



TWO REASONS WHY PEOPLE AREN'T HAPPY OR SUCCESSFUL

Let us try here with siyata d'shmaya to say a very small point but which has much application and meaning for us. Who among us doesn't search for fulfillment and joy? We do not always find what we search for, so let us think here of a small but fundamental way which will help us attain the joy we seek.

We see that when people feel successful, it is easier for them to be happy, and by contrast when people feel like they're failing and not succeeding, they are far from being happy.

Part of the reason why people aren't successful is because they are doing a lot of things that are way beyond their actual capacity to do – they are over-doing themselves. Another reason why people aren't successful at what they do is because they aren't being consistent at anything.

Upon some analysis, we can see that these two reasons are really connected. When a person does things beyond his actual capacity, he really can't be consistent either with whatever he's doing – it's impossible to be consistent at something that you don't have actually have the capacity to do. But when a person is doing things that are within his ability, then it becomes possible for him to be consistent at what he's doing. If a person for many years has gotten used to doing things that are really beyond his capacity, that means he has never really done anything consistently.

Ever since childhood, a person has learned and taught himself that whenever he keeps doing something and he isn't successful at it, he has been telling himself that he really cannot do it. After all, he has failed so many times at it. A person teaches himself that he can't work at something consistently, and instead, he tries to grab onto any success that he can, but never really building any one area of success. People like to console themselves with the words of Chazal, "Grab and eat, because tomorrow we will die." They get used to not being consistent with whatever they do. When it comes to making livelihood as well, they keep grabbing onto whatever success they can, never learning how to be consistent at anything.

GAINING STABILITY BY BEING CONSISTENT IN TAKING SMALL STEPS

Every person is looking for a good salary, but he also needs a job that's steady and consistent. Just like our physical body needs a stable source of income, so does our soul seek stability. The more we feel our need for stability, the more we can feel the need to progress with steadiness,

The proper way to reach joy – and thereby live a life of regularly experiencing joy - is to take small things that we can do, and consistently work on them.

Every person understands himself at least partially, if not completely. Every person knows what's preventing him from success. With some people

it's anger, with some it's impatience, etc. Many times people tried and didn't succeed, and then they give up and they say "This is the way I am. I was born like this, and this is how I will always be."

But if a person really wants to come out of problems and make progress - after he has first identified the problems that are blocking him from success - he will then decide to work on one small point which he will keep being consistent at working on. He should choose to work on one small, easy point that's holding him back from progress, and he should focus on seeking only this small amount of progress that's steady and consistent. It should be something that's possible and easy for him to work on. Then, once he decides to work on this, he should do it once or twice a day and not more. But he should be consistent for a period of time about it.

This way of living brings a person into a certain process, of building and moving forward, taking step at a time, but fundamentally. Whoever will try to do this, working consistently at this, will see progress within the next few months. After a few months he should see how he has grown, how his soul has moved forward.

VALUING THE SMALLEST ACHIEVEMENTS

There are those with a nature to seek big things, big growth, a lot of achievements, etc. So they try moving forward very fast. The idea of taking small steps of growth and steady progress is hard for them to work on, and even when they do decide to work on small steps of growth, it has no meaning to them, because it's only a 'small' achievement and not a big, huge achievement.

Consider the following analogy. A Bar Mitzvah boy is really a result of 4000 days of the hard work that his parents have put him into him. Until his Bar Mitzvah, the parents patiently watched him grow. Even though they could have given him a "wonder drink" to make him get big and mature very quick, they chose not to do that and instead they were patient in watching him grow, because they realized that his growth must be slow and steady. They know that it's a certain process and that it doesn't happen quickly. Once one realizes that he needs to work on something slowly because he realizes that such growth fundamental for him, he can have patience to work on it. If a person is patient and he is also consistent, like the parents who are patiently watching their boy grow and mature until he reaches Bar Mitzvah age, then he will be successful.

When it comes to the growth of our inner world as well – the growth of the inner human being that is inside us – we need patience as well, when growing and nurturing our inner world. The clearer we are about this point, the better we will grow.

BEING PATIENT WITH OUR GROWTH – USING EARTH TO STABILIZE OUR FIRE

To say this even more clearly, we all have inner abilities that are hidden

JOY FROM STEADY PROGRESS

and dormant within us, and our avodah (our inner work) is to activate that potential. It is like planting seeds in the ground, which later sprouts and develops into a plant. The Maharal says that a person is called adam from the word adamah, the ground, because just as planting a seed will take time until it sprouts and develops, so does a person slowly develop. Chazal said that there is one tree which takes 70 years to develop - the carob tree – and this tree represents the 70 years of life of a person's life.

