



Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter
Edition 37: Human Understanding Given

2,115 words of content -- approximate reading time required: 8.4 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. HUG: HUMAN UNDERSTANDING GIVEN

Many years ago when I was a young supervisor I worked with an older woman named Anna. Anna was the department's designated grandma – dispensing advice, listening to troubles, and always with a hug. She taught me that hugs were lifeblood – a person needs three hugs a day for survival, and twelve a day for growth. Her personal mission was to make sure that everybody got at least one a day from her. And what great hugs they were – big strong arms, a warm and loving heart. I could rarely escape from one of her hugs, and always felt transformed after receiving one of them. My outlook on hugs I got from Anna.

In last month's newsletter I mentioned my hug strategy as being an important part of Cheryl's recovery program. Over the past month I've had half a dozen friends and colleagues tell me that they decided to try that "12 per day technique..." Several of you, my dear readers, have reported that the exercise was, A) more difficult than you expected, and B) a very positive experience.

In that context, I stood in the receiving line at my daughter's wedding and received several months worth of hugs. And watched as many of our friends and family used the opportunity to give Cheryl some extra big hugs, so glad they were to see her well and whole again.

Hugs have the power to convey so much love and support, and I found myself thinking about the meaning of the word, hug.

The American Heritage dictionary defines hug as: *To clasp or hold closely, especially in the arms, as in affection; embrace.*

The etymology of the word is unclear. Perhaps it comes from *hugge* "to embrace," perhaps from the Old Norse *hugga* "to comfort," or from from *hugr* "courage, mood," or from the Old English. *hycgan* "to think, consider," or even the Gothic *hugs* meaning "mind, soul, thought."

I like all of these possible roots. Hugs are certainly about conveying comfort. I believe it often requires courage to offer a hug, that hugs can change one's mood, and that a good hug can come from – and connect to – one's very soul.





A hug is one of the most human things that humans do. So I like the definition my wife uses: HUG stands for **H**uman **U**nderstanding **G**iven. Perfect!

When we hug, we are in effect saying, “the human being in me connects to the human being in you.”

And note the form for a good hug: We face each other, heart to heart, and bring our hearts together. Human Understanding Given. What a happy event is a hug...

Do This For Yourself!

At this time of year many people experience a higher degree of family, friend, community, or coworker interaction. Chanukah is just past, while the Muslim feast of Eid ul-Adha starts on the 19th, with family gatherings common. Christmas celebrations have been buzzing for weeks, and the official rites begin on the 24th and 25th. The seven days of Kwanzaa kick off on the 26th. And then we move right into New Year celebrations.

Lots of hugging. A lot of it is perfunctory hugging (*do I really have to hug Aunt Mildred?*), which is so unsatisfactory. So try this:

The next time someone signals that a hug is imminent (the outstretched arms are usually a signal!), give yourself a treat, and hug back. Just relax and be fully present in that moment, heart to heart. Feel the affection that the other person holds for you, and let them feel the same from you.

In every day there are 20,000 moments. Make your hugs moments that you – and others – will remember.

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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: THE HUMAN TOUCH**

In today's hands-off, no touching/no hugging workplace, we have this dilemma: we are still all about people connecting with people. How can you communicate human understanding given... without actually hugging?

The good news is that human contact is still necessary and realistic even in sterile business environments.

Some degree of personal touch can be achieved by sticking to “safe” neutral spots, such as the arms below the shoulders. If you want to congratulate someone on a job well done, you can reach across in a conversation to touch their upper arm or forearm, which will generally not violate any personal space norms, yet still convey connection. Truly, a warm handshake (clasping with both hands, even) can communicate a lot. And in the absence of any touch, try directly facing the person you are speaking with, and listen attentively. You may not be in





physical contact, but you'll still be facing heart-to-heart, and that sends a non-verbal signal that is both powerful and personal.

Remember: Leadership is not about a title. Anyone can be a leader who creates positive human connections and makes others feel important and cherished!

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### III. SHAMELESS BRAGGING

When I returned from the fabulous wedding weekend, I was pleasantly surprised by two items in my mail.

The first was a very formal and official-looking government document from the US Patent and Trademark Office. The waiting period has passed, and I now officially own the name: The Executive Happiness Coach®. There can never be another. As if!

