



## THE UNENDING CHALLENGE OF FINDING HAPPINESS FOR YOUR KIDS

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Happiness is being grateful for what you have. In today's world, that perspective is often regarded as too naïve and simplistic to define happiness by this day's parameters. This is most likely the reason why many people nowadays literally go crazy trying to find happiness.

I remember the time when we used to consider happiness as just being able to go to the ice cream house with the whole family after church on Sundays. My late father would regularly make sure there was always an ice cream cup for everyone, after which we all would head home to share Sunday lunch. It was nothing elaborate or ceremonial, really. It had all been just one simple but heavenly Sunday with the whole family.

Nowadays, our family still tries to share Sunday lunches and dinners together, but those have somehow become fewer and farther between. Much as I'd like to impose my rules for such simple pleasures, my children have had to contend with their own agenda at school and work, which has somehow prevented them from participating in such activities regularly. My younger kids still participate, though. But I have somehow begun countdowns for each one of them. How long will they really share in such a noble family activity as Sunday lunch and dinner?

Those who've seen that particular TV ad where a family makes Wednesday evenings as a family affair might agree with me when I say that family dinners have somehow lost their very essence. We have been distracted by the evening news or early evening TV dramas to ever talk about anything. Many times, I have often felt too tired to strike up a conversation with all my kids on the dinner table. I have had to do my catching up with their daily affairs in snippets: listening to this child recount her funny encounters in class; listening to that other child complain about her classmates teasing her; asking that son about activities in their performing arts class; asking about this son's pet spider. Believe me, if I could only grow more ears and channel my voice to various zones on the table, I would. But I take the challenge as part of my growth, and embrace each child warmly whenever I can.

They say that one of the secrets of happiness as a parent, especially one with several kids, is not to feel guilty for your shortcomings. But that's just meant to make the job easier, not to take the guilt completely away. I wish there was a genuine way to make everyone in my family happy all the time. As it is, I have to take consolation in the fact that I am neither in control or command of their happiness. Happiness has to come from within them, and I can only guide them in this respect.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. In your opinion, why do children nowadays fail to find happiness in simple things?
2. Are parents to blame for their children's failure to find happiness? Elaborate on your answer.
3. What made you happy as a child? Are they still the same things that make you happy presently?
4. What would make you genuinely happy as your parent's child? Your child's parent?
5. If you could do anything during the last days of your life, what would they be? Why?