If we have patience like that towards ourselves – knowing that we can only grow in a slow process and that our growth cannot come rapidly – then, we can succeed in our growth.

But the nature of a person is that he wants so much and very quickly. The power to grow, from the bottom up, is like the element of fire, which naturally rises upward. Fire quickly rises, but the problem with fire is that it doesn't stay lit for long, and it can only rise when the source of the fire is strong. When we light a fire it takes very quick to go up, it only stays lit if the candle is well-lit and thick, some can light for 2 or 4 hours, some light for 24 or 48 or 72 hours, some can light for a week, some can even stay lit for a month, but after that it extinguishes. Fire doesn't last that long. Eventually a person's fire gets extinguished after some time. So a person needs more than just fire in order to progress - he needs the element of earth, the stable ground that will enable him to build himself step after step, and then he can rise properly.

Here is an example to illustrate the idea. A child can barely do anything when he's born. Then he opens his eyes, and the parents are happy with anything he can do, the smallest progress he shows, the smallest step. But as the child grows, the parents stop being so happy with every small thing he does, and so does the child. Yet, though the parents have stopped enjoying his every small step of success, the child should learn to be happy with his small achievements, and he should do that when he is an adult as well. We need to keep being happy with even our smallest success, just like we are happy with a little child's smallest steps. The more we understand that this is how we grow just like when we are small children, the more we can grow as adults.

Let us explain what changes as we become more mature. When a child starts to walk, everyone is happy with even the smallest step he takes. The child takes a step and falls, then he starts walking a little until he is walking regular and later he is running. Now let's understand deeply, what does the child subconsciously as he progresses like this? He learns that small steps can all be done quickly instead of slowly. Then he stops valuing the small steps, and now he only has value for big and fast steps. Subconsciously he keeps learning that small steps forward are meaningless, and only instant or quick results are important.

This carries into adulthood as well, where he believes that things which can be done quickly are a waste of time when done only slowly and steadily. He stops having value for slow, steady growth and he only values quick growth. Even more so, a person learns that he doesn't have to be conscious of his growth and progress. These thought patterns become carved into us deeply.

When we get bigger, who has gotten bigger? Our body has grown, we have become smarter too, but our heart remains the same as a child's. Raboseinu teach that our heart always remains youthful like a child: "The inclination of the heart of man is evil from his youth", and the word ra (bad) is from the word naar, child, hinting to how the heart is childish. The heart can only grow slowly, like the steps that a child takes. Even very great people with great minds have hearts that have grown very slowly. A person has an intellect and heart. By a child, the intellect works slowly, and when he gets older his intellect works quicker, so he realizes that he has to work faster. But he also thinks that his heart also has to work fast, while in reality the heart must remain the same as a child's. Even with older and greater people, their heart can only grow slowly like a child's. One can only grow his heart very slowly – meaning that his inner growth can only be gradual. And, just as he has patience to bring up a child slowly, so must one have patience to grow his heart with the gradual growth process that it needs – he cannot accelerate his inner growth.

When one understands this, he won't have difficulty with trying to grow and progress forward in anything, because he knows that's all growth has to be slow and steady. He has anticipated this already, growing only at the pace that the heart can grow at. The older a person is, the more patience he can have towards his heart – the more patience he can have towards his own growth, knowing that this is the way it's supposed to be.

All those who are successful are those who recognize that their heart can only grow slowly. The more we are zocheh with help from Hashem to internalize this deeply that our heart must grow slowly like a child's, we will then speak to our heart – we will view our inner world of growth - with the heart's language, and with the heart's slow, child's pace. The "evil inclination from youth" can then be worked on slowly, and at our heart's child pace that it needs.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Practically speaking, one should identify what's holding him back from moving forward and take small steps forward, as if he is teaching a child to learn one letter after another, and this is how one works properly with himself. And he can be happy with every small step of progress just like we are happy with every small step of a child.

This is a change of perspective which brings us patience and consistent steady development. Like this, we enter into a process of living with joy, of utilizing our potential, like planting a seed in the ground which is constantly in a process of growth, it's earth that stabilizing our fire to grow higher.

IN CONCLUSION

May Hashem give us the understanding to be patient with ourselves like a child, to take upon ourselves small steps of growth according to the pace of our heart which can only work slowly, and to be happy with every small step we take. That is a person who lives a life of joy.

