

Soulful Songs and Stories

With a song and your stories, we co-create a soft place for hard conversations and a brave space for personal and spiritual growth.



Hi Soulful Song Lovers and Story Tellers,

Soulful Songs and Stories about Fun and Happiness

There is no one way to be happy or one path to happiness, any more than there is one path to enlightenment or to God. One size does not fit all. Neither can it be reduced to a song or a story or a quote. Even so, may you find some wisdom that resonates with you in these words and songs. Do you remember a time before fun was socialized out of you? When you used imagination instead of things to have fun? It seems that those most open to fun are children (since they are not yet inhibited by society's prescriptions and proscriptions) and seniors (because they are no longer constrained).

Story And the Master said unto them, "If a man told God that he wanted most of all to help the suffering world, no matter the price to himself, and God answered and told him what he must do, should the man do as he is told?"

"Of course, Master!" cried the many. "It should be pleasure for him to suffer the tortures of hell itself, should God ask it!"

"No matter what those tortures, no matter how difficult the task?"

"Honor to be hanged, glory to be nailed to a tree and burned, if so be that God has asked," said they.

"And what would you do," the Master said unto the multitude, "if God spoke directly to your face and said, 'I COMMAND THAT YOU BE HAPPY IN THE WORLD, AS LONG AS YOU LIVE.' What would you do then?"

And the multitude was silent, not a voice, not a sound was heard upon the hillsides, across the valleys where they stood.

—Richard Bach, *Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah* (1977)

"Don't Worry Be Happy," Playing For Change <https://youtu.be/uWXUWepSak4> 3:59

- *I believe that the very purpose of life is to be happy.* —The Dalai Lama
- *The foolish seek happiness in the distance, the wise grow it under foot.* —James Oppenheim
- *The only way to find true happiness is to risk being completely cut open.* —Chuck Palahniuk
- *You wanna fly, you got to give up the shit that weighs you down.* —Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*
- *I'm happy. Which often looks like crazy.* —David Henry Hwang
- *The best way to pay for a lovely moment is to enjoy it.* —Richard Bach
- *There is only one happiness in this life, to love and be loved.* —George Sand
- *Don't confuse happiness with a sofa.* —Pope Francis, July 30, 2016

- *I must learn to be content with being happier than I deserve.* —Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*
- *PURITANISM, n: The haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy.* —H.L. Mencken
- *Seek it outside and you'll be exhausted. Seek it inside you'll find a path.* —Maxime Lagacé
- *What a wonderful life I've had! I only wish I'd realized it sooner.* —Colette

"Best Day of My Life," KIDZ BOP Kids <https://youtu.be/yss0SGzrUIY> 3:15

Unless you return to square one and start over like children, you're not even going to get a look at the kingdom, let alone get in. Whoever becomes simple and elemental again, like this child, will rank high in God's kingdom. —Jesus (Matt 18:3-4, *The Message*, Eugene H. Peterson)

If your happiness depends on your children being happy, that makes them your hostages. So stay out of their business, stop using them for your happiness, and be your own happiness. And that way you are the teacher for your children: someone who knows how to live a happy life. —Byron Katie

"Celebration," Playing For Change <https://youtu.be/8Lu4iLulQos> 3:52

If we deny our happiness, resist our satisfaction, we lessen the importance of their deprivation. We must risk delight. We can do without pleasure, but not delight. Not enjoyment. We must have the stubbornness to accept our gladness in the ruthless furnace of this world. To make injustice the only measure of our attention is to praise the Devil.

—Jack Gilbert, "A Brief for the Defense," *Refusing Heaven: Poems*, 2005

Story When my father left my mother for a woman three decades younger, I couldn't have known how much my feelings for her would change. I don't fault my father. He was dissatisfied. My parents' marriage was one I never understood: She nagged, he yelled, they fought, she ignored. I can't fault my mother, either. A practical woman, she worked as a librarian and raised three children. The difference between them, I think, was this: My mother never expected a life of happiness or fulfillment; my father did.

—Mira T. Lee, "From 'Homewrecker' to Caretaker," *NY Times*, Aug 30, 2019

"What a Wonderful World," Playing For Change <https://youtu.be/ddLdoQRf7Vg> 3:40

Our capacity to draw happiness from aesthetic objects or material goods in fact seems critically dependent on our first satisfying a more important range of emotional or psychological needs, among them the need for understanding, for love, expression, and respect. —Alain De Botton

Music for the fun of it

"Kora Kora," Penguin Cafe Orchestra <https://youtu.be/yQOnENjXGP4> 3:05

"Ripple," (Grateful Dead), Playing For Change <https://youtu.be/MHorfNnXFVU> 4:41

We are here to abet creation and to witness it, to notice each thing so each thing gets noticed. Together we notice not only each mountain shadow and each stone on the beach but we notice each other's beautiful face and complex nature so that creation need not play to an empty house.

—Annie Dillard, "The Meaning of Life," *Life Magazine*

Music for your reverie

"Ave Maria," J.S. Bach/Gounod, Yo-Yo Ma, Kathryn Stott <https://youtu.be/hyUhEjtlDLA> 2:48

"I Fall In Love Too Easily," Keith Jarrett Trio <https://youtu.be/ENrRAiZlLiA> 9:48

"Ebben? Ne andrò lontana," Wilhelmenia Wiggins Fernandez, Aria from Act 1, *La Wally*, Alfredo Catalani, (from the movie *Diva*) <https://youtu.be/2hsmoo97CVA?t=58> 3:50

There is a big difference between giving up and letting go. Giving up means selling yourself short. It means allowing fear and struggle to limit your opportunities and keep you stuck. Letting go means freeing yourself from something that is no longer serving you. It means removing toxic people and belief systems from your life so that you can make room for relationships and ideas that are conducive to your wellbeing and happiness. Giving up reduces your life. Letting go expands it. Giving up is imprisoning. Letting go is liberation. Giving up is self-defeat. Letting go is self-care.

So the next time you make the decision to release something or someone that is stifling your happiness and growth, and a person has the audacity to accuse you of giving up or being weak, remind yourself of the difference. Remind yourself that you don't need anyone's permission or approval to live your life in the way that feels right. No one has the authority to tell you who to be or how to live. No one gets to decide what your life should look like or who should be a part of it. No one, but you. —Daniell Koepke

I love that word “absorption” because I think that’s my definition of happiness. All of us know we are happiest when we forget ourselves, when we forget the time, when we lose ourselves in a beautiful piece of music or a movie or a deep conversation with a friend or an intimate encounter with someone we love. —Pico Iyer

Namasté,

Alice and Steve



"Warning" by Jenny Joseph

When I am an old woman I shall wear purple
With a red hat which doesn't go, and doesn't suit me.
And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves
And satin sandals, and say we've no money for butter.
I shall sit down on the pavement when I'm tired
And gobble up samples in shops and press alarm bells
And run my stick along the public railings
And make up for the sobriety of my youth.
I shall go out in my slippers in the rain
And pick flowers in other people's gardens
And learn to spit.

You can wear terrible shirts and grow more fat
And eat three pounds of sausages at a go
Or only bread and pickle for a week
And hoard pens and pencils and beermats and things in boxes.

But now we must have clothes that keep us dry
And pay our rent and not swear in the street
And set a good example for the children.
We must have friends to dinner and read the papers.

But maybe I ought to practice a little now?
So people who know me are not too shocked and surprised
When suddenly I am old, and start to wear purple.



©1962; in *Selected Poems*, 1992
<https://youtu.be/mGsQYbXNKOU>
1932–2018

