

Joy – Your Spiritual Task

written by Chaya Rivka Zwolinski
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To find joy is the hardest thing of all. It is harder than all other spiritual tasks...Put all your energy into being happy. – Rebbe Nachman of Breslov

The Rebbe tells us that, if need be, we should force ourselves to be happy.

Of course, this advice is not politically correct. From today's psychological viewpoint, forcing yourself to be happy is wrong. It's denial. Better to be miserable, say the experts.

In some cases, denial may not be healthy. It is absolutely true that someone who has experienced trauma or a grievous loss, and is struggling with emotional pain may need to talk

about what they are going through with a caring, supportive friend or adviser. In fact, in Sefer Hamidos, ([The Aleph-Bet Book](#)), the Rebbe advises us to talk about our troubles. But he also tells us that dwelling on suffering more than is necessary makes us suffer all the more.

For many of us, the blues can all too easily become a habit. The *yetzer hara*, the evil inclination, takes pleasure from nothing as much as it does depression. It even devises clever tricks to get us to succumb. It lies to us over and over again that we cannot change and our circumstances can't change. It blinds us to the good things in our lives. It tells us that only fools are happy—they can't see how rotten everything really is.

Are You Kidding Me?

Is this post really pushing your buttons?

Are you thinking, how insensitive! You don't know my problems!

Maybe you're saying to yourself: Sure. I bet you have no troubles and everything in your life is perfect. You probably didn't grow up the way I did. You don't have my personal life. You don't have my money problems. You don't have my children. Or my spouse. Or my health issues. Or my disabilities.

Well, I'd like to assure you that I have my own set of "problems". But, following the Rebbe's advice has proven to be extremely effective in banishing the blues. Because the blues are not caused by problems.

Huh?!!



What Depression Does

Actually, the blues attract and increase your problems. That's right. Sadness beckons troubles. It sets the table and invites them over to dinner.

The Rebbe tells us that depression causes the mind of a person to go into exile. One outcome of an exiled intellect is that you won't be able to think clearly and you'll make poor choices, leading to complications.

The Rebbe explains that depression is like mud covering the heart, blocking the ability to appreciate and maintain our personal Godly connection. When our spiritual connection is clogged, our pipes get backed up. When our pipes get backed up, problems stay and blessings can't get through.

The Rebbe says depression makes us weak and brings heartache. It even brings suffering. And he says that we must avoid depression so we aren't sent reason to be depressed. By

succumbing to needless depression, we are, in effect, telling God that we don't appreciate the good things we do have. Why should God send us more good things if we don't appreciate the ones we have?

The Rebbe also tells us that dancing and clapping our hands sweeten harsh judgments. In other words, joy repels problems.

The way to outwit the evil inclination is with simple joy.

Sometimes, when things are such a mish-mash, the Rebbe says that the only way to be joyful is to do something silly. He says we should put all our energy into being happy, pull out all the stops—even if it means acting childish or foolish.

It's Adar!

Because it's a leap year, and we have two months of Adar, this year we have double the potential for Adar joy. We just experienced the unbridled happiness of Purim, and now we carry that joy with us into the Pesach.

Here's my plan for joyful Pesach preparations:

Blast dance music and dance while cleaning, organizing, cooking. (Spiritually-uplifting music plus dance is a proven recipe for instant happiness).

While running errands, no matter how harried you think you "should" be feeling, try smiling instead. Even at that sour-faced guy at the bank or the bored receptionist in the dentist's office. True, they might not smile back, but that's okay. Scientific research shows that the act of smiling causes your brain to release endorphins and serotonin, so even if you're not happy when you begin a smile, you might be the time you finish!

The first nice, warmish day, when spring buds are just beginning to show, no matter how busy you are, take a 20 minute walk somewhere where there are trees. Repeat as often

as necessary.