FROM ORIGINAL HEBREW SHIUR IN MONSEY
הכרת הכוחות שמחה 014 עפר דאש דעפר מחפשת שמחה עם אנגליית

YOUR FEELINGS ARE MORE COMPLEX THAN YOUR INTELLECTUAL DEFINITIONS

The same should be done for analyzing your feelings about love. When recording your feelings in the notebook, write the date each time, and each time you review or skim through the notebook, check the dates you wrote the entries on and then review what you wrote. Then, write a summary of the entire process so far.

However, we should be aware that there are differences between our intellectual definitions and our feelings – both in their amount and quality.

For every intellectual definition that we come up with on a topic [i.e. when analyzing an emotion or any aspect of our soul], we can have several feelings about the very same topic. Any additional definition that we discover will also produce several new feelings that we will have, which we didn't identify until now. That being the case, for every definition that we discover, we should look for as any feelings that we have on the topic. We might discover totally new feelings on the topic, or we might find additional insights within the feelings we have already written.

What's more, every definition we discover is really coming from a certain layer of our soul, and therefore, the deeper the definition is, the deeper feelings it will produce. The deeper definitions that we find, the more opportunities we will have to reveal another series of deeper feelings. Every series of feelings that we uncover will enter us into an additional depth of the soul. (We will be seeing more feelings, as well as deeper feelings).

This is the barometer by which we can measure our progress: If we see that we are identifying additional and deeper feelings, it is a sign that we are progressing. Accordingly, if we aren't discovering any new feelings, it is a sign that we are not doing the work properly. Either (1) We are not understanding properly the definition that we have on the topic, or (2) We haven't properly identified our own feelings on the topic, or (3) Our feelings aren't consistently matching up with our intellectual definitions on the topic.

In short, if a person is doing all the steps of the work here, there will be a considerable amount of definitions and feelings that he will discover. Let us now return to the previous example of analyzing love, in order to relate better to the concept we are explaining. A person writes down his definition of love, and where he identifies it in his life:

Date: 1 Nissan, 5779. Topic: Love. Definition: An enjoyable partnership of being with another. Where I Identify It: I love to laugh together with my children. I enjoy taking a trip with my husband/wife. I enjoy learning together with my friend. Today, we made a breakfast with the extended family and we really enjoyed it. My husband/wife and I enjoy eating a meal together. My fam-

ily enjoys being together on Shabbos." A month later, review the notebook, think about the topic again, and write down your new insights. It might look like this:

Date: 1 Iyar, 5779. Topic: Love. Definition: A month ago, I thought that love means to enjoy being involved with another person. I thought about it again and realized that love is more than that, because I can love someone even when I'm not together with that person. For example, yesterday I felt a love for my child even though we weren't together then. So now I realized that love is an emotional bond you feel with another.

This would be followed by a summary, "I identify that love is an emotional bond with another. According to this new definition I discovered, I can identify additional scenarios where I feel love. I feel a bond in my soul with Hashem. I feel a bond in my soul with my children. I feel that I am soul-bound with my wife/husband. Today my parents came to visit and I felt that we have a deep bond. Today I learned Torah and felt that I was so connected to it. Ah, the holy Torah! "For it is our life"! Today I spoke with my Rav or Rebbi, and felt a deep and strong connection to him."

10 months later, the person might identify a change in how he or she defines love:

Date: 1 Adar, 5780. Topic: Love. Definition: Almost a year ago, I thought that love is to enjoy being involved with someone, and sometime later I understood that love is also a bond of the soul with another. I reviewed my notebook again and my definition of love still didn't change. But today I heard that love is to expand your soul in order to unify with another.

Next, the person would write how he identifies this new definition: "This is a very deep definition, so I had a hard time identifying how I felt it in my life. But this is what I discovered: I feel a desire to unify with my wife/husband. I feel that my children and I are unified, because they come from me. I don't feel it 100% but I want that unity to increase. Today I connected much more to the Torah when I was learning it – I felt that I was "one" with the Torah. I also felt a little today how I am one with Hashem and His Torah. I only felt it for a few moments. It is very deep, and I have a lot to grow in this area, and I hope that this feeling will increase."

