



Yogamama Says

Disowning My Happiness

Kathleen Thompson

A weird thing happened at the yoga class I attended in Asheville, NC, last month. The teacher started the class by setting the context: The theme that day was “Gratitude.”

She started out by saying, “Who in here is really, truly happy?” I immediately raised my hand, but then quickly withdrew it when everyone began to snicker, (the implication, as I understood it, was that nobody could be really and truly happy).

She continued by saying that if anyone in that room was really and truly happy, she would gladly surrender her position as teacher and let that person teach the class because they would be more in a position to teach a yoga class than she was.

She went on to explain that if we did want more happiness in our lives, a surefire way to get that happiness would be to start expressing gratitude every day: gratitude for the miracles of our bodies, our friends, families, etc.

But it buzzed in my head for the whole class (and beyond, obviously) how I had disowned my own happiness in the face of peer pressure. I was embarrassed to admit that I was (and am) really and truly happy.

But the question set up doubts for me. Am I happy? Really and truly happy? And if so, how is that even possible given war, environmental degradation, human rights violations, and all the myriad sadnesses in the world.

I kept posing that question to myself over and over, and the answer I always came back to was: YES. There is something at the core of my life that radiates pure happiness. Is my life perfect? Of course not.

Do I get pissy and want things to be

otherwise than they are at times? Most definitely!

But that doesn’t in any way diminish my core happiness. I think it was wired in me from birth. I believe it’s a genetic pre-disposition, because how else can I explain this?

I have a lot to be grateful for, and hopefully I express that gratitude daily. But it really bothers me (now) that I couldn’t admit it in a group of people for fear of...

For fear of what? Having to defend myself? Of looking like a Pollyanna or a ninny? Of being condescended to in some way?

I wondered: Am I a closeted Happy Person? Afraid to tell people for fear of their reaction? Am I afraid of being the big old target of somebody’s Happiness Pea-Shooter?

I wonder what would have happened in class if I had kept my hand up and said, “Me! I’m really and truly happy! What’s not to be happy about? I’m healthy, alive, about to do some fabulous yoga. I have people who love me, good food to eat, a nice, but modest house and really lack for nothing essential.”

I wonder what would have happened. Would somebody else have been empowered to claim their own happiness, too? I will never know.

What I do know is that I will NEVER disown my happiness again.

I’m happy, and I know it, and I’m clapping my hands, dammit. 🙌

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