

**Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter**  
**May 2003: Notice and Use Your Power to Choose**

1,356 words of content -- approximate reading time required: 5.42 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. Jim

==>If you like what you read here why not share it with a friend?  
==>If you received this from someone else you can join (it's FREE) in a few seconds.  
Instructions are at the end of this newsletter. I never rent, sell, or give away my lists.

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**I. HAPPINESS PRINCIPLE #7 – CHOOSE TO RESPOND**

“The problem is not that there are problems. The problem is expecting otherwise and thinking that having problems is a problem.” ~Theodore Rubin

Anyone who has been to a comedy club or seen an episode of “Who’s Line Is It Anyway?” on TV has witnessed improvisational acting. In the theatre of improvisation, the basis of nearly everything is a technique known as “Yes, and...” If you are on stage making up a skit in the moment, your goal is always to KEEP THE DRAMA GOING. This requires that the players embrace whatever comes at them and figure out how to incorporate it into their next line or their next action. Life is no different -- as it speeds ever onward we must keep the drama going; the tone, the mood, and the outcome of that drama is a direct result of how we respond.

The opening line of one of my favorite books captures the essence of this perfectly: “Consider this, if you will: You are onstage every day performing the scenes of your life in a play without a script.”\*\* What a concept, eh? What if you could CONSCIOUSLY tap in to your natural ability to create, and focus it on making every response a positive one? Try it for a week, or even just a day, in the drama of your life. Rather than reacting to the scenes as they unfold, try embracing what happens and keep the scene moving.

When one practices responding long enough, then response becomes the reaction. Think about this. The difference between reacting and responding is often little more than the pause to take a deep breath and THINK. In that moment, during that pause, the trick is to shift from telling (“You have to do this next”) or emoting (“Ohmigod! You did WHAT?!”) to asking.

Coming From A Place of Curiosity

Formulate a question, so that what appears to others is curiosity and support. “What have you already tried? Can you tell me what happened? How can I support you? What are you looking for next? What are the issues on the table that we need to review? What is the outcome we are seeking, here? Etc...”. As this habit becomes more natural, one can RESPOND even under the most urgent of circumstances.



simple but they have had a significant impact -- they encourage conversation. The better we understand each other the stronger our relationship has become.

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### **III. IN THE WORKPLACE**

A decade ago I ran an outplacement center for my employer. Over the course of 18 months I worked with more than 500 people to help them create resumes, search for new jobs, and move on with their lives. After awhile, I learned I could predict how quickly someone would “land” a new position based on the conversations I had with them following their termination.

If their tone was “I was screwed” and their first action was to sell off all their company stock in anger, they hung around for a long time in the center. But if their first question was “Can you help me understand what my options are?”, I knew they would soon be healed -- and hired. This latter group CHOSE to move forward rather than react.

#### ***AN EXERCISE IN THE WORKPLACE***

Ideas are fragile beings. Like a seedling, they need warmth and light and nurturing to grow. If you step on a seedling, you crush it. An idea stomped on too early will also die, even if the idea was a good one.

Nurture Ideas Using Yes And. Try this at your next team meeting: When a new idea is tossed out, nurture it before you analyze it. The rules are that you must say “Yes (embrace it), and...” then put on what Edward deBono calls the Yellow Hat of Optimism. For the next two-four minutes you must focus on the following questions: “What is GOOD about this idea? Why WILL it work? What are the benefits of doing it? How might this idea be improved to make it better?” After those first several minutes, notice how much stronger the idea is. Okay, now you can put on your black hat of judgment and critique it.

A weak idea may still die, but notice how many seedlings or their offshoots do grow to maturity because you chose to respond and allowed them to grow stronger with the nurturing of Yes And...

Remember, leadership is not about a title. Anyone can be a leader if they focus on helping others to succeed and grow!

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Stay tuned for the next edition of Happiness @TheSpeedofLife later in May. I’m happily stepping aside from the speed of life to spend a week touring rural Ireland with my eldest daughter. My next edition will reflect on Living For Life, Not Stuff!

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### **IV. INSTRUCTIONS AND CONTACT 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 mid-day “Happy Hour” (it’s alcohol free!) on the 13 Principles?

=> P.S. Don't keep us a secret. We grow by referral, so please pass it on! To join our complimentary newsletter, please visit my website: <http://www.1leadercoach.com/> .

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

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**Happiness is a decision, not an event.  
How will YOU decide today?**

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