

## The Being Happy Podcast #5:

### ACCEPTANCE

When I was a kid, I was unusually small. I hated it. At 12 I was the size of an eight-year-old.

Everybody makes jokes about the smallest kid in the class.

When you are a guy, you want to be big and tough – you want to be a man!

In primary school – or grade school - the bigger guys used to pick me up and throw me over the fence.

I remember the day I started high school - *Victor Harbor High School*. I walked around the entire school looking for a kid – any kid - that was smaller than me. Not one.

I was smaller than all the boys – and I was shorter than all the girls.

I went home and told my Mum, *“I am the smallest kid in high school. I hate it.”*

She said, *“Don’t worry, wait until next year!”* My Mum said, *“When you are in second year high school, some of the new kids are bound to be smaller than you.”*

So I hung on - waited a year. Meanwhile the big kids continued to throw me over the fence.

And next year, when I was in second year, 120 new kids arrived from all the surrounding towns – and I walked around the whole school looking for one kid that might be smaller.

No. I was still the smallest kid in school.

I went home and told my Mum – *“I’m still the smallest! I hate it!”*

And I told her about Tony Ferguson who used to turn me upside down and drop me in puddles.

And my Mum said, *“Wait another next year. When you are in third year high school, there will have to be some kids that are smaller than you.”*

So I waited another year. And my first day of third year, I walked around the entire school looking for one kid, just one who was smaller than me. I was still the shortest.

And everybody still made jokes about little Andrew. I hated it. I went home and told my poor Mum.

What could she say?

So she sat me down and she explained to me that there are some things in life that you can change and some you can’t.

She said, *“You accept what you can’t change and go to work on the rest.”*

Well it was about that time that I began to grow into a normal sized human – so didn’t really take much notice of my mother.

But guess what I have discovered. Happy people - and successful people - all seem to know about my mother's advice.

Life works when you:

- accept yourself
- when you accept your circumstances
- when you accept other people as they are
- and when we accept the world as it is – which makes sense because it is the only one we have got.

And you might say, *“Well, accepting myself, accepting my circumstances, accepting other people as they are sounds like giving up! And shouldn't we have standards?”*

It's not about standards, it's about embracing reality.

You first accept what is. Then you go to work on improving whatever you can.

Lots of people admire Hollywood stars that are born perfect.

I admire Danny DeVito ... four feet ten inches tall (1.47 metres). The star of films like *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Ruthless People*, *LA Confidential* ... he is a producer, he's a director ... he's funny. He's an inspiration!

Imagine Danny DeVito's career if he had been angry and bitter – there would be no career!

Here is the good news, most things about yourself you can change ...

It's hard to change your height.

It's not easy to change your parents.

But you can change your habits.

You can go to work on your self-image.

You can change what you eat.

You can develop your skills.

You can improve your relationships.

You can change your bank balance.

You can change your friends, you can learn to make more friends.

And you can change your attitude.

## music

Let's talk about:

### Accepting Yourself

Imagine that you're overweight and you want to become thin. If you say:

- a) I'm not fat, or
- b) it's my mother's fault that I am fat, or
- c) my sister is fatter

what happens? You stay fat.

Then there is option d) I'm fat and I hate myself.

That doesn't help either – when you hate yourself – when you refuse to accept yourself - you feel you deserve to be punished - so you stay fat – and you suffer in other ways.

But then there is option e) I am fat. I like myself whether I'm fat or not. And I now choose to lose 50 kilos. In other words you begin with acceptance.

Now you can move forward.

Perhaps you are broke right now. Perhaps you have lost your job or lost a loved one. Maybe you are sick. You say, *"I just don't know what to do."*

Here is the first thing to do - and the only thing to do. You accept where you are.

To turn things around you first make peace with your situation. Forget about blame, forget about guilt, forget the "what if's". Progress depends on acceptance.

Acceptance doesn't mean, *"I want to stay here"*.

Acceptance means, *"This is where I am - and now I move on to what I want."*

So instead of saying, *"My husband behaves like an angry gorilla and I'm stuck with him. I should have married someone else."*, it is more like, *"I married an angry gorilla. What a perfect learning experience! I now realize I deserve better treatment."*

Let's say that you invested all your money with your cousin Billy and he lost the lot.

Instead of beating yourself up, saying, *"I've lost all my money. How could I have been so stupid?"*, you say, *"I am where I am. I made it once, I'll make it again."*

Again, acceptance isn't *giving up*. Acceptance is recognition that *"this is a part of my journey"*.

Acceptance very often it means, *"Right now I have absolutely no idea why this had to be a part of my journey but I embrace it anyway."*

## music

### Michael

I learn so much from my wife, Julie.

Her son, Michael – my step-son - was badly brain-injured in a car accident in 1987. We have spent the last 29 years teaching him to speak. He still struggles.

Michael has severe short-term memory loss. Michael will never ever hold down a regular job. His life now is very different to the one that we all planned.

Guys that Michael went to school with are lawyers and bankers.

People say to Julie, *"How do you deal with it?"*

And Julie's reply is always, *"Michael is a loving son, he is kind, he is as generous as anyone that you will ever meet."*

Again, acceptance. Focus on the good things.

