

ESSAY

Feeling Good Is Not Bad

by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

Feeling good is not bad as this enables us the freedom to feel the pleasure of emotion, spirit, and contentment in our brief and potent life. I am recovering from major surgery. This helps me in healing myself physically and mentally. Thus, I become less willing to accept powerlessness, resignation, despair, self-effacement, depression, and self-denial.

On top of a tough recovery, I was also living in an age of immense interlocking crises, from climate to pandemics to wars. It almost felt impossible that happiness and satisfaction would ever be a part of my remaining life until I met some wonderful people who showed me the light at the end of the tunnel.

I met Sharron (not the real name) who was a home-health-care nurse during the first eight weeks of my recovery. Sharron was always cheerful and asked me to think positively. She told me to enjoy the present and the future which, according to her, was going to be brighter. I asked Sharron about her personal life. She was divorced from an abusive husband and was taking care of her autistic teen-aged son all by herself. She couldn't work a full-time job due to the condition of her child. Because she worked limited hours as a home health nurse, she just made barely enough money to take



care of the household but she never pitied her circumstances and held her head high.

And here I was who went to the best hospital for my surgery and could afford home-health care, feeling eager for recovery and feeling pessimistic. Many of us, like me, are in a pattern of behaviors and practices that do not enhance our future, and it is past time to alter our entire thinking and environment. I can afford to worry about climate change, the polarization of America, the war in Ukraine, America's foreign policy, Biden or Trump winning in 2024 again, biased news on cable channels, abortion, transgenders competing with regular girls in sports, border crisis, possible invasion of China into Taiwan and chaos in Iraq and Sri Lanka. During all that, I never thought about folks like Sharron who are less resourceful than us.

I now notice and feel with guilt authentic contentment in people who have committed deeply to their own spiritual happiness, which gives them a long view of life and a grounding of peace in what is. I have witnessed happiness that seemed both performative and authentic in communities of the Nordic nations that seem to be quite happy with their plight.

I also remembered that my life has not always been comfortable. I struggled with anxiety attacks during my youth. I didn't

have enough money to take care of myself and my wife, so I immigrated to America. I struggled for jobs here and finished my master's while taking care of my wife and two children on a shoestring. Though I was lucky to have a job, I was always under the threat of layoff adding to my anxiety and insecurity. I survived through all that. Now that I am reaping the benefit of my golden years. I am reminded of Swamy Vivekanand's words:

“Comfort is no test of truth. Truth is often far from being comfortable.”

I also know that many of us experience flashes of joy throughout our lives, and if we are lucky, we get brief periods of respite, vacation, or retirement. But overall, we are not content. In all, we are not satisfied with what we experience and accumulate. As a general state of affairs, we choose to suffer unnecessarily. In the end, we become what we practice. Feeling good is not bad at all.

