

How To Find Wholeness In A Fractured World

Circumstance Does Not Have To Dictate Terms Of Happiness

Happiness can seem like an endless journey fraught with many, often contradicting theories. There's what you should and shouldn't do; training states of mind; economic considerations; health; family; meaning; philosophy; spirituality – the list goes on.

But what actually works?

“As a newborn, they found me on a frigid winter's day inside a brown paper bag left on a toilet seat in a bar-and-grill wash-room in upstate New York,” says A. K. Driggs. “It would prove to be an inauspicious start for a happy life.”

Can someone with such a disadvantaged beginning life find happiness? We don't have figures on abandoned babies in the United States, let alone a protocol based in the social sciences for how to help raise these infants as they mature. Fortunately, Driggs was adopted by a loving couple, but other challenges would come her way.

For Driggs, her estimated January birthday initiated an extended series of life obstacles – romance, sexual identity, insecurity, fear of abandonment, cancer, being bullied and other existential crises, career uncertainty – on the path to happiness.

“But I found it and, honestly, I'm sure I'm happier for having gone through the challenges beforehand,” says Driggs, author of “Abandoned in Search of Rainbows,” (abandonedin-search-of-rainbows.com), which details her journey to wholeness. She offers advice for those who seek fulfillment in life.

- Self-acceptance is the gateway. We tend to worry about what's wrong, which makes a certain amount of sense because what's right doesn't require attention. Of course, the problem with this paradigm is that we create an inner environment dominated by anxiety. And, ironically, we worry about all the things we tell ourselves that we first have to do to be happy. As a result, we often have that busybody voice perpetually telling us something is wrong.

“Accept that there are things that need to be done – you want to be healthier, find a better job or a long-term romantic partner – but these things don't have to be accomplished in order to be happy,” Driggs says. “Anxiety is terribly inefficient. There's no point in worrying about such issues unless you're actively trying to yield a solution. Accept that you're in the process of growth, and it's not so bad.”

- Your spirituality is available to you every day. Many people wonder what spirituality means in practical terms. Aside from metaphysical aspects, some define spirituality as self-transcendence, which proves to be extremely valuable in our pursuit of happiness. Again, consider the subliminal voice that's always telling us things like Your hair doesn't look good enough or You said the wrong thing at the meeting and so forth. Are these concerns anything more than ego traps?

“There is a golden thread of truth that winds through and between the cloth of all religions if you look carefully,” she

says. “Spiritual truth lies within each of us at the temple within. The Universe is vast, and our humility in relation to it is good because it relieves us of the ego burden.”

- Make peace with your sexuality, disability, religion, race, adoption and more. Thankfully, in 2015, society has come a long way in its relationship to those who are not the majority. Still, it's not hard to feel different, and there are individuals and groups that are explicitly unwelcoming.

“It's sad that many of us are still in a position of needing to advocate for those from minority groups, but there's an upside to it,” Driggs says. “If you're different, you are unique and you can embrace this identity. As an adoptee, for example, my parents instilled in me that I was special because I was chosen. A similar perspective can be taken by anyone who feels different for a number of reasons. Embrace who you are!”

- Don't let go of what makes you happy! No matter how you've come across happiness – whether seemingly by accident or after a long, earnest effort – appreciate it by doing it. While that may seem like simple common sense, people lose sight of what makes them happy all the time.

“I found happiness in my spouse; the family that I've chosen, my friends; and singing as a recoding artist,” she says. Whether it be dancing for fun, sewing, gardening or simply singing to all living creatures, don't give up what makes you happy.”