



Happiness@ TheSpeedofLife

Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter Edition 39: Let Go To Create Space

1,737 words of content -- approximate reading time required: **6.95** 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. Please forward to a friend who needs more happiness.

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I. LET GO TO CREATE SPACE FOR HAPPINESS

Last week I donated blood and arrived home with (yet another) free t-shirt. Problem: my t-shirt drawer was crammed full. I removed two older shirts and decided to recycle those as workout shirts. Problem: the shelf where I keep my workout gear is crammed full. While I'm in my closet I also noticed the three new dress shirts I purchased last week are freshly-pressed and hung on the closet handle with a note from my wife: "Can't fit in closet. Something has to go!"

I know what this means. I don't want to admit it, though.

You see, each item in my closet has a story; "it used to be my favorite shirt," or "I bought that on our cruise," or "it still fits!" or "my Mom gave that to me..." If I continue to honor every story for every pair of pants or socks or t-shirt, however, I have no room for any new stuff.

So I must let go.

When it comes to clothing, I follow the rule that "if it doesn't make me feel fabulous, it should go." Well, what if I love it all? Sorry, Jim – you either create some space or you are stuck with your current wardrobe for the rest of your life; or we cram it in and you'll always be wrinkled.

I must let go.

Aargh! I can purge other areas of my life, but clothes I like to wear till they die. I still own a pair of jeans I bought before I had kids, and my eldest just turned 26. Maybe it's my upbringing (large family, hand-me-downs were the norm), maybe it's a comfort issue, I don't know.

I do know this, however: If I don't let go of SOMETHING, there's no space for anything new. So, I will let go. Next time the Salvation Army calls about used clothing, I'll say, Yes.

What does this have to do with happiness? Here's the thing: no one who lacks for happiness has an empty emotional closet. Yes, I mean you! Your closet is full of the stuff you've brought home over the past few years or decades.





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Do any of these stories match what's hanging in your emotional closet? "It used to be my favorite emotion" or "I bought that when I was in high school" or "It still fits!" or "My Mother gave that to me..." Get my drift? You are always wearing some emotion, but if you limit yourself to what's already in your closet and you can't bring yourself to let something go, you'll never have the space for the new emotions you want to bring home!

So put on your Spring Cleaning outfit, and let's start pitching what no longer makes you feel fabulous!

Let go of Certainty

If you find yourself paralyzed by analysis, please know that you will rarely know everything, and there will always be some risk in life. *Replace with:* "I know that there are *multiple* correct answers to most problems, and I trust myself to choose well and choose faster."

Let go of Anxiety

Anxiety is fear that has no source – it's worrying "just in case." Anxiety really fills up a closet fast. *Replace with:* "I know that things may go wrong AND I trust that I am smart enough and capable enough to figure out what to do when that happens. Meanwhile, I refuse to waste my energy on something that does not exist."

Let go of Needing To Be Right

The extra energy required to win EVERY conversation EVERY time drains you more than you realize. *Replace with:* "I am open to others' good ideas. I speak up when I have a concern, and as long as I feel that I am heard, I am okay with the final outcome."

Let go of Resentment

Resentment is when you drink the poison and expect the other person to die. Holding on to old wrongs is like setting a moth colony loose on your wool sweater collection and then hating your grandma for knitting. *Replace with:* "I forgive you. I cannot forget what you did or what happened to me, but I will no longer allow that to control me. I take back my own power to control my life from today forward."

Let go of Hatred and Intolerance

Disliking and disagreeing with others can sometimes help us feel better about ourselves, but only to the extent that we are able to tear others down so they are lower than us. Such emotions feel very powerful, yet are always corrosive – they kill us from the inside out. *Replace with:* "I'm not weird – I'm just not you. You're not weird – you're just not me." (Yes, this sounds simple – and I encourage you to try it on and notice what happens when you wear it!)

Let go of Impatience

Yes, it's all about you, and "they" are trying to make your life difficult. "They" are deliberately slow to irritate you. "They" purposely messed up your account to waste your time. Sound familiar? *Replace with:* <Breathe in, deeply. Breathe out, slowly. Repeat> "I am sure you are trying your best. I am calm as I ask for your help to resolve this issue." <keep breathing, deeply>

Let go of being a Know It All

One of the biggest barriers to learning is, "I already know that." When we tell ourselves "this is nothing new" we stop listening and we stop learning; and when we stop learning, we stop growing; and when we stop growing... we die. *Replace with:* "I am always learning. I am open to new possibilities. Even if I heard this before, I am in a different place today, and I know that I will find deeper meaning than I did last time I heard it."



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Let go of Unhappiness

Some amount of discontent with the status quo can serve to drive you. When you find yourself constantly unhappy with today, though, it's time to try on a different outfit. *Replace with:* "I choose to enjoy where I am today, even as I aspire to something else. My life is not perfect and I am flawed, and that means that I am a *perfectly normal* human being."

Do This For Yourself!

Go through your emotional closet and pull out the items that no longer make you feel fabulous. Listen to the "story" that goes with each one. It's in your closet for a reason. Tell the story one last time, and then decide what would better serve you. Let the old outfit go to make space for happiness and new positive stories.

Repeat annually. ☺

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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: SAME RULES APPLY

Really, the above applies to the workplace – except that at work we keep our "stuff" in a drawer or overhead cabinet rather than a closet. Purge regularly.

And if you're comfortable with letting go, share your skill and experience with others who have difficulty with it. When you hear someone say, "that's how we've always done it," or "that's the way I was taught," realize that you have an opportunity to mentor someone who may have problems with change. Encourage them to tell you their "story," and help them to replace that story with one about the future.

Remember: Leadership is not about a title. Anyone can be a leader who knows how to let go and help others feel good about cleaning out their own emotional closet!

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## III. PERSONAL REFLECTION: MY OWN CHAIR!

When I was growing up, I was one of eight kids, and in our crowded, crazy home everything was community property. I used to watch TV shows where the dad came home to a calm house and sat down in "his" chair to read the paper and relax all evening, and I'd think, "someday, that will be me."

When Cheryl and I were married right out of college, we stocked our apartment – and later our own home – with hand-me-downs that served us well and were functional...but not necessarily comfortable. By the time we had funds to upgrade our living room furniture we were expanding the family, so everything we purchased was rated for durability and its capacity to hold a crowd.

As our four kids grew, our furniture choices focused on everyone having their own "space" (to reduce arguing!). We spent a lot of years with two large couches as our primary furniture, so everyone had a reserved space but no one really had their own chair. No, not even Dad. I

