Happiness is Just a Thought Away

We need to change the way we think in order to clear the clutter from our mind and find peace, says **Jeanette Saldanha**.

AS we look at our lives we find that we are constantly experiencing ups and downs. Some days we are happy, while others bring us sorrow and pain. This feeling has grown over the last two years as we have adapted our lives to the pandemic. From birth throughout lifetime, there will be pain and difficulties. When we realise this truth, we begin to search for answers. This search brings us to the words of saints and mystics who have come to this world to show us the way to happiness. Meditation is the process of calming us down. Meditation helps us become aware of our spiritual nature which is our true essence.

Once we become aware of our spirituality, we also gain knowledge of god and then everything else in life falls into place. We should lead ethical lives, wherein we learn to be truthful, non-violent, compassionate kind and selfless. In doing so we

will gradually find that our lives are transformed. We will realise the oneness of god's creation and strive to work not just for ourselves but also for the greater good. As we introduce meditation and ethical living into our lives one step at a time we find that our attention remains focused on god and the bliss and joy of the inner regions.

We will uncover the inner strength to overcome our difficulties and stay happy and peaceful despite the turmoil surrounding us. Self-transcendence gives us joy in boundless measures. When we train ourselves, we do not compete with others. We do not compete with the rest of the world, but at every moment we compete with ourselves. We do not compete with our previous achievements and each time we surpass our previous achievements, we get joy. Success we cannot depend on because somebody will always come along and make our success pale into insignificance. When we live in the 'success' world, we are doomed to frustration. But when we live in the progress world, there is always tremendous joy.

This comes not only from transcending one's capacities but from the effort itself. Anything that we do devotedly and soulfully helps us to make progress. Through my personal experience I have learnt that sometimes we clutter our houses with unwanted things collected over years without any use just because of sentimental attachments to them. And this was a moment of insightful learning to me. 'Making a room' and 'making room'

are two separate things. The same way we clutter our minds with unnecessary thoughts. To make room we need to move things out to clear space. It is as hard to experience joy if our lives are crowded or cluttered as it is to find space in our closet for new clothes when we hold on to all our old ones.

Remove the clutter from your mind as you would from a room

Learn to relax. One of the things is that we are forever running to do something or to catch up with unnecessary jobs. Even during our break we feel some strange internal pressure to go somewhere or do something, as if staying at home and resting isn't a legitimate way to spend one's free time. Looking after everyone's needs but your own is sadly elevated in most families to a virtue, especially in the case of women. Whatever the emergency may be, make sure to see that you are okay before helping others. Otherwise you would be of no use to anybody.

Resentments, however small, occupy huge space and they swell in volume with the passage of time.

Left unresolved resentments have the power to become all-consuming and are very effective at fuelling bitterness, anger and hatred. Fight with yourself. Why fight with external foes? He who overcomes self will achieve happiness. The happiness that comes after misery is all the more enjoyable. It is to the scorched in the sun that the shade of the tree gives exceptional relief. Happiness comes from the soul's satisfaction not from our body's satisfaction. Success should be measured by yardstick of happiness by your ability to remain in peaceful harmony with the cosmic laws. Strength is happiness and not cowardice.

We tend to externalise our challenges and keep hoping for others to change. This is unlikely to materialise. The reality is that the change is within us. The good news is when we look and start to change irrespective of the people and the circumstances around us. We start to experience a different reality. This is not about shifting the blame or compromising. It is the difference between looking out of the box. That is because we have different perspectives. When we start to shift our attitude, perceptions, beliefs, actions and behaviour, we suddenly realise the world around us is different. Our change invariably elicits healthier responses.

Dealing with people who may bring turmoil in our lives reminds us that turmoil arises when things

happen contrary to our expectations. The ability to successfully deal with such situations depends on how resilient we are and how well we acclimatize ourselves to what is happening around us. It is easy to blame others for making us angry, but the truth is we are the ones who are in control of ourselves. We have the power to ignore others and remain calm and peaceful. We see and feel different kinds of environments as we pass through our life. From school to our working place we experience an intellectual shift. At the workplace we learn to work in a cooperative way.

Friendly cooperation leads to order in life, leading to a social shift. We make a living out of our work place. It causes a shift in our financial standing. However, the real shift and order comes from self-confidence and self-strength. Everybody works relentlessly towards being happy when it's actually a natural phenomenon that needs you to focus on activating it. Being happy shows that you have control over your life and happiness and you are not held hostage by circumstances or preconceived ideas of what brings happiness. Just smiling and spreading it to the face of others is a huge endorphin release that actually makes the brain happy.

Being happy never goes out of style. The joy is a natural state of being and misery is our own creation. We create our own internal heaven or hell based on factors like expectations. Ask yourself if you want to grumble, whether it's a habit to do so. Notice how much effortless it takes to grumble and how much effort it takes to say positive .When life goes topsy-turvy all you need to do is to sit quietly in a meditative state and reflect on all the wonderful moments and experience of the past. Focus on your positive vision and happy dreams for the future and feel gratitude. Purpose and passion fill your being. A bird sitting on a tree is never afraid of the branch breaking, because her trust is placed not on the branch but on her own wings.