

YOU CAN FEEL STRUGGLE AND HAPPINESS AT THE SAME TIME.

Embrace your whole self.

The virus makes life so heavy. Feelings of fear, despair, exhaustion abound. Guess what? There can still be room for happiness but...how can we find that when the things that make us happy aren't within our reach?

The yoga practice called "Santosa" teaches us that we can feel content no matter what. When I first learned about Santosa, I thought it was a big pile of stink. But, by going through the exercises I'm going to provide here, I was able to start creating a sense of contentment for myself, even in the midst of tough stuff. That doesn't mean living in the virus world isn't hard. It truly is. I can, however, give myself glimpses of contentment and joy.

Finding our level of happiness and contentment within a struggle means we have to get to know ourselves at all levels - the things we consider "good," "bad" and everything in between. It's a brave and tough endeavor but you can do it! You already do hard things every single day. Some days that means getting out of bed to face the world. Sometimes it means staying under the covers because you need nurture. Sometimes it means speaking your mind.

You've already shown your bravery today. Can you name one or two ways?

Contentment can come when we have a willingness to show up as our true selves no matter what. When we stop fighting our feelings and learn to accept that we can be all sorts of things. For example, I don't like what the virus is doing to our world and I can cry about it (which I do daily) but I can also recognize the good things around me. I can still plant flowers and talk to my neighbors while standing 10 feet away. I can embrace both of those parts of myself. Many of us aren't taught to feel all of our feelings and definitely not to show them. But, in doing that, in hiding parts of ourselves, we end up suffering. Each of us deserves so much better than that!

Think of the ocean. You know how part of it can be calm while another part creates a giant wave? That's you! You can feel both afraid and strong. You can feel both stuck and determined. You can feel both weak and strong. It's all real. I personally can't feel just one emotion at a time. When I try, I find myself identifying the emotion that's socially acceptable and cramming the other one way down deep.

What does happiness look like to you?

Why deny ourselves the full experience of being who we are? We are fabulous and there's a direct correlation between believing in our fabulousness and our overall state of feeling content and/or happy.

Here's a framework for understanding and cultivating your happiness. Jot down your thoughts when you read the questions below. Spend as much time on this as you'd like. Be curious about what comes to you. No self editing, please. Let yourself get real.

Where did you find happiness?

Write words or phrases that describe things that helped you feel happy pre-virus.

What would it be like to allow yourself your full range of emotions without hiding them from others?

Think about a time when you hide your full emotions. What does that feel like in your body? What does it feel like in your mind?

Visualize handling the situation differently. Imagine yourself showing your full self and imagine the other person responding with kindness.

Where do you find happiness?

Write words or phrases that describe things that help you feel happy during the virus.

This week, take a risk and show your emotion to someone. Practice embracing your entire self. Start with sharing on our community page, if you'd like.

Notice how it feels in your body to open yourself up. Can you find a sense of relief? Can you uncover a sense of happiness knowing that you can show up just as you are?

How often do you fake happiness to accommodate others?

When do you find yourself pretending to be happy so that others don't worry or so that you don't feel weak?