



Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter Edition 47: Happiness Tips for Turbulent Times

1,482 words of content -- approximate reading time required: 5.92 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. SPREAD THE WORD: Please forward to a friend who needs more happiness.

Join the Happiness Conversation several times each week at www.LifeWithHappiness.com

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I. HAPPINESS TIPS FOR TURBULENT TIMES

Yikes! Between all-time high gas prices, the meltdown of financial markets, the loss of value in our retirement savings, and the proliferation of nasty, fear-based political ads, it feels like Happiness is under siege!

I'm in the same boat as most of you: I'm not a financial advisor; I don't dabble in oil futures; I cannot predict the future; and I wish just as much as you that politicians would talk about what they will DO rather than how terrible their opponent is.

SIGH.... What's regular folks like us supposed to do while our representatives in Washington DC are "fixing the problems?"

Don't Panic

First of all, don't Panic. I still remember the definition of panic from my Red Cross lifeguard training back in my teens: **Panic – a sudden, unreasoning, and overwhelming fear that attacks in the face of real or perceived danger.** In these times, the "danger" for most of us is more in our heads and hearts than it is real. So keep things in perspective: the house is not on fire, the children are safe, there is food in the pantry and a roof overhead, and we all know that stock markets always cycle down and then back up again. Remind yourself that once this crisis passes, you're probably going to be OK, even if your bank changes ownership. So avoid rash action.

When your heart rate goes up and your hands get sweaty, take a few deep breaths and wait for the feeling to pass. I promise you, it will.

Meanwhile, I offer some ideas to help you find some happiness in your world.



Tips to Nurture Happiness in Turbulent Times

If we want stronger muscles, we go to the gym to work out. If we want more resilience in our emotional selves, we must improve our awareness of the world. Here are nine exercises that will strengthen your “positive emotional muscles.”

1. **Practice Gratitude.** Keep a list of what brings you joy. SAY “thank you” more often. Think about what you’re grateful for as you drift off to sleep each night. Gratitude is the most powerful of all the ‘positive emotions’ and will strengthen your ability to feel optimism, hope, or happiness.
2. **Look for Light in the Darkness.** Picture the Yin-Yang, which symbolizes the opposite forces in life: light and darkness, good and evil. Nothing is pure – there is darkness in the light, and light even in the darkness. What is GOOD right now? E.g. interest rates have dropped, and voter registrations are up across the country.
3. **Inventory Your Life.** You may already have a list of problems, projects, tasks, and concerns. These lists help you stay organized. But let’s face it, if you spend all day looking at what’s INcomplete and UNdone you can get pretty frazzled. For balance, keep a list of what you complete, accomplish, and address. Accomplishments and Incompletions both exist – which you focus on *more* will frame how you feel about yourself and your work.
4. **Escape into a Good Book or Movie.** Really! Research has shown that the warm, fuzzy feeling we get from watching a film or finishing a book with a positive ending can temporarily elevate our mood for up to 48 hours after we finish. (Check out my [2008 Reading List](#) for some book ideas!)
5. **Tally your Friendships.** Instead of focusing on financial assets, take time to list all the important relationships in your life: family, personal friends, work friends, even the casual acquaintances that touch your life (like the cafeteria lady who always tells you to “have a blessed day!”). Relationships don’t lose value at times like these – they remain PRICELESS!
6. **Focus on Experience versus Expense.** Instead of suspending your monthly dinner group because you need to cut back, suggest they convert temporarily to a rotating potluck dinner. If you can’t afford a vacation away, plan a Staycation and become a tourist in your own town. Instead of buying cookies, grab some kids (or an adult who behaves like one) and bake the cookies. Remember to take pictures... and lick the spoon!
7. **Look for a Low-cost Option.** What if you don’t want to sacrifice the activity, but have anxiety about the cost? With a little research and some creative thinking, you may be thrilled to find you can still live your life AND save money.
~Dining out too costly? Many restaurants offer special deals – even high-end restaurants often post *prix fixe* (fixed price) menus that are fun and fabulous -- and don’t forget to look for *Kids Eat Free* nights if you’re dining with family.
~Watching a movie at home? Your local library offers top DVDs for free – as long as you’re willing to plan ahead a few days.
~Want to redecorate? Try the Redesign In A Day option – paint just one wall (something fun or dramatic) and rearrange the furniture to create a new flow through the room.





~Entertaining the kids this weekend? They'll enjoy an adventure in the local Metroparks (cost=\$0) even more than another movie with popcorn. You'll be happy to save money, plus you'll have a new story to tell!

8. **Turn Off the Media for a Few Days.** TV, radio, and newspapers offer a constant stream of fire, flood, famine, politics, and war. They say it's what sells, but only if you buy it. When you feel overwhelmed, turn it all off for a few days (or at least skip all News, talk shows, and commercials) and allow your emotional system to recalibrate without being constantly pulled down, down, down.
9. **Watch Your Language.** Pay attention to the stories you most often tell – both in conversation and in your own self-talk. Do you dwell on what's wrong or what's right? Are you Mr/Ms Doom & Gloom, or do you balance the scary stories with good news? Make sure you are not pulling yourself (and others) down by constantly talking about your fears and inadequacies and how you can't retire today. Stop it! You're not retiring for at least ten years anyway. Instead, share stories about what you got done, how proud you are of someone, or the good book you just finished.

Yes, I know – I'm suggesting you change some of your habits. What are habits except behavior you repeated over and over again until it became comfortable? If your old habits no longer serve you, create a few new ones and take back the control of your life, your mood, and your happiness.

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The 13 Principles of Happiness, which I wrote seven years ago, provide MANY ideas for dealing with today's tough times: take care of yourself; focus on your values, not possessions; choose your response to situations; pay attention to what you have; simplify; let go of what drains you, and so on.

Why not download and post a 1-page summary of all 13 as a reminder? You can do so here: <http://www.theexecutivehappinesscoach.com/happiness/philosophies.cfm>. Take care of you.

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## II. IN THE WORKPLACE: PEOPLE ARE WATCHING

In times of uncertainty, leadership is more important than ever. Notice how the conversation about the U.S. presidency has shifted from "experience" and "celebrity status" to "who is the better Leader?" And who is in the hot seat in this financial crisis? It's the people on top.

If you're in an organization, you're likely seeing the same shift. Who's in charge, what are they doing, what message are they sending, and is it helping?

People look to their leaders in troubled times, and they so desperately want to believe that someone has 'the answers.' If you're in a leadership role, people are watching you right now. And what are they watching for? If you're paranoid, you might think they are waiting for you to mess up. But most just want you to... LEAD!

So, be a leader! Provide inspiration. Say something that gives them hope. Create a vision or a strategy so that they will know you are taking them somewhere better – that the company or

