



Happiness@ TheSpeedofLife

Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter Edition 53: Why Sadness Matters

1,281 words of content -- approximate reading time required: **5.12** 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. WHY SADNESS MATTERS

We just completed the season that includes two of the world's most solemn - and joyful - religious celebrations: Passover and Easter, both of which are tied to the first full moon of Spring. But this article is not about religion; it's about the birth of happiness through adversity.

Passover's pivotal event is the death of all the firstborn of Egypt, and ends with the birth of the Jewish nation as their people are released from slavery. Easter begins with a crucifixion and death and ends with the joy of rebirth. Spring starts with cold, snow, and rain and ends with the annual rebirth of trees, flowers, and vegetable patches.

The joy and happiness associated with each of these events could not be possible without the darkness that came before. Resurrection can only occur after death. Freedom means something entirely different to those who were once slaves. Spring blooms all the brighter after the long, cold death grip of winter.

So too, Happiness cannot exist without Sadness. If we did not experience moments of frustration, sadness, irritation.... why would we even care about feeling optimistic, content, or happy? It is the contrast between the 'down' and the 'up' emotions that makes the up so desirable.

I love to go walking in the quiet light of a snowfall in winter. But truly, my favorite aspect of Winter is that Winter makes Spring possible. I appreciate the brilliant yellows and purples and myriad shades of green so much more after living with the short days and unending grey of winter.



Hard Times Make the Good Times Brighter

Similarly, I love that the difficulties in my life have helped me to appreciate the good times so much more, when they occur. I believe this to be true in many areas of my life -- that the darkness makes the light appear brighter.

- For example, if I'd not experienced heart problems in my 20's, I would not appreciate my health nearly as much today.
- If we'd not lost a baby to miscarriage, we would never have taken the path to adoption that eventually added two more beautiful children to our family.
- If I'd not lost my youngest brother to cancer 15 years ago, I would never have attached such importance to the power of Positive Attitude.
- If not for having to 'coach' my wife through illness and anxiety two years ago, I would certainly not carry as much passion for the real power of coaching as I do.
- And if not for the death of my younger daughter four years ago at age 22, I would never have discovered the true power of happiness to build resiliency in people.

Certainly, I wish none of those events had occurred. Yet each of those dark times allowed something beautiful and powerful to emerge.

You see, just as we welcome Spring more enthusiastically after a bitter Winter, we feel some emotions more powerfully after we've experienced their opposite. Happiness and Joy are not possible without Sadness. Gratitude for what one has feels all the more powerful when one has experienced loss or scarcity.

Nature thus provides us with lessons on how we might keep our dark times in perspective: as the set up for what comes after.

Do This For Yourself

Think about how you hold some of the dark times in your life.

- How have some of those "winters" in your life helped create more brilliance in you?
- How have your losses contributed to building strength you did not previously know you possessed?
- In what ways do you see the world with different eyes, because you've witnessed tragedy?
- Most of all, how much more do you appreciate the happy times, because you've known sadness?

It's healthy to feel sadness after a loss; and often the more we lose, the more we learn to appreciate what we have. Sadness matters.

When you suffer a loss, a setback, or a difficulty, give yourself time to process the sadness, anger, fear, and grief. Once you've moved through that dark period, take a moment to feel grateful that you survived, and consider the ways that you are now stronger, smarter, more experienced, more resilient, and capable of seeing the world through new eyes.

And know that happiness is always available to you once you've reached the other side. ☺



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II. IN THE WORKPLACE: BIRTH PAINS

Based on the headlines of late, it’s a generally nasty time to be in business. And since most of us are engaged somewhere in the workforce, we’re often impacted by the grim hopelessness that some people exude.

On the flip side, I’m seeing some new messages popping up among the ceaseless headlines about unemployment rates and corporate closures. With increasing frequency I’m hearing conversation about new and better business practices, increasing attention to customer service as a differentiating factor, and in some companies, an explosion of innovation.

People often bring their best selves to a crisis. When resources are plentiful, we’re okay with maintaining the status quo. But when resources are in short supply, we start to become more creative. When what we’ve been doing is no longer working, we become more willing to experiment and try something new. This is human nature – to adapt in order to survive.

I believe that a new world order may be emerging from this simultaneous breakdown of our financial, climatic, and energy systems. But in order for that new world to be born, there will be the labor and delivery. There will be pain, screaming, high emotions, and even some blood. Birth is not pretty.

Yet when it is over, the pain is forgotten.

Frankly, I will be horribly disappointed if things go back to the way they were. I love that many individuals and organizations are re-tooling, examining their business practices, and reinventing themselves to cope with the newly emerging world order.

And I’m especially happy to witness the emergence of new leadership. The world needs optimists to help the rest of us see the possibility of a better tomorrow.

Remember: Leadership is not about a title. Anyone can be a leader who fosters hope in dark times and who champions innovation as a positive tool for weathering a crisis.

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III. THE 13 PRINCIPLES IN THE WORLD – COOL!

Shameless self-promotion:

Last week I attended a networking event with about 50 people. One of the participants opened up her portfolio to grab a business card, and I spied something familiar. On the inside cover of her portfolio she has pasted a full-page copy of my 13 Principles of Happiness.

“Oh, I carry this with me all the time,” she said. “They help me stay balanced.” How cool, I thought!

Not five minutes later I was chatting with another colleague who placed her planner on the table and... guess what was taped to the front cover of her binder? Yep, one of my *13 Principles of Happiness* bookmarks. “I refer to this daily,” she confessed.

