



Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter Edition 59: Charlie Watson's Rule

2,194 words of content featuring **33** specific ideas -- approximate reading time required: **8.78** 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. CHARLIE WATSON'S RULE

A friend of ours, Dr. Mary, is a General Practitioner who has patients of all ages and life stages in her medical practice. Mary recently shared stories about a number of elderly patients who inspire her, like the 99-year old who still drives to appointments or the 80-something great-grandma who just completed a marathon. These are stories of people who, despite age and sometimes disability, still carry a positive attitude about life and learned long ago to take everything in stride.

Mary grew more reflective as she shared a story about a long-time neighbor of hers who, at age 96, made a decision to sell his house and move into an assisted-living facility. She met Charlie for lunch shortly after his move and in the course of conversation asked him, "so, what do you know about life, Charlie?" Charlie Watson, by the way, had a long and successful career as an accountant and business owner. At the time of his move, he still played golf regularly, belonged to the local country club, stayed connected to his family, and was on sound financial footing.

How did he respond to her question? He looked at Mary and said, "I should have had more fun."

I should have had more fun

That's an interesting perspective from a man who spent the last 25 years in "retirement," eh? For the rest of the evening, we talked a lot about what Mary now refers to as "Charlie Watson's Rule." Our little group is comprised of four couples, all in our mid-50s and just about ready to have a "fun" life beyond our kids and paying college tuition...except that one of our members learned just six weeks ago that she had a growth in her brain, and two weeks ago underwent surgery to remove a tumor from the front of her brain.

So, when is the right time to start having more fun in life? Now. Right now.

How often do we delay fun because we are too busy, too serious, too involved in 'important stuff' to take the time? Ugh! We've bought into the notion that 'after this is over...I'll be happy.' So we

make our happiness and our fun dependent on some event occurring, e.g. *I know I'll be happy when...* I get promoted, I get married, I get divorced, I have kids, the kids move out, we get the house remodeled, I finish school, we get a bigger house, I lose weight, and on and on.

Focus on Today

Happiness Principle #12 says, ***Focus on Today: Waiting for something to happen "tomorrow" in order for you to be happy is like watching yourself in the mirror and saying, "You go first."***

So don't wait until you're too old, too sick, facing your mortality, or trapped by crisis to have some fun. Here are 25 simple (and inexpensive) ideas for having more fun, right now.

1. **Paint your front door.** We plan to paint ours brilliant green before the end of the year. From the Oct-2009 *This Old House*, 100 Easy Upgrades Under \$100.
2. **Go shopping in the house.** When you rearrange items (furniture, photos, decorations) from one room to another, you create a feeling of freshness in your home.
3. **Cluster things.** Build groups of like items (e.g. candles, vases, photos) to create appealing visual spaces in your home. Cluster in odd numbers for maximum interest.
4. **Put fresh flowers on the table.** When we shop at the West Side Market in Cleveland, I take my final \$\$ (usu 5-15 bucks) and splurge on the biggest bouquet I can afford.
5. **Plant spring bulbs.** Pick up a bag of daffodils or hyacinths and plant them where you'll be able to see them from a window next March as the snows melt.
6. **Eat your dinner outside.** Whatever you cook for dinner, it will taste just a tiny bit better when you take your plate(s) outside onto your deck, balcony, or front porch.
7. **Watch the sun set.** Or the leaves fall, or the rain drop, or the birds gather at your neighbor's feeder. It's a lot more calming than anything on TV. And more real!
8. **Once a month, have a 'no electronics' night.** Or even once a week. If it has a plug or battery, turn it off for a few hours and enjoy the quiet. You can even use the space to read or have conversation.
9. **Let the kids cook.** Or at least help. Cooking can be a family affair that builds community, teaches kids about responsibility, and maybe nurtures a future chef!
10. **Eat dinner together.** Regardless of who cooks, sit down with your spouse, kids, kitten, dog, or visiting friend. Have your dinner in the company of others and you'll find you eat more slowly.
11. **De-stress your holidays.** Draw names from a hat and set a budget. Everyone will get a gift, but the focus will shift from "stuff" to family, which is a gift that gives all year.
12. **Start a dinner club.** Get a group of four or more friends together and start a quarterly (or even monthly) rotation. You can try new restaurants, or cook for each other at home.

13. **Watch an old movie.** Pop some corn and pop in a classic film on DVD. Sing out loud to *The Wizard of Oz*, or laugh out loud to *Some Like It Hot*.
14. **Play with a child.** Sit down on the floor and live in their world. Wear a funny hat, Have tea with an imaginary friend. Give voice to a stuffed rabbit. Hide under a table and pretend no one knows you're there. Imagine...
15. **Step out of your fitness routine.** Once a month, do something Different. Try a new class (Zumba, Hula Hoop, Tabata, Spinning) or a new time of day, a new speed, or a new piece of equipment.
16. **Rent a scooter.** On our recent trip to the Mexican Riviera, we abandoned all reason and set out over cobbled, narrow streets, dodging taxis and otherwise risking life and limb. What fun!
17. **Complete a goal.** Finish something you've delayed for awhile. Notice how good it feels.
18. **Get certified.** Take a class; learn something new. My 80-year old father-in-law attends seminars on Film History at the local community college. I just completed my SCUBA certification. Our brains love to be stimulated!
19. **Make a gift.** You know how 'cool' it is to receive a homemade card or gift? It feels even better when you're the giver. Design and print your holiday cards this year. Use your sewing, painting, woodcraft, or writing skills to create what goes in that gift box.
20. **Volunteer.** Give of your time – it makes you feel good to do good, and you can't put a price on that kind of joy.
21. **Look for beauty in common places.** Look up at the clouds. Watch a sunset from your own backyard. Admire wildflowers growing along the path or freeway. Beauty is all around you if you care to look.
22. **Read the comics page.** Or open that joke email from a friend. Practice laughter today.
23. **Wear purple. Or Red.** Or leather, or some other color, accessory, or item of clothing that's out of character for you. Be Bold for a day.
24. **For one day, Smile at Everyone.** Make eye contact and smile at everyone you meet for a day or a week. Pay attention to what happens – it's really quite amazing!
25. **Remember Charlie Watson's Rule.** A few days ago Cheryl and I got a call about tickets to the Notre Dame-Boston College football game on 10-24. We assessed that we 'shouldn't' go because we just came back from Mexico, and we don't really 'need' to go to a game. So we were about to turn down the offer, when Cheryl came into the room, looked at me and said, "Remember Charlie Watson's Rule."





