

**Dear Polly,**

I am a 35-year-old woman with an ostensibly good life. I am conventionally attractive, well educated, from a racial background that does not get excessively discriminated against in my country, and from enough money that I have never known true deprivation. I have a well-paying job with benefits in a glamorous, creative industry that I worked my butt off to get after suddenly pivoting away from a more stable and lucrative career path in my mid-20s. I live with my boyfriend, a wickedly smart and enormously kind man who shares the same twisted sense of humor as mine and thinks the world of me. I've traveled around the world and managed to make friends everywhere I go. Even though I'm introverted and often feel awkward and unsure of myself in social situations, many people would say I'm funny and charming. I've found the courage and strength to break off toxic relationships that were not improving despite all my best efforts; chiefly, those with my mother and my ex-husband. I have done so much work to understand myself better and break unhealthy mind-sets and habits. I am finally at a place in my life where I can do almost anything I want to do, and yet ...

I am unhappy. I do not feel the sense of grace and gratitude I want to. Instead, I am a dissatisfied ball of longing and anger, and then when the anger curdles, great sadness.

Dear Isabel,

I'm a kid with a life that looks very good...from the outside. For starters, not to brag, but I'm pretty good looking, I have a lot of friends, and I get good grades. My family isn't rich by any means, but we have enough money to live and be comfortable. I've never really known what it's like to live without something I want or need.

I play basketball after school on the varsity team (we won Regionals three years in a row!). I worked my butt off for months to get on the team. I was nervous about even making it to the final round of tryouts because I only ever played soccer on a team. But now I'm one of the fastest players, and I've made 2 different shots from half court this season. Some players stay on the bench the whole game, but I always play for at least three full quarters.

I have the best friends in the world. My best friend and I share the same sarcastic sense of humor, and we love to tell jokes about everything and everyone we see. When we tell our jokes in class, the only people who aren't laughing are the teachers. I manage to make friends everywhere I go. Talking to people makes me nervous sometimes, but it seems like most people I meet can't even tell – they usually just tell me I'm funny and that I seem cool.

I have tons of good friends, but I have had to break off some relationships with toxic people. No matter what, it seemed like nothing would ever get better. For example, I haven't really talked to my older brother in weeks and it's been months since I've even *seen* my cousin. My cousin lives right down the street and my brother is right down the hall. I used to be close to both of them, but things started going downhill, and I got tired of trying to fix things.

I try to be the best person and friend I can be, and I think I'm a lot better than I used to be. I've worked so hard this past year to keep my grades up and to make more friends, and I think I have come really far. I feel like I can do almost anything. And yet...

...I am unhappy. I do not feel peaceful or thankful. I feel like I'm walking around with so much longing and anger inside of me, just begging to be let out. And whenever the anger fades away, I feel a deep sadness.

Can you help me? I feel like I'm doing everything right, but something still feels wrong.

Sincerely,  
Still Not Happy