

Continuous Life Improvement

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11. Add Behaviors Which Bring Happiness!

As you make decisions on behavior throughout your life, be sensitive to feelings of joy, kindness, love, beauty, grace and other positive emotions. Select behavior and seek out situations that promote and maximize these feelings.

12. Shut Down Negative Thoughts!

You are enjoying something, and suddenly a thought comes flying out from your deep subconscious that causes you doubt, guilt, fear or anxiety. For example, you are taking a nice hot shower and enjoying it. Suddenly a thought comes through telling you that you should not waste hot water. Consider that thought, assess whether it is valid, and if not, let that thought pass, and continue to enjoy the shower. Don't jump every time your subconscious mind comes up with an objection to something that you enjoy.

13. Recognize and Avoid Asceticism!

Ancient ascetics believed that the spirit was good and the body evil, and by punishing the body one enhanced the spirit. Some ascetics pursue this philosophy to the point of causing pain through self-flagellation, self-starvation and purposefully living in pain or discomfort. Some ascetics use a display of their self-torture as a way to draw attention to themselves. Avoid this behavior and always seek to increase happiness and tranquility in your life.

Asceticism includes simplifying or minimizing one's life to an extreme level. When simplifying one's life, do it to the extent that it increases happiness and tranquility. Don't punish one's self with pain or suffering for any reason other than cases where one gains a long term benefit through short term pain.

14. Ignore Negative Inputs!

Listening to negative news is debilitating. The information that enters your mind is what shapes your mind. Choose your incoming communication deliberately. Avoid media which push programming and choose media which allow you to select the information you wish to receive. Avoid people who are caught in negative thought patterns and who constantly speak about threats, dangers, crime and injustice.

Develop the state of your mind by choosing what enters your brain. Seek out a group of like-minded people to fill your day with thoughts of friendship and caring. Be kind and greet others with a smile to help others rise above the negativity. Doing so will benefit you as much as others.

15. Know that Happiness is Easy to Achieve!

It is easy to get the things necessary for basic human needs: food, water and shelter. A person who can obtain these basic things can be happy.

If your thoughts start to worry about how you are going to earn money to pay for something, ask yourself if you really need that item. Be calmed by the knowledge that basic human needs are easy to acquire, and anyone who has the basic human needs can be happy.

In addition to these items, by nature a human needs friendship, fascination (intellectual focus) and physical fitness. Friendship means social interaction and being part of a group of friends and family. Fascination and intellectual focus are the things one is passionate about. Often fascination is related to learning, building or creating. Physical fitness allows a person to be active and able to do a wide range of activities and it promotes health.

Note that the last three types of human needs can be satisfied without the need for money, if one chooses the right methods of obtaining these needs.

Comfort yourself with the knowledge that happiness is easy to achieve.

16. Preserve the Health of Your Body

Your level of happiness over the long term depends on how you treat your body. Neglect and abuse can bring pain. Eat healthy foods, exercise and use your body to maintain your fitness level. Use appropriate hygiene and preventative medical care. Exercise is an example of a short term discomfort that has long term benefits. Strive to achieve a healthy mind in a healthy body.

Our senses are the most direct and true connection with the natural world, far more direct than our understanding and learning about the natural world that we receive through communication with others. One should carefully guard against anything that would disturb, modify or distort one's senses and sensory observation of the natural world. One should moderate the use of intoxicants which distort one's perception of the world. Avoid alcohol and drugs in excess.

17. Stay Frugal, But Enjoy!

Would you like to be able to decide how to spend your time each day? Frugality can give you this choice by reducing your expenses to an amount that you can fund with part time work or a small investment income. Reducing your desires to those things which you actually need will help you reduce your spending.

It is very important to spend less than you make. Spending more than you earn, buying on time, taking on credit, all of these bind you to servitude. When you spend money, think about the time that you will need to work to pay for that item.

It is good to save and invest. The purpose of savings are to allow you to live without work taking up your available time.

If you are fortunate to have a level of savings and are financially well off, feel free to do things with your money that bring you happiness. Be generous to others.

18. Rational Behavior Decisionmaking

In order to use reason to live a life of happiness and tranquility, one applies rational decisionmaking to ones life based on the philosophy of Epicurus.

Rational Behavior Decisionmaking involves selecting one's behavior and activities, including:

Which activities we choose to do each day

Which people we associate with

How we speak to and treat other people

Recognizing nature through our senses

What we consume

Distinguishing between pleasure and pain, and determining which actions or events led to the experience of pleasure or pain

Levels of Rational Behavior Decisionmaking

Present Moment Comfort Enhancement

Be attentive to one's body and how one could improve comfort and contentment.

At frequent intervals, one should be aware of one's current physical state and imagine what one could do to increase comfort, such as drinking to relieve thirst, finding a good sitting position, wearing clothes that do not bind or chafe, or getting up and stretching after being inactive for some time. When physically active, enjoy the exercise but know the limits and take a break when appropriate.

Present Moment Positive Emotion Enhancement

Over one's life, one should learn specific behaviors that enhance feelings of joy, kindness, love, grace and other positive emotions (pleasurable emotions). Behaviors which bring pleasure might include calling a friend for a conversation, preparing a meal, writing a poem, taking a nap, designing a project, organizing one's desk, reading a book or going for a walk. The behaviors which an individual finds pleasurable are individual to that person. Each person must make themselves aware of the types of behaviors which enhance one's positive emotions, and in the present moment, should select that behavior which the individual feels would be most pleasurable. It may be helpful to make a list of behaviors that have been enjoyable in the past to help one remember the options that one has in the present moment.

