

Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter
December 2002: Being Selfish

1,278 words of content -- approximate reading time required: 5.11 minutes. And isn't your happiness worth it?

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Welcome! This is my e-newsletter, which focuses on defining and applying the 13 Principles of Happiness in your life and work. It is a (more or less) monthly communication. I invite your comments, reactions, and ideas. Happy Holidays! Jim

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I. HAPPINESS PRINCIPLE #1 - BE POSITIVELY SELF-ISH

Each time you travel by plane you receive the following instructions prior to takeoff:
"In the unlikely event of cabin decompression, oxygen masks will drop from the compartment overhead....If you are traveling with a small child or someone who needs assistance, put on your own mask before helping with theirs."

Take my own oxygen first? But, but... what about my kids/friend/spouse/grandma? Hey, if you're not breathing, you'll be of little use to them during the rest of the trip.

So it is with life in general. We live in a time of constant discontinuous change, overbooked schedules, and multiple conflicting demands on our time and resources. We need to keep our energy reserves high in order to cope with those demands.

Selfishness, in this context, is not about refusing to share your toys with others, or thinking ONLY of yourself. But it IS about thinking of your own needs first, because you understand that when you do, you have more capacity to be there for others. It is about identifying what you need to function at peak effectiveness, and making sure you get it for yourself. Finally, it is about accepting responsibility for your own happiness instead of waiting for someone else to "make" you happy.

So, how can you practice positively self-ish behavior?

~~ Let Go of Guilt over putting yourself first. A credo I've lived by goes like this: "The trick to raising happy kids is to first have a happy marriage." The corollary to that is, of course: "The trick to having happy relationships is to first be happy yourself." So when you focus on your own needs first, you are creating a solid foundation that will benefit all the other significant players in your life.

~~ Say No. Legitimate obligations and responsibilities deserve your attention. But not every request for your time falls into that category. Give yourself permission to decline invitations to events you really don't want to attend or which will stress you. Say no "selfishly" to additional responsibility if that's what feels right.

creating a memory and sharing an experience together -- because I didn't listen to logic, but instead was positively selfish.

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III. IN THE WORKPLACE

The job of a leader is to get things done through other people. We've all been taught that recognizing and rewarding the performance of our people will "keep their gas tank on Full" and their performance on high. Great wisdom that works, but that essentially puts you as leader in the role of Gas Pump Attendant.

What if you could institute Self-Serve? Teach your people and give them permission to be selfish, and you'll empower them to refuel at will. Your people will be happier and you'll increase your impact as a leader.

AN EXERCISE IN THE WORKPLACE

** Give everyone on your team a dozen large gold foil stars at the beginning of the month. Hang a large piece or two of flip chart paper on a wall in a nearby high-traffic area, and draw an enormous star on it (big enough to accommodate all the little stars). Tell everyone they are to use their gold stars to recognize others for doing something great during the next month i.e. serving a client, helping a coworker, solving a problem. When they award it, have them write the person's name and the date on the star with permanent marker, and deliver it personally to that coworker at your team's next morning or weekly meeting, along with an explanation of why. The recipient should post their stars on the poster. All allocated stars must be spent before the end of the month.

Here's the twist: give everyone permission to award one of the stars to themselves. When the big star gets filled, hold a little celebration (even a pot luck, if funds are tight) and spend a few minutes reviewing all the reasons people appreciated one another.

Watch what happens when you empower people and allow them to be just a little selfish...

Remember, leadership is not about a title. Anyone can be a leader if they keep their own fuel tank on full and share it with others!

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IV. CONTACT AND SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Jim Smith is a personal and leadership coach, trainer, and Speaker. Jim is a recovered corporate executive who has over a decade of experience helping leaders at all levels to be happier and more successful in their lives and careers. He'd love to help you succeed in a bigger game! Why not bring Jim into your organization for a 1-hour, half-day or full-day workshop on the 13 Principles?

=> P.S. Don't keep this a secret. We grow by referral, so please pass it on! To join our complimentary newsletter, please visit my website: <http://www.1leadercoach.com/> .
AOL Users: If links are not active, you will have to cut and paste.

Drop me a line anytime with your feedback and questions! Jim <mailto:Jim@1LeaderCoach.com>

Happiness is a decision, not an event.

How will YOU decide today?

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