

How People Change

By Vicki Alden, LCSW

What Is Happiness?

If you are thinking about changing your life for the better, one way to start is by identifying your goals. You are probably hoping to find some version of happiness or emotional well-being. That might look like any combination of the following:

- A sense of freedom
- Self-esteem
- Self-confidence
- Happy to get up in the morning
- Working towards goals
- A sense of purpose in life
- Satisfying relationship

What Is Unhappiness?

If you are thinking about changing your life, you may be experiencing some combination of the following elements:

- Feeling sad, lethargic or depressed
- Feeling afraid
- Abusing or being addicted to alcohol or drugs
- Feeling lonely
- Anxiety
- Problems with relationships
- Not getting what you want in life; feeling frustrated in working towards goals
- Not caring enough to have goals

How Will You Change?

When you decide to change your life, try the following ideas.

1. Explore your feelings. Keep a journal, talk to a trusted friend, work with a professional counselor.
2. Envision your future. Write in a journal, make a collage, do a guided visualization, talk to a friend or counselor, research possibilities.
3. Explore wishes and dreams. Keep a journal, talk to a trusted friend, work with a professional counselor.
4. Be open to new ideas. Take a class, travel, say yes to things you may have avoided in the past.

5. Look for kindred spirits. Avoid people who make you feel bad about yourself, seek out those who make you blossom, reach out to those with similar interests and dreams.
6. Try something different. Deliberately buy new items, try different brands, shop at different stores, do the opposite of what you usually do, see different movies, read different kinds of books and magazines.