



The Flavors of Happiness Savoring the Lemon Sorbet

with Bette J. Freedson

Have you experienced the pleasure of getting so close to your goal that you can almost taste success? Have you tasted the coppery flavor of fear or characterized an unpleasant experience as distasteful?

Disappointment can be bitter; revenge can be sweet and babies' feet are delicious. Getting something you want at the expense of something else can be bittersweet, and romance can add spice to your life.

If capturing events and emotions in olfactory and gustatory terms heightens the felt sense of the feelings, why not make the yummiest emotions burst with metaphoric flavor?

Take happiness for example.

You most likely don't need a formal definition of happiness since it can be argued that you know it when you feel it. But because happiness can occasionally slip by unrecognized, it's worth knowing what the Dalai Llama says about this state of pleasure.

"I believe that the very purpose of our life is to seek happiness," His Holiness

explains. He also warns that material aspects will not produce happiness if your mental attitude is negative. . . . "If you are mentally unhappy or frustrated, then physical comfort is not of much help." The Dalai Llama recommends that to facilitate the feeling of happiness, it's best to develop "an inner discipline that brings calmness of mind."

If we trust this wisdom, cultivation of a repertoire of sense experiences connected to calmness might serve as the recommended discipline. With such a practice, the comfort of a felt sense of calm could be absorbed into soma and soul to be elicited later as "happiness" when antidotes to stress and negativity are needed. The healing and calming potentials of connecting calmness to happiness were deliciously demonstrated in a recent therapy session with my client Abi.

A thirty-two-year-old mother-to-be, Abi, often comes to therapy in a state of angst. We have been utilizing hypnosis to help Abi access her inner wise mind for coping with stress. On this day, however, despite the fact that she is eight months pregnant and in the middle of a home move, Abi is glowingly happy. She tells me that she is managing, and she is feeling "great."

"I know there are stressors," Abi says. "And I want to continue working on them but today I am happy and I just want to keep this good feeling."

"I'm writing a blog about happiness." I tell Abi. "And I wonder if you would be willing to see what your happiness tastes like today?"

Smiling, Abi agrees by closing her eyes and going visibly into trance. Continuing induction shifts Abi's focus from management of her material life to the inner awareness of her felt sense of calm, of feeling happy. At this point I suggest to Abi that she bring to mind a variety of tastes that she enjoys and see what flavor most closely matches her current good feelings.

After a moment Abi's face lights up. "It just popped into my head," she says. "Rocky Road ice cream!" We both giggle and she goes on. "I am handling so much, my new marriage, the details of my move, and getting ready for my baby. There will be stress, but now I'm at a sweet spot, and I want to savor it!"

I suggest she savor the sweet taste of the Rocky Road ice cream. Because any road can get rocky from time to time, it can be comforting to remember that in the midst of rocks there can be sweet times. I invite Abi to locate a place in her body where she can anchor the taste of the sweet feeling that corresponds to the flavors and connotations of "rocky road." Abi's hand immediately goes to her heart, "Here!"

Now I invite Abi to absorb the flavor of rocky road happiness into her heart, knowing that she can always find the sweet spot of her calmness right there.

Oriented back from trance, Abi is delighted. "This is just what I needed today." She tells me. "I wanted a tool for staying calm and this is it."

Then I ask, "What was the flavor of this session today?"

"Lemon Sorbet!" Abi grins. "It has just the right amount of tang and sweetness, just like life."

Before we conclude, I mention to Abi, "This session reminds me of a wonderful book for children that someday you might get for your baby. It is called *Double Dip Feelings*. In life sometimes Rocky Road and Lemon Sorbet are served up together and you can savor them both."

Now if you would like a taste of your own personal felt sense of happiness, take a moment to remember something that made you feel really good. What was the sensation like? Did you feel calmness? Excitement? A little of both? What flavor would most closely match these feelings? Noticing the flavors of happiness can be fun, and the savoring can provide calm for your body, happiness for your mind, and peace for your soul.

And remember the discipline: notice, savor and memorize the flavors of your experiences of happiness. And next time you go for ice cream you might consider ordering a double dip.

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