Pain is inevitable, Suffering is Optional

Adyashanti says: Human needs and wants for security, relationships, finding God, whatever you seek boils down to being happy. We want those things because we want to be happy. However, we suffer because we have been taught to identify with and cling to and believe the thoughts in our heads. We would rather suffer in fact than give up what we think we know that shows up as our opinions, thoughts and beliefs. It’s hard to let them go because we think those are who we are.

What thoughts and beliefs do you tend to cling to that cause you suffering?

Here are 5 forms of thought patterns as described by John Izzo in his new book, The Five Thieves of Happiness. He says happiness is truly our natural state and life is not so much about the pursuit of it as it is simply getting our selves out of the way.

Thief #1 Control countered by Surrender
We all want to control situations and scenarios to the outcomes that most benefit us, but deep down, we know that complete control is an illusion. Happiness comes from understanding that we can control our actions and our responses to things external to us, but we cannot control the results of our actions.

“Attention without attachment “
Attention is about the actions we take, the intention we have moment to moment. Attachment is a focus on a goal or what is called in yoga a “sticky desire.”

We have trained he mind to focus on attachment to what we cannot control: the future. When our intentions don’t lead to our desired outcome, we must then simply re-choose how to be in the present moment again. So, you lost the match, the relationship, the promotion, or even playing golf this afternoon when the rainstorm ruined it. Once you see that unhappiness is resistance to whatever is at any moment. Happiness is being present in each moment and open to what might arrive. Never confuse this with some resigned passivity. I am still going to practice hard for the next match.

Counter each thief with these 3 steps: Notice, Stop, Replace (Reform) Notice when caught up in a control pattern of thought. Stop by gently brushing it aside (not now dear) Replace with the truth of a more life enhancing thought. Such as these mantras.

Mantra for Surrender:
I choose to be in the present moment and embrace whatever is. Happiness is not in the outcome I seek.

Thief #2 Conceit countered by Service
The thief named Conceit is about spending your whole life worrying about your small little story, what is often referred to as the Ego. There is something very ironic about the pursuit of happiness, which is that most people’s happiest moments are when they are the least self-conscious. Rather than sitting around thinking about happiness, you find yourself caught up in something and suddenly you forgot about yourself for a short time. There is a fundamental truth about life, which is that the small self is mortal and temporary while the larger Self which is all of life is eternal. Service is about seeing the self as part of the larger conversation. [A liver cell might imagine itself separate but is happier when it remembers it is connected to the whole]

Mantra for Conceit
I am connected to all that is and if I can contribute to the good of the whole, happiness will find me.
The Five Thieves of Happiness
With author Dr. John Izzo

Thief #3 Coveting countered by Gratitude
Many studies suggest that writing down a few things you are grateful for every day boosts your immune system as well as making you happier. I think the most fascinating thing is that it isn’t just being grateful for yourself but being grateful for others. The Conceit thief wants you to make your life a contest by always comparing yourself to others. On People who passively watch the lives of others on social media are less happy. After all, you are watching everyone else’s movies as A rolls, while living the B roll in your own life. But the research also shows that people who actively like the posts of others, send them congratulations, and genuinely interact in the happiness of others become happier through social media.

Mantra for Coveting
*Life is not a contest. I will be grateful for what I have and who I am. I will celebrate the success of others for when I celebrate for others, I am happy.*

Thief #4 Consumption countered by Contentment
At its core this thief tells us that we need something outside ourselves to be happy when happiness is an internal choice not a result of something happening to us. So long as we think happiness comes from the happenings in our life—whether they are possessions, people, or accomplishments—we are in trouble. The way you know this thief is being activated in your life is you keep thinking, “I will be happy if or I will be happy when,” rather than, “I choose happiness right now.” In my daily meditation, I begin and end with this mantra: “I choose contentment.” I do think simplifying on the outside helps one be less focused on external happiness because the more things you have, the more you think they are why you are happy.

Mantra for Comfort countered by New Experiences
It turns out that from a brain perspective, we are hardwired for routine but excited by change. So much of our happiness comes from getting out of our routines and having new experiences. But the thief is even more about comfortable patterns we get into that no longer serve us. For example, when I was in high school I had bad acne and got picked on a great deal, so I learned to play it safe, not taking on risks unless I knew I could succeed. When I got to university, the acne had cleared up, but I kept playing it safe for years. The pattern felt comfortable, and it was a big barrier to my greater happiness. Many people have some pattern they learned and are comfortable with that is not productive. This thief wants us stuck. This thief is also very harmful to us as a species.

Mantra for Comfort
*I am not my patterns. Just because this is my habitual channel, does not mean it serves me. I can choose a new path.*

Ending the old habits of mind
The Knower is awareness in the Buddhist tradition, Holy Spirit in Christianity, Higher Self in other practices. Is the part of us that catch ourselves in the act and then: Notice, Stop, Replace (reform) Is not so easy to “kick them out” as they are within us, but can step up as the “Knower” to occupy the throne. “We spend our days at the mercy of the thieves when there is a self within the self that stands ready to be the wise lord or our inner temple.”

More info and get the first chapter free: *drjohnizzo.com/five-thieves-happiness*