



Happiness@ TheSpeