

Joy Is Your Inherent Nature

I'm 27, and I've been depressed, anxious and on drugs my whole life. My mom sent me to a new therapist, and he gave me a copy of this magazine. He also gave me homework. I'm supposed to do some kind of art project and go for walks in nature to help me feel different about my life. It seems too simple. I guess I'm afraid to try these things because I don't want to get my hopes up and then be even more depressed. How is it possible for me to be happy when I never have been?

— Frozen

Dear Thawing,

I am so glad you wrote to me. You are on the edge of a whole new frontier. So many people have found their way into a life they sincerely love through hardships just like yours. Many say they're actually grateful for their depression, anxiety or addiction because it propelled them onto a path of self-discovery, healing and awakening they would never have explored otherwise. The poet Kahlil Gibran wrote, "The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain."

Depression is often fueled by something called ennui, which is a state in which a person suffers from a lack of spirit, enthusiasm or interest. Art and nature are expressions of divine creativity, just as you are. Simply walking outside and noticing nature will begin thawing your protective walls (look up *forest bathing*). Then you can explore writing, drawing, painting or even singing or dancing about what you discovered and liked.

The emotion of happiness is enjoyable but fleeting, even more so than challenging ones like sadness and fear. They are necessary parts of the human experience designed to come and go. Joy, however, as Danielle LaPorte writes, "is the fiber of your soul. And since your soul can never be annihilated, your access to joy never vanishes."

Step outside. Put your hand on a tree or bare feet on the ground. Breathe. Ease and joy may seem unfamiliar, but they are already part of who you are — an exquisite, unique, necessary and valuable art piece of this wise, creative, loving universe. Thank God for you. ❀



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