

# *JOY*

*By Dean Johnson*

When I was asked to speak about what joy meant to me, I thought that it would be very simple to sit down in the atmosphere at school and have my pen flow fluidly until I had scribed my extended definition. However, I was frustrated in that it took more time than expected. So let me tell you what joy is not. Joy is not getting sick on the day of your last final of the semester in a class which determines if you can progress in your major or must delay classes, and potentially graduation. Joy is not living in a climate that snows and rains one week, is bright, sunny, and in the upper 60s the next week, then gets cold again once your body has begun to readjust. Joy is not having your tire pop and shred on I-77 on your way home for Thanksgiving break one day before your 20th birthday. That actually is called karma: The last day of your teenage years sending you out with a literal bang for all of the idiotic instances in which you involved yourself in your first few teen years. Now that it is established what joy is not, I will digress back to defining “joy.” To me, joy is knowing that all of these non-joys make the good so much better; the great so much greater; and every one of those dreams that come true so much more realistic.

Joy is being able to slow down from your habitual, busy life and take a moment to see how you have grown from where you were one year ago in this same element. Or maybe that you have grown and the growth led you to a new element where you are prospering. Joy is knowing that you have persevered through the non-joys and have come out better for it. Joy is knowing that whatever situation wanders your way is not too much to handle.

Joy is rivalries. Joy is sports. Joy is cards. Joy is board games. Joy is a good book. Joy is a thought-provoking painting.

Joy is everything in the time spectrum. It's the ability and chance to better yourself in the future. It's the opportunity to help those around you in need. It's the moment you live in now knowing that even if things aren't perfect, you are better off than most. It's striving for development in your life when you have done something wrong or not maximized your potential, knowing that every moment is another chance. It's the memories that you have from your past that have helped you through every hard day, week, or eight months.

Joy is your mother, your father, your grandparents, your siblings, your children, your grandchildren, your nieces and nephews, cousins, other family members and friends. It's your job, your church, your car, your house, your hometown. It's your personality, your diversity, your contributions, your legacy you leave at the end of each day. Joy is embracing that which defines you.

Joy is giving. Joy is receiving. Joy is giving thanks. Joy is the holiday season. Joy is a month off from school. Joy is any period of time you make it to be.

Joy is taking pride in the school that you attend and that will eventually graduate you into this world, knowing you received an invaluable education that cannot be measured by any number of degrees, masters, or PhD's. It's not only winning, it's knowing that you learned from the battles. And that amidst the entire calamity there is a serenity deep inside of it seen by those that take the time to look. Joy is remembering friends and loved ones that are no longer with us. Walking past a memorial stone, an urn, or a grave site smiling at the fact that someone else took the time to touch you and positively impact your life before physically leaving you forever. It's knowing you have the chance to do the same for other people whether it be in someone else's name or for yourself. It's the struggle that comes along with this opportunity. Joy is pain.

Joy is doing something for yourself. Joy is a tattoo. Joy is a piercing. Joy is dying your hair...or letting it grow out. Joy is a frivolous guilty pleasure.

At the same time, joy is seeing the big picture. Amidst the partying to begin winter break on the night after finals you can sit in your dorm room looking out the window knowing that you are truly at home because your heart is there, as cheesy as it may seem. No one ever said you only had to have one home...your heart can be in multiple places. Knowing that regardless of how it might be perceived by outsiders, you are in one of the most beautiful and peaceful places on earth-be it a resilient university or within the walls of a church that welcomes any and all of the most eccentric characters that life's story has to offer.

Joy is an ambiguous and general term thrown around in the realms of speech by us all as we employ it with copious connotations. Joy is play dough...yours to make whatever you wish.

To me, joy is looking up from reading out of a notebook and realizing that all of the people in front of you are listening attentively and truly care about what you have to say. You are joy.