



Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter
Edition 29: Simplify Your Life

1,889 words of content -- approximate reading time required: 7.6 minutes. And isn't your happiness worth it?

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

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

IN THIS ISSUE

=====

- I. Happiness Principle #10: Simplify
- II. In the Workplace: Remove What Doesn't Work
- III. Random Stuff: Thou Shalt Not Whine
- IV. Instructions and contact info

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

I. HAPPINESS PRINCIPLE #10: SIMPLIFY

Principle #10: Simplify. Automate, delegate, or eliminate tasks or goals that complicate your life. Being content with simpler pleasures increases your opportunity for awe.

Several years ago I read Karen Kingston's "Clear Your Clutter with Feng Shui." It's not an especially profound book, but the universe sent it to me at just the right moment in my life (actually, it was a gift from a client). The message this tiny book held for me was, "All that 'stuff' you're hanging onto is draining you! Get rid of it. Simplify and declutter, and expect things in your life to change for the better."

Feng Shui (pronounced *fung shway*) is, according to Kingston, "the art of balancing and harmonizing the flow of natural energies in our surroundings to create beneficial effects in our lives," while Clutter "accumulates when energy stagnates and, likewise, energy stagnates when clutter accumulates." Clutter, then, can be a symptom or a cause of Stuck Energy. And stuck energy holds us back from truly enjoying life – it gets in the way of happiness.

A recent two-year makeover of much of my home created more clean lines and open wall and floor space, and reduced the photos and bric-a-brac on shelves. The result is a lovely, calm, and open space in which I love to spend time.

My office, meanwhile, had emerged as the epicenter of paper accumulation and negative energy in my life. This really hit me a couple months ago when I walked into my office on a Monday morning and noticed that I was having trouble breathing. That's right – breathing. Between the time I left my bedroom, passed through the dining room and kitchen, and arrived in my office, my shoulders and chest had tightened up, my stomach rolled into a knot, and a feeling of dread rose up in my core.

The Executive Happiness Coach was NOT happy in my work environment!

In that moment of clarity I noticed the following: My task list was two typed pages long. My "overdue" list was half of that. I was carrying more coaching clients than ever. I was overcommitted on my volunteer work. I'd not done any filing in months. My Inbox held over 300



emails. My client files (on top of my desk) were overstuffed. Binders and boxes from workshops were scattered over every flat surface in the office. Yikes!

I turned to my Happiness Principles – hidden behind a stack of copies -- and noted I'd stopped honoring #10. I was holding on to TOO MUCH and the weight of all of it was about to take me down.

~~~~~

Ever been to that place? I thought so.

So I'm guessin' that there's plenty of "junk" in your life, too.

One of the most powerful things you can do is to streamline your life every so often. Pull things out of it. Identify things that aren't essential and get rid of them. It might be something as simple as cleaning out your garage, and then noticing how much calmer you feel when you come home every night. Or it might be reducing your obligations, learning how to say "no" occasionally so that you're not constantly running and burning out.

I know it's simple to say. It's harder to do. But a good chunk of happiness is simply about being aware of the choices we make. It's about just looking at what we're doing and stepping back for a moment, and saying "Why am I doing this? Why am I holding on to this? Oh, I don't *have* to do this. I don't *have* to keep this."

And then notice what happens when we realize we have the power to choose. Make sense?

~~~~~

I started by getting rid of about 12 linear feet of paper, cleaning out old files that no longer serve me. Then I purged my task lists – and was surprised at how many items on my list were no longer of consequence. Why were they still there? Finally, I wrapped up with a few clients and did not immediately work to replace them.

I'm at a tough emotional stage, actually. I have to LET GO of needing to hold on to some stuff, and I confess to a little fear around that. But I have to tell ya, I love the feeling of having empty drawers and open surface in the room, as well as open space on my calendar to go with a shorter task list.

My next step is to eliminate some of the furniture: less places to stack clutter, the less clutter accumulates. And as the clutter disappears, I'm finding my energy is back up when I am in this space. I am more fully present in my conversations as the distractions in the room have diminished.

I really, truly, feel happier.

Do This For Yourself!

Pick a domain in your life where you feel overwhelmed physically, mentally, or emotionally. Then try one of the following:



Deming's 14 Principles are all about elimination of what doesn't work. (The 14 Principles, which still underlie most workplace quality programs, are listed on the Red Bead site I noted above).
Examples:

- ~Cease dependence on inspection to achieve quality (build it into the process, instead)
- ~Drive out fear (it doesn't work in the long run)
- ~Remove barriers that rob people of pride of workmanship (lack of training, dis-information, unnecessary steps, unrealistic standards, etc)

All of my experience – as a line manager, as a consultant, as a coach – and actually, even as a parent! – has taught me or reinforced this notion: more “rules” never helps.

Simplify. Improve the systems themselves, then focus people on a few core issues and let them do their jobs. Nordstroms – the role model for retailing/customer service – is famous for their one one-page employee handbook that lists but one rule for employees: "Use your good judgment at all times."

Think about it. What can you REMOVE that will improve your workplace?

Remember: Leadership is not about a title. Anyone can be a leader who chooses to inspire others and help make their path easier.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

III. RANDOM STUFF: THOU SHALT NOT WHINE



Several months ago the Reverend Will Bowen, pastor of Christ Church Unity in Kansas City, Mo, vowed to model the sort of behavior he encouraged in others: he made a pledge to go 21 days without complaining. That meant no whining, gossiping or criticizing for three weeks, long enough to form a new habit.

“The one thing we can agree on,” said the Rev. Bowen, “is there’s too much complaining.” It took him three and a half months to string together 21 consecutive days with no whining.

Other members of the church decided to join him, and they commissioned purple bracelets (they read, “A Complaint Free World”) to wear as reminders. A local paper did a feature on the group’s initiative, which was eventually picked up by People Magazine, and then The Today Show called. Suddenly this little church community was besieged by requests for bracelets, and they set up an entire website to supply the world. They’ve now given away (yes, they are FR#EE!) over four million to people and organizations all over the world.

Check it out: <http://acomplaintfreeworld.org/> You can order bracelets, or learn how to use them (basically, you wear it as a reminder. Catch yourself complaining or kvetching? Switch to the other arm and restart your count).

This campaign, in my humble opinion, is a form of Simplifying. When we eliminate complaining, we free up that energy for ourselves to enjoy what’s right about life. And that’s another path to Happiness!

