

Cultivating



JOY

Joy is a more potent than happiness, and also less frequently experienced. Whereas happiness tends to be a fleeting emotion once joy is touched upon it tends to take hold and become our state of being. Joy comes from within out, whereas happiness comes from out within.

Happiness is stimulated and a reaction to an external stimulus or situation, for example when we pass an exam, have an offer accepted on a house we really wanted or for some of us, when we win the lottery. Happiness can be experienced as mildly, like satisfaction, or intensely, as bliss. It is an emotion, however, that is finite and transient.

Joy, on the other hand, is an internal sensation, both experienced and generated inside of us. It is of us, but not self-interested. It is eternal and undisturbed by external circumstance. It is the inspiration for creativity, a vital ingredient of wellbeing and is enough in and of itself. It is the state of non-judgement, non-striving, and total peace with self – who and how we are.

You will need:

A space to sit outdoors or by a window indoors where you can see outside.

Notebook
Pencil

Things to try...

Embodied mindfulness for connection to joy.

Sit outside or by a window. Ensure you are comfortable and warm. Take a moment to sink from your mind into your body. Pause.

Notice your bottom against the chair or ground. Breathe in and then out to that spot consciously three times. Place your hand on your heart. Connect to the rise and fall of your chest, the inhale and exhale and to your physical heartbeat. Then look around you. Notice the trees, plants, animals. Hear the sounds of the natural world. Focus on the colours and shapes you see. Take the frequency of all of this into your chest via your hand. Connecting mindfully this way supports the swelling of joy within you.

Cultivate YOUR joy...

Things to try...

Take time to connect to a memory of a time when you felt joyful – expanded, free, easeful in your mind, body, and heart.

What were you doing? Being? Where were you? Who were you

with? Release if necessary what happened before or after that moment, just be in that place. Jot what you discover from this enquiry into your notebook. Schedule more of this into your diary for a month and see the impact of your wellbeing.



Things to try...

Where is the home of joy in your body and what does it 'look like'?

Once you have completed the embodied mindfulness and cultivate your joy exercises above, revisit the memory again. This time spend some time being curious about your body's processes and how it actually feels joy. Where in your body are the strongest sensations? What do the sensations feel like? Hot? Gentle? Flowing? Throbbing? If they had colour, what would it be? A shape? If they were an animal, what would it be? A landscape? Play with these questions. Draw or journal about them.

Top tips...

Health benefits.

Joy is a natural state of the parasympathetic nervous system, the rest and digest aspect of the central nervous system. This is integral to wellness and the antidote to the stress response.

Get out of the mind and into the body daily.

Joy is a sensation of contentment and peace. We cannot 'think' the experience of joy. We need to feel it. Focus on consciously coming into the body every day with the intention of full embodiment. Warm baths, gently and mindfully applying body lotion, doing basic somatic exercise will support the connection to body and skin and therefore, the cultivation of joy. Yoga is also an excellent way of slowing down the mind, generating body awareness and getting in touch with joy.

Things to try...

Ongoing joyful focus and awareness.

Be discerning. Notice those people, activities, TV programmes, places which take you out of peace and ease. Put a boundary around them. Discern which facilitate spaciousness and pleasure, laughter, and expansion. Prioritise your time with, doing, listening, and watching them.

Top tips...

Go outside.

The simplicity and freedom of being in nature – listening to a babbling brook or the crashing of waves against the beach, feeling the breeze against your cheek, walking amongst mighty oaks in a forest – these things stimulate the deep sense of oneness, and contentment, peace, and joy within us.

Useful links to find out more.

<https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/strategies-for-finding-more-joy-in-your-life>

This is produced in collaboration with Kay Turner, you can find her courses and experiences at Happy House Masham.

