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10 Steps Toward Feeling Happier, Now

- 1. Make the decision to be happy.** Life will continue to challenge all of us with its bumps in the road—some big, some small. It is your attitude and how you choose to negotiate those bumps that determine how you feel. Adopting an attitude of appreciation for everything you have, and recognizing that you always have a choice about how to respond to external circumstances can contribute significantly to feeling happier.
- 2. Cultivate a sense of connection.** Examine the relationships in your life—at home, at work, and socially. Do you feel connected to the people in your life in a healthy and satisfying way? Do you feel connected to yourself? Through reading, taking a class, meditation, spiritual exploration, therapy, and communicating with others, you can deepen your sense of connection and well-being.
- 3. Focus on forgiveness of yourself and others.** This can be very challenging at times, especially when you feel someone has done something that seems unforgivable. The forgiveness, however, is for you; not for them. It frees your mental and emotional energy to blissfully go forward in your life. There is a saying: “Holding onto resentment is like letting someone else live rent-free in your head.”
- 4. Set short-term and long-term goals for making your dreams a reality.** Goal-setting gives you something to look forward to, something to work toward, and creates structure in your day-to-day life. As each step along the way is completed, you experience a sense of pride and accomplishment.
- 5. Find fulfilling work.** Having an occupation that you enjoy and has meaning for you gives you a sense of purpose and can be deeply satisfying. If the work you are currently involved in falls short of this criteria, you may want to look at the possibilities for making a change at some point. If changing jobs is not practical, perhaps you could find a volunteer position or hobby that would meet the same criteria.

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- 6. Take care of yourself physically, mentally, and spiritually.** The health of your body enormously impacts happiness. Proper nutrition, regular sleep, and daily exercise that you find enjoyable are essential. Stress reduction through conscious schedule planning, breathing exercises, and meditation can make a tremendous difference. If you already have a spiritual practice or affiliation, seek to deepen it. If you don't have one, you may want to explore those that interest you to find one that fits for you. Remembering your spirit—feeding, nurturing, and satisfying your soul—can greatly increase your feeling of happiness.
- 7. Be honest with yourself and others.** Congruence is the agreement between who you are, what you think and say you want, and your actions. As you become more connected with yourself, your goals, and your self-care improves, chances are you will find it increasingly easier to be genuine and authentic with others. When you really know who you are, what you want, and you are being true to yourself with actions that match, your happiness quotient will go up dramatically.
- 8. Be open to learning, growing and creating.** Continually expanding your mind through learning can increase your sense of self-confidence. Minds are kept young and sharp by continual use, and mentally active people live longer. Learning is as important to your brain as exercise is to your body. The more you learn, the more aspects of life you can be aware of, appreciate, and enjoy.
- 9. Manage your money wisely.** If you are not already doing so, you can improve your money management by disciplining yourself to save money, keeping expenses low, evaluating your budget regularly, and using extra caution to consider expenses involved prior to starting a family, buying a home or making other large purchases. The old saying, "Money can't buy happiness," is not entirely true. We need money to pay for food, housing, transportation, and all other necessities for survival and comfort. Financial security is defined as "the point at which a person has enough savings or regular income to support a comfortable lifestyle." 'Comfortable' means different things to different people. There are two ways to experience being rich: To have great wealth or to be content with what you already have. Once the basics of survival and reasonable comfort have been satisfied, your attitude regarding money becomes much more important than the size of your financial portfolio. Those who know how to use money well in the promotion of happiness are way ahead of those who think they need more.

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10. Step out of your comfort zone in the pursuit of pleasure. Most of us tend to become creatures of habit. We eat the foods we like over and over, watch the same television shows week after week, frequent the same restaurants and theatres, and even choose the same vacation spots each year. What we once loved becomes comfortable, familiar, and eventually boring. If you feel stuck in a rut, make a conscious effort to add variety to your life. Try a new restaurant, plan a new and adventurous vacation, visit a museum you've never been to, or sign up for that dance class you've been thinking about taking. The possibilities are endless, and so are the rewards.

Counseling can help:

- Create happier, healthier, more loving relationships.
- Increase self-awareness and understanding.
- Improve communication skills.
- Decrease stress; increase peace of mind.
- Develop healthy conflict resolution skills.
- Improve parent/child relationships.
- Facilitate change in patterns of relating which are not working.
- Heal past hurts which are getting in the way of your present happiness.
- Resolve recurrent issues so your life is more of what you want it to be.
- Aid in the process of grieving a lost relationship as well as other losses.
- Conquer eating disorders and addictive behavior.
- Assist in personal and spiritual growth.

This material is provided for informational and educational purposes only. For further information or help with related issues, please call me at **(818) 591-2989** or **(805) 375-5860** or call another licensed mental health professional.