

9 States of Happiness

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Are you happy? How do you measure your happiness level? What is happiness, really?

After years of studying positive psychology, (the science of happiness), I have identified **9 states of being** that define happiness for me. My goal, with this article, is that they might make others reflect on what happiness is for them. I have found that defining happiness for yourself is often the first step in being happier, in that it makes you recognize it and appreciate it when you feel it.

1. Being at peace

Being at peace, or finding a state of tranquility, calm or quietude is to me the foundation of happiness. This feeling of serenity can be experienced in moments of joy, but also in moments of sadness or anger. Those who suffer from anxiety, if they are conscious of it, might relate to this need for inner peace. It is what I strive for the most in my life. To feel at peace is not to be confused with always being in a good mood, but is rather a knowing, that even in uncertainty and in the daily chaos of life, all will be well and everything will unfold in perfect order.

2. Being authentic

What are your values, your beliefs, your strengths and your weaknesses? Who are you really?

We all have a tendency to wear different masks in order to protect ourselves or to be accepted. Some of us define ourselves by other people's beliefs or identity. Eventually, however, this becomes exhausting.

Discovering who you really are will be the most important journey of your life; and to live an authentic life, for me, represents happiness, even if it means not pleasing everyone or that not everyone agrees with my points of view.

3. Being in harmony with the universe

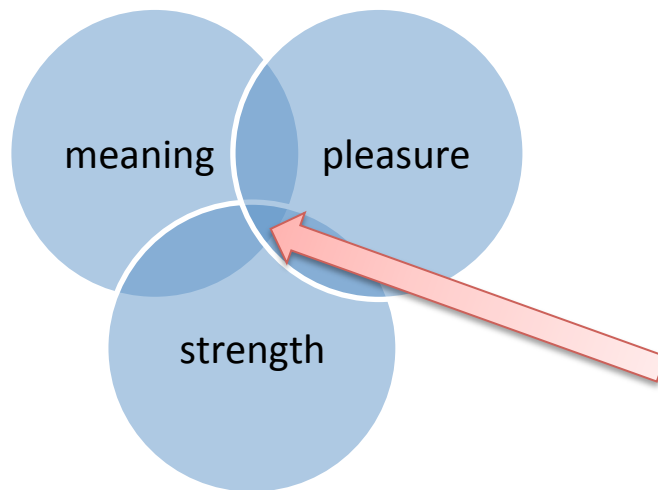
Some refer to this as "flow". When I am in harmony with the universe, it feels like everything is unfolding in divine order, and that I am exactly where I should be. I feel protected and that things are happening for a reason.

To access this state, I have to practice surrender. Surrendering to all that is and not trying to control every aspect of my life. In this space, I live the values that are important to me in every circumstance I encounter, I set intentions, I work hard towards the goals I have set for myself and I have faith that by doing this, all my desires will come true.

4. Being passionate and creative

When we discover what makes us passionate in life, we often find our creativity and our happiness increases. For me, being happy means living the life I want to live and not the life others would like me to live. Although I am not always certain of what that life looks like, I learn from each experience and collect information as to what I like and don't like along the way. This information allows me to build my own personal roadmap to happiness.

Noticing what makes me feel at peace, what motivates me and what makes me lose track of time provides hints to finding my passion. In his book *Happier*, Tel Ben Shahar explains that our purpose in life is where our strengths, what gives us pleasure and what gives us meaning intersect.



5. Being lighthearted

It is not always easy to not take life too seriously - Even harder is to not take ourselves too seriously. Humour and lightheartedness, as well as play, socializing and entertainment all contribute enormously to happiness levels and should not be underestimated. Being lighthearted has always been difficult for me. I would love to not overthink, to not overanalyse, to let go and have fun more often. I would love to laugh from my belly Every. Single. Day.

6. Being courageous

I have learned recently that being courageous does not mean that you will not feel fear. It means, actually, that you will use fear and anxiety as a catalyst to find the necessary energy to live your life to the fullest, follow your dreams and fight for what you believe in.

It is difficult to be courageous when you feel alone in the world or when your points of view or beliefs are unpopular or judged. To be courageous means **to live in vulnerability**, to accept that you will get hurt sometimes and that you will, most likely be judged – but to believe in something enough to take that chance.

7. Being open-minded

This state of open-mindedness is the one that has served me the most in my career, and certainly in life, in general. Being open to new ideas, to new, unconventional ways of doing things and to different types of people has allowed me to experience incredibly interesting situations and to develop rich and profound friendships.

8. Being healthy

To be healthy is extremely important, but I think physical health comes naturally when you are in a good mental state. When we are comfortable in our own skin, we have less of a tendency to want to eat or consume alcohol excessively. All addictions become less chronic and we feel like exercising more and seem to crave things that are good for us.

Mental health is very important and often our underlying beliefs about things can keep us in a state of depression or anxiety for a long period of time. We often need a change of perspective, and in many cases, it is a good idea to ask for help from outside sources, since it is our perspective and our thinking that have caused us to be where we are.

9. Being spiritual

Research shows that a large majority of happy people believe in the existence of a higher power. For me, spirituality is the key to happiness and is the underlying theme in each of the nine states mentioned in this article. Whether or not you practice religion, having faith gives life meaning and alleviates stress or pressure. Having faith is a personal choice, but even acting as if you believe has been shown to have a large impact of happiness levels (Super Brain, Deepak Chopra). I am always surprised by how much cultivating my faith decreases my anxiety levels and increases my happiness levels.

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