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Living Happily Together



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LIVING HAPPILY TOGETHER

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A home should contribute the greatest possible happiness for all of its members. A happy person will make others happy, and thus enrich the lives of many. His family, his friends, and his community can all feel the influence of his happiness. People who live happily together share experiences that should help them meet any misfortune.

If we were to ask a member of a happy family to tell us what makes him happy, he might say, "Well, lots of things." And he would be right. Because happiness is not a separate thing in itself; we do not best win it by deciding to be happy. It is more often a by-product of what we do and what we care about. It is what comes to us as the result of cultivating certain habits, outlooks, and relationships.

We all desire happiness; however, life cannot all be happy. We must realize that the old saying, "All roses have thorns," is true of living.

In a home where happiness prevails, where each family member is doing a good job of living, there will still be problems to be solved. Life has its hard times as well as its better moments. We need to be honest and face the fact that all persons and all families have problems. We do not need to make our own greater than they are. Much trouble that we look for never arrives. It is the way we look at the problems and how we go about meeting them that is important when we are thinking of the happiness of ourselves and others.

First we should understand that no two people are alike. What makes one person happy may not bother another, and what pleases one may annoy someone else. To live happily with others we must recognize and accept these differences.

We become what we are because of our inherited factors and all of the experiences we have had. Our family, our early baby days, our childhood, the school we attended, in fact, everything that has ever happened to us becomes a part of us, making each of us a unique individual—different from everyone else.

YET THERE ARE SOME SAMENESSES. In each of us there is a little of what we see in everyone else, and often the acts we do not like in others are things *we* do.

Another point we need to understand is that **EVERYONE IS ALWAYS SEEKING SOMETHING.** Sometimes we know what we want; sometimes we think we know; but much of the time we do not know at all. **YET, ENOUGH IS KNOWN ABOUT HUMAN BEINGS TO BE SURE THAT ALL WE DO IS DONE TO FULFILL SOME VERY HUMAN NEED.**

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Understanding And Meeting Our Needs

Many of our innermost wants or needs are common to everyone else. The baby has needs, the child, the adolescent, the grown man and woman. How about asking ourselves sometimes,—How are my family's needs being met—my children's—my husband's and my own? We all have in common some very basic needs which must be met in one way or another. Many of these are emotional needs.

No listing of emotional needs has ever been fully agreed upon. But most authorities have pointed out certain needs as being essential.

I. WE NEED TO FEEL SECURE—LOVED AND WANTED

Experiences that build a feeling of security give us safety, anchorage, and peace. They make us feel warm, loved, and comfortable. They give us the courage to meet life's problems.

We Need Affection To Make Us Feel Secure

When we are really honest we admit that whether we be young or old—man, woman, or child—we do need and want affection. It is necessary for true happiness.

The baby needs cuddling. He needs to be held closely. This is the only way he has of knowing that he is loved.



We Need Affection To Give Us Confidence

The young child wants to be held and caressed. Gradually he learns that smiles and kind voices also mean that he is loved. He needs affection from everyone in his family.

As he grows older he wants fewer caresses, but continues to need verbal reassurance. The teen-agers want to express their affection for each other, but they still want their parents' companionship and understanding.

In a good marriage the partners give and receive affection, staunchly and supportingly, supplying for each other a very important need and having an abundance left to give to their children as they grow.

We Need Response To Make Us Feel Secure

We all crave response for what we *are*, not for what others want us to be.

Mrs. Brown often says, "Jimmy, I like you when you are a nice boy." But Jimmy wants to be liked whether he's nice or not. He needs to know that he, with all his ugliness included, is loved and accepted as he is. Jimmy needs the kind of response from his mother that helps him to know, way down inside, "Even if I'm bad, even if she's mad, I know that she still loves me; that I am still loved as her son even if I have been bad."

Response comes to the infant as he is cared for and loved. A baby has very little trouble getting the needed attention which makes him happy.

But as he grows he must please others, as well as himself. If he doesn't the response he wants is often withheld. He still needs loving attention and kindly direction.

School age children get response from their friends for what they are. "He's my friend. He's O. K." However, response from his family continues to be needed. Could we recognize his good acts and be less critical of his mistakes?

In later life response may come simply because, "He's my husband," or "He's my dad, and he's swell." These responses grow with loving understanding.

Such approval makes one feel wanted, loved, and secure. Too much criticism and condemnation destroy this positive response—it injures happiness.

We Need To Feel That We Belong

We need to feel that we have a place in our family, in the club, church, and community.

A sense of belongingness comes to the baby through cuddling and physical closeness. As he grows and is accepted by his family he feels that he belongs. He needs parents who love each other and who provide a harmonious home for him. A child who lives among a quarreling family never feels secure, for he lives under constant threat of being left out.

He needs to find comfort and support in moments of trouble and doubt. For when he is uncertain of himself he is apt to feel lost. Then, knowing that someone is with him, rather than against him, helps him find his way. Yet, so often, we seem to forget that he is troubled when he "is naughty."



We Need To Belong To A Group

"You bad, bad boy! You've ruined my best rug," is too often used! No average child would willfully "ruin the best rug." He's probably already troubled; why add to his misery? You could restore an outcast by saying, "Too bad. But I'm sure you didn't know it would do that."

As a person grows older he needs to have a feeling of belongingness to circles *outside* his home such as being a member of a Sunday School class, a neighborhood play group, or a grade in school. Of course, he still must have a place in a family—it may be in the family he establishes. He will, no doubt, seek other people who are like him, "who speak the same language."

II. WE NEED TO FEEL ADEQUATE

Without a feeling of adequacy we lack faith in our own abilities. We lack courage.

