

How to Get Rid of “Joy Squashers”

When John came to me for counseling, he could not understand why he experienced so little joy in life. I could. His constant worry, anxiety, and depression stemming from unresolved childhood issues squashed his joy. John’s father had been verbally and physically abusive to him throughout his childhood, often threatening to hurt John if he did not do what he asked. Until the day his father died, when John was twenty-one, he was afraid his father was “going to go after” him.

As I helped him work through his wounds, he began to experience joy. It was a strange new feeling at first, but now he is comfortable with doing the things he loves. Today he is experiencing much joy by taking guitar lessons, playing volley ball, and surfing on the weekends.

If you are currently going through a difficult time, your feelings will temporarily get in the way of your being able to fully experience joy. But find the small moments of joy: a walk on a sunny day, hearing birds cheerfully sing, or seeing a beautiful sunset. When you are feeling better, make it a top priority to experience as many small moments of joy as you can. There are countless ways to do that, but first you need to get rid of your “joy squashers”—those things that stop you from feeling joyful.

First, take an honest look at how *you* might be squashing joy from your life. After all, we can’t change what we don’t acknowledge. Circle all the ways in the following list in which you have squashed your joy over the past year. There is no shame in acknowledging these feelings and actions, so don’t hold back!

Joy Squashers:

Living in fear	Negative actions
Worrying	Not pursuing my heart's desires
Beat myself up with thoughts/words	Trying to be perfect
Being overwhelmed	"Ignoring" my feelings
Being stressed	Having to be right
Letting my ego get in the way	Blaming others
Abusing myself	Focusing on what I do not have
Accepting mistreatment	Focusing on what is wrong
Mistreating others	Not living in the moment
Not saying "no" when I need to	Being hard on myself
Negative thinking	Comparing myself to others

I have also squashed my joy by:

If you circled and wrote down all the ways you can think of, it will be easy to see why there may be very little joy in your life. Are you surprised by how many ways you squash your own joy? You are not alone! Most of us do so in many ways each and every day.

Now that you've taken an honest look at what you have been doing, you can change that pattern with surprisingly simple yet very effective tools. Let's start by discussing each of the joy squashers in the list. A whole new world of possibilities is about to open up for you!

Living in Fear

Marissa intuitively knew that her life was about to change for the better. Yet, she was terrified. Every time she thought about moving and changing her career, enormous fear