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CULTIVATING COURAGE WITH CHAILLE

Finding Joy

By Chaille DeFaria MCC, CDWF



It's January. Another year come and gone. It's the time when many of us make a New Year's Resolution with the utmost intention of being successful. But best laid plans sometimes go south, and we lose our motivation to make a change. This leads us to disconnect from the happiness and joy that initially inspired us.

First, we need to understand the difference between joy and happiness. Happiness is tied to circumstance and is often fleeting, like celebrating and having fun at a friend's birthday party. Joy is tethered to spirit. It is steady and lasting.

What are the obstacles that challenge us to feel joy? If it is challenging for you, you are not alone. Most people are terrified of joy. It is a feared emotion. Joy is what we find when we are not thinking of the "worst case scenario" or catastrophizing. It is taking in a moment that feels so good you want to bottle it up forever, but you push it away because you are afraid it won't last, as if it's "too good to be true."

I recognize joy is a practice, and one that I had to work hard on because I always prepared myself for disappointment. I believed trusting and celebrating the "feel good" moments were fleeting, so I pushed them away as fast as they came to me. I learned that leaning into joy was too risky. I had to develop the courage to stay with the feeling of joy and celebrate it. This is when I learned how to practice gratitude.

If we remember that we are always in a state of choice, accept that change isn't comfortable, and know that it is possible to change if we choose to do hard things, we can experience joy! Changing our behavior requires us not to be afraid of our emotions. The only way I have attained success in my life is through practicing courage over comfort. Research has proven the most joyful people are those who practice gratitude.

There are small things we can try, like simply saying "Hello" to a stranger. At first this can feel awkward, but I recommend you give it a try and notice what you feel. If joy is the light, and fear is the darkness, be brave, stand in your truth, and shine a light on the "good." Don't get buried by media and all the negativity that prey on us.

People are afraid right now, and fear is contagious. But guess what? So is **JOY!**

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