



Happiness@ TheSpeedofLife

Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter Edition 54: Happiness Factors: What's in YOUR Life?

2,428 words of content in a jam-packed edition -- approximate reading time required: 9.71 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. HAPPINESS FACTORS: WHAT'S IN YOUR LIFE?

"What causes Happiness, Jim?" Someone recently posed this question at the end of my presentation on Happiness. Hmm. I paused a moment before I responded.

Well, I began... I'm afraid I may disappoint you because my answer to that question is: Nothing. Nothing can 'cause' happiness to occur for us. Happiness is a response, for sure, but it comes from within, not outside of us.

Having said that, I CAN share with you some life conditions that affect our experience of happiness. I'm not saying these *cause* happiness -- rather, people who nurture these factors in their lives tend to report higher levels of Happiness than those who do not.

Four Factors That Correlate to Happiness

- 1. **Having Faith/Spirituality** – nurturing a belief in something beyond and/or greater than yourself.

First, let me offer a distinction between Religion versus Faith/Spirituality.

Religion refers to an organized institution with which one may affiliate, e.g. Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Sufi, Hindu, Greek Orthodox, Shiite Muslim, Reformed Judaism, etc.



Faith is a belief in something you cannot see or prove. **Spirituality** takes Faith a step further, and refers to one's belief in and worship of a higher power, e.g. Yahweh, Allah, God, Mother Earth/Nature/The Universe, etc.

It is possible to affiliate with a religion and have no spiritual life. For example, the person who attends services -- but never prays -- might be going thru the motions and yet still feel emptiness.

Conversely, it is possible to be spiritual without being religious. For instance, the person who belongs to no church may find great peace and joy when they spend time in nature. This feeling of peace can be just as powerful for the Christian, Muslim, Jew, or Hindi who goes to temple and experiences a connection with that higher power through ritual and prayer.

Making it happen for you: Spirituality requires attention and practice; you must give yourself the opportunity to experience awe, peace, and connection. Walk in nature. Try prayer. If one church does not meet your spiritual needs, visit others. Meditate. Do any of these often enough, and you will notice your sense of contentment grow stronger along with your spiritual practices.

2. **Being in Relationship** – having people in your life with whom you can be yourself and upon whom you can depend when the going gets tough.

Being in relationship means that you have friends or family members or coworkers who know you, accept you as you are, and who will listen to you and give you a hug when you need one...AND having people whom you care about and will do the same for

Note: This is not about marriage. The need to be in relationship begins when we are born, so it is a lifelong need. Besides, when it comes to marriage and happiness, the results are mixed – after all, 50% of marriages in the US fail, and in many parts of the world the marriage contract still constitutes a legal form of indentured servitude.

Making it happen for you: Nurture the relationships you are in. You must give, to receive.

3. **Connection to Community/Feeling of Belonging** – feeling connected to one or more groups where you share a common bond or interest.

Humans are, by nature, social beings. Church, civic groups, professional associations, volunteer organizations, prayer groups, AA or Al-Anon, book discussion groups, scout troops... these are all examples of affiliation groups that can fill our human need for group engagement.

My wife's Great Aunt Helen – who just turned 90 – is still connected with a group of girls who attended middle school together 75 years ago. The survivors still meet monthly, and they all credit the constancy of this group with having contributed to their long and happy lives. Very cool!

Making it happen for you: Get involved in a way that allows you to hang around with other people. Depending on which study you pick up, estimates are that between 50 and 70% of Americans volunteer or donate their time each year to an organization or cause. Volunteerism is a powerful way to fill this human need and feed your own happiness.



- 4. **Having a Sense of Purpose or Mission** – having a degree of clarity about why you do what you do. Being able to answer, “for the sake of What do I do <this>?”.

I’m not talking about needing to be in touch with your “soul purpose,” the reason you’re on the earth – though if you know that, you’re all set. But while many of us spend the first several decades of our life trying to figure our soul purpose, we can identify other short term drives.

