



# Happiness@ TheSpeedofLife

## Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter Edition 43: Is Happiness A Good Thing?

1,730 words of content -- approximate reading time required: 6.92 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. IS HAPPINESS A GOOD THING?

Every once in awhile I have a conversation with someone who gets uncomfortable talking about Happiness. They hear my title and immediately start to back away as though I have a contagious virus. I had one person recently wave me off and say, “Frankly, I don’t want to be happy all the time, Jim.”

Truly, neither do I. And so maybe it’s time to, once again, step away from Happiness and talk about the value in other emotions.

My work is NOT about achieving endless bliss. Rather, it is about knowing how to 1) Experience and enjoy happiness, then 2) Revisit that emotional realm at will and not have it be distant or unattainable. My work is about helping people realize that they have choices about the emotions they feel, and then teaching them how to make those choices differently (e.g. Happiness is a decision....)

Can you be TOO happy? Actually...yes. Consider one definition of happiness: “the quality or state of being joyous, glad, or contented.” I’m sure you all want joy in your lives, but if that’s the only place you lived, would you appreciate it as much?

#### Discontent Drives Progress

And if you were content all the time, you might lose all your motivation to do better, move ahead, learn, and grow. In fact, some studies have found that people who report consistently high levels of happiness, e.g. 9 or 10 on a 10 point scale, achieve less in school and career environments when compared to those who come in at 7 or 8 on the same scale.

To be fair, one can argue that if a person says they’re at a 10 on the happiness scale, isn’t that the ultimate achievement? I mean, if Chris makes \$35K a year and is perfectly happy in his job

and his lot in life, would he ever need to make more money or have a new job? Probably not, and good for him!

If everyone felt like Chris, however, we'd still be living in caves. Fact is that without some amount of UNhappiness and DIScontentment, we'd not have all the wonderful things that make life interesting, like air flight, chocolate ice cream, calculators, and the internet. Think about it – innovation only occurs when someone wants something MORE than what is.

### All Emotions, In Balance

In fact, every human emotion serves a purpose. **Fear** kept us from being eaten by saber-tooth tigers. **Frustration** keeps us from spending too much time in unresolved situations. **Disgust** is a survival emotion that prevents us from eating moldy food that could make us sick. **Caution** stops us from stepping off the sidewalk in front of speeding traffic or from signing legal papers without reading them first.

If you believe in evolution, consider this: early humans who were ALWAYS happy lacked the skills necessary to survive, and actually died out (those darned tigers!) in favor of those who had the capacity for fear, anger, anxiety, and distress.

Lest I be misunderstood, however, let me clarify – Happiness is a good thing. I WANT more happiness in my life, and I'm guessing you do, too. Let's just make sure happiness and optimism are mixed with appropriate amounts of ambition for the future, desire for learning, and justifiable anger when someone harms us. Just as in nearly every other area of life, balance and moderation are best.

*"A main 'Criteria of Consciousness' for the human experience is never having all you want. For as one dream comes true, another swiftly takes its place. Not having all you want is one of life's constants.*

*And learning to be happy while not yet having all you want (which, as you can see, is constant), is the first 'Criteria of Joy.' Nail it, and for the rest of your life people will be asking what it is about you." --from "Messages from the Universe" at [www.Tut.com](http://www.Tut.com)*

### Do This For Yourself

Take a sheet of paper and draw a line down the center.

On one side, make a quick list of the conditions in your life that are positive and about which you are happy. On the other, make a quick list of the conditions in your life that you wish to change.

Now step back and notice how you are able to experience happiness with some aspects of your life even as you hold some degree of discontent with others.

Finally, take a moment to express gratitude for both lists – the things that bring you happiness AND the things that keep you learning, growing, and experiencing more of life.

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Happiness Principle 7 reads: "Choose To Respond," and certainly supports choosing the right emotion for each situation. 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: MOSTLY HAPPY – BUT NOT ALWAYS!

The following concept is proven by research and is almost universally accepted – that happy employees work harder, are more creative, solve problems faster, are sick less often, and engage more fully. Bottom line, happier employees support a better bottom line.

Yet do we want employees who are always happy, never discontent? Not really. We want innovation (which requires a desire for improvement), constructive conflict (which arises from ambition), prudence with financial and material resources (requiring caution and concern), and continual learning (which comes from wanting more and better).

Leaders must learn how to nurture an environment that appropriately balances gratitude for past contribution and the demand for more and better next time. Only when we balance contentment and discontent can we create a happy AND ambitious workplace.

**Remember: Leadership is not about a title.** Anyone can be a leader who chooses happiness for their self, and then shares their moods and choices with others to help lift them up. One person can, truly, make a positive difference.

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## III. NINTH ANNUAL SUMMER READING LIST

Each year, prior to taking two weeks of holiday on the beach, I ask my friends, clients, and colleagues what they are currently reading. I research what is offered, make my selections based on “messages from the Universe,” and then share the entire list and commentary with everyone.



I continually stretch myself to explore new genres while also having fun and learning. This year’s nine selections will take me into inner-city schools; Japanese, Bengali, and Dominican immigrant communities; and the mind of a dog. I will explore micro-trends, the future of civilization, and what it’s like to change the world.

In addition, I share 15 books of fiction, fact, and Happiness that I read since last year and believe you might also enjoy.

You can review and download (pdf) the list at [www.TheExecutiveHappinessCoach.com](http://www.TheExecutiveHappinessCoach.com) (click on the Resources and Archives tab). In the list you will find summary notes along with my personal comments. The list itself is fun reading, even if you don’t pick up any of the books. I hope that you enjoy this year’s compilation.

To download the entire list from this year or last (2007), go here:

<http://www.theexecutivehappinesscoach.com/resources/resources.cfm>





I was MISERABLE for the first five days – falling asleep at my desk, craving sweets, and feeling icky. Then, like flipping a switch, it all stopped. For the past 2.5 weeks I've felt FABULOUS – to the point that I'm quite reluctant to go back to my normal cuisine. I'm more alert, I'm sleeping better, all my digestive symptoms are working perfectly, and I have no interest in sweets. I find this fascinating.

## You Are What You Eat – Physically and Emotionally

The most amazing outcome of all this is how much attention I'm paying to everything I put in to my body – and the realization that I was NOT paying attention before. They say that You Are What You Eat, and I now 'get' that in a whole new way.

It's caused me to reflect on what I put in to my emotional self, as well – my self-talk, what I read, what I watch on TV, the conversations I hold. When I'm taking in negativity, stress, and bad news, I feel like crap. It's hard to feel upbeat and happy if I am immersed in a downer environment or if I'm focused on my shortcomings instead of my accomplishments.

So now I'm thinking about what a 21-day *emotional* cleanse might look like. Like this, perhaps?

- No negative self-talk
- No gossip
- No making promises I can't keep
- No mainstream media (no war, politics, murder, etc)
- No downer conversations with people who carry negative attitudes
- Focus daily on what I DID vs what I did not do

What are your thoughts? What would you want to eliminate from your emotional diet for 21 days? [Send me your ideas.](#)

I have a sense this might be even harder than giving up caffeine and chocolate!

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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 <mailto:Jim@TheExecutiveHappinessCoach.com>

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**Happiness is a decision, not an event.**

**How will YOU decide today?**

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