

CONTENTMENT

Submitted by Dr. Dale Johnson

When you are discontent, you always want more, more, more. Your desire can never be satisfied. Contentment can be defined as the feeling of completeness, appreciation, and “enoughness” that we experience when our needs are satisfied.

Contentment is positively correlated with greater life satisfaction and well being. One of the greatest indicators of contentment is how one answers the question “All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?”

I learned contentment from a mentor uncle whose father became ill during the depression and the bank was going to repossess the farm. At age thirteen he dropped out of school, negotiated with the bank, made the farm profitable, and bought the farm for his parents. He was frugal, he complimented instead of complained, and he found contentment in the small pleasures of life. When others complained about the last load of hay getting rained on, he would reply, “I’m glad for the shower, it is good for the corn.” When neighbors celebrated a honeymoon to view the beautiful fall colors in New England, but noted the local beauty in Northern Illinois, he spent time sitting in a chair and admiring the beautiful valley. When elderly and crippled with arthritis he would answer, when asked about how he was doing, “I still feed the cattle every day and on Wednesday a friend and I go to a Village Café where we eat pie, drink coffee, and feel like millionaires!”

If we are not satisfied with our life as a whole, does that mean we need to go get and do the stuff that will make us satisfied so we can be content? Or does this mean we stop taking for granted what we do have so we can experience real contentment and enoughness?

My guardian parents also taught us that we didn’t have to have the most expensive prestigious vehicle, or the glamorous house, or the fancier clothes.



There was a difference between wants and needs and when needs were met then just maybe “enough was enough.” So when can you say, “I already have everything I really need?”