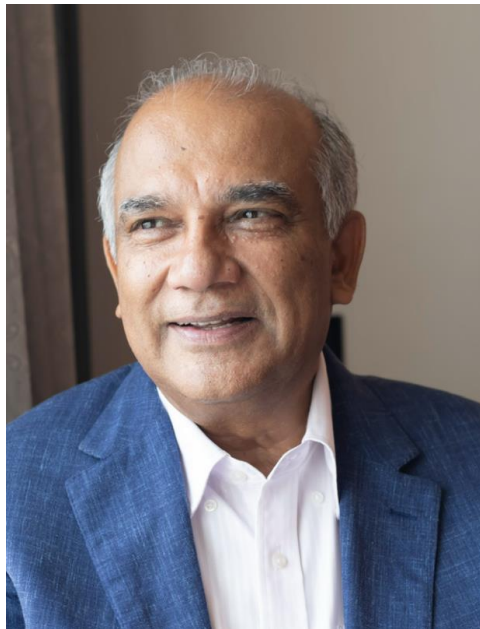


The True Measure of Success: How Joyful and at Peace You Are in Life

—Prof. Arun Sehgal



“The measure of success is how joyful and at peace you are in life.”

I read this line today, and it stopped me.

Not because it was clever.

Not because it was poetic.

But because it was deeply, disturbingly true.

In a world obsessed with achievements, titles, wealth, milestones, and public applause, this simple sentence quietly dismantles everything we have been taught to chase. It challenges decades of conditioning that equate success with accumulation and visibility.

It asks a far deeper and more uncomfortable question than most success metrics ever do:

After everything you have built, achieved, endured, and sacrificed — are you joyful?

Not successful on paper.
Not admired in society.
Not respected in meetings.

But joyful — inside.

Because life, as we eventually learn, does not reward effort with fairness, loyalty with loyalty, or love with permanence. Life does not operate like a balance sheet. It simply unfolds. Sometimes gently. Often painfully. Almost never according to plan.

So the real question becomes:

How do we remain joyful — not when life is perfect — but when life is life?

This is not an article about denial or blind optimism.
It is about inner mastery — how to live with clarity, grace, and peace despite disappointment, dismay, disloyalty, unrealistic expectations, emotional exhaustion, fractured relationships, professional challenges, and declining health.

1. Joy vs. Happiness: Understanding the Difference

“Happiness depends on what happens.
Joy depends on how you respond.”

Most people spend their lives chasing happiness without realizing that happiness and joy are not the same.

Happiness is external.
Joy is internal.

Happiness depends on outcomes — success, praise, comfort, validation.
Joy depends on alignment — with one’s values, conscience, and inner truth.

Happiness says, “When this happens, I will feel good.”
Joy says, “Whatever happens, I will not abandon myself.”

Happiness rises and falls with circumstances.
Joy remains steady even when circumstances are unstable.

Joy is not excitement.

Joy is peace without resentment.

A joyful person may still feel sadness, anger, or grief — but these emotions pass through without poisoning the soul. Joy does not deny pain; it refuses to let pain turn into bitterness.

The journey toward a joyful life begins the day we stop chasing constant happiness and start cultivating inner steadiness.

2. Accepting That Life Will Never Be Fair

“Life is not fair — but it is the greatest teacher.”

One of the greatest destroyers of joy is the belief that life should be fair.

It is not.

Good people suffer.
Hard workers are ignored.
Loyal hearts are betrayed.
Truth is often inconvenient.

When we cling to the expectation of fairness, every injustice feels personal, and every disappointment becomes heavier than it needs to be.

The moment we accept that life does not owe us justice, we free ourselves from endless disappointment.

Acceptance does not mean surrender or helplessness.
It means not fighting reality.

Joy begins the day we stop asking:
“Why is this happening to me?”

And start asking:
“How do I respond without losing myself?”

Life’s unfairness, when accepted, becomes a teacher rather than a tormentor.

3. Handling Disappointment Without Becoming Bitter

“Disappointment is inevitable.
Bitterness is optional.”

Disappointment is not a failure of effort.
It is a natural outcome of expectation.

Most disappointments do not come from what went wrong — they come from what we silently expected to go right.

We expected gratitude.

We expected loyalty.

We expected fairness.

We expected recognition.

When expectations go unfulfilled, disappointment hardens into bitterness if left unattended.

Joyful people make a conscious choice here.

