

ASK THE ADVISERS

The views and opinions expressed in "Ask the Advisers" are solely those of Keith Singer.



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Gratitude

Many people feel happy when they look at their account statements and see their account has appreciated in value. Conversely, a bad month in the market can often create heightened levels of anxiety.

Many people think to themselves: they will be happy when they obtain a certain amount of money or achieve some other financial goal. The reality is your happiness is predicated on your level of gratitude for what you have. When you are grateful for all the good things you have in your life you will inevitably be happy. Conversely, when you are focused on the things you wish were better in your life then you may feel sad or anxious.

If you are worried about running out of money or the ability to pay your bills that is a legitimate concern, and it is important to plan properly to avoid being in that situation. However, studies have shown that once you have a roof over your head and food to eat, having incrementally more wealth does not make you happier.

Imagine you went to the doctor, and you were given a cancer diagnosis with a grim prognosis. Most people would be rightfully unhappy. Then when you returned to the doctor for a follow-up visit, it was decided upon further testing you did not actually have cancer. In fact, you had a clean bill of health. Most people would be extremely happy and relieved because they would be singularly focused on the gratitude they had for their good health.

I recently had a similar scare and spent a month going through extensive diagnostic testing. When I finally learned I was fine, my gratitude was at an all-time high. Relatively mundane things that might have bothered me under normal circumstances suddenly seemed inconsequential. If you are fortunate enough to have your health and reasonable financial security and you want to feel happy, try to spend some time each day thinking about the things you are deeply grateful for.

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