For instance, going to school or holding a job might be for the purpose of caring for your family or establishing your career (even when the work itself is not your purpose). Or you might find purpose in what you do outside of work or simply in the way you focus your attention. For example, some find purpose in leading; others find it in doing high quality work; still others find it in being a nurturer; or in providing structure and support to others; or in manifesting creativity; or in being a great role model, connector, organizer, or listener.

Making it happen for you: Ask yourself, “What’s a gift(s) I have to offer the world, and do I have the chance to do so?” If you are not sure what gifts you bring, ask those whom you trust to share what they think. When I have clients gather such information from their friends, family, and coworkers, they are often (pleasantly) surprised to learn how others see their value.

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II. IN THE WORKPLACE: VOCATION VS JOB

To the four factors in the prior section, I add one more that relates specifically to work

- 5. **Vocation versus Job** – nurturing a connection to the broader purpose of one’s job, beyond just the wage-earning/task aspect of the work.

Every job has a broader context, if we choose to see it. The sanitation worker whose job is to clean the floors and empty trash in a hospital ward can see his/her job as a series of menial tasks OR as a vital part of creating an appropriate environment for healing. The former will enter a room with head down, shuffling dully through their tasks all day long, and leave exhausted at day’s end.

Their coworker, meanwhile, will enter each room with a bright smile for the patient/resident, make small talk as they empty the trash and swab the floor, and perhaps straighten out the cards and pictures hanging on the bulletin board or offer to freshen up the vase of flowers sitting on the windowsill. The latter individual, while completing the same sterile checklist, also connects to the human aspect of their role.

I saw a perfect example of this factor at work recently, as I stopped by my local US Post Office on the morning that postal rates jumped by 2 cents.

Two stations were open, staffed by two employees I know well, and who are polar opposites on the happiness scale -- let’s call them Mary and John.

Mary makes eye contact with people in line, invites them to her window, and always asks about how their day is going. Today, I saw her smile and kindly say to one woman, “yes, I know it can be confusing when the rates change. How about we take care of that package

for you?"

John, who grunts "Next!" without looking up, proceeded to bark at a customer who tried to mail something with insufficient postage ("didn't you read the sign on the door? Postage went up this morning!"), and then whined loudly to his coworker, "I hate the first week after an increase – all the bozos come out!" Keep in mind, the lobby was full of customers like me. Yikes!

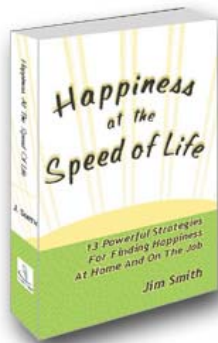
John appears to carry the mindset of a 'wage slave,' counting the days till retirement; Mary, on the other hand, clearly enjoys educating the public about mailing requirements so that their packages can arrive quickly and in good condition. She connects to the overall mission of the USPS and 'gets' that she works for a service organization.

How do you approach your job? Do you think about how what you do connects to the end customer, or how what you do makes a difference for others in the organization? If you feel unsure how to answer this question, consider chatting with a coworker or manager to explore and understand that connection. When you connect to the *meaning* of your job, you are more likely to enjoy it and to experience more moments of happiness and satisfaction while at work. And wouldn't that be nice for you?!

Remember: Leadership is not about a title. Anyone can be a leader who connects to the greater purpose of their job, shows up fully everyday, and shares their joy with coworkers and customers.

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III. HAPPINESS, THE BOOK – ARRIVES JUNE 1



After talking about writing a book for over three years, I finally did it! I am pleased to announce the arrival of ***Happiness At The Speed of Life: 13 Powerful Strategies for Finding Happiness At Home And On The Job.***

The book includes a collection of the "best of" my newsletters from the past seven years along with new material, organized around the 13 Principles of Happiness. This is the first time I've ever assembled in-depth reviews of all the principles in one place.

Cover to cover, the book offers over 110 tools and practices for strengthening your positive emotional 'muscles' plus several dozen workplace-specific practices.

The book will be available shortly after June 1 for purchase online. Meanwhile, if you'd like to reserve a copy for yourself, you can pre-order by clicking on the book cover on my home page (www.TheExecutiveHappinessCoach.com), or visit www.HappinessAtTheSpeedOfLife.com.

