From a Clinician’s Perspective

Accept by Cynthia Garrett, Licensed Mental Health Counselor

“Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it.” Charles R. Swindoll

Life is beautiful every time you’re able to accept something that has gone wrong. When you can connect with feeling good on the whole, even though things aren’t going your way, you know emotional freedom. What more could you ask for?

It’s all about perspective, isn’t it? We are challenged to see and appreciate what we have and to shift our attention from what we’ve lost.

So, let me point out three steps that can make your life truly beautiful. You don’t always need to go through some life-shattering experience to become more accepting and peaceful. You can start out from where you are today.

1. **Shift your perspective**

   Often, our ideas about how we think our life should be come from other people. Others may be insecure or unhappy about their own life, so they judge ours to make themselves feel better, or they may genuinely not want us to make the same mistakes they did. Either way, they are seeing things through their own lens, which reflects their experiences, not ours.

   The only person to whom we should ever compare ourselves is our previous self or what we’d like our future self to be. Doing this in a nonjudgmental way will help lead us toward growth. But if you’re cruel to yourself by being harshly critical, you’ll be more likely to become your own worst enemy. When we move toward our greatest self, we clear all the blocks to the natural peace that exists in the present moment, and in our hearts.

2. **Practice letting go.**

   How can you accept a devastating loss or change? Accept life the way it is because we cannot change what already has happened. Easier said than done, but we can start the process of learning to let go in our everyday life and build up the strength to handle larger losses in the future. Don’t harbor unnecessary frustration, anger, or grief. Resisting the flow of life will only make you unhappy. This takes courage, but the process will empower you enormously. The ability to let go of things in everyday life makes for happiness and ease.
3. Let beauty in.

When you’re focused on everything that’s lacking, it’s hard to fully notice, appreciate, and enjoy what’s there. Look around you; there’s beauty all around. What an amazing planet! Beaches and mountains, colorful fish in the ocean, birds flying across the sky, music and culture, blueberry ice cream, kissing in the sunset, and lifelong friendships. Learn to see and appreciate what you have as opposed to giving too much attention to what you don’t have.

Open up to what is truly beautiful and important in your life. For example, look at a flower and enjoy its fragile beauty; take your mom on a surprise picnic; or give yourself a day to relax. Take on the curiosity of a child. Open up and explore life as if it were your first day on this earth. You can choose to focus on any of these. What’s your choice?