

# *How To Be Happy*

## *Without Spending a Cent*

- Judy Payne -

*W*hether our own children and our self-indulgent society want our help or not, it seems to me that our most loving legacy is the wisdom we have gleaned from our own life's lessons. I offer here a bit of my perspective in the hope it will help you clarify what success and happiness mean to you and how you might try to leave the world a tad better place than you found it.

### *First, my observations and conclusions*

As you watched the relatives and friends of 9/11 victims being interviewed on TV, did you notice a common theme in their responses? Over and over I heard bereaved folks say they were sure that *their* loved one died helping someone else, or that a void was created because of some strength of character *their* departed one took from this world. I didn't hear anyone mention the deceased's high salary or wheeler/dealer power, fancy car, athletic prowess, or gorgeous body. Hmm. Is there a lesson here about what—deep down—we already *know* constitutes a successful, happy life?

These comments validate my beliefs concerning the human condition from my vantage point as a mom, teacher, speaker, writer and loser of 110 pounds twenty-some years ago. I think there must be something in our DNA that allows us to feel truly happy only when the following intrinsic conditions prevail:

- ◆ We work hard to do our best with the many or few natural abilities we were given, and
- ◆ We aspire to be primarily givers, not takers.

If my hunch is right, no wonder our old extrinsic formula for success and happiness isn't working for us. Rather, we live in a S.A.D (selfish, angry, dumb) Society of semi-miserable people in a frantic quest for extrinsic fun instead of intrinsic happiness. We seek to acquire the extrinsic symbols of success and expect these trophies to somehow fulfill our spiritual, intrinsic need to feel happy.

There are oodles of people who appear to "have it all," but feel unsatisfied because society's superficial definitions of success and happiness have failed them. So how do we, as individuals and as a society, realign our goals with what we intuitively know is real success and the key to true happiness?

It's simple—not easy, but simple. We need to replace our current "King Midas Law" for success and happiness, with what I will humbly call "Judy's Law." All I did was revise the FORMULAS a bit to do two things:

- ◆ **Redefine** success and happiness to reflect what we all know would rekindle the spirit in all of us.
- ◆ **Re-evaluate** our methods for evaluating success and happiness.

***The Old "King Midas' Law" Formula***

Result: Extrinsic, Short-Term, Phony Success and Happiness

*Step 1:*

$$M^{\wedge}+P^{\wedge}+S^{\wedge} = SU$$

*Translation:* Lots of money + lots of power + lots of stuff = Success

*Step 2:*

$$SU+F=H$$

*Translation:* Success + Fun = Happiness

**The New “Judy’s Law” Formula**

Result: Intrinsic, Long-Term, Genuine Success and Happiness

*Step 1:*

(Here I added the old, forgotten, vital ingredient-**STRUGGLE**)

$$\mathbf{ST} = (\mathbf{S} + \mathbf{K}) + (\mathbf{SE}) + (\mathbf{SC}) + \mathbf{C}$$

*Translation:* STRUGGLE = skills and knowledge + self esteem + self confidence + character

*Step 2:*

Therefore: ST=SU

*Translation:* Struggle=Success

*Step 3:*

Consequently: SU=H

*Translation:* Success=Happiness

***How To Implement “Judy’s Law”***

*Goal: Happy Humans and Harmonious Humanity*

- ◆ First, look at your own life and listen to your own heart! Take note of the superficiality, the impossibility to control, and the minimal short-term satisfaction you get from your consuming, socially-expected, extrinsic activities and rewards.
- ◆ Next, flip your mind over and think about the unacknowledged, long-term joy, pleasure and satisfaction you receive from your growing, loving, unheralded, intrinsic activities and accomplishments.
- ◆ Finally, be sure you know the difference between extrinsic, short-term fun, and intrinsic, long-term happiness.

