

Wrapped In Stillness

A Personal Retreat Guide



"It's a helluva start,
being able to
recognize what makes
you happy."

~Lucille Ball
Legendary Actress
1911-1989

What Does Happy Look Like?

Are you ready to unleash your genie from its bottle? After writing the first chapter of this book on the topic of sorting things out, I started thinking about Priscilla Dean, the woman responsible for the session that changed the course of my life many years ago. I decided to track her down. It was a challenge to find her since she had moved away from Wisconsin ages ago. So, I played amateur private detective and tracked her down on the Internet. It took several attempts, but I finally found her and she had a pretty good memory of me all these years later. I shared my chapter with her and asked if she would be willing to add her thoughts to my book. She has hosted many sessions with people trying to “sort things out” and I was certain she would have an interesting insight. This is the beautiful response I received from her not long after my request:

‘Sorting it out’ starts with perceptive listening and asking the right questions. Most people know in their hearts what they are capable of. When that does not surface easily, a need for approval is usually attached to the stopper that holds the genie in the bottle. If we take a look at what approval is needed, it will likely lead us to the right question.

We can shake down our parents, siblings, environment, heredity, and most assuredly, they all have a part in it. Then the question that we must ask ourselves is, ‘Why does it matter?’ Aha, we come to self—self-confidence, opinion of self, view of self. Next question is, ‘Who cares?’ We have one life to live. If we allow anyone or anything to

prevent us from being our fullest, shame on us. Stating something so simply and as matter of fact may ring hollow in your ears. If you have a passion for something, then you are ahead of the game because it is already clear to you what you want to do. If you have an uneasy feeling, an unrest, then the passion or the need has not been able to surface. I would like to offer a suggestion, a place to start. Something that is good for all of us to review periodically. I have developed a worksheet on 'what makes us happy.'

For five days in a row, make a list of the things that make you happy. It's okay to repeat things from a previous day. Each day start a NEW sheet and do NOT look at what you wrote the day before. Keep all the pages. (However, if you are only on a one-day retreat, go ahead and make the list and go straight to the questions.)

HAPPY INVENTORY

After you have completed five days of listing what makes you happy, reflect on the following questions:

1. Do I do these things now?
2. Do I do this with others?
3. Does this cost money?
4. How much time does it require?
5. What time of day do I do this?
6. How can I bring this into my weekly schedule? Daily life?
7. What are the similarities and differences of my happy inventory?
8. What strikes me most about this list?
9. How does it make me feel?

Priscilla finished her letter by sharing:

I vowed I would never write a book on gardening because every year gardening is different. However, every year my garden teaches me something. One thing I have learned is that no matter what the weather hands out, something thrives. What does that mean to you? Maybe something/someone out there is waiting for what you have to offer. Waiting for that song, that sentence, that smile, that encouragement, that recipe. Finding out what makes us happy is a good start in knowing our heart's wish.

I did Priscilla's exercise just as instructed. Surprisingly, I ended up with thirteen different entries on my five-day list. What grabbed my attention was the fact that almost half of the things I said "make me happy" are things controlled by others. Discovering this fact changed how I behave. I noticed that I waited for others to bring me the happy. My previous formula was:

$$S + O = H \text{ (SITUATION + OTHERS = HAPPY)}$$

As a result, I created a plan where my happiness equation had to include a "me" symbol. I changed it to:

$$M + A = H \text{ (ME + ACTION = HAPPY)}$$

Make yourself happy. A good friend of mind did the Happy Inventory and realized making time to drink tea in her backyard made her happy. The appearance of her yard did not. So, as soon as her budget allowed, she did a complete overhaul of her garden. It is now a place of tranquility and a perfect garden of happiness for her and all who visit. This is a great example of someone making a bubble of happy for herself.

Thank you, Priscilla, for taking time to write for my book. I only spent one hour of my life with you, but it was profound. You let my genie out of its bottle and she has been dancing ever since.

*“Someone out there
is waiting for what you have to offer
Waiting for that song, that sentence, that smile,
that encouragement, that recipe*

*Priscilla Dean
Sort-It-Out Leader.”*

ask yourself...

What is the “happy” that I want for me?

What insights emerged after writing my Happiness Inventory?

Can my insights be even more specific?

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