We are heading to South Bend on the 24th. Thank you, Charlie, for reminding us to live our life fully, right now.

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The 13 Principles of Happiness offer strategies for living a happier life, right now. Why not post a copy of the original 13 Principles on your workstation wall or on your refrigerator? You can download a 1-page summary here:

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

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## II. IN THE WORKPLACE: WHY NOT HAVE FUN?

*All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. Proverb*

There are dreary jobs, for sure; and nearly every job includes some dreary tasks. But if you work in a job or a culture where Fun is a dirty word, you need help!

Having fun and working hard are not mutually exclusive concepts. I've personally worked at companies where employees were worked brutally hard... and where we partied just as hard. It was the moments of fun that helped us bond as a team and find the strength to endure the really intense work environment.

How might you create more fun in your workplace? Here are a few ideas to get you started.

1. **Trivial Pursuit (or Scrabble) Tournament.** This is a great short-term way to generate excitement, do team-building, and get people talking across departments. "Stay & Play at Lunch" is most effective during the nasty weather months. Even though most people will only be scheduled a few times, don't be surprised if they start hanging around as cheerleaders. To engage more people, have them enter in teams of 2-4.
2. **Candy dish on the desk.** Keep a small dish filled with rotating seasonal candy or snacky things (or whatever you can find on sale). It works on the same principal as a bird feeder – if you fill it, they will come to visit!
3. **Put up a Gold Star Wall.** Allow customers and coworkers to post compliments and kudos.
4. **Start meetings with a Fun Fact.** Trivia, company history, current events, whatever. Create a moment of laughter and you'll release endorphins that will help with the more 'serious' business on the agenda.
5. **Celebrate Wins.** When that new software rolls out, or the department hits a new high in transactions processed, make a (big) deal out of it.
6. **Two words: Pizza Party.** This is the most basic of all tools. If you're asking people to work late or come in on a weekend, choke up the funds to pay for some snacks. Or donuts, at least.



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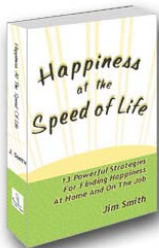
- 7. **Participate in a United Way drive.** There are many, many ways in which raising money for charity and having fun intersect. Your local UW rep can provide you a list of ideas.
- 8. **Let a Team make it happen.** Too busy to do it yourself? Pull together some energized employees, give them a mission ('help make this place more fun!'), and watch them go. You can give them a small budget or encourage self-funding (can you say, 'bake sale?')

Remember: Leadership is not about a title. Anyone can be a leader who shows others how to balance Fun and FUNction at work. When you foster a more positive culture, it leads to a better emotional and financial bottom line!

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### III. SHAMELESS COMMERCE DIVISION

New testimonials flow in every day from people who are fans of the book. Jo Ann wrote, "I took the book to a management meeting and read a passage out loud to share an idea for engaging employees. Now my boss wants to read my copy when I'm done!"



I'm thrilled to hear that Jo Ann used the book to improve her effectiveness at work. What's stopping you from doing the same?!

[Surf over to my website to order your copy](#) of **Happiness At The Speed of Life: 13 Powerful Strategies for Finding Happiness At Home And On The Job.** You'll get over 110 tools and practices to help you be more effective in your life and at work.

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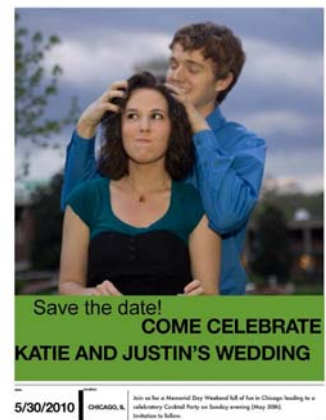
### IV. PERSONAL: A YEAR OF WEDDINGS

Justin and Katie sent out their Save The Date mailing at the beginning of October and so the countdown officially began. Children of the Internet that they are, it was an email of a pdf file, with a courtesy ground mail sent to a handful of the over-80 set who do not have a computer.

Because the bridal couple are currently living in Florida, and planning a Chicago wedding for their Cleveland and Pittsburgh-based families, with invitations going out to friends in over a dozen other states, electronic communication will be a very important part of the process.

I remember in my mid-20's when all my friends and siblings were getting married – it seemed like there was a wedding to attend nearly every month. Then it got very quiet for several decades.

Now my children, their friends, and the children of my friends are of marrying age, and we are back in the swirl. In 2010 we will travel to Toledo, OH on New Year's weekend, then to Chicago in May (that's for Justin and Katie), to Rochester, NY in July, and back to Toledo in September. That's a lot of dancing!





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## IV. CONTACT OR CONNECT

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 people build happier lives and build more positive work cultures.

All things Happiness Coach:

Blog: [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 <http://www.TheExecutiveHappinessCoach.com/newsletter/archives.cfm>

Contact Jim directly: <mailto:Jim@TheExecutiveHappinessCoach.com>

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**Happiness is a decision, not an event.**

**How will YOU decide today?**

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