



Happiness: A Look at Pleasure vs. Happiness by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

I hate to rush. But I also really like to be on time and am conscientious about that. So when it really doesn't matter, I especially enjoy what I think of as "timeless time." I don't need to wear a watch, and for awhile time just doesn't matter. Sometimes a free afternoon will unfold so deliciously slowly that it seems I have twice as much of it. There is a state of mind referred to as being "in flow" or "in the zone"-- when we're perfectly focused and centered. Many reach this state of exquisite balance through meditative practice or being so focused on any task that it's all there is. These experiences of intensely purposeful creative focus, or of complete freedom and solitude, are some of the most pleasurable and happy times I know.

We've all known people who appear to have it all, who do many "pleasurable" things, yet they are never content. They have never learned to be at peace. They seldom, if ever, experience happiness. Some of my very happiest moments have been some of the simplest. To read more on this, take a look at His Holiness, The Dalai Lama's book, *"The Art of Happiness"*.

Curiously, sometimes happiness is actually the result of forgoing pleasure. (e.g. *Those donuts may bring ten minutes of sensory pleasure, but not make you very happy when you try to zip your pants next week.*) That's not to say donuts are always a bad idea. There's much to be said for the simple, momentary pleasure of an occasional self-indulgent treat. Sometimes when we are surrounded by truly serious problems, finding pleasure where we can may be what gets us through. But true happiness is about balance. Joan Gale Frank, author of "Instant Guts," a great audio about risk-taking, and I once spoke about happiness and pleasure. Upon her return from a vacation working in the slums of Bombay, she said, *"Happiness comes from an internal place. For example, even though one wouldn't call my work in India "pleasurable," it made me terrifically happy because the work had so much meaning for me. Doing what comes slowly and with difficulty may not bring immediate pleasure, but it can bring happiness -- knowing that you are on a long-term path to bring something important into your life."*

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