

Ten Simple Steps to a Happy Heart

1) Say thank you, and mean it. Seriously be thankful for what you have. Tell someone you love them. It may not be much (or it may be a lot), but it's yours. Family, friends, health, knowledge—those are what are important. If something comes up above and beyond that... lucky you. Be thankful.

2) Take change as an opportunity to act. Big things happen in life. Sometimes they are shitty. Don't let these things become your identity. Or do. Make them yours; own them; live from them, and then only keep what you find valuable. Discard the rest. If you lose your job, don't harp on how unfortunate the circumstances may be at the time, but take it as an opportunity to finally pursue that dream job you've always wanted, or maybe take a job that you never knew you'd enjoy. Or, view it as an opportunity to take a long needed break giving you time to rethink your future. A positive outlook is everything.

3) Have no expectations. I have, on countless occasions, turned a situation from good (or at least not bad) to *horrible*... because I had expectations about how the situation would turn out. This was dumb of me. We can never predict how a situation will turn out, whether it's a job interview or a trip to the market. We are humans, not wizards with soothsaying abilities. Expectations only breed disappointment; chances are, whatever you're dreaming up in your head is waaaaaay better (or worse!) than what's going to actually happen. The best way to approach things is with an open mind. So roll with it. Sit back and enjoy the view. Whatever happens is gonna be fine. And remember, everything happens for a reason, even if you don't quite understand it at the time.

4) Smile. Over my lifetime I've had a few friends that simply refused to smile and preferred to scowl at life, and they were some of the most miserable people I've ever encountered. Perfect strangers would actually walk up to them and ask "why so glum?". Approaching both people and situations with a smile is perceived more positively by others than if you were to approach them sporting a frown. Imagine how it can change your attitude if you do this all the time? People will see you smiling, and maybe they'll smile back at you. Before you know it, they'll be happiness all around. Try it. It works.

5) Let the important people in your life know how much they mean to you. Hug the ones you love hard and often. If you can't hug them, send a letter, a gift, a Facebook message, whatever it takes. Never take for granted the impact those people have on your life. When they are gone, remember them fondly.

6) Don't get bogged down with toxic emotions like jealousy, anger, fear and self-loathing. They all go hand in hand and are unnecessary, not to mention destructive. Everyone is on their own path trying to figure out their own lives, just like you and me. If they cross into

your path, step aside and let them pass, or walk alongside them for a while. And do so politely. Do not judge how heavy or how lightly they tread, but focus on your own pace and the direction you are heading—lest you trip along the way.

7) Love your body. Be compassionate with yourself. It's the only body you'll ever have... follow the golden rule with it. Treat your body as you'd like it to be treated. Kindness and tenderness are always encouraged. Treat your temple with love, nourishing food, and regular exercise, and it will be much happier.

8) Help others. Reach out and volunteer at a homeless shelter (for humans or non-humans), offer to help an elderly person take their groceries to their car or home, send greeting cards to random strangers in nursing or children's homes. Make someone smile today.

9) Surround yourself with positive people, and let the one's who don't bring you positive energy (and especially those with downright negative energy) fall to the wayside. Focus on the positive, and have compassion for those who focus on the negative. Be a role model when you are around negative people, but don't try and be these peoples' psychologists if they resist your influence, unless of course, that's your profession...

Because, ultimately, to be happy, one must:

10) Be the change. We've heard it time and time again, because it's true. If you want something to happen, make it happen on an individual scale. The world cannot make you happy or sad, only you can. If you want to be happy, it's simple: make the commitment to be happy. See the glass half full, starting now. Life is pretty amazing, and yours is certainly worth celebrating.