

Crap Happens but Still Positively Happy

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With so much animosity in our own backyard, let alone the world, it is hard to imagine a time when humans will ever, in John Lennon's immortal words, "live in peace." For optimists like myself, the current state of the world is just downright depressing. It would be a lie to say that there aren't times when I feel like it's a lost cause, and I might as well let the world be damned as it is; but those moments don't last too long.

I have often tried to come up with an answer as to why I am able to keep a positive outlook on life, despite all the crap that happens to me personally, to my friends, family, community, and in the world. Looking at things in the big picture, things look pretty bleak. Within Canada itself, despite the economic growth and stability, poverty, prejudice, and animosity remain in the "best country in the world." And personally, several of my friends are so discouraged at not having a strong direction for their future. With all this negativity, how can I possibly have a positive perspective on life? Am I off my rocker? To some extent, I will agree that it's unrealistic to always stay positive. After all, everyone has the capacity for both positive and negative life conditions. In fact, in a conversation with a friend, I was told that my friend had rarely, if ever, seen me "happy." The statement came as a bit of a surprise, considering I enjoy a great many things in life. But my friend was right to the extent that I am definitely not one to always express my happiness, or at the very least, express it in clearly emotional ways.

Perhaps, given the pressures and responsibilities in my life, I am not necessarily "happy" in the strongest sense of the word, but that by itself does not mean that my positive attitude has gone down the drain. Positive attitudes come in two forms: internal and external, both of course being very important. I am without a doubt "happy" about my life, and have a positive outlook, if only because I appreciate all the things I have, and enjoy all the things I can do. Whether that's because of my upbringing is another question, but the fact is, I am happy in this internal sense of the word. Given this internal positive attitude, the world isn't so bad, because despite it all, I appreciate my own life.

The difficult kind of positive attitude is the external one. Given the world has serious, perhaps depressing problems, it might be unwise to project this positive attitude as strongly as it exists within me. But despite the lack of explicit enthusiasm, the fact remains that I value everything around me, from the conversation with my friend, to all the responsibilities I have. And that value is enough to keep my positive attitude aflame. But key also is being able to instill this positive attitude to those around me in the tiny ways that I do, and thus spread this "happiness" one person at a time. When this happens, nothing will kill my positive attitude.