



**1. Aerate and feed your lawn.** Aeration involves poking holes in or pulling plugs from your lawn to loosen up compressed soil so water and nutrients can get to the roots.

Open your attitude. When others toss new ideas/changes your way, do they just sit on your surface for the rain to wash away? When your focus in every conversation is to win and be right, you are like the compacted lawn – no room for anything else to grow. Consider dropping your defense of what you believe. Poke some holes in yourself (figuratively speaking) and let some new stuff under your surface. Allow those to germinate and notice how much healthier you feel – mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Many readers know that I read extensively and eclectically. I constantly explore new ideas, both to stimulate my brain and to plant future ideas. I'm amazed how often apparently disparate ideas emerge together in a new form, just as I need a new resolution to a problem.

**2. Trim dead tree limbs.** Dead branches or those growing at odd angles can break and damage the tree or fall on your house. Removing those and leaving the wounds to heal naturally will improve the health of the tree.

Old traditions or beliefs that no longer serve you can create huge stress on your systems unless they get removed. There can be pain in saying, "No" to something you've always done. Time is a natural healer that will allow you to refocus your energy on personal growth along your other, healthier branches.

Cheryl and I did a lot of trimming a few years ago after our daughter's death. In our quest to establish a New Normal for our family, we let go of many things that now brought us pain, and worked to introduce new traditions for our future family gatherings. Three years later there is an empty space on our family tree that will never be filled; yet because we refocused our attention on what we still have (versus what we lost) we are able to experience happiness in our new normal.

**3. Cut back perennials.** A little work now results in healthier spring growth. Trim spent perennial foliage down to the ground; this sends energy to the roots for next season.

Core values and beliefs are like perennials – they form the foundation of a good garden. Yet, like a garden that changes shape each year, we humans continually evolve. You need to take a hard look at your values every few years and ask, "Do my values still support who I am and what I do today?" Sometimes you'll want to dig up and discard a value that you've moved past; other times a value needs editing to remain dynamic and useful to you. That "cutting back" creates space for new growth on your old roots and reenergizes what remains.

I often challenge my clients to revisit their values or tolerations (energy drains) and edit what they have in writing. The act of culling or editing creates a new and powerful awareness that revitalizes how they live their life.

**4. Plant bulbs now for spring glory.** The reason why many yards lack color until late in spring is because their owners fail to plan in September for the following March. If you want to experience the thrill of bright crocuses in spring snow or tulips in April, you must bury those bulbs now and let them grow below the surface for many months.

In like fashion, many who are disappointed with where they are right now failed to set goals or plans sufficiently early. When you set a long-term goal or start a practice or habit, you may exhibit little or no progress for many months. Yet when you most need yourself to be strong,



you'll blossom as a result of all your previously-invisible practice.

A client who regularly avoided confrontation wanted to stay in conversations even when they felt uncomfortable to her. Her 'practice' was to keep eye contact and breath deeply to help her remain calm. After nearly two months of low-risk practice, she found herself under attack in a staff meeting – a very high-profile, high-stakes conversation. She told me how surprised she was when she was able to remain calm and confident as the conversation progressed...to a positive outcome! Because she planted those bulbs far enough in advance, they blossomed at the right time.

### **Do This For Yourself!**

Here's a quick planning checklist for your future success and happiness:

1. Open your attitude by poking a few holes in your assumptions and beliefs – and let a few ideas that are new to you slip in and take root.
2. Trim away some traditions or behaviors that no longer serve you, and consider what would for you be a positive New Normal for the future.
3. Pull out your list of personal values. Consider dropping one, creating a new one, or editing your definition of others.
4. Identify a big behavior shift you want to make. Then create a small, low-risk practice to which you'll commit some time every day to build your underlying capacity.

The more you attend to your personal yard today, the more beautiful the result you'll achieve in the future. Your actions today will affect your future experience of happiness. Be early!

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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.theexecutivehappinesscoach.com/happiness/philosophies.cfm>

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## **II. IN THE WORKPLACE: TODAY'S ROOTS, TOMORROW'S TRUST**

The connection from the above to the workplace is simple – though not always easy. When change occurs, you need people on your side, willing to work with you through a difficult time.

Waiting till the change occurs is too late to form a solid foundation. So... how might you put down the roots of trust today, and give them a chance to grow strong? Start today getting to show the members of your team that you know them as individuals, and that you care. Keep your promises. Share information. Be fair in your treatment of others.

If people learn to trust you in slow times, they will show up more ready to trust you when shift happens.

Remember: Leadership is not about a title. Anyone can be a leader who builds solid relationships and practices trustworthiness!





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### III. THE WEDDING UPDATE: T-MINUS 10 WEEKS, AND COUNTING

This weekend comes the bridal shower, and a week later the invitations will go out. Yikes! Seems like just yesterday that Kelly got engaged, and the wedding was impossibly far off.

Two weeks ago Cheryl and I attended the wedding of the daughter of good friends. When we arrived at the church we stopped to speak with the mother of the bride. She looked a bit tense, and when we asked if she was okay, she said, "just one word: Bride-zilla." Ah. A reminder that even on a day of celebration, stress can overwhelm the joy.

Soon, however, the bride and her dad came down the aisle, her with tears streaming down her smiling face. Clearly, she was holding many conflicting emotions in that moment – no wonder she'd been stressed! The rest of the day was picture perfect, relaxed, and filled with happiness.

Still, it reminded me that in the 24 hours just prior to the wedding, my wife and daughter (and me!) will likely be juggling a gazillion details, people, conversations, priorities, and emotions. Cheryl and I chatted about starting now to practice finding our "calm space" – so body and mind can easily go there versus first trying to find calm as the world spins madly on the wedding morning.

On another note, progress on the house next door continues: new cabinets, counters, and appliances completed the extreme kitchen makeover; every wall sports a fresh coat of paint; the new deck looks fabulous: the flooring is down; and the whole-house rewiring is live. We flipped the house in exactly 60 days – just in time for the future in-laws to arrive for the weekend.

And I've learned that Cheryl is an absolutely incredible general contractor. We've been married nearly 30 years and I still discover things about her that I did not know.

Life is full of surprises. How cool is that?!

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### IV. INSTRUCTIONS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Jim Smith is The Executive Happiness Coach™. He is a recovering corporate executive whose passion is to help people discover and increase the amount of Happiness in their lives and work.

View past editions at <http://www.TheExecutiveHappinessCoach.com/newsletter/archives.cfm>

Drop me a line anytime with your feedback and queries! Jim  
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**Happiness is a decision, not an event.**  
**How will YOU decide today?**

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