Supporting Your Clients to Choose to Be Happy

Often times, as their life optimization coach, you will find your clients putting themselves in situations that “cause” them to be unhappy. At least that’s what they think - that their unhappiness is due to their situation. They will usually have it that their situation is beyond their control. The more they tend to ponder their sorry state of affairs, the more they suffer.

One of the surest ways to maintain a life of suffering is for your clients to keep their attention on themselves and their problems. This is why therapy is so often ineffective. The therapist working with your client usually concentrates has the client maintain their focus on themselves. Now please do not misunderstand. An examination of these areas can indeed be worthwhile if used as the basis from which we make the necessary requests and actions to resolve the issues in question. However, when the sessions remain centered on your client’s pitiful situation, and their never-ending personal problems, they serve to keep the very issues they desire to resolve in place. If your clients want to stop suffering, have them simply turn their attention away from themselves and put it on something outside of them that is more worthy of their focus than their own, often petty, concerns. Challenge your clients to take on a new challenge or area of development that will require them to reinvent who they are. Suggest that they commit to the support or success of another person. Have them decide to champion another’s excellence, take on a worthwhile cause or challenge and focus on contribution. Doing so will handle their petty concerns pretty effectively. If your client’s life is centered solely on the pursuit of their own happiness, they will likely never get there.
Suffering involves your client wanting something he or she does not have or having something they do not want. If they maintain their focus on themselves and the hopelessness of their situation without taking any definitive action steps to resolve their dilemma, they will be prone to keeping their untenable situations in place. Challenge them to cast off the role of a victim and take full responsibility for their lives, relationships and well-being.

It’s too easy for them to fall into the trap of thinking that their lives will be great when some future event happens. It does not matter what the event is. For some clients, it will be leaving school, for others going back to school. Some think happiness will come when they get married, others when they get divorced. To some, having kids is the answer. To others, having the kids move out is more like it. The circumstances are irrelevant. Your clients’ happiness under this scenario is always in the future. However, as soon as the future arrives, it somehow loses its luster and they are back in the miserable present. They will most likely find themselves once again, living out of their past with their eye on some future event that they hope will make them happy.

Instead of having your clients link their happiness to a future event, challenge them to decide to be happy by virtue of declaring that they are right now, in the present. Remind them that happiness is an interpretation they get to invent or declare as a commitment. When they decide to live their lives out of this declaration, they will interpret events from this perspective of being happy instead of circumstances causing them to become unhappy.
Everything that occurs in your clients’ lives supports them in some way. Suggest that they believe it and look for verification of that truth. Empowered with this belief, challenge them to look forward to an exciting, happy life filled with fun and passion.

Here are some exercises to support your clients in creating happiness:

1) Instruct your clients to identify any areas of their lives that cause them to be unhappy. Ask them to consider if their focus is on themselves and their own concerns?

2) Challenge them to declare their decision to be happy. Have them notice a shift in how they interpret events once they decide to look for reasons to be happy. Suggest that they share their decision to be happy with at least 5 people and request that they remind them of their declaration when they see them straying from it.

3) Ask your clients to consider what goal, cause, commitment or vision could they shift their focus to in order to make life worth living for the next 150 years?

4) Ask your clients what definitive actions they will take to resolve any stagnant situations in their lives.