



JOY TO THE WORLD

During the Christmas season we talk about and sing about Joy. The season of Advent talks about the Joy of celebrating the birth of Christ. People talk about feeling joy in buying gifts for loved ones. We teach children about the “Joy of Giving” through helping others, donating and volunteering. The popular songs of the season include “Joy” in the title or lyrics such as “How Great Our Joy” and both versions of “Joy to the World”. While the other two well known winter holidays, Kwanzaa and Hanukkah, do not specifically define Joy in the same way the historical events of Hanukkah and the 7 principles of Kwanzaa have the inner peace and contentment of joy in their teachings and celebrations.

While we talk about Joy and strive for Joy we often confuse Joy with happiness. While they are similar they are not actually the same. Joy is defined as “A feeling of great pleasure and happiness” while Happiness is defined as the “state of being happy”. So what really is the difference?

Joy comes from the inner-self of a person, and is connecting with the source of life within you. It is caused by something really exceptional and satisfying.

Happiness is a result of something that is outside of you, and gained by observing or doing that particular thing. Thus, Happiness may be momentary, as it is a result of short-term contentment; but Joy, being related to the inner self, is long lasting.

While we strive for both, we want to be happy and we want to experience joy, Joy would seem to be the more desired long lasting emotional state. Joy incorporates spiritual, mental and physical components which creates a lasting state of inner peace, wellbeing and contentment **even during times of suffering and sorrow**. This would indicate that having an inner sense of joy in our lives helps us cope with and heal from suffering and sorrow. This is often attributed to a spiritual component whether it is a belief in a higher power or a connection to nature and humanity.

How can we develop a state of Joy in our lives and support others in the development of Joy in their lives?

- 1) Explore when you feel happy and when you experience joy to determine the difference situations which elicit these two emotions. Does Joy create a longer lasting inner sense of peace and contentment?
- 2) Actively seek a spiritual connection in your life through either a religious belief structure or through active involvement in the environment and humanitarian causes.
- 3) Identify ways to give service to others through volunteering at a service organization or by helping those you know personally.
- 4) Examine your lifestyle and priorities to determine if you focus more on external, materialistic items and activities or on the development of relationships and activities that bring you inner peace and contentment. Make a plan to increase activities that bring you inner peace.
- 5) Support others in finding Joy in their lives through beliefs, relationships, activities and service that foster inner peace and contentment for them.