The second was notification from the International Coach Federation, the industry's primary credentialing body, that my coaching portfolio was approved. I may now use the title, Professional Certified Coach (PCC). From the certification:

"This designation is earned by demonstrating knowledge and proficient use of core coaching skills through a comprehensive application and exam process designed to ensure high standards for the coaching profession and the clients it serves. "

The designation represents that I've completed a comprehensive coaching program, delivered nearly 2,000 hours of coaching, and have demonstrated proficiency in the 11 Core Coaching Competencies. I'm especially proud of the PCC credential as it took me over two years to complete my training and put together my portfolio. Only about one in four people who applied for the ACC, PCC or MCC credential in the past year have receive approval. So I was quite nervous until the results arrived.

I did not realize how much I wanted this -- until I noticed how excited I was to hold the certificate in my hands! (And yes, perhaps I did give it a little hug...)

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### IV. THE FINAL WEDDING REPORT: MEMORIES

After 18 months of anticipation and planning, The Wedding finally occurred. Even two weeks later, my head is still spinning as I process it all. Savoring a good memory is a very powerful way to experience positive emotions for yourself, and storytelling is a means to share positive emotions with others. So if you don't mind, I'm going to share some random wedding memories as a means of spreading some happiness!

(note: for more on the skill of Savoring, see editions 14 and 32 in the [Happiness Archives](#))

**The place:** On Thursday we arrived in South Bend to attend to a myriad of details, including a final meeting with the hotel staff regarding logistics – and we got our first look at the hall, which had been undergoing a major renovation when we last saw it. I've seen many pretty banquet halls before, yet the first sight of this one absolutely took my breath away – because this one was for MY daughter's wedding. The head table, lit from underneath by a thousand tiny white lights,





hovered above a sea of white – white chairs, white tables, white china – all set in a ballroom done in shades of cream and yellow. For me, breathtaking.

**The planner:** The final meeting w/ the wedding coordinator at the Basilica at Notre Dame, who kept emphasizing to Kelly, “this is your wedding. However you want it to be, just tell me.” Her job, she reminded us, is essentially Stage Manager: to ensure that every detail -- on stage and behind the scenes -- happens as it should. And I thought, “wow, what a cool job.” Every week she manages two Perfect Weddings. Hers is a happy-making job, for sure!

**The forgotten:** Midori, the mother of the groom, flying in from Seattle, WA, forgot her suitcase at home with all her clothes. Fortunately, at the last minute, she’d put her wedding-day dress in Mark’s suitcase because he had extra room. Whew! Disaster averted. Everything else was taken care of in a couple hours at the mall with an overheated Visa card!

The groom himself, meanwhile, realized he’d forgotten the rings at home in Cleveland (like mother, like son?!) This little detail a Visa card could not fix! However, a neighbor with a key was able to help my brother-in-law retrieve the rings, and they arrived on Friday in time for the rehearsal.

*This phrase kept running thru my head the entire week after the wedding:*

**I cannot recall a time in my life when, in a single day, I laughed so much, hugged so many people, cried so often, expressed thanks so many times, loved my family so completely, and danced so much and for so long.**

**Especially the dancing part. ☺**

I found myself constantly surprised by the little things that, for me, made the day almost magical.

**How beautiful the mother of the bride looked** when she donned her dress. It was an appropriately modest, mother-of-the-bride dress; at the same time, it was the first article of clothing Cheryl’s ever owned that was custom-made for her. The dress fit her like a glove, and she looked incredibly graceful and elegant.

**The degree of calm Kelly demonstrated** throughout the day. Even in the midst of “the bobby pin crisis” (her veil came loose 10 minutes prior to the ceremony!) she was relaxed and enjoying her day. A moment: Kelly, her mother, and I doing yoga breathing together in the rear of the church as the processional music began. In – out – calm....

**Charlie Wiess**, the Notre Dame head football coach around whom so much optimism for the future swirls, was attending a fund-raising event elsewhere in the hotel. When he learned there was “Notre Dame wedding” going on in the grand ballroom, he came down to congratulate the bride and groom – who coincidentally were hanging out with their photographer at the hall entrance. They were thrilled to have a photo taken with Charlie (a moment, perhaps, that only fans of the Fighting Irish can truly appreciate!).

The **geographic spread** of the guest list. The 175 people who attended came from three continents (friends from Ireland and Paul’s grandmother from Japan) and from 16 states in the U.S. This truly was a wedding of Millennials.

