

Something to look forward to

From The Joy Project



This is a great technique to use when things look 'black'; when it appears that there's no way out of a mess; or when life is a boring, drudge or just busy or stressful. Always have something to look forward to. It's the same concept as seeing a light at the end of the tunnel, and by always planning something you can look forward to, you make sure the light permanently shines.

Life is always going to come at us in waves - peaks, and then troughs which usually catch us by surprise! And at the bottom of the trough where we can't see our way out, we think life is the 'pits', the anticipation of something pleasant can let us see that the sky is still above us.

To start this process, buy a book you can keep somewhere special. Create separate sections in your book that allow you to sort your ideas into daily, weekly and annual events.

Think of as many things as you can that make you feel great. Dancing, reading, sewing, hobbies, singing, walking, exercising, seeing friends, laughing, going to the movies, learning something, playing the piano, cooking, watching a comedy, gardening, driving, daydreaming, doing nothing, roller blading, sailing, playing tennis - anything that makes you feel good. Make a list of these activities in your special book.

Next, consider all the things that happen in a day that make you feel good. Watching the sunrise or sunset; a phone call from someone you love; listening to music; finishing a project; seeing your children or partner at the end of the day; having an hour to yourself - scan your days and make a list of daily 'anticipations'.

Now recall all the vacations you have ever dreamed of taking. Write down all the exotic destinations - or boring ones! And describe all the sorts of things you would like to do there. Do you like beach based holidays or outdoor adventures? Back to nature or exotic hotel holidays? A lot of the fun is the planning beforehand. It's reading all the travel guides on the area and deciding what to see and experience; discussing these details over endless dinners and cold nights and anticipating the wonderful time you are going to have that makes it more special.

Our brains can't tell the difference between vividly imagined experiences and reality. If we vividly recall (or relive) a wonderful experience of the past, our body-mind releases the same array of 'feel good' chemicals that it did at the time of the actual experience.

Similarly, if we vividly imagine an experience that we think will be fantastic our body-minds release feel good chemicals. That's what daydreaming and anticipation is all about! Remember that last week at work before your holiday starts? Your body is at work but your mind is already on holiday - and you feel great!

So this is the critical step. The planning. Each month, in your book, or diary, for the next month (at least), mark something to look forward to each day - perhaps you can have the same one each day for a week then have different ones for the following weeks.

Then design your weekend 'things to look forward to' for the next month. And finally the 'biggie' - the vacation! Even if it's not a glamorous, exotic destination, you can imagine and plan for a wonderful time - whether it's complete relaxation or camping and bushwalking in the hills somewhere.

And you can still think, dream about and plan the vacation of a lifetime!. Maybe you are saving up for that trip through Europe and it's castles; or a round-the-world trip! It doesn't matter if this vacation isn't due to happen for 10 years - it's the anticipation that makes it a fantastic stress-busting strategy.

So when you are feeling stressed, burnt out, exhausted or overwhelmed, look at your book and daydream about an upcoming event.

<http://www.thejoyproject.com/finding-joy/something-to-look-forward-to>