

Joyfulness Snack # 2:

Your Friend, Roy G. Biv

If you can memorize "Roy G. Biv," you can use Full-Spectrum Joyfulness.

In case you were not taught this useful abbreviation in science class, it stands for the order in which the major colors in the visible-light spectrum appear:

Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet.

Here are the Joyfulness categories that correspond to each color.

Red = Receiving

Orange = Owning Your Gifts

Yellow = Saying "YES"

Green = Giving

Blue = Belonging

Indigo = Invigorating

Violet = Venturing

There's a chapter on each theme in this book.

Chapter One: RECEIVING

To be ready and open to receive more joyfulness, you need to do something that seems simple but actually can be quite difficult.

You need to cultivate desire.

When I start working with a client, my main work is to walk with them as they uncover their authentic desires. I believe that our authentic desires are sacred. The reason we even need a spiritual companion or therapist to help us uncover these desires is that they have often been blocked and buried.

What blocks and buries our desire for joy? Joy-Squelchers, which come in two separate and nasty breeds.

The Inner Joy-Squelchers haunt the shadowy corners of our psyche. The Outer Joy-Squelchers are the wild variety that can be encountered virtually anywhere you roam -- in our media, our culture, and in the people around you.

The Inner Joy-Squelchers, in their essence, boil down to a feeling that you are unworthy of joy, happiness, or fulfillment. This pervasive feeling of unworthiness comes from deep religious roots in our North American culture, operating silently under our awareness, passed on from generation to generation.

When this voice of unworthiness speaks to us, it sounds something like this:

- If something bad happens to you, including unhappiness, it's your fault. You did something wrong and bad, or you are wrong and bad.
- Other people are better than you -- look around and see how happy they all are. Obviously, they're being rewarded.
- You should be happy. Unfortunately, there's nothing you can do to become really happy. Well, maybe -- maybe -- if you work a whole lot harder you'll get to be happy.
- How can you let yourself feel joyful when you haven't solved all your/your family's/your friends'/your company's/the world's problems?
- What? You think you deserve to be happy? You're wrong, and you're going to be punished if you even try.

So -- permitting ourselves to desire more joyfulness may well take us down a path that contains obstacles. We need to learn to recognize, greet, and put aside these inner obstacles, possibly many times, as we develop the habit of receiving joyfulness.

To be ready to receive more joyfulness, you need to do two things initially -- and possibly over and over again.

First, cultivate your own authentic desires. The single most powerful force within you is the force of desire. If you are brave enough to uncover and bring to life your most authentic desires –

- your own, not someone else's,
- authentic, not what you think you should want, but what your heart truly yearns for,
- desires, not vague wishes, but powerful thirsts,

-- then you will unleash a strong motivating force that has the power to overcome the stumbling blocks that Joy-Squelchers put in your way.

Second, defeat all Joy-Squelchers by practicing the first Joyfulness theme, Receiving. If you have not practiced your joyfulness skills for a very long time, or if you are sunk deep in a feeling of unworthiness or gloom, you may have to practice Receiving for a week or two, or you may have to return to it again and again as you go along.

To prepare to receive joy, do the chapter's Meditation at least once. Notice the Inner and Outer Joy-Squelchers you encounter, and make a habit of turning away from them and letting yourself be magnetized by the happier part of each moment. Make a covenant with yourself -- a serious, or sacred, promise to yourself -- to try at least one of the "Joyfulness Games" this week. Sing the song.

Have fun!!

Joyfulness Snack # 3: Inner Joy-Squelchers

Here's a short list. Add your own.

- Joy is in limited supply. If I'm happy, it takes away from someone else's well-being.
- I don't deserve to be joyful because I didn't _____
- I don't deserve to be joyful because I did _____
- There's so much suffering in the world -- how can I be joyful?
- There are so many reasons to be miserable: global warming ... taxes ...

Democrats ... Republicans ...

Hunger ... war ... terrorism ...

- I'm feeling pretty happy right now -- maybe I shouldn't, and even if I should, it will probably end very soon.
- What would _____ think if s/he saw me having fun?
- I'll let myself be joyful when I ... finish my filing ... forgive everyone who's ever hurt me ... lose 20 pounds ... have five thousand dollars in the bank ... apologize to everyone I've ever offended ...

