



Happiness@ TheSpeedofLife

Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter Edition 41: Happiness Is...

1,629 words of content -- approximate reading time required: 6.51 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. HAPPINESS IS...

There are a lot of events happening in the world today that don't feel great: recession, climate change, concerns about energy, water shortages, war, oppression, the absence of leadership, airlines failing, and on and on. Yikes! Even optimists are challenged these days.

Last week I saw a T-shirt that reminded me there's always another perspective. On the shirt, below a partly-filled glass, were three lines:

Optimist: the glass is half-full
 Pessimist: the glass is half-empty
 Engineer: the glass is 50% larger than it needs to be

That T-shirt started me thinking about my business tagline, "Happiness is a decision, not an event!" Let's dissect that phrase.

Happiness...

I define happiness as "wanting what you have." It's an inner state of contentment and joy that comes from choosing to let go of needing or wanting more than what is already there.

...is a Decision...

Decide means literally, "to cut off the others." When you decide, you choose one direction even as you turn away from other options/choices, and eliminate the stress and tension that accompany indecision and uncertainty.

...not...

meaning, something other than.

...an event!

Something that happens, to you, next to you; an occurrence. Events are outside of you, not inside.



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recognize that even in the worst of times people still shop, still learn, still buy cars, still take vacations, etc... those businesses will put a lot of attention on reinventing their business, adjusting their strategy to new consumer behavior, seeking new markets, marketing their brand, and investing in the future. After sanity returns, they'll be growing fast on their solid foundation, while their competition is emerging from the dark basement, rubbing their eyes and wondering what happened.

I'm not saying we're not in tough economic times. I'm just saying that when you respond to difficult events with denial or depression, nothing improves; whereas when you face difficulty with your best creative self and a determination to find solutions, your outcomes will improve.

What I *believe* will happen to me, will happen. Funny thing, expectations – they almost always come true!

A couple months ago I was leading a strategic planning session for a company whose historical base was regional manufacturing companies. During talk of recession and the decline of local manufacturing, one leader spoke up:

"Manufacturing is really a growth industry," he said. "It's just that's it's growing somewhere else!"

This client began last year to invest in expanding their sales force to new states in the US, plus Mexico, Taiwan, and China. Because there's a long tail on their sales cycle, they've not yet seen a payoff from their investments. They've committed to keep investing, however, because they believe that the current weak cycle will play itself out and they will emerge with a global customer base. That's optimism in action.

Remember: Leadership is not about a title. Anyone can be a leader who inspires hope and optimism in others (and themselves!), even in difficult times!

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III. HAPPINESS BY THE NUMBERS

100 – of people who play the lottery, percent that expect they will be happier after they win.
<15% -- of lottery winners, percent who – two years after winning -- are actually happier.
Money can't buy happiness, apparently.

11-17% -- Average increase in tips for servers who write 'Thank You' or a personal note on checks before presenting to customers.
Gratitude resonates!

50% -- Portion of happiness that researchers tell us is pre-determined by our genes – our base "thermostat," if you will.

10% -- Portion of happiness determined by our life circumstances (where we live, our economic status, culture, and so on).

40% -- Portion of happiness affected by what we think and what we do – the part we can shift through intentional actions and strategies.

We can't change who we are; we CAN change what we do!

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IV. THERE AND BACK AGAIN

My son Justin is back home. The Peace Corps was not for him, even after a year of anticipation.

He left with intention to fulfill his service commitment. His resolve began to weaken, however, when he started in-country training and learned that the work he was training for was more administrative (desk work & grant-writing) and political (to help Ukraine prep for membership in the European Union) than it was about community or youth development.

He took a journal with him, to capture his experiences. Into this journal he poured his feelings, trying to understand them. He wrote letters to all the people who would be affected by a decision to resign: his fellow recruits, his country leader, the host family who had taken him in, his language instructor, his family and friends.

The first time he got Internet access to write us, he'd been in Ukraine for two weeks and was emotionally conflicted yet clearly moving to a decision. Through his journaling Justin found a way to describe his concerns: his unhappiness was equal parts missing something AND not connecting with the place he'd come to live for the next two years.

The paradox here is that if his initial Peace Corps assignment to Micronesia had not fallen thru, he would have started the work nine months ago, and Katie would have been a sweet girl he met briefly last summer. But because that placement changed, Justin's deployment was delayed – and he fell in love.

Bottom line, his heart was not in the work. His heart was in Nashville, with Katie. If he could have loved the work, I believe he'd have stayed. But when you have a torn heart and there's nothing there to nourish the other half, how can you live?

As Justin put it: "when I graduated from college I did not feel like a whole person. Serving in the Peace Corps was the right thing for me. But in the nine months since then I've grown in a lot of ways and met someone who makes me feel complete."

As his mother put it, "**Sometimes you have to go far away to figure out you're supposed to be where you were.**"

I found both the above statements profound. Happiness comes from the decisions you make in the face of the way events unfold, not from the events themselves.

And so I've amused myself with noticing how the Universe works. Here's my take on the situation: If Justin was meant to serve in the Peace Corps, it would have happened. The nine-month series of events that led to this place (the repeated delays in assignment, meeting Katie, the shift away from youth development, the personal growth he experienced during the delay) were apparently more what the Universe had in mind for him.

And now, some high school in Nashville may benefit by having one heck of a committed teacher on their staff next school year. And some lucky kids will have a great coach for their basketball team next season.

We are very proud for Justin.

Hey, Happiness can happen even when you're not looking for it!



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V. 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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