not judge others (or yourself) because it is harsh and destructive.
- Remember that "being human" means being imperfect and making mistakes -- and that's all right.

Body

- Listen to your body, it tells you what it needs. It's your job to pay attention and find a way to change what isn't working.
- Remember to breathe, really *breathe*. When feeling stressed, take a few deep breaths -- focus on filling your belly with air, expel, *then* take a new, full breath.
- Get enough sleep. Give yourself the opportunity to get what your body asks for each night and if sick, get more and replenish your body.

"Serenity is not freedom from the storm, but peace within the storm."

*Life is turbulent and happiness is a result of what is happening inside of you,
not what is happening to you.*

This advice is adapted from an article originally written for the New Year's edition of the on-line magazine, *Soulful Living* at www.soulfulliving.com