

STEP THREE: PUT HAPPINESS FIRST

One thing we can agree on is that we all want to be happy, right? You might think so, but studies of people in every stage of life have shown that we virtually never put happiness first. It is always a by-product of something else and never the main event.

When you look at this breakdown, you might agree that it sounds fairly accurate:

Question: "What will make you happy?"

- Elementary school – children in third grade listed their wants as trips to the amusement park, dolls that talk, bicycles, no more homework, and video games.
- High school students – this age group wanted to be popular, to have a boyfriend or girlfriend, to excel in sports, to get a drivers license, they want nice clothes, and get into a good college.
- Mid-20's group – this group wanted a meaningful relationship, a better job, more money, a good apartment.
- Mid-40's group – this group wanted better relationships with their spouses, more respectful children, better job opportunities, financial security, less stress, and more personal time.
- Mid-60's group – this group wanted health, security, respect from others, status in the community. Once in a while, they mention peace or comfort or even happiness.

Never was the word "happiness" mentioned, but when people of every age were asked why they wanted bicycles or a drivers license or a better job, they always said it was

because that would make them happy. Although they believed that happiness would be the end result of obtaining all of these things, they never stated it directly. The result of that is that they're putting off their happiness until they have the things they think will give it to them. The solution is to choose to be happy now while they're working for whatever it is they desire.

In many cases, happiness is as easy as realization of it. What's standing in the way of happiness is the negative self-talk and training that brought us to a point where we thought we had to have something – whatever that thing is – in order to be happy. In many cases, it's just as easy as flipping a switch.

The solution, then, is as simple as making the decision to be happy now.