

One of the ways we overthink is through our endless chase of trying to be happy.

We think - am I happy? Is he happy? Is she happy? Are the kids happy?

Am I doing a good job? Should I change something to make sure everyone on this cotton-pickin' planet is happy?

AM I THE CHOSEN ONE TO CREATE HAPPINESS FOR ALL?

You might say, we overthink happiness a wee bit.

But instead of pursuing happiness, what if we pursued MEANING?

The research is abundantly clear that when we focus on meaning instead of happiness, there's a huge shift.

The reason is, there's power in your focus.

Meaning CREATES, while happiness is fickle and temporary.

(Just like the weather in North Carolina! Sunny one day and in the sixties; raining and cold the next day with snow in the forecast! 😊)

Back to the research -

Having a purpose, or meaning, in life is tied to a 22% reduction in strokes and makes you 2.5 times less likely to end up with dementia.

The reason why all of this adds up is that happiness is about YOU.

And...

When happiness is your focus, you become unhappy, according to a researcher at UC Berkeley. You're overthinking happiness!

Contextually, meaning and purpose take you outside of yourself and help you focus on others. Relationships are the key here -

Purpose and meaning are relationship-oriented and others-centric.

Happiness and the overthinking that comes with it are self-centric - it's all about how YOU feel.

Instead of overthinking happiness and all that entails, Harvard researcher Dan Gilbert recommends folks cut off options and just make and commit to a decision that's purposeful.

And when one of Gilbert's friends agreed with him and quipped, "That's probably why married people are happier," Dan went home and proposed to his girlfriend of 10 years!

And wouldn't you know it? Reports are that Dan Gilbert was a happier man after he married. :wink:

This is why goal setting can be a BUST - pursuing goals JUST for the end result is chasing happiness.

While those who pursue goals, ENJOYING the process, reveling in the journey, finding the meaning, become so much happier!

And guess which thought process is less exhausting?

So how do you get there - finding meaning instead of chasing happiness?

1. Reframe the whole darn thing. For example, janitors at a hospital who saw themselves as a part of the team that helps sick people get well, rather than a "cleaner," were happier because they found meaning in their work.
2. Habit words and knee-jerk answers have got to go!

Instead of saying "I have to," replace it with "I get to." Simply changing those two little words creates a sense of privilege instead of drudgery.

Say "I don't (as in "I don't eat cake") instead of "I can't"--I can't is a sad sack story that no one is interested in. I don't eat cake is a decision that people will respect.

Stop saying sorry all the time and start saying "thank you." Not "Sorry I'm late," but rather "Thank you for waiting for me!"

3. Align with your values. This seems basic, but we are often at odds with ourselves and our lives. You wouldn't expect to find a pantry full of junk food at my house, would you? Of course not, because junk food is out of alignment with my values and what I teach.

Are you walking your talk--do a bit of a deep dive and check yourself. If you're out of whack, it's time for an alignment assignment!