



Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter Edition 46: Hypermiling and Happiness

1,478 words of content -- approximate reading time required: **5.91** 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. HYPERMILING AND HAPPINESS

Hypermiling

I have, for the past month, been [hypermiling](#). Hypermiling refers to a set of driving techniques used to maximize fuel efficiency. I drive a smaller, manual-transmission car (always have, always will), so I've been using hypermiling techniques such as [pulse & glide](#), coasting, slowed acceleration, and timing my arrival at intersections with lights.

The techniques require more attention to the road, as I must adapt what I'm doing to my driving environment. Am I driving uphill or downhill? If I'm approaching a light, will it still be green when I arrive, or will it likely be red? Am I going fast enough to avoid irritating the drivers behind me? Oh yes, I also find myself giving more buffer distance to the cars in front of me, as I seek to avoid braking except when necessary.

Is it working? Well, my little Honda Civic averaged 27mpg in mixed city/highway driving for the past year, and I've popped that up to just a tad over 31mpg in mixed driving, and over 37 highway. 15% increase is not a bad return on my investment!

Plus, I gotta tell you... this technique has not materially impacted my travel times. I'm finding that I still arrive on time, because much of the time I used to spend idling at red light I now spend slowly coasting to the light in neutral – instead of gofast.stop.wait, gofast.stop.wait, I'm now doing more go, slow, go. In other words, my usual style involves a lot of rushing, braking, fuming, and then accelerating.

As I give full attention to my driving, I am extremely aware how different that feels. I've been driving for 36 years, and often do so on 'autopilot.' I'm sure you know what I mean (and I'll bet you are just as guilty of it!) – driving while also listening to the radio, eating a snack, chatting on a mobile phone, or creating a mental task list.



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Funny thing -- as I pay closer attention to my driving and the environment on the road, I find myself paying closer attention in other areas, like conversation. And as much as I like to think of myself as a good conversationalist, I'm embarrassed to note how much room for improvement I've become aware is possible in my conversation

I talk like I drive, sometimes. Yes, I mean rushing, braking, fuming, and accelerating. Hey, I'm an extravert yet I'm also a "busy guy," so I often find myself moving fast, then getting frustrated when others are not moving at the same speed, doing multiple things while I'm talkin, etc. Not always a formula for fun and happy conversation

I thought it might be interesting to apply hypermiling concepts to conversation. This is what came from my musings:

Maintenance

Before you even get in the car, you can take action to improve gas mileage. In the same way, you can improve the outcome of conversations with some up-front prep.

1. **Keep tires properly inflated.**
Make sure you are paying attention to your own fitness for conversation. Practice listening. Stay informed about the key issues. Don't try to drive a conversation on re-treaded issues.
2. **Keeping your air filter and oil filters up to date and clean.**
Make sure you show up to conversations without all the "dirt" you've picked up from driving around in toxic meetings with others. Figuratively shake out your filters so you can be totally objective in the conversation.
3. **Reduce weight load by removing unnecessary objects from the vehicle**
Stop and dump old baggage before you start talking. Let the conversation be about now, not about what happened last week or last year when one of you was tired and cranky. That's past.

Once your trip/conversation begins, you might consider using these...

...Common Hypermiling Techniques

4. **If you can avoid turning the key, do so by walking, biking and/or taking public transportation**
Is this conversation necessary? Is there another way to accomplish what you want that will not do "damage" to the environment?
5. **Hold an Anticipatory Focus**
Watch carefully what others around you are doing and saying. How fast or slow is the conversation moving around you? How much 'space' do you have? Is that a hill coming up -- then get ready to press the gas a little, but also be ready to let go and let the situation unroll downhill as you give others a chance to speak.
6. **Know and Plan your local routes**
You likely know the hot buttons and motivators for the people you speak with most often. Plan to avoid trigger issues unless necessary, and take advantage of the smooth spots on



the conversation route to help you make good progress – share appreciation, express admiration or gratitude, bring up subjects THEY like to talk about.

7. Avoid or minimize braking

If you are paying close attention to where others are in the conversation, you can avoid having to make sudden stops or fast turns.

8. Avoiding quick accelerations and decelerations

Even if the topic is important and urgent to you, it may not be to others, so plan to allow time in the conversation for a little chit-chat before you dive into your main topic. This gives others time to let go of what they were doing and connect with you in the conversation. On the other end, be sure to wrap up the conversation on a positive note.

9. If the engine is not doing work, shut it off

If you don't have anything useful to say, shut up and Listen! A quiet engine allows other sounds to come through more clearly.

10. Avoid additional gas wasters like running the air conditioning and driving with the windows down

In conversation, focus on one thing at a time. Avoid trying to fit too much in to a single conversation, especially if you're asking someone else to do something for you. One thing they'll remember, maybe two. If you cram too much in, you'll dilute the main message and drive down conversation efficiency!

Hypermiling can be fun, and using some of these techniques – consciously – in conversation can lead to more positive outcomes and more happiness for both you and those who connect with you every day!

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The 13 Principles of Happiness inform much of my work. If you'd like to download a 1-page summary of all 13 as a reference, you can do so here:

<http://www.theexecutivehappinesscoach.com/happiness/philosophies.cfm>

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## II. IN THE WORKPLACE: USE PULSE AND GLIDE

When the workplace gets busy, many managers push the gas pedal all the way to the floor and drive at maximum speed all day. This gets them farther, perhaps, but their conversational efficiency is terrible! They miss a lot when every interaction is at high speed. Meanwhile everyone else is so busy staying out of the way that a lot of energy gets wasted on conversation avoidance (“stay away from Chris today – talk about hyper!!”)

Pulse & Glide is a hypermiling technique for use in busy traffic. The idea is that after you accelerate you take the speed up just bit higher, then ease up on the gas and let the car glide on the flat or down hill areas with no or minimal pressure applied to the gas pedal.

With a pulse and glide approach to interaction, there will be times when you can and should focus on acceleration and fast forward movement. But then there are times when you just need to let go of speed and focus on quality and even a little relaxation in your conversation.



Sure, it may not feel “productive,” when you’re up to your neck in project deadlines, to have a conversation with Sue about her new puppy, check in with Kenisha about the class she attended last week, or chat with Ramon about his love of gardening; but think about how much harder YOU work for a boss who shows they care about you!

**Remember: Leadership is not about a title.** Anyone can be a leader who knows how to slow down, pay attention to others, and do everything they can to increase the effectiveness of conversation!

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### III. HAPPINESS: WEB 2.0, CONTINUED

#### Join the Happiness Conversation!

Here are some of the topics you’ve missed at [Life With Happiness](#) over the past few weeks.

- Happiness is just being alive and well
- Happiness is cool nites and dinner on the deck!
- Don’t Watch TV! (well, maybe a little...)
- Happiness is in the air
- Happiness is a hot shower
- Happiness and The Joker
- You can manage your stress
- Sometimes you just have to make the decision to be happy
- Who am I to be happy?

I invite you to join the conversation. You can [subscribe via email](#) or [set up a feed thru Feedburner](#) from whatever reader you choose. I’d love to hear from you.

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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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