Future Distress Reduction

There are a number of problems which one can avoid in the future by taking action today. Examples are preparing a financial budget to avoid a lack of funds, exercising to improve future health, medical care to heal a wound, working today to avoid future poverty, brushing one's teeth to avoid tooth decay. Select this type of preventative behavior when a relatively minor negative experience today will prevent a major discomfort tomorrow.

Future Positive Emotion Enhancement

Some actions one can do today can reap benefits in the future. Examples are planting a seed to enjoy the future crop, getting an education which will improve one's career, investing savings so that one may enjoy free time from employment. Select this type of action strategically, with a consideration as to risk and reward, in particular regarding what one is giving up today.

Self Preservation and Maximization of Pleasure

Life is what allows us to enjoy pleasure, so preservation and extension of one's life is the prime directive to maximize one's ability to experience pleasure.

In one's rational behavior decisionmaking process, one should always consider the risk of death or injury associated with the behavior, and the impact of the behavior on one's health and longevity.

Suggestions for starting out with a system of rational behavior choices:

Make a list of foods which cause indigestion or other problems and avoid them.

Consciously select the food and drink which you consume using science-based knowledge of a healthy diet as well as your preferences in flavor and taste.

Make a list of things which you enjoy doing and which bring pleasure, so you can refer back to them when you have time and don't know what to do.

Make a list of preventative actions you wish to take and know how they need to be applied in order to be effective.

Imagine the type of life one would like to have in the future and ask oneself what can one do today to bring that life into effect.

If there is an activity which you particularly enjoy, for example, a morning walk or afternoon tea, deliberately schedule these activities on your calendar so they don't get neglected and double booked by more mundane tasks and responsibilities.

19. Avoid Politics

Politics and discussion of politics involves dispute, disagreement, suspicion, rumor, lies, deception and retribution. To avoid the negative emotions that these actions bring, avoid

participation in politics.

You may wish to participate in democratic voting. It may be best to inform yourself by researching the candidates or proposals in a very focused way rather than relying on media to inform you. Elections cause the media to behave in damaging ways. Often the candidates and media will try to convince the audience that things are desparately bad and changes must be made or disaster will strike. This leads to distress among those who are convinced by the narrative. To avoid this negative impact on your well-being, avoid watching media, in particular television. Select your news source based on its rational qualities and balanced reporting. Text-based news sources are best.

In some cases, you may wish to engage in political activity to defend a cause which is important to you. Be selective about how you choose to be an activist on an issue. Working in a support role will be less damaging to your mental health than being a candidate for office. However, if there are no other potential candidates and you see a need to protect something important to you, you may wish to be a candidate for an elected position. Do your best and try not to get caught up in the negative side of politics.

20. Overcome Your Fears!

What if I become destitute?

Remember that even in the simplest shelter, with simple food and water, one can achieve happiness. The things that one really needs are easy to get. By accepting a simple life, spending less than one earns and saving money for emergencies, one can maintain a secure, if simple, standard of living and achieve happiness.

How will I find a suitable partner if I am not rich?

The way to find a partner is to be socially engaged, to have a circle of friends that includes a number of potential partners, and to have inner peace and tranquility that allows for good communication with potential partners. A flashy car, new clothes, jewelry and trendy haircut are not required.

I will miss something in life if I do not become rich!

You need some wealth to live. However, extreme wealth does not necessarily bring happiness. In fact, it is more difficult for an extremely wealthy person to achieve tranquility. Work toward a level of wealth that allows you a simple life.

21. Simplify Your Life!

Most people will benefit from reducing the complexity of their lives. Simplification frees up the most valuable commodity which a person can have: time. However, simplification and elimination of things is not a goal in itself. Simplification and minimalism have value to the extent that they improve one's life through reducing stress related to maintenance of things and by freeing up the time it takes to maintain them. It is also a frugal way to avoid unnecessary

expenses. The goal of simplification and minimalism is to achieve a level of tranquility that is not disturbed by responsibilities and the maintenance of the things one owns.

Once a person reaches a minimalist state of tranquility and is enjoying the free time that simplification provides, one should seek to add behaviors and actions which increase happiness to one's life. One may choose actions and behaviors that maximize positive effects while minimizing responsibilities and negative effects.

As one learns which things truly add value and happiness to one's life, one can choose those beneficial behaviors which have a minimal impact on one's financial resources. One can focus one's time on a select group of friends that one knows are rational, kind, caring and without the overhead of drama, anger or deceit. One can spend time researching a subject which one is passionate about. One can create art, build furniture or perform music. One can express themselves through writing. Simplification of one's life can lead to a flowering of expression that is made possible by reducing one's responsibilities and maximizing free time.

Conclusion

In order to continuously improve one's life, one needs to eliminate negative behavior and select behavior and actions that promote positive emotions.

These are the things that one needs to be happy:

FOOD

WATER

SHELTER

FRIENDSHIP

FASCINATION

PHYSICAL FITNESS

All of these things are easy to get. Some require a small amount of money. All of them require one to make good decisions about how to live one's life.

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