To feel adequate we must have experiences that increase self-respect that build into us a sense of our own worth. These come through *achievement* and through recognition given us by others.

We Need To Achieve To Feel Adequate

Satisfactions that come from doing what one "sets out to do" contribute to happiness. The infant who is in pain achieves when he manages to gain help from an adult. As he grows he learns to achieve in other way. He reaches for objects. He crawls, and later walks. He begins to feed himself. He discovers that he can do things for himself. We call this "helping the child become independent." But to him it is achievement, and it adds to his happiness.

Soon, however, he must yield what *he* wants to what *others* want—don't touch, don't do that. Eat now. Sleep now. If these demands are not imposed until he is ready and able to meet them he can adjust happily, and still have a sense of achievement, of doing what is expected of him. However, if these demands are forced on him before he is ready to comply, he may react in undesirable ways. And one thing is certain, his happiness is impaired.

Children get a great deal of satisfaction out of physical achievement. Later, intellectual achievements are valued more. Whatever a person is asked to do should be suited to his abilities. When achievements are required which are too difficult, then all achievements begin to seem impossible, and the feeling of adequacy is injured.

We all need a balance between success and failure. Too many failures will cause discouragement. How often have you heard some one say, "I can't do that." We want to feel that we can try to do things and get some satisfaction from trying.

We Need Success In Some Undertakings

A good example of this was shown at a fair. A woman had entered a jar of food in each class and as the judge went down the list and placed ribbons on jars other than hers, she often said, "Just wait until she gets to the apple jelly." The blue ribbon was placed on her apple jelly, and this brought a feeling of achievement to her. This feeling of success is carried into other parts of her life and affects her actions in daily life.

People need to find things which they can do—and get joy out of doing them. Parents who direct every detail in the lives of their children are robbing them of the happiness which comes from self-direction. Taking responsibility, making independent choices, carrying out one's own decisions—these make for a sense of adequacy and contribute to one's own feeling of worth.

Wherever we can, we need to help ourselves and others grow in the ability to make choices and to direct oneself. These things make for happiness.

We Need To Feel Needed

We all need to feel needed. We need to know that there is something for us to do that no one else can do. This need is easily met in our farm homes. There is always a job for everyone—even the smallest child has chores. He knows that he must do these chores. He must feed his pig. He knows that if he does not do his part, other family members will do more than their share. It is a good thing for us as parents to feel needed. No one can take our place. We are needed by our children. We need to build for self sufficiency in our lives.

Dr. James S. Plant said, "We need to develop the ability to live within ourselves. You want to build your house near other houses because you need those relationships; however, build your house so strong that it will stand a storm that might blow the others away."

We Need Recognition To Make Us Feel Adequate

We want other people to appreciate our accomplishments. Even the most modest of us feels rewarded by recognition, and in all probability strives the harder to deserve it.

No worthy person wishes unearned praise or insincere flattery. It's quite another thing to be told that we have done well—when we have.

We need to think as well of ourselves as we possibly can. We do not want, of course, to overrate ourselves. But a wholesome and honest appreciation and enjoyment of our own accomplishments strengthens our self-esteem.

The baby frankly enjoys all the recognition he can get. He smiles and coos when he is admired. The young child too, enjoys attention and approval. In fact, he usually becomes unhappy if he is ignored. Then he strives to get attention one way or another. If good behavior does not bring recognition he may try "showing off," shouting, kicking, anything to make others notice him.

Gradually, as we grow up, we like best the recognition that comes because we have done a thing well, or think we have. It makes us happy when others recognize something into which we have put effort.

Why not admit we like it? It is thoroughly human and natural to enjoy having what one does appreciated. Let's give our family members recognition for tasks well done. Happiness will increase as recognition replaces criticism, nagging, and scolding.

These Things Are Important

Having Basic Needs Met

Our needs must be met if we are to live happily and well, we need to be loved and wanted—to feel secure. And we need to have some recognition and a sense of achievement if we are to feel adequate. Each of us in our own way tries to satisfy our emotional needs.

Learning To Cooperate

We are happiest when there is a good balance between what we want and what we get. However, because we are a member of the family group within which our interests may clash with the interests of another, we cannot expect our every wish be gratified. If we have an attitude of consideration for others we want to share and are happy in that sharing. We learn that we need the help of others and helping others gives us satisfaction. Every member of a family may be happy when privileges not necessarily equal are shared and not given to a favored member. The difference in sharing or favoring may be determined by the particular needs of the individual member. The emotional need of a pre-school child for some particular thing might be as great as the need of the adolescent for something of far greater cash value. In this case we would be meeting equal emotional needs and not favoring one.

Achieving Mental Health, Happiness, And Fun

Family happiness is strengthened by good health. Parents who do not feel well find it hard to be considerate and hard to help others attain

emotional needs. Children, are irritable and often naughty just because they have not had enough sleep, or are unwell.

Sharing fun increases the happiness of family members. For out of such relationships come understanding, sympathy, and common interests that help bind individuals more closely together. Thus happiness increases.

The Way We Think Affects Happiness

Our mental attitude is a very important factor in happiness. A deep inner courage gives us the strength to carry on whether conditions are good or bad. A person who has faith and courage is called well adjusted. He can take whatever comes and still retain a certain amount of happiness, and he can have a steadying effect on others. This so-called inner courage can be gained easiest by those who have their emotional needs reasonably satisfied. However, there are some folk who fail to attain happiness even when their needs are met. These people usually are bogged down in their thinking—they are failing to understand themselves and others.

As one grows in self-understanding, he usually grows in happiness.

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