

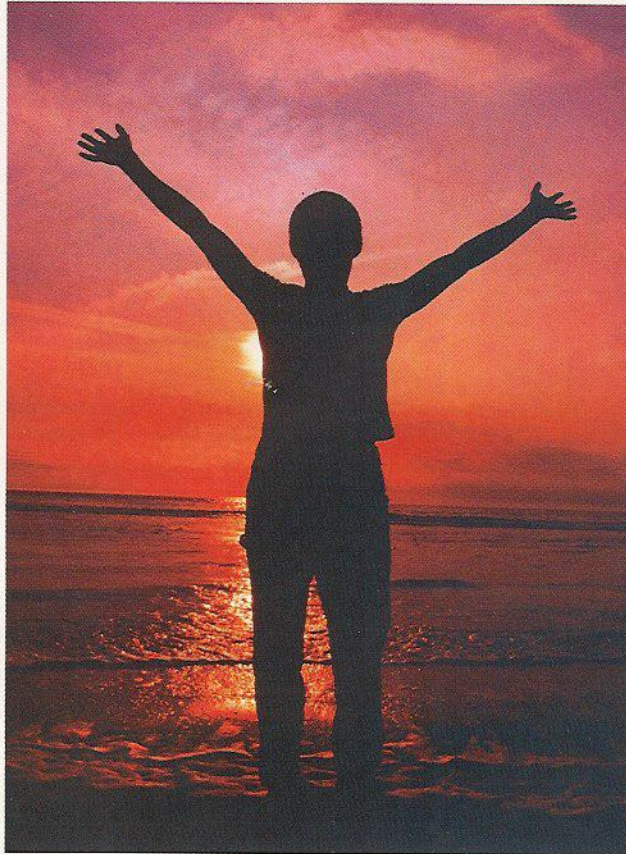
# Needs Must

Do you feel contented - or are you craving for more?

David Moxon looks at how discontentment is detrimental to your health

**A** COUPLE that retired just over two years ago, have since moved house a staggering five times. They have also changed their car twice, bought endless new furniture and even had an £8,000 purpose-built sun lounge erected in the garden of their last house because they weren't happy with the shape of the existing summerhouse. Nothing wrong in that if they've got the money, I hear you cry. And that's true. But looking at it from another perspective, without their finances in mind, I think this tale highlights a more worrying message - one of discontentment. The couple concerned are the first to freely admit this. It seems that as soon as they had achieved one goal they felt compelled to press on to pinpoint the next, allowing no time at all to sit back and savour their success, with little time to enjoy it.

Many British social commentators, including a number of eminent psychologists, suggest that being discontent is one of the biggest causes of unhappiness in modern life. A common catalyst for most causes of anxiety and depression are concerns that relate to what might have been or what could be, with an inability to enjoy the here and now. Contentment, it seems, is a rare commodity - so why is it so important to achieve it?



Firstly, being contented can make you a nicer person to be with. It reduces the likelihood that you will suffer from envy or jealousy, and there are few worse emotions to deal with than coveting your neighbours new car or stylish gas Bar-B-Q. If you're contented people will soon recognise it, as it is a trait that people appreciate and enjoy in others. It generally ensures, therefore, that you have an ever-increasing circle of friends - lets face it nobody wants to be around someone that constantly wants to better them.

Secondly, being

contented will give you a much more balanced approach to life. However, beware: don't confuse contentment for complacency, lack of achievement or poor motivation. It is not an excuse for sitting down and doing nothing. That's not 'true' contentment - that's just downright laziness. Being contented should be the end product of motivation or creativity- i.e., working hard on your garden is the effort, the contentment should be sitting back and enjoying it.

Thirdly, being contented is arguably the

best form of stress reduction there is. This is why contentment can have such positive effects on physical health. Modern life constantly presents us with an overwhelming number of daily choices and options. It bombards us with the consumer message that we need to regularly update our lifestyle. Mobile phones, computers, MPV's, PDA's, DVD's or a GPS system - we're told by the media that we really should have them all. Don't know what I'm talking about? Well, according to advertising moguls, that means you're missing out! And with so much available to choose from today, it's all too easy to become a consumer junky, wanting more and more to ensure you don't miss out. Don't get me wrong - there is absolutely nothing wrong with acquiring new technology (or old for that matter) or indulging yourself from time to time. What is wrong, agree psychologists worldwide, is not knowing how to be happy with what you have got, rather than pinning your happiness and fulfilment on the latest High Street purchase.



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