

The power of gratitude

If you are driving in the pouring rain in your five-year old, bottom-of-the-range car, do you notice the latest BMW 5-series ahead of you and feel envious, or do you notice the man on his bicycle with his child on the handlebars trying to get to school and realise how much you already have?

The key to financial happiness is to accept where you are today. If you are constantly unhappy with your life you invalidate all that you have, all that you have achieved. The truth is that you have far more and have achieved far more than many other people.

Avoid “upward” comparisons

Financial coach Linda Smith says that we are always comparing ourselves in a negative way to other people. We always wish we were thinner or richer or could go on the same exotic holidays as those “other” people.

But there will always be people who are thinner, richer or have more successful partners. Continually comparing ourselves to them will not make us happy, it just keeps us locked in a negative space. We need to focus on all the things we can be grateful for.

Smith says the problem with our society is that we measure our self-worth by our bank balance. We place our worth in the car we drive, the schools we send our children to and even our choice of mobile phone. These things are all just smoke and mirrors and mask the reality that the BMW you covet most likely belongs to the bank and that the owner could be one pay-cheque away from bankruptcy. Status symbols do not buy happiness or financial success.

Stop finding excuses

If you are in a negative frame of mind and argue that it is impossible to save yet believe that your life will be better if you just had more money, look around you at the people who do not earn as much as you and ask yourself: how do they survive? They are most likely looking at you and saying, “If only I was that person and had what they had, then I would be happy.” Happiness is not found in acquiring more, it is found in valuing what you already have.

Focus on the positives

“There is always something to be grateful for, even if it is just a good night’s sleep or green traffic lights when you are late for a meeting,” says Smith. By focusing on what you already have you will no longer find the need to buy things to make you feel happy. As we all know from experience, acquiring objects may give us a momentary lift, but it is short-lived and does not bring us any closer to happiness.

“The goal I want my clients to achieve is to be so comfortable with what they have and to believe so strongly in the plan they have that they can walk through a shopping centre and admire the shops, look at the clothes, but on a very real level realise they do not need any of it to feel happy”.

Start taking positive steps towards financial satisfaction

- Every day write down ten things you are grateful for.
- Write down a financial goal each month – start small and congratulate yourself as you reach each goal.
- Share your goals with someone who can support you: sharing your goals makes them more real and helps you to stick to your action plan.
- Have patience: the universe works on a different time scale.

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