

How to Photograph Your Way to Happiness

9 Ways to Find Joy Through Photography

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By **Judy Weiser, R.Psych., A.T.R.**

Whether it's on our cell phones, PDAs, pocket digital cameras, or fancy SLR, it seems that we are always taking pictures. But did you know that every picture you take is a self-portrait, even if you aren't in it?

I recently provided consultation for a survey

commissioned by Kodak that showed that while most Americans say their network of friends has grown "wider" through social networking and portable electronics, these technologies have not made those connections any deeper. In light of these findings, and from my work as a psychologist specializing in using photos to help people heal, I believe that we can deepen our relationships and even our self-awareness by looking more carefully at our photographs.

Looking at your pictures can help you know more about the deeper parts of your life. Why did you want to preserve that particular moment? What do your photos tell you about your inner feelings and thoughts, and what matters most to you?

Try these 9 techniques to get to know yourself – and strengthen your connections with others—through photography.

Psychologist Judy Weiser, director of the PhotoTherapy Center, is considered the world authority on the emotional meanings of ordinary snapshots. Visit <http://www.kodak.com/go/smile> to learn more about the Kodak survey and PhotoTherapy.

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"My intent is to show that you are *perfect* just the way you are, only *perfection* exists."
- Don Miguel Ruiz

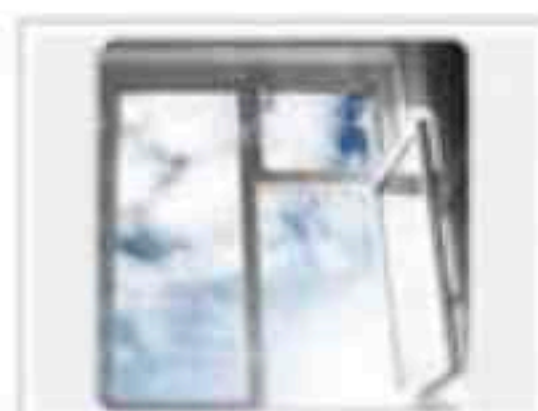
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See Yourself Through Others' Eyes



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Start by asking people who know you well this question: Can you tell which of my photos were taken by me, and which were taken by other people? Ask them to tell you more about how they recognize yours in particular -- their answers will mirror back facts about you that make you special to them, things you might not have ever realized yourself. How

does each photo you take and share, speak about the unique person you are and what makes you so special (and different from other people)?

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Practice Photo-Fantasizing



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You can use your imagination—via your photographs—to explore “pretend scenarios” and find out where your life might be heading (or directions it’s wanting to go). Imagining (or even actually create) photos to answer questions such as these, and then explore what you discover as a result. This can be the first step toward re-evaluating your path and

shaping it to a better future.

1. Imagine you could have your picture taken anywhere in the world, or with anyone you like, or doing whatever you really want to do, what would it look like -- and why?
2. If you won a lottery and never had to work again, what would pictures of you at that time look like, or show you doing?
3. If you could create a photo-book to tell your grandchildren what they will need to know, to have a better life, what would be in it?
4. If you could control how your life turns out, what will photos of you future show?

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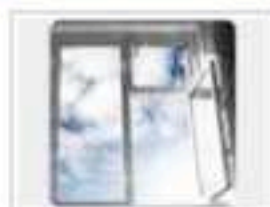
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Create A Picture-Perfect Environment



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Decorate your home and work spaces with photos of friends, family, and loved ones, or of special places that have deep meaning to you. Be sure to select photos that have strong positive memories. Every photo has feelings and memories underneath its surface; choosing the right one enables you to revisit those moments all over again.

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Share Your World



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The people you miss, miss you too. Let the important people in your life know how you're doing by sharing photographs of not just the special moments but the ordinary moments of your daily life. Sharing the "small stuff" can have a BIG impact on your relationships.

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Interview Your Photo



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Find the happiest picture in your collection and unlock its magic by imagining a conversation with it. What positive message would it want you to know? How would it like you to feel? What would it want you to remember? What would you like to say to the people in it, including yourself?

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Rekindle Relationships



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During tough times, strong relationships keep you positive. You may be wondering about an old friend from your past, and even thinking about how to reconnect. Repair your relationship with a snapshot from the past, one that makes you remember better days. Sending an old friend a photo of the "good times" along with a heartfelt note is a great way

to bond.

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Break the Ice



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Turn your photos into conversation starters. Behind every picture is a great story that wants to be told. Sharing your photos is like sharing your life; when others hear your anecdotes connections are made that can last a lifetime. Put up an interesting or unusual photo in your office to spark conversation with your co-workers; post your favorite photos on social

networking sites and then post explanations that will invite others to respond and comment.

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Carry a Photographic Pick-Me-Up



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Beat your blues! Find your most positive photo—of a beloved person, a treasured place, or yourself looking radiant—and carry it with you in your wallet, purse, or pocket. When you're feeling down, look deeply at the image. Looking at a photo of happier times will put you right back there again, and leave you feeling the same way you did when you first

experienced it.

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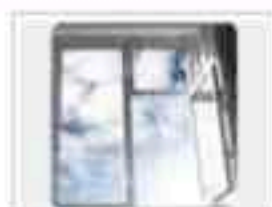
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Make New Memories



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Take pictures with the people whose company you most enjoy. Taking group photos gives you something in common to talk about later, as well as something to share and send around, extending the happy mood of a fun gathering.

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