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## The quest for happiness

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**By Bachar Bakour**

So varied and diverse are the opinions of what constitute happiness, what create it, and what account for its permanence. In a life imbued with evil, sadness, anxiety, hardship, etc., how can happiness be attained? How can I create a true smile on my face, despite being in distress? What is the key to happiness?

To a great number of people, the key to happiness and delight is to be found within the purview of all kinds of wealth, money, self-indulgence, celebrity, and the like. Happiness is a composite of these carnal elements, to the exclusion of anything that tends toward spiritual growth. The problem in this approach lies in the fact that we have seen how a large number of celebrities and

tycoons have expressed their displeasure and discontentment. While some of them have recourse to drugs and alcohol in pursuit of solace and comfort, others ended up committing suicide or attempting to. In striking contrast, we have seen and heard about people who, despite an outward state of great agitation and turmoil, live with an inner peace and security, enjoying life to the maximum.

### **Happiness constituent elements:**

Contentment: Man is innately avid to amass as much wealth and property as possible, even though it may be to his detriment. Propelled by an overwhelming desire, he stretches his eyes and hands to others' possessions and belongings. The solution may be derived from two pieces of advice from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who says, "Whoever, at the start of the day, has no worries concerning safety and security, with a healthy body and a means of a day-to-day livelihood is [blessed with something great] just like the one to whom the entire world has been given." And he says, "Do not look to those who are superior to you [in terms of money, property, living standard]. Rather, look at those who are inferior to you, for it is more conducive not to belittle God's favours upon you."

2. Help others: Giving help to your brother, partner, friend, neighbour or even a stranger is among the things which will make your heart filled with joy. Try to busy yourself in social activities promoting the general wellbeing of the society. Before having a smile on your face, help put one on the faces of others. The more you share the anxieties and concerns of your fellow humans, the more you tend to forget yours. Our beloved prophet said, "He is not a perfect believer, the one who sleeps on a full stomach, while he knows that his neighbour is hungry." And said, "One deserves God's help as long as he helps his brother."

According to 75-year Harvard study on happiness,

Close relationships, more than money or fame, are what keep people happy throughout their lives, the study revealed. Those ties protect people from life's discontents, help to delay mental and physical decline, and are better predictors of long and happy lives than social class, IQ, or even genes. The happiest people were the people who leaned into relationships with family, with friends, with community.

3. Prayer: Mother's lap is the safest shelter for a fearful child. God is likewise the best refuge from all that might be a source of harm to man. 'I seek God's refuge from Satan, the accursed' is a statement often repeated by Muslims. God, the merciful, is always ready for help, protection, guidance and deliverance of His servants from evil. "If My servants ask you about Me, well, I am near; I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls to Me. Let them then respond to Me, and believe in Me, so that they may follow the right way." [Q. 2:186] "This verse fills a believer's heart with love, confidence and utter reassurance. In this atmosphere of friendliness and compassion, God, who has no need for anyone, directs believers to respond to Him and believe in Him, in the hope that this will guide them to wisdom and righteousness. When one responds to God's call, one must be confident that God will answer one's prayers (du'ā'). However, one should not hasten God's response, for He alone decides the most appropriate time to respond." Pointing out when and how one's prayer is answered by God, the Prophet is quoted as saying: "God would not like to see His servant holding out his arms pleading for help and turn him away empty handed." "God shall answer the prayer of any Muslim anywhere on earth, or He will protect him against harm, as long as he does not ask for something evil or for the break-up of kinship relations."
4. Never bother about the past or the future; give undivided attention to the present movement, and enjoy it.
5. Let it stick in your mind that your Lord is of absolutely infinite forgiveness, so upon committing evil do not hesitate to seek His pardon.
6. Incomprehension of the purpose of the creation of evil does not entitle you or me to state that God has no wisdom, mercy or might.
7. Focus on the positive side of the test, as elaborated earlier.
8. Have recourse to patience.
10. Concentrate on the enormous reward from the Lord, if you have endured patiently, showing no sign of objection or rejection.
11. Always remember that this world, in comparison with the life to come, is very short, trivial and a passing delight.

We are now enjoying the bliss of Ramadan, the month of the Quran, of fasting, of taqwa and of social solidarity as well. To be happy, let us make others happy and merry. \*\*\*

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