



Happiness@TheSpeedofLife

Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter

Edition 12: Focus On Today

1,438 words of content -- approximate reading time required: 5.75 minutes. And isn't your happiness worth it?

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Welcome to 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

A special welcome to all who've joined us recently. We are now mailing to nearly 900 happy people! My goal is to grow to over 1,000 readers, so....

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I. HAPPINESS PRINCIPLE #12: FOCUS ON TODAY

"The best things in life are nearest: Breath in your nostrils, light in your eyes, flowers at your feet, duties at your hand, the path of right just before you. Then do not grasp at the stars, but do life's plain, common work as it comes, certain that daily duties and daily bread are the sweetest things in life." ~Robert Louis Stevenson

Before reading on, complete this sentence: "I know I will be happy when <fill in the blank>" (we'll come back to this later).

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What is the best use of your time now? I mean right now? Today?

Well, (clearly in addition to reading this great newsletter!) the best use of your time now is to refocus on what's most important. Important for yourself and important for others. When we get caught up in the tumult of deadlines, office politics, family dynamics, personal crises and the latest disturbing news, we can lose sight of what is important for us.

Let's start with today. What's on your plate? Respond to your emails? Make some client calls? Pick up your children after school? Finish the next chapter in the latest bestseller? Pray? Stop by the grocery store for an emergency supply of tofu and hummus? OK, so the last one is on my plate today, but the idea is that what is important to us crosses all dimensions of our life -- our professional obligations, our family responsibilities, our creative interests, our spiritual commitments, our community involvements, and our personal aspirations.

Our happiness in life begins with our happiness today. I find it can be difficult to focus on my happiness today, however, if I'm distracted by the stress of multiple demands. The simple task of taking a deep breath, spending a few minutes to think about today and listing what is most important for me to complete before I end my day can help me sustain my creative enthusiasm.





## Happiness@TheSpeedofLife

So, what did you fill into the blank at the start of this newsletter? I know I'll be happy when: I get that promotion? Lose weight? Get a raise? Land a new job? Meet my soul mate? Have kids? Finish this project?

Hey, I have some news for you: waiting for something to happen "tomorrow" in order for you to be happy is like watching yourself in the mirror and saying "You go first."

Happiness is not a place. It's not a destination. It's not a goal. Happiness IS. It is a way of BEING. It is a mode of traveling. If, instead of focusing on "when" or "if," you focus on today, right here, right now, you know what? You can be as happy right now as you decide to be. You don't have to wait.

So, you know, if I don't do anything else today, acknowledging that my wife and I built a home together, where four of the most beautiful people I will ever know felt safe enough to share a meal and our life, and a story, and knowing that this, my friends, this is the most important thing for me, for today, forever...well, then I've had a happy day.

How about you?

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### III. IN THE WORKPLACE

*"If you only look forward to tomorrow, you'll collect an awful lot of empty yesterdays" ~Professor Harold Hill in "The Music Man" (1962)*

I have many friends in the accounting field, and I am married to a CPA. All of these people were immersed in the tax season and year-end close from mid January until just a few weeks ago. During this incredibly intense period I saw two different approaches to the peak demands of the season:

Group A: Long hours; working weekends; heads down; intense, relentless pressure; no time to breathe; feeling burned-out; dragging to work, and always, always, always looking forward to April 15<sup>th</sup> when the pressure would ease up. On the 15<sup>th</sup> a huge collective sigh went up, and these players collapsed into a heap.

Group B: Long hours; working weekends; heads down; intense pressure; occasional pizza parties; the occasional Silly Hat day; random acts of fun; and a looking forward to April 15<sup>th</sup> when the pressure would ease up. On the 15<sup>th</sup> a huge collective sigh went up, and the teams looked around to determine what their next challenge would be.

Same pressures, different outcomes. What's the difference? The Group A companies think that during times of intense pressure, all fun and enjoyment is a waste of time, and must be banned from the workplace in order to "get real work accomplished." They believe that happiness must wait until the job is done.

Group B, meanwhile, realizes that, during times of intense pressure, fun and enjoyment help to keep creative energy at higher levels. They recognize that happiness can be connected to progress as well as outcome.

### TRY THIS

Think about what your team is currently under pressure to complete – it may be a reorganization, implementing a new process, a big, high-profile project with a no-compromise deadline, or getting thru a seasonal peak of business. While there is a temptation to delay all "celebration" until the goal is reached, consider how you might recognize achievement of milestones along the way, or

