

## Get happy

**Immigrant author who faced immeasurable tragedy wants to share her secrets to happiness with other newcomers**

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Rita Nayar lost her son and husband in a cruel tragedy 11 years ago, but today she can look you in the eye and say, "I am a happy person." The author of the book *The Happiness Quotient* adds: "Someone else in my position might claim to be a miserable person, but I am not, I am very happy."



There could be no misery greater than what RITA NAYAR has experienced in her life, yet she has managed to find a path to peace, which she writes about in her book *The Happiness Quotient*.

Nayar sees life from a different angle than most of us. "Life is [made up of] experiences that come and go. In that experience we have to stay grounded; stay strong. Incidents will happen to us. Circumstances will have an effect on us, but life is all about standing strong and going through the experiences."

One experience Nayar has survived could have come straight out of a horror movie; on May 22, 1997, after 22 years of marriage, Nayar came home with her daughter to find her husband had murdered their 10-year-old son with a knife, burned down the house and then set himself on fire to commit suicide. "That was the end of a long, difficult marriage and that was his revenge on me," says Nayar, who was born in Rajasthan, India. After marrying her husband in Ghana, they moved to England and then Canada in 1978.

Nayar believes that immigration is an adjustment. "Coming to a new country, struggling between the old and new values, the challenges of getting settled and adapting to the new environment, finding a secure job and sometimes in addition facing family problems are worries that might make immigrants depressed," says Nayar, who offers regular meditation classes and Vedanta training (an Eastern philosophy on enlightenment) in her hometown of Markham, Ontario (see [ritanayar.com](http://ritanayar.com)).

She says her book *The Happiness Quotient*, like her classes and keynote speeches, will "build confidence and it will give immigrants a strong leg to stand on. It will tell them not to compromise their values and it will show them how to live with those values."

Nayar, now 55, guides people through "the gates to find their own happiness," while revealing the practical steps of having a lasting state of peace of mind. "Happiness is a free mind. It's not an anxious mind, a frustrated mind, a jealous mind. When the mind is without these negative emotions, the person is happy," she says.

Nayar believes that our thoughts are usually centred on outside circumstances and that's why we feel pressure all the time. "We have to sit back and adopt a different philosophy of life. No pushing! The world is too big, and we can't control everything. To have a free mindset, let it go and create a space for good things to come in."

Her first book, *Ordeal by Fire*, published in 2003, won the In Celebration of Women Author's Award. It then took Nayar two years to write *The Happiness Quotient*, eight years after her unspeakable family tragedy.

Nayar, who is also a senior corporate professional in Toronto's financial industry and is currently busy helping to plan her daughter's wedding, sees happiness in every colour. For her, tomorrow is a mystery in which anything can happen and she is fine with that.

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"I learned from the tragedy and my severe grieving, and I understand how to overcome life's difficulties. The good and the bad in our life are very temporary. This is the way the world works."

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