What is the alternative? Be sad. Be bitter?

## John

I have a friend called John.

Ten years ago, John had a big business, a big house, big cars, he had a big art collection, had a wife with big diamonds, they had big parties ...

John sold his big business to a big company that didn't pay their final big instalment.

He spent half his fortune in a big legal case – and the other half on a big divorce.

Today John has a small apartment, and a small dog.

John went through a lot of stress – and alcohol!

His life today is very different to the life he had ten years ago.

And I saw him last week in the supermarket – in the yogurt department.

And you know what? He is happier than he has ever been.

John would never have chosen to go through all that – we never ever WANT to go through what we need to go through to become the kind of person we want to become.

But here's what John told me about how he sees his life now. He said:

1. *"I don't have to impress people".*
2. He said, *"My life looks different today to the life I had ten years ago – and that is okay".*
3. He said, *"There is a time for everything".*

Perhaps John has something to teach us all.

## music

### Accepting Other People

What is it that everyone wants? To BE accepted. To be accepted by a lover, a family, a club ...

Why is it that we are so obsessed with finding love?

Because when we are loved, we are accepted.

You spend 25 years consumed by the belief that *"I should be better. I should be richer, I should be smarter, I should be taller, I should be more successful."*

Then you fall in love. Finally you have found someone who says, *"You are wonderful just as you are."*

What a relief! *"I am accepted."*

Finally you have someone that doesn't want to change you ... yet.

Acceptance – it is the greatest gift you can give yourself.

It is the greatest gift you can give to a friend, “*I love you as you are.*”

## music

### Be Flexible

Think of the happiest people you know.

They are probably more flexible than other people you know.

- They don't expect everybody to *agree* with them.
- They don't demand that life is *perfectly predictable*.
- They don't get angry about things that have *already happened*.

Here's a word that miserable people can't wait to use: "should" ...

- My husband **should** appreciate me.
- The government **should** do something.
- I **should** have invested in *Apple* or *Google*.
- There **shouldn't** be so much traffic!
- It **shouldn't** be raining.
- I **should** have married her sister!

Unhappy people like to argue with reality. It's a recipe for misery.

Happy people are more flexible, more **accepting**.

Instead of making demands on life and people, have preferences.

You say, “I CHOOSE to be happy.” You ACCEPT that there will always be people who are:

- angry
- rude
- ungrateful
- work less than you
- or make more money than you.

Having preferences means we say:

- I prefer that the neighbours to be quiet – but if they make a noise, I can handle it.
- I prefer to have money – but whenever I am short, it is OK.
- I prefer that people see my point of view – but when they don't, it is OK.

You have preferences about the outcome of your plans, but you accept whatever happens.

Once you recognise that your ultimate goal is peace of mind, you decide to be less rigid.

Some people will tell you the world is terrible – and getting worse. And that is their excuse to do nothing! They are the guys who give up.

People who change the world - the great humanitarians like Mother Teresa, the great leaders like Nelson Mandela, they embrace the world as it is – and then set out to make it better.

That's what we can all do – work on improving our little corner of the world.

### **Practising Acceptance**

You say, *“So how do I practise acceptance?”*

Try this: every morning when you wake up, say *“This is perfect. Where I am is perfect. All my mistakes are perfect.”*

*“My life until now has been the perfect preparation to graduate to something better.”*

Does the word “perfect” seem a little extreme? Then try using the word “okay”.

*“Where I am is okay. My life until now has been ideal preparation to move on to something better.”*

Whenever things seem to go wrong, like, you miss a flight, you lose your house keys, you miss out on a promotion, tell yourself, *“I don't know why but this is okay!”*

And then, look for reasons to be happy now.

### **music**

You say, *“So Andrew, is it that you are talking about being tolerant?”*

*NO! Tolerance is being unhappy and keeping your mouth shut.”*

Acceptance is embracing what is. Embracing reality.

What happens when you accept what IS? Your life changes.

You argue less, you quit trying to make other people wrong, you quit complaining. Frustration dissolves into fascination.

You look for good things in your life, and as you look for good things, life heaps more good things upon you. Friends, lovers, opportunities appear almost magically.

Why? Because when your thoughts change, your life changes. You begin to create and attract different circumstances.

You begin to get the feeling that the Universe is plotting to make you happy.

To have a beautiful life you don't have to know everything and you don't even have to be very smart!

It is more about accepting where you are, seeing the best in people, making an effort each day and believing that life will turn out well.

**My Next Podcast:**

My next podcast, number 6 is a surprise – I am not telling you what it is but I will tell you this ...

It is the ONE most important thing that you were never taught in school about HOW YOUR MIND WORKS.

If you listen to the next podcast – and if you use this one principle, it will transform your performance in every interview, speech, sales call, every examination that you ever do, it will make you a safer driver, it will make you healthier and wealthier ...

If you have ever wondered, “Why do I keep making the same mistakes?” this is the podcast for you.

One simple piece of information that can be the difference between success and failure.

It is breathtaking how few people understand what I am going to share with you in Podcast 6.

Until then, I wish you success and happiness.