Did that personal 3-step examination give you a wake up call about the ridiculous Madison Avenue and Wall Street def-

initions of success and happiness that you have just accepted through osmosis? If so, simply do the following:

- ◆ **Stop** letting others determine how you feel about yourself (extrinsic). I've noticed that people who know this are already happy, even if they aren't rich, trouble-free, smart or beautiful.
- ◆ **Start** putting more quiet time, growth experiences, challenging tasks, delayed gratification and service to mankind into your life.

### ***How To Pass It On***

Raising and educating kids and saving our S.A.D Society could be much easier if we incorporated some old conscience-building motivators that have been disappearing over the last couple of generations. In addition to avoiding struggle in our quest for ease, equity, and absolutes, we have also omitted healthy portions of fear, guilt, fairness, and common sense. Thank goodness we aren't so morally numb that we no longer care if people are devoid of conscience. We evidence some moral outrage by our willingness to spend oodles on the law to pursue and punish slackers for their lack of character. It sure would be a lot cheaper if adults would just model, teach, and enforce good character in children until their copycatting becomes a repertoire of habits and behavior. Then, ideally, both kids and adults would automatically practice good character—even when no one is watching.

Perhaps, in order to help our self-absorbed, angry, adrenaline-addicted kids learn how to make themselves happy, we could start with the following:

#### *1. Take back control of our children.*

- ◆ We have rich and poor spoiled kids who are allowed to make too many decisions for themselves, with

too much discretionary time and money to spend without adult guidance.

- ◆ We adults are shirking our responsibility to model responsible decision-making and set boundaries.
- ◆ Discipline should be a learning experience, not just punishment; it should be administered out of love, not frustration.
- ◆ Our kids need more opportunities to be givers. They flourish when helping one another. (This I know because I studied it in my own classroom for years. The payback for the teacher is that kids learn at far higher levels, and discipline problems are rare.)

2. *Talk about character and honor at home, school, and in the workplace.*

- ◆ If a child indicates she/he would like to be an accountant, focus on the positive choices in which to use that career, such as working for a cancer research foundation.
- ◆ The writings of our forefathers are rich with examples of how they made honor and dignity top priorities in their personal and public lives. Talk about these guys, as well as everyday heroes and heroines.
- ◆ Consider having every family member create a mission statement. It could even become a big deal, with a special family ceremony.

3. *Model and Expect Good Character.*

- ◆ Instill habits of good behavior and character by modeling and expecting good manners, saving money, delaying gratification, and offering service to mankind.

4. *Reevaluate how we evaluate kids.*

- ◆ Isn't struggling to be the best we can be, the best we can do?
- ◆ Schools should incorporate into their grading philosophies at least *some* concept demonstrating that the biggest reward for learning is not the extrinsic grade, but the intrinsic joy of learning.

Have you ever noticed that in the long-term, we don't respect teachers who gave us that "Easy A?" Instead, we respect the teacher who pushed us and made us struggle to be our best.

- ◆ Too often, schools count what is countable, but not necessarily what counts. For accountability, schools depend upon one-size-fits-all, right/wrong, win/lose, quantitative, and easily calculated answers. Outside the classroom, we wouldn't expect a 4-foot kid to "beat" a 6-foot kid on a basketball court. We wouldn't give a baby a bad grade because he doesn't learn to walk the same day other babies his age learned to walk. Instead, we let him rise and fall until he masters the learning.

We may have umpteen types of intelligences identified now, but some kids just have more of them than others do. I've seen kids try hard, but eventually give up because they know they will never "succeed" by the school's definition of success.

- ◆ Kids will do anything to avoid looking stupid. Difficulty with learning is the elephant in the middle of the living room. Our society tries to force everyone to look smart and believes that money, power, and stuff are the evidence. Why not create a variety of opportunities to showcase each child's special gift?

*Now it's your turn.*

Please try to improve upon my ideas and add your own. Although we will never get it exactly "right," the good news is that all we have to do to be successful and happy is do our best to raise successful, happy kids. This will improve our S.A.D.Society. **The process is the Product.** The bottom line is:

***The STRUGGLE will make us SUCCESSFUL and HAPPY.***