

# The Search For Happiness

■ Richard Corns

## Look Into Yourself, Not Shop Windows

We're all searching for something in life, and for many of us, we not quite sure what it is. Some might answer that it's a black belt, or to live in a nice house and drive a fancy car. Others will say it's to get married and have children, or take regular overseas holidays, have a great career or perhaps all of the above? While we all have different things that drive us, ultimately we all want the same thing – happiness. Houses, cars, jobs, investments, toys etc are all just products we come up with because we hope they will help us find happiness.

» It sounds simple enough and it truly can be, but somewhere along the line we have been confused into how best to achieve happiness. The consumer society we are, we've been conditioned into thinking

that the best way to achieve happiness is to spend money. Have you ever heard the term 'retail therapy'? The theory goes; when you're down, the only solution is to go out and buy something that will make you feel better. Many people swear by retail therapy, so does it really work? If you were to think about it, really think about it, you would most likely agree it serves only as a temporary band-aid-like fix. It fills a whole in the soul but before you know it, it needs filling again, and so the cycle continues, we feel flat, we make a purchase, we feel better – for a while – then we feel flat again, make another purchase and so it goes. Retailers love this as they make a fortune off our constant need to fill a whole – there must be a better way!

» Happiness is an emotion, an internal feeling. Is it not elementary then, that to achieve something internal, we should not be looking to something external? Most would agree with this statement, yet most, whenever they don't feel a deep sense of fulfilment or happiness, instead of looking into themselves, they look into shop windows. Don't be fooled by money hungry retailers or the memories of your previous short term-fixes, its time to stop trying to temporarily filling a whole and time to start plugging it – permanently! Real happiness can't be bought over a counter; it comes from a deep-seeded sense of inner-fulfilment.

## Giving Is A Miracle That Transforms Even The Heaviest Of Hearts

Nothing soothes the soul like giving. Have you ever handed someone a gift at Christmas knowing they are sure to love, and found it even more exciting than receiving a gift? Ask any karate instructor and they will tell you that watching a student achieve a grading, and knowing they played a part is often more rewarding than their own gradings. It's not rocket science, it's simple, if inner fulfilment is the best method of feeling prolonged happiness, then the best way to make yourself happy is to make others happy. Giving doesn't fill a

whole, it removes the whole – and isn't that much better? On the topic of giving, once again many minds go back to retail therapy, "Ah; so rather than buying that new jacket for myself, I will really find happiness if I buy a dress for my wife?" Author Kent Nerburn writes, 'We build our lives around accumulation – of money, of possession, of status – as a way of protecting ourselves and our families from the vagrancies of the World. Without thinking, we begin to see giving as an economic exchange'. Just as you cannot buy happiness, you cannot buy inner-fulfilment, a guilt free conscience or any other emotion. Giving is not an economic exchange. You cannot take from your financial bank balance and hope it shows up in your emotional bank balance. Simply put, giving is about compassion and generosity.

*The same mindset that says, "I will be happy when I have that", is the same mindset that will repeat itself once that desire is met.*

## Giving Need Not Be Grand Gestures

So right now you might be thinking of ways you can start giving, charity work, organising a huge fundraising night, coaching a kids soccer team etc. There are many ways to give and each one is amicable. But giving need not be grand gestures; it can easily be the small, often unnoticed acts that can be done anywhere and at anytime. Taking 5minutes to sit down and listen to someone who needs to vent, complimenting someone who largely goes unnoticed, dropping over to your grandparents for a tea, giving a few dollars to a homeless person, taking a stressed-out friend on a picnic to get away, the list goes on. When you start making a habit of small generous gestures, you begin to lock into the miracle of giving. When we give, big or small, those who benefit from our compassion let their walls of emotion down and we see their true unprotected heart, we begin to find what is common among humans, and not what differentiates us.

» When we make being a giver a habit, we discover that we have the ability to create internal joy, appreciation and happiness by even our tiniest gestures. We discover we have the ability to unlock what is good in others by giving what is good in us. ☺

