



Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter Edition 49: Holiday Happiness

2,090 words of content -- approximate reading time required: **8.34** 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.

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I. TIPS FOR HOLIDAY HAPPINESS

A recent *Saturday Night Live* skit revolved around a family of grown siblings gathered for Christmas Dinner. Their interaction moved from the sharing of warm moments and singing carols to screaming tirades based on sibling “issues” from childhood.

The humor came out of human moments. How many of us have a similar “love ‘em ☺/can’t stand ‘em ☹” relationship with parts of our family – one that surfaces when we are gathered for a shared meal or exchange of gifts?

The skit struck me as particularly relevant because I’ve had numerous conversations with friends and clients over the past couple weeks: adults in their mid-40’s who can’t seem to escape a relationship pattern that was established when they were teens; concerns over petty rivalries spoiling holiday gatherings; or discussing the dread they feel when they think about the holidays.

Hey, I’ve been there: I’m part of a big family. On one side, “intimate” gatherings involve 40 people ranging in age from 1 to 73, while on the other side of the family we mix up blended families and second marriages. Toss in a few crying babies and season with a sullen boyfriend who’s “bad for her,” and we are never at a loss for drama!

Are you one of those hoping to SURVIVE the holidays this year? Perhaps these will help:

Eight Tips For Holiday Happiness

1. **Take a Breath, On Purpose.** Breathing is the – let me repeat that, with more emphasis – THE most powerful tool you possess for helping you respond to stress-inducing

situations. When you take a breath – on purpose – deep into your body, you provide extra fuel to your brain (for quicker thinking), while you create an autonomic relaxation response in your body. Try it right now (I'll wait).

Ahhhhh.... Wasn't that nice? Now, practice that several times a day, every day, so your body knows how to do that when Uncle Harry reminds you – yet again – that your apricot roll will never be as good as Great-grandma's <grrrr>.

2. **Step Back.** When you find yourself at the edge of your nerves, take a step back. Literally. The physical act of pulling your body back helps your emotions also pull back from the edge. From a calmer emotional space, you can de-escalate the situation.
3. **Keep Your Wits About You.** If someone did or said that in the workplace, would you react the same way you do as when your mother does it? If you're like most people, you play by a more "professional" set of norms at work. I suggest that if you bring your Work Wits to a family gathering, you'll find it easier to respond appropriately, and then move on to the next conversation.
4. **Don't "Play To Win."** A good conversation is about the exchange of ideas. If you need to always Be Right – if your goal is to "win points" – you'll be spending lots of your holiday time trying to convince others to change their "wrong" opinions. Why? Unless they live with you every day, who cares? They're your relatives, not your competitors on Survivor!
5. **Keep It Light.** If you're like many people, you will spend a good deal of time selecting an outfit to wear to each gathering. While you're in the closet, pull down that Smile you keep in a jar on the shelf. And layer on a pleasant expression, while you're at it. If you arrive already tense and grouchy based on what happened last year, you'll guarantee a tough time. But show up in your best Smile, ready to laugh at cousin Ron's (very lame) jokes, and you may just enjoy yourself!
6. **Let It Go.** Yes, I know that cousin Judy really ticked you off by scheduling her wedding just two weeks before yours. But come on – that was 13 years ago! And are you EVER going to let go of resentment over what your little brother did to you when he was 17 and an idiot – before he got married and got responsible? Remember that forgiveness is a very powerful emotion; it does not erase the past, but it gives you permission to not let what happened in the past drag you down in the present. Let it go, and notice how much lighter and happier you feel.
7. **Hang Around With the Little Ones.** When you arrive at a family gathering that involves kids, share some of it with them. Chat with your teen-aged nieces and nephews and listen to their dreams. Allow yourself to be relaxed and real with a giggly four-year old. And while other people might engage in the drama, you'll have a lot more fun laying on the floor and looking at the tree from underneath!
8. **It's Not About The Gifts.** Really. It's not. You know that – I'm not telling you anything new. I'm just reminding you to tap into the wisdom you already possess. Focus on relationships and just being together. Notice your blessings. Maybe even convince the family to share something they are grateful for before you open all the pretty boxes. Best Buy's tagline is "You. Happier." With all due respect, you can't buy happiness in a box at an electronics store. ☺



III. CHANGE THE WORLD – READERS SHARE THEIR IDEAS

In last month's edition of HSOL, [Change You, Change The World](#), I offered 13 actions you can take, everyday, to make the world a better place. Each of these actions works like a pebble dropped in a pond – the ripples that move out from you affect everyone around you. As a reminder, they were:

Smile; Focus of what is right and good, not just what is wrong; **Focus on solutions, not blame;** Perform acts of kindness; **Say, I Love You;** Recycle; **Express gratitude;** Give Blood; **Keep your promises;** Forgive everyone, including yourself; **Visit someone who is lonely;** Mentor a young person; **Wear Colored Socks**

At the end I invited you, my dear readers, to share your reactions and your own ideas to change the world. I received several responses that were just too good to keep to myself!

Tom, a financial planner, wrote: *"Somebody told me years ago the power of sending someone a hand written note. It is even more powerful today since it is done infrequently. George Bush Sr. would send 10 every day. Cavs owner Dan Gilbert sends one to every employee on their birthday. I started sending 1 per day a couple of years ago and I did it for 2 months. I am committing to go back to that and keep it going."*

Gudron, who works in the Federal government, commented: *"There is no doubt in my mind that you are changing the world by sharing your gifts and making them available to anyone who wants to know. God bless you for sharing your gifts so generously. May you experience more blessings than you even know what to do with. You certainly make my heart smile! I really enjoyed your principle re: **Focus on what is right and good, not just what is wrong.** I so often say that I am thankful for all that is right, and sometimes even for the things that go wrong, for it is then that God shows me a new revelation!"*

Marian, a nurse manager, offered: *"I coach everyone on my team that whenever they have something negative to say – about a doctor or a patient – that they cannot leave the conversation until they tell me something good about that same person. I believe this helps everyone on my floor to keep a balanced perspective, and keeps the atmosphere a lot more positive to support healing!"*

Aisha, a banker, wrote a note of appreciation: *"This month's newsletter has especially moved me. I found myself in tears reading the article "13 Ways You Can Change the World". Over the past few months I have on a quest to be the best person I can be spiritually, mentally and physically. These 13 Ways are like a blueprint. I have been holding on to some baggage and it's time for me to do some forgiving. It's also time for me to start giving back to the world. Thank you so much for this newsletter!"*

Kevin, a retail business owner in Pittsburgh, forwarded the newsletter to his entire peer group with the following comment: *"As I read the opening poem, I realized that so often we wait to react to what others are doing, when in reality, if we just dig deeper into ourselves and change our attitude and actions we will influence change in other people's attitudes and actions as well. Treat people well and give them the experience and the sales will follow!"*

Michelle, a very successful realtor in Arizona (and a mother of five), commented on idea #13: *"Okay...you might laugh...I do focus on all of this stuff...except the colored socks. I am*