Joyfulness Snack # 4: Outer Joy-Squelchers

How many of these joy-squelchers have you heard? Make a game of checking them off as you hear people saying them, or the media broadcasting them, and add any more that you encounter -- or even, horror of horrors, hear yourself saying!

- You're having too much fun over there.
- Aren't you kind of old to be doing that?
- Guys don't do that.
- Women don't do that.
- (Fill in your religious or ethnic group here) don't do that.
- Who do you think you are?
- Don't quit your day job! (When said to someone whistling or singing, etc., in public.)

Questions for Yourself:

Do you know someone who's truly joyful? What qualities does s/he have? Could you imagine being like that one day?

What would it be like if you were truly joyful? Would anyone be mad at you? Would it hurt anyone? Really?

What do you authentically desire, right now? Make a list. Try not to judge yourself in any way.

Meditation

Read this meditation quietly to yourself -- it is most effective if you do this two or three times during the course of one week.

I'm relaxing deeply and softly into my heart right now. Letting my breathing take me deeper into quietness. Checking in lovingly with all parts of myself, then drifting on into a quieter and deeper place.

The color to remember for Receiving is Red. So I'm inviting the color red into myself. Breathing into myself the shiny red of Valentine's hearts. The delicate red of a rosebud. The translucent red of a lovely summer sunrise. Breathing the red of life itself, the heartbeat of life, into myself. Becoming ready, willing, to receive more life. More abundance. More vivid, life-giving, hearty experiences and feelings. Permitting myself, in my own time, to relax deeply into this warm, red, life-giving, safe place in my own heart.

In this deep place, I'm asking myself:

Do I desire more joyfulness?

Am I truly, deeply willing to receive more joyfulness?

Am I ready to receive more joyfulness right now, or are there obstacles that make it hard for me to receive joyfulness?

I'm being with my desires and my obstacles for a minute -- breathing gently, expanding around both my desire and my difficulty. Being very gentle and patient with myself.

Returning my attention to my breath, to my body, coming back to the present moment.

Journaling

Take a moment to jot down some notes about anything you noticed while you were in meditation -- your desires, and the obstacles you noticed.

Make a note of any defiant thoughts, acts, or deeds you have used against the Inner Joy-Squelchers you encounter.

Joyfulness Games to Try: RECEIVING

Choose one of the following to try during the course of the next week, or make up your own.

- For the following week, as you find yourself having a few minutes of downtime, say to yourself: "I am ready to receive more joyfulness." Notice what happens when you say this to yourself.
- Try picturing yourself as an empty basket, and imagining what sorts of joyfulness might come into that basket.
- Become a detective -- notice birds, animals, and people that seem to be experiencing joyfulness. Do any of these observations create a special feeling of aching or yearning in you? That might be a clue to the specific kinds of joyfulness you are craving.
- As you go through your day, imagine that you are the Chief Award-Giver of your world, with a big sack of gold medals and trophies, and find as many specific things, events, and people who deserve awards as you possibly can. Some awards might be, "most cheerful co-worker," "most handsome cat." Take a moment to mentally savor and enjoy each awardee. Give yourself the biggest and most ornate trophy for making an effort to receive joy.
- Imagine the potential joy in your life as a gigantic, powerful magnet. Practice letting your heart be drawn by the magnetism of the joyful side of any situation you are in.

- If you are opening yourself to receive joy and come up against an Inner Joy-Squelcher, don't cave in! Ask it what the heck it's talking about! Demand that it be logical! Record the incident in your journal.
- If you come up against an Outer Joy-Squelcher, blow him/her/it a raspberry. Silently, if necessary, or at a later time, but do it, and record the incident in your journal.
- Buy yourself an inexpensive children's toy, such as a bottle of soap bubbles or a ball and paddle, and play with it for five minutes when no one is looking. Notice what that feels like. Then give it to an actual child. Notice what that feels like.
- Start a list of your authentic desires. Don't edit or second-guess yourself. Don't show it to anyone. Let yourself really feel your desire for these things or events.
- If you drive, use every red light as a reminder to say to yourself, "I am ready to receive more joy." Other reminders might be: every time you hear a bell or airplane, smell coffee, see a flower.

Covenant for RECEIVING

A covenant is a sacred agreement. As you become ready to make a sacred agreement with yourself, you're invited to complete the following covenant. Writing it down will help to make it important and memorable for you.

I hereby covenant with myself to prepare to receive more joyfulness.

I will do this through the following practices or attitudes:

Signed: _____ Date: _____