They lower expectations of others and raise accountability for themselves.

They stop seeking emotional returns on moral investments.

They give because it reflects who they are — not because they expect repayment.

This single shift preserves joy and prevents emotional corrosion.

4. Dismay and Emotional Exhaustion

“Rest is not about quitting.

It is reflecting and then responding at will.”

There are times when life does not hurt dramatically — it exhausts quietly.

You wake up tired.

Not physically.

Emotionally.

This kind of exhaustion comes from prolonged uncertainty, unending responsibility, and continuous emotional labour.

Joyful living requires learning to pause without guilt.

Not every tired soul needs motivation.

Some need permission to stop, reflect, and realign.

Rest is not weakness.

It is wisdom.

Those who never rest eventually lose joy — not because life defeated them, but because they never listened.

5. Facing Disloyalty Without Losing Faith

“Do not let one broken promise convince you that all hearts are unsafe.”

Few experiences wound deeper than betrayal.

Disloyalty shakes not only trust in others, but faith in relationships themselves.

Joyful people allow themselves to grieve betrayal — but they do not generalize pain.

They say:

“This person failed me.”

Not:

“Everyone will fail me.”

They set boundaries without becoming cynical.

They protect themselves without hardening their hearts.

Joy survives when trust is selective — not abandoned.

6. Expectations: The Invisible Joy Killers

“Expectations are silent agreements we make without permission.”

Expectations are among the most underestimated sources of suffering.

They are rarely spoken, often assumed, and almost always unmet.

Most pain lives in the gap between expectation and reality.

Joy grows when expectations reduce.

Expect effort — not outcomes.

Expect change — not permanence.

Expect peace — from within.

This mindset does not lower standards; it lowers suffering.

7. Relationships: Choosing Peace Over Proving a Point

“Peace is often found not in winning — but in letting go.”

Many relationships fail not because love disappears, but because ego dominates.

The need to be right.

The need to be understood.

The need to be validated.

Joyful people choose peace over victory.

They understand that:

Not every silence needs filling.

Not every misunderstanding needs clarification.

Not every relationship needs saving.

Sometimes joy means letting people be where they are — without dragging them where we wish they were.

8. Professional Challenges Without Losing Identity

“Your work may fail.

You are not your work.”

Work matters.

But work is not identity.

When success defines self-worth, failure becomes devastating.

Joyful professionals separate performance from self-respect.

They learn from failure without internalizing shame.

They understand:

Your job is what you do — not who you are.

This distinction protects joy in an unpredictable professional world.

9. Health, Aging, and Gentle Acceptance

“Aging is not loss — it is refinement.”

Health changes.

Energy shifts.

Bodies age.

Joyful aging replaces comparison with gratitude.

It shifts from speed to depth.

From ambition to awareness.

From achievement to meaning.

Acceptance does not erase limitations — it dignifies them.

10. Freedom From Validation

“The day you stop seeking approval is the day joy finds you.”

One of the deepest sources of joy is self-approval.

Joyful people appreciate praise — but do not depend on it.
They know who they are — even in silence.

When validation becomes optional, joy becomes stable.

11. Spiritual Detachment Without Withdrawal

“Do your best.
Leave the rest.”

Joy does not require withdrawal from life.

It requires detachment from outcomes.

Act sincerely.
Give your best.
Accept the result.

Joy lies not in control — but in surrender.

12. Redefining Success: From Achievement to Inner Peace

“Success begins the day inner peace matters more than outer applause.”

There was a time when I defined success very clearly — almost mathematically.

Success meant:
Good health.
Rich relationships.
Material abundance.
Time to enjoy life, on one’s own terms.

For years, this definition worked.

But life refines thinking — not through theory, but experience.

With time, I realized something deeper.

You can have health and still feel anxious.
You can have relationships and still feel lonely.

You can have abundance and still feel restless.
You can have time — and yet lack peace.

That is when success redefined itself.

Today, I believe one is truly successful only when joyful and at peace.

Joy and peace are not rewards of success.
They are success.

Conclusion: Choosing Joy, Every Single Day

Joy is not found.
It is chosen.

Chosen when life disappoints.
Chosen when people change.
Chosen when plans collapse.
Chosen when strength fades.

Joy is the refusal to become bitter.
The courage to remain gentle in a hard world.
The wisdom to live without resentment.

And perhaps that is the true measure of success:

Not how much you achieved —
but how peacefully you lived with yourself along the way.

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