



# Happiness and Meaning

*By Lyn Carman*

After a January of many, many challenges here in Australia, there is much to reflect on, to share and even more reason to connect with each other, to heal.

I listened to Cheryl McCarthy talking last night on Q&A. She was the duty officer for the evacuation centre at Bermagui Surf Club during the New Year's Eve bushfires, coordinating the emergency response when the call went out at 3am. While she was speaking on a terrifying and traumatic event, she appeared to me to have a calmness and humility, she was 'happy', peaceful, respectful and heartfelt. So today while I reflect on this, I am curious to explore happiness and meaning and how in the face of adversity some people triumph.

The quality of our lives, I believe, isn't built on the events in our lives, but the meaning we give them. And the meaning we give becomes how we experience our lives.

The future as several names.  
For the weak, it is impossible  
For the fainthearted, it is unknown  
For the thoughtful and valiant, it is ideal  
Victor Hugo

We as humans are hardwired for hard times, we have a neurological fear system embedded within our brain (FFF), this helped us survive, though now the same fear system can limit our lives ..... what can save us is also the number one enemy of happiness. In this modern world we no longer have the same dangers and daily threats, the hunt or be hunted survival it was designed for. To balance this, we have evolved to possess the human neocortex, which is the primary area for intellect – this is the creative, the intuitive, the intellectual, the spiritual. More importantly it is the home of happiness.

So, let's explore the qualities of happiness and consider what you would like to experience more of.

### **The Twelve Qualities of Happiness + one**

**Love** – the heart of happiness. When we come from a place of love it is the antidote of fear. Love is the polar opposite of fear and the two cannot exist at the same time.

**Optimism** – this is more than simply being positive; it provides power over painful events. Every event holds opportunities for lessons, and sometimes the greater the pain the greater the lesson.

**Courage** – As fear is hardwired into our neural pathways so is courage, and the only way to rise above fear is to tap into courage. Courage provides a balance and a quality which allows us to thrive.

**A sense of freedom** – we all have the freedom to choose all the time. When we chose we define who we are. Unhappy people don't know this, or they don't believe it. The truth is freedom is available to anyone who has the courage to exercise it.

**Proactivity** – Wishing, waiting and hoping that opportunities come along, accepts the role of passive victim. When we participate in our own destiny, we chose to be the active hero in our own life.

**Security**– Happy people know that nothing truly lasts forever. Not money, not approval, or even life. Security isn't measured in money or a calendar but through feeling secure about who they are and what they stand for – security is an inside job!

**Health** – Health and happiness are interdependent. The most important part of your health is your mood chemistry.

**Spirituality** – Happy people are willing to go beyond the limits or boundaries of their own lives. Their fear isn't death – its dying knowing there was still fuel in the tank, of not living a full life.

**Altruism** – Happy people focus on others not just themselves; they know that this focus feels great and gives them purpose. Contribution is one of the greatest needs of humankind.

**Perspective** – unhappy people tend to have a black and white view of life. It either is or it isn't, there's no grey, and therefore they are easily disappointed. Happy people see the grey, and they keep sight of life's bigger picture when there are problems.

**Humour** – Humour and lightness connects us to our neocortex. Try to stay angry when you are laughing. When we chose to take ourselves lightly our troubles appear less serious. It is in this space suffering is lifted from the heart to a place of empowerment, the only place where there is power to heal it.

**Purpose** – Happy people know why they are here and are doing what they know they are meant to do.

**+ \*Appreciation\*** – This has a banner all its own. We cannot experience fear and appreciation at the same time. Happy people spend time appreciating and being grateful for what is in their lives, who is in their lives and what they are experiencing.

Some of the most amazing people have built their lives from adversity. I am always curious when there is sometimes so much to be unhappy about, that some people seem to rise above and are truly happy. I believe we all have a choice to experience life on our terms, so what will you chose to experience more of?

Much of what I share here comes from learnings in the book "You're only six steps away from happiness"

