

Filling Your Cup August 2026

Happiness is in the Present Moment



One of my friend groups has a group text exchange where we can share happy moments, vent about concerns, and support each other as we travel on our life journeys. A friend in the group lamented about Halloween decorations being sold at stores in August. We live in a society where now, more than ever, consumerism is rampant and is essentially an epidemic on its own. Influencers sway us to the product for which they receive a paid endorsement. Stores are always sending us alerts on our phones, reminding us of what is on sale or the newest release we need to purchase immediately.

This is fine in a free market country. However, we lose sight of what truly makes us happy. Possessions are just a temporary bandaid. When someone makes an acquisition, there is a need for positive reinforcement. Then, there is another

acquisition, and more accolades. We fall into this repeated cycle and receive temporary satisfaction. Happiness can be permanent by choice. In her 2007 book, *The How of Happiness*, positive psychology researcher, Sonja Lyubomursky, defines *happiness* as “the experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile.”

It can be a challenge to really experience happy moments during the day when our Inbox number exponentially increases, our clinic rooms and waiting rooms are overflowing, and our charts are stacking. With the chaos around us, it is important to see what is meaningful in the present moment. Happiness is about what is in front of you, not what happened in the past or what could happen in the future. There are always moments that can show us meaning.

When we are feeling less joy in what we do, whether it is at work or domestically, it is important to take a moment, and breathe. Validation is given when we see a large number of patients or receive a high Press-Ganey satisfaction score. We have such a precious opportunity to share our knowledge, experience, and compassion with children and their families. However, our focus shifts with time to those quantitative rewards, and it can be difficult to remember what we enjoy about our work.

One of my three-year-old patients recently came in for a hospital follow up. He said to me “I was in the hospital! I rode in the ambulance!”. He proceeded to show me photos from his stay, sharing, “I was painting!” and “I built a flying car! It is F1!”. He was admitted for respiratory distress, but the memories of his hospital stay focused on the moments of happiness: painting, riding in an ambulance, building a LEGO car. I

commented to his father, “Wow, isn’t it amazing how resilient kids are? He is focused on all of the happy moments, and not any moment of being scared.” Our kids are such wonderful teachers.