

Five Great Ways to Achieve Happiness Through Serving Others

I worked in the “Happiness” business.

For a long time I worked in the Hospitality industry, restaurants and hotels, where I have been a busboy, host, waiter, bartender and manager. For 12 years I spent most evenings and weekends, and every holiday, taking care of people who were going out to dinner or attending an event like a wedding or prom.



Photo by [padraic woods](#)

I truly enjoyed this work as it was emotionally fulfilling and financially rewarding, not to mention just plain fun a lot of the time.

There are those who would disparage a career path like this as demeaning and servile, yet the call to serve others is the source of my own greatest happiness.

I remember going home after many 12- to 16-hour days, having served hundreds of people their meals and watched them dance and celebrate a special day with family and friends. At these times I felt tired, of course, but also invigorated and gratified by the display of human connection.

The call to serve

Those of you that are parents of small children know about the effort and sacrifice that is required to raise them happy and healthy. And I would submit that you feel that your children are your greatest source of happiness. This same feeling of pride and love comes to many of those who are called to the ministry, teaching, medicine, or even the hospitality industry. Serving others is sometimes a thankless job, yet it remains a reward in itself. Here are some ideas to consider for increasing your personal level of service, while bringing happiness to yourself and others:

1. Show respect and courtesy. It seems like such a small thing, and in our busy lives we often forget that a kind word, a helping hand, or just a smile and “Thank you” can create a bright spot in another person’s life. And then two people are happy.

2. Listen more than you speak. One of the things that my wife has taught me is that sometimes she just wants to vent about her day. Being a man, I will often have advice on how to handle the situation (and men are seemingly hard-wired for problem solving). One of the things that makes her so special is that she tells me when she wants advice and when she just wants me to listen. My listening makes her happy.

3. Give genuine praise. Recognizing the contributions of others is a mighty act of service. This is an investment in others that doesn’t cost you a thing, and the returns can be amazing. Remember, *“Praise in public, punish in*

private". Even in a disagreement there is an opportunity for service, and you can restore happiness to the relationship, if you speak the truth in love to help another to learn and grow.

4. Keep your promises. You can create an atmosphere of service simply by doing the things that you say you will do. Dependability and punctuality are the hallmarks of the service-oriented individual. When people can trust you it creates happiness all around.

5. Practice forgiveness. Pointless hard feelings are the source of so much unhappiness in the world. Holding a grudge against another is a blemish on your soul. When you can let go of this, you can begin to heal the pain. Making a point of forgiving someone is a great service, for there are times that the person may not even know that they have hurt you. You can even forgive those who do not want to be forgiven, trust me - it will make you happy.

In the end, only you are responsible for your own happiness. Serve others first, and as it says in the *Dhammapada*:

“With our thoughts we make the world.
Speak or act with a pure mind
And happiness will follow you
As your shadow, unshakable.”

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