

10 Tips to Gain

*Emotional Health,
A Happier Life,
and Stronger Relationships*



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By Denise O'Doherty, LPC, LMFT, MSN, LCDC

It is no secret that we all want to feel happy, and each one of us has different ways of getting there.

Did you know that happiness, joy and peace are your natural state of being? Yes, it is. Every other emotional feeling is a learned response to circumstances... everything! You have inadvertently learned to feel the way you are feeling right now, learned to settle for less than you really want, to make choices that fall short of happiness, and to accept not having your needs met. In fact, you may have mistakenly come to believe that's just how life is. But, what you have learned is now holding you back like invisible, elusive walls.

Happiness is not something you have to strive for or achieve. It's a state of being that happens when your needs are being met and you are in balance.

Depression, anxiety, frustration, anger, worry, stress, lethargy, guilt, fear, abandonment, judgment, grief, sadness, victimization, suicide, and every other negative state is simply a result of not getting your needs met ... of not knowing how to get your needs met. In this state you are out of balance, disempowered. Your life spins out of balance and spirals downward ... or it simply stalls and you go nowhere.

There is hope! There is a way to stop this cycle and reach your emotional and happiness goals. Stop settling, and begin to live again.

Here are ten steps that you can take to increase your emotional health and bring more happiness into your life.

I hope you enjoy this information and it helps you in living a more happy life.

Sincerely,

Denise O'Doherty

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Tip #1: Your Self-worth is Not Dependent on Others!

Stop trying to get approval from others to feel good about yourself.... the more you desire and focus on other's approval, the less you will receive it. When you quit wanting approval and focus on your life and what works for you, approval happens naturally. Focus on what inspires, has meaning, passion and importance for you. People are attracted to those who are confident and happy because their lives work and they are doing what works for them. The less you care about whether you get approval, the more you will receive. If they don't support you for being who you are and doing what you love, you might not want them in your life anyway.

Tip #2: Take a Deep Breath, then Respond!

Think and act, rather than re-act. Take your time before responding. When people "put us on the spot" and we respond with a knee jerk reaction, we are not using our best judgment. Don't respond until you have thought it through and feel ready or you might regret it. You can always say, "I'll have to think about that and get back to you", or "I don't know you well enough to talk about that" or "I'm not sure how I feel about that, I'll have to think about it". Keep your cool and stay grounded. You are in charge of your actions and need to do and say what is best for you.

Tip #3: Set Your Boundaries, and Stick to Them!

Know that you cannot have a boundary and simultaneously be responsible for the other person's feelings. Boundaries help us protect ourselves from being manipulated, intimidated and controlled by others. Boundaries keep relationships respectful and healthy. Having boundaries means knowing which behaviors from others are okay with you and which ones are not. Once you know your boundaries, you can stand up for yourself and therefore educate others how to treat you. If you take responsibility for their feelings, instead of yours, you may lose your sense of self, weaken your ability to take a stand, and teach others that your boundaries don't matter and don't need to be respected.

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Tip #4: Set Your Boundaries, and Stick to Them!

It's not what happens to us in life but our attitude towards it that makes a difference. The difference between being a negative or positive person is not whether or not you have problems. Everyone has problems. It's attitude. Do you look for solutions or more problems? When you get sick, do you focus on suffering or on healing? When you think positive, happy, loving thoughts, there's a different chemistry that goes into your body than when you think depressing, negative, anguished thoughts. Everything that happens to us in life has meaning. Those with positive attitudes tend to judge less and look for the meaning and the lessons in life. Adopting this mantra will bring you peace despite your problems and more confidence in your ability to manage life's circumstances, less stress and a positive sense of self.

Tip #5: You Always Miss the Shots You Never Take!

Don't worry about failure, think about the opportunities you miss when you don't even try! As long as you are willing to stay as you are, or to stay only with the familiar and not take risks and try new things out, then it is impossible to grow. If you try something new and it doesn't work out, you may have lost some time or money, but in general you go back to the way you were before you started. But if you try something new and you succeed, your whole life could change. People tend to be much more afraid of success than failure! What would you need to let go of to risk having more success?

Tip #6: Take Some "ME" Time, You Need It!

Know that being good to yourself is being responsible and pays great rewards for you and those around you. It is not selfish. Give yourself quiet time and breathing room. Learn to get centered and grounded. This may be through prayer, meditation, quiet time or anything else that gives you peace of mind. Know that how you take care of your body will affect your mental energy. Exercise, eat consciously and give your body the sleep it requires. Make time for yourself. You're worth it?

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Tip #7: Be Assertive!

Stay assertive. Being passive means not speaking up for yourself usually due to fear of abandonment or hurting someone's feelings. When we are passive, we tend to internalize resentment resulting in emotional and/or physical impairment. Being aggressive means you get what you want at someone else's expense. It's never a "win" if you win and someone loses. Being assertive means being honest and direct. In a conflict situation, both people "win" when the focus is not on the end result but on keeping the integrity of the relationship. Being assertive results in others respecting you for taking a stand, relationships that are built on trust and integrity, making better choices and getting better results in life and having a more positive sense of self.

Tip #8: Hold Yourself to Realistic Expectations!

No one makes us feel guilty without our consent. Guilt comes from not living up to our own expectations of ourselves. It comes from the feeling or thought that what you did is not okay. It indicates that our behavior needs to be corrected or altered. Shame is an overwhelming negative sense that who we are isn't okay. It's about feeling different, defective, and less than anyone else. By being accountable for our actions and making healthier choices, we can overcome guilt. By building our self-esteem and teaching ourselves how to cherish who we are, we can overcome shame. Guilt and shame can rob us of our true nature and identity as a complete, worthy and worthwhile person. By freeing ourselves from guilt and shame we can be open to a greater sense of well-being, self-respect and the unlimited opportunities the world sends our way.

Tip #9: Develop a Support System!

Develop a support system with people you can trust. Trust means that the other person cares about your needs as well as theirs and wouldn't do anything for their gain at your expense. People are our greatest resource. They help us get through the tough times. To have a friend, we need to be a friend. People are always willing to help and support us. All we need to do is let them in.

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Tip #10: Have an Attitude of Gratitude!

Live with gratitude. Be aware of and appreciate what you have, rather than focusing on what you don't have. Find meaning in what failed to show up. Live with an "abundance attitude" rather than a "lack attitude". There's more than enough to go around. Remember that happiness is wanting what you have. Life is precious. Make it count.

Plan the Work, and Work the Plan!

Now that you have your outline of taking charge of your life again, it is time to get to work. Remember, to set realistic goals, be sensitive to your own needs, and be open to change. If you take these principles, use them and apply them, you can definitely be on your way to obtaining emotional health, living a happier life, and building stronger relationships.

Life is hard, Therapy Can Help!

Sometimes our experiences are difficult for us as individuals to process on our own. Making sense of things often times need a trained eye to observe, interpret and evaluate a plan of action to overcome the obstacles life throws our way.

With over 25+ years of experience in helping people overcome life's difficult moments, I am ready to help when you need it. My clients have proven results that allow them to tackle life's most difficult challenges in a healthy and positive manner. To learn more about me and how I can help you achieve emotional happiness, and the ability to build strong and lasting relationships, please visit the links below or call me at 713-524-9525 for more information.

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