



Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter
Edition 23: Principle #4 – Be Early

1238 words of content -- approximate reading time required: **4.9** minutes. And isn't your happiness worth it?

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Welcome to my e-newsletter, which focuses on defining and applying the Principles of Happiness and Positive Emotion in your life and work.

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I. HAPPINESS PRINCIPLE #4: BE EARLY

"Last one is a rotten egg!"

Remember shouting that while playing as a kid? When I heard it, I would run faster - to avoid being tagged, to get out of the pool, or to get in line. It's amazing how we learn to rush through life to avoid being last.

What if, instead, we genuinely strive to be first?

As parents, in an effort to build our children's' confidence, we encouraged them to volunteer to be first, especially when they had to do a presentation for class.

Early speakers are more likely to be graded by the objective standards. As more people present, there is inevitably a bit of comparison that goes on in the grading (oh, that was good, but not nearly as good as Suzy!) Plus, once their presentations are over, they have the luxury to sit back and relax and learn a bit from other's presentations.

Those who go last, meanwhile, sometimes learn less. While others are presenting, they are going over their notes, rehearsing in their head, and creating negative self-talk ("oh, they really have nice charts. Mine aren't that good. Wow, that Suzy is so good; I'm so not ready. And on and on). Their anxiety builds and builds while they wait for the others to finish.

I can't say how many times one of our kids would come home and say, "I am so glad I went first!" Gradually, each of them came to champion the benefits in being early. They were able to put their energy into meeting their goals rather than procrastinating on them.

You don't have to be first all the time, but it is important to know it is an option. When you have a chance to be first and you hold back, you open up a space that is too easily filled with regret, worry, anxiety, and concern.



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The lessons we instilled in our children can benefit everyone who is caught in the fear of public speaking or anything else they are reluctant to do. Why volunteer to be first?

- ~ Save wasted time and anguish - no nail-biting worry while you wait for your “turn”
- ~ Occasion to shine – when you are early, there is nothing in front of you that you/others would compare
- ~ Quick relief - you can relax and bask in the relief of completion as you watch those who follow
- ~ You're the expert - confident, enthusiastic early adopters are often perceived as experts as much for their courage as for their content

Do this for yourself

What is something in your work or life that you are putting off? Starting a project? Finishing it? Training in that new software or workflow process? Having a difficult conversation? Making a change?

Step back and take a look at what you are carrying around with you as a result of that delay. Some of the stress may be from the project itself, of course. But be honest with yourself: how much of it comes from simply the fact that you are putting it off? I know that with me, the stress associated with an overdue project or delayed conversation is often far, far greater than the stress associated with actually doing the thing!

So, what if you were to raise your hand to go first (or maybe second) on the rollout schedule, instead of 12th? What if you scheduled that conversation for tomorrow morning instead of spending part of every day worrying about it? What if, instead of digging in your heels and resisting that new process, you simply surrendered to it and rechannel your resistance energy into implementation?

The results could amaze even you, eh?

And the best part is, when we let go of delay anxiety, we open more space for happiness.

The 13 Principles of Happiness provide a framework for centering ourselves, eliminating frictions, and showing up fully. If you'd like to download a 1-page summary of the 13 Principles of Happiness as a reference, you can do so at:

<http://www.1leadercoach.com/happiness/philosophies.cfm>

~*~*~QUOTES & TIPS~*~*~

“Happiness, I have discovered, is nearly always a rebound from hard work.” ~Ray Stannard Baker

Different perspectives on getting up in the morning:

“Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.” ~Benjamin Franklin



“Progress isn't made by early risers. It's made by lazy men trying to find easier ways to do something.” ~Robert Heinlein

And with mid-term elections a couple weeks away, a topical reminder:

“Vote early and vote often.” ~Al Capone

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II. IN THE WORKPLACE: PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED

A client recently brought to the coaching conversation a load of anxiety about upcoming workplace changes. The key problem for him is not “how to handle change” – rather, the issue is that the company is currently a “player” in the mergers and acquisitions (M&A) world, and what happens in the next six months is both unknown and, in this moment, unknowable.

Further, the M&A activity is handled at the top level of the organization and is shrouded in secrecy. My client, a senior leader one level below the exec committee, sighed.

“I can’t prepare my division for what is coming when I don’t know much myself. And for what little I do know, I am sworn to secrecy since no paperwork is signed and nothing is certain. The staff know ‘something is going on’, and morale is suffering.”

Turns out that the “story” he tells himself is that he can’t take action till the news breaks, then everything will have to happen at the last minute. His nightmare implementation scenario was the source of his stress.

“Well,” I asked, “what CAN you do while you are waiting? How might you prepare for the unknown?”

Once he dropped his “can’ts” and started thinking in terms of getting ahead of the changes, he realized that there is much he can do to get his team ready. He created a plan to engage his “inner circle” of managers in an examination of various M&A outcomes, then pull out the issues common to all and start to prepare the staff. Some education in change management will benefit all regardless of what specific changes actually occur. And he also decided to focus on additional team-building to strengthen the team in advance of their upcoming challenges.

Here was an example of Being Early. Change is inevitable, so when you prepare – even in a “generic” way – by giving people tools, language, and process for better handling the unexpected, you eliminate a stressor and create the space for a bit of fun. And even, dare I say, happiness?
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Remember: Leadership is not about a title – anyone can be a leader when they focus on helping others succeed!

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III. RANDOM FUN: RANDOM GENERATORS

This month’s random fun site is about, well, randomness! In the spirit of discovery, I entered the phrase “Random Fun” into Google, and came across this fascinating blog on random generators.



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<http://ezinecheck.com/checked.gif>