SPECIAL OFFER FOR MY SUBSCRIBERS: If you are one of the first 33 people to order a copy of Happiness through my website, you will receive a signed copy with a special message inside!

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The 13 Principles of Happiness can be used as powerful strategies for finding happiness in a turbulent world.

Why not download and post a copy of the 13 Principles on your work-station wall or on your refrigerator at home? You can download a 1-page summary here: <http://www.theexecutivehappinesscoach.com/happiness/philosophies.cfm>. Take care of you.

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## VI. SPEAKING OF BOOKS: SRL 2009 IS NOW OPEN



That's right; it's almost time for my TENTH ANNUAL Summer Reading List (SRL). Each year before I take my two-week vacation on the Atlantic shore I solicit ideas for great new reads that you've discovered over the past year. I'm looking for titles on coaching and business topics as well as great novels and frothy little beach books. I'm especially interested in new genres, etc, as my reading tastes are eclectic.\*\* I will check them out, make my selections, and then share the compiled list with all of you, so you can make your own

Summer Selections at the bookstore.

If you'd like to participate, please note the following three points:

1. While I welcome the new business titles, I have read very little fiction this year, so I am STARVING for some great new titles that will help me escape from reality. Please share what you've discovered!
2. I need your ideas by 5-29 -- the Friday following Memorial Day -- in order to give me time to research and get the list published along with the June 17 edition of this newsletter.
3. Please help me manage my Inbox! Make your Subject Line, [Summer Reading List 2009](#) or [SRL 2009](#). Include in the text three items: Full Book **Title** (including subtitle if you have it), **Author**, and one paragraph explaining **why you liked/recommend the book**.

\*\*If you are new to my SRL or want to get started early on your summer reading, you can find the past two years ('07, '08) on my [Archives Page](#).

I can't wait to hear your recommendations!

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## V. READERS COMMENT: MORE ON SADNESS

Last month's newsletter explored the value of some of our 'darker' emotions, reminding us that, *"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."* (To revisit the April edition, go here: <http://www.theexecutivehappinesscoach.com/newsletter/archives.cfm>)

I received many notes thanking me for validating the value of other emotions. A few snippets from the mailbox:

Paul wrote:

*"Hey, Jim, you hit a home run with timing on this one. We just found out that <my father-in-law> has metastasized cancer in his brain this past weekend. I have a feeling we'll be struggling to see*



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*the proverbial spring after the winter for a while (given that we're at the beginning stages of this battle), but I'm sure it will eventually show itself."*

Maureen's story, finally, spoke of sadness and happiness in the context of death of a loved one:

*"Jim, this newsletter re-connected me with the experience I had taking care of my 2 elderly parents as they slowed down in their life's journey and eventually passed. Most especially, I thought of my mother who had Alzheimer's.*

*It was, as you can imagine, very difficult for all of us to see the Mother we knew be "stolen" from us so slowly over time. It was most difficult for my Father as well as for my siblings. And while I had my struggles with her Alzheimer's and not remembering who I was...I was just simply able to still see her light, her humor and her strength, saying: "I'm here! Just look deeper."*

*Together, we discovered music as the key into her world, where we could connect. I have many happy memories of the time I not only spent with her, but how we were able to still connect. When she passed (literally as she was taking her last breaths) the song that she and I used to sing together, and also sometimes when her granddaughters visited, came on the radio in her room: "You are my sunshine."*

*My one niece, who was there with us when Mom passed, said it best: "I am so happy and so sad at the same time." I will never forget that moment, which for me included the circle of last few years of both happiness and sadness and so very much growth and strength.*

*As always, thank you, thank you and thank you some more. ~Maureen"*

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## VI. INSTRUCTIONS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Jim Smith, PCC, is The Executive Happiness Coach®. He is an executive and life coach, international speaker, and author. Jim provides inspiration and practical tools to help his clients build happier lives and more positive work cultures.

Join the Happiness Conversation at [www.LifeWithHappiness.com](http://www.LifeWithHappiness.com). Ask me a question on [LinkedIn](#), [Friend me on Facebook](#), or [Follow me on Twitter](#).

View past editions of this newsletter 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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