To the degree that we are identifying additional feelings and new layers in our soul, our emotional experiences will increase and our soul-awareness will become sharper and clearer. This highlights another difference between our intellectual definitions and our feelings. When we discover a true, intellectual definition, that is the definition, and there is no other way to define it. Though we can divide it into several parts and even use different terms to make it clearer, it is ultimately one definition, which cannot be stretched past its defining boundaries. But each definition can bring along several deep and subtle feelings with it. We can feel each of these feelings uniquely. Otherwise, we would not be

SEEING YOUR DEVELOPMENT SELF-RECOGNITION & SELF-ACTUALIZATION

able to identify them. Even more so is that almost every feeling without exception, upon first glance, seems to be compatible with several different definitions. We would therefore need to see which definitions match up with which emotions, and which don't. Likewise, for each unique feeling we discover, we will need to clarify which category of feelings it belong to. Additionally, each feeling has a certain "concept" of its own – a particular movement of the soul- which we should clarify [this will be explained soon].

For this, let us once again return to the example given before, of analyzing love. A person can write several definitions of love, and the scenarios where he identifies love in his life.

After that, one should go through each of these scenarios and see which definition of love applies to which scenario, and which scenarios do not match his definition.

For example, when it comes to the love he feels to his children, he will find that some scenarios are in sync with all of his definitions of love, but in some scenarios, he will find that only some of the definitions apply.

The next step is that he should divide it into different kinds of love: My love for Hashem, my love for Torah, my love for the Jewish people, the love I have for myself, loving my spouse, loving my children, etc. Make a graph of different kinds of love, and write under each of them what kind of love you feel.

Lastly, try to identify the very concept of what the love is – the particular way that it "moves." [This is because each emotion of the soul is really a movement of the soul, with varying degrees of intensity. With love, we can analyze: Is it an exciting kind of love or a calm kind of love?] For example, love for Hashem is described in the verse, "Many waters cannot extinguish the love, and rivers cannot drown it." In other words, love for Hashem is a fiery, passionate love (because 'water' cannot overcome it). Identify how this is the nature of loving Hashem – it is a fiery kind of love. But your love for children feels like a calmer kind of love, in which you are giving to them pleasantly, and this is a love that flows like water. (Water is calm, fire is intense). Identify how the love for your children is calmer and quieter, like calm and pleasant waters, unlike love for Hashem which is more intense and passionate, like a flaming fire.

With every feeling, you can identify its particular "movement." Gradually, you can reach deeper feelings that are subtler and clearer, and that is how you can penetrate into the depths of your soul.

SEEING A CLEAR WORLD

As long as a person has never yet recognized his or her personal soul like this, the person is living in a cloudy, confusing haze.

By contrast, when we are recognizing our personal soul – both through intellectual and emotional input – we can then gain an encompassing view on our soul, identifying our various feelings

and the intensity to which we feel them. Then we can reach the desired goal of recognizing our soul, which is "A clear world you saw." And, when we are seeing a "clear world", we can then recognize palpably the Reality of the One Who said that this world should be.

A LIFELONG WORK

At this point, we must clarify an important aspect. In the few pages of this chapter, we have explained the very fundamental stages of recognizing our personal soul, but the actual, hands-on work and reaching the more advanced stages does not take a day or two, but much longer. Even learning how to write our personal book doesn't take a day or two. It requires much patience to write down your definitions and feelings, and to gain an encompassing view of your personal soul and to grasp the parts of the process you are amidst. These steps really span the course of our entire life – they are gradual, drop by drop, and stage after stage.

Therefore, we must know that as long as we put in proper effort for a considerable period of time, we can then reach a noticeable level of recognizing our soul-faculties. With time, we can reach a point where we can give four or five definitions, and twenty or more feelings, for each soul aspect that we are trying to learn about. If we are persistent with this, we can cover 20, 40, 60 and more topic of different soul-aspects. Internally, we will gain immensely from this process, with lifelong gains.

We should look at ourselves no different than a person who is trying to become a doctor, who has the patience to understand that he won't become a doctor until several years of learning the medical field, and who realizes that there are many areas which he doesn't yet have mastery in. After years of learning and practicing, though, he can then become a doctor for the rest of his life. And even after he gets to his desired goal of becoming a doctor, he keeps learning the medical field and renews his learning, making sure to complete himself in other areas. In the same vein, we are like aspiring contractors who are learning about the most desirable goal on the world – the profession of building our soul – and therefore the first thing we need to is to learn the art of how we build the soul, which entails writing a personal notebook about ourselves and reviewing it often. This will take us a long time, but afterwards, we can go on to build our souls for the rest of our lives, until we can become a "complete person".

NEXT WEEK: FINDING YOUR QUALITIES