



**Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter
Edition 28: What Do Your Emotions Have to Say?**

1,550 words of content -- approximate reading time required: **6.2** 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. LISTEN TO YOUR EMOTIONS

In the last decade or so, science has discovered a tremendous amount about the role emotions play in our lives. Researchers have found that even more than IQ, your emotional awareness and abilities to handle feelings will determine your success and happiness in all walks of life. ~John Gottman, Ph.D.

Excerpt from a recent discussion at a client's office:

"Emotions don't play a role in our decision-making, Jim. We make decisions here in a very straightforward manner, based on logic and reason and an objective review of the facts. Actually, I'm a little frustrated that people keep bringing up emotion, as I don't see that as relevant to our process. I'm much happier when we deal with our reality instead of some touchy-feely fantasy world."

Do you see what I see? The only way this manager could fully express his perspective on emotion was to invoke emotion – he's frustrated, he's happy. But hey, he's never emotional...

Sure!

The fact is that we ARE emotional beings, just as much as we are physical and intellectual beings. We are always in some emotional state. Our emotions are an integral part of us – they serve us, protect us, guide us, inspire us. Emotions set the stage for much that happens in our own little world.

The word, EMOTION, comes from the Latin meaning, "to move out from" or more casually, "that which moves us." An emotion is a predisposition for action – every emotion carries a different story, a different language, and a different set of options for action.

The same event can lead to a wide variety of responses because each person involved is predisposed to interpret the event differently based on their emotional lens.



For example, the announcement that Jane, a peer, just got a promotion.

~Chris, who lives often in anxiety, gets all wrapped up in worrying about how he's going to handle the additional work that will be dumped on the team.

~Liz, whose primary mood is enthusiasm, can't wait to go over and congratulate Jane, even though she also holds some bitterness as she feels she was equally qualified for the promotion.

~Shaniqua is carrying a streak of jealousy today, and secretly begins to plot how to make Jane pay for leaving the team.

~And Jon, who has worked closely with Jane and really respects her ability, feels a sudden surge of sadness, and sits frozen because he doesn't know what to do with that feeling.

None of them are paying any attention for the rest of the meeting.

In my programs I sometimes use the term "Positive Emotions" to describe the emotions that cluster around Happiness (such as gratitude, enthusiasm, optimism, hope, contentment, joy, etc). But that term is an assessment. Emotions are neither good nor bad; emotions are just emotions.

They are. Each one serves a purpose. It's better to withhold assessment of an emotion and to ask:

"What message is this emotion sending me? And how might that be impacting me?"

In the example above, for instance, Jon's sadness is telling him that he is in touch with something he has lost. And that he may need to give himself a small space to grieve for that loss before he moves on. Meanwhile, Chris' anxiety is telling him that he is afraid, but not sure exactly where that's coming from. So he may need to initiate discussion about how Jane's duties will be distributed so he can deal with facts instead of fears.

When we pay attention to what our emotions are telling us, we expand the information available to us in our actions and decision-making.

Do This For Yourself!

Because we live constantly in our own little emotional stews, we often become unaware of how emotions are influencing us. Here's an exercise I often use with my coaching clients when we are trying to increase their self-awareness:

For the next week or so, stop once an hour and ask yourself, "What am I feeling right now? What name (emotion) do I give this feeling?" And then jot it down on a list or in a journal, and move on.

If you want to deepen the exercise, try this follow-up: "And what choices are available to me from <that emotion>?"

At the end of a week, review your list and notice what emerges. At the very least, you will increase awareness about how you're carrying yourself in the world. And in a world where (self) knowledge is power, you will have increased your capacity for making different – and possibly better – choices.

~*~*~QUOTES~*~*~



Let's not forget that the little emotions are the great captains of our lives and we obey them without realizing it. ~Vincent Van Gogh

As none can see the wind but in its effects on the trees, neither can we see the emotions but in their effects on the face and body. ~Nathaniel LeTonnerre, translated

When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but creatures of emotion. ~Dale Carnegie

If you'd like to download a 1-page summary of the 13 Principles of Happiness as a reference, you can do so right now: <http://www.1leadercoach.com/happiness/philosophies.cfm>

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II. IN THE WORKPLACE: EMOTIONS COME TO WORK

When I meet people who voice disbelief that emotions live in the workplace, I ask if it's okay to challenge them for a minute. It usually takes only a short discussion to draw out how often they actually use emotions – their own and others – to make decisions, write strategy, hire, fire, promote, run projects, decide who to lunch with, and so on.

Once we've agreed on the reality of emotions in the workplace, we can then discuss feelings as facts. No, a feeling is not the *same* as a fact, but Feelings ARE Facts in that they exist, they have an impact, they are at least as important as other facts like timelines and process steps and customer requirements.

Change in the workplace often runs up against discomfort, frustration, and resentment. We can ignore those, and pretend that since our change makes so much SENSE the implementation will proceed without incident.

OR...

We can plan for the fact that these normal, human, emotional responses will occur and so plan time for communication, education, engagement of impacted parties, and otherwise provide support to help people move from those emotional states to ones that we know provide more energy: excitement, curiosity, trust, or confidence.

A leader who does not listen to emotions does so at their own peril!

Remember: Leadership is not about a title. Anyone can be a leader who chooses to inspire others and support them in becoming all they can be.

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III. RANDOM STUFF: MILLENNIALS GETTING MARRIED

So, my oldest child is getting married in December, and I've been fascinated watching these representatives of the Millennial Generation (those born after 1981) prepare for the big day. How different from 1978 when my nuptials occurred!

Of course, they have a website (www.ksmithandpgibson.weddings.com) complete with updated profiles of the wedding party and MapQuest links to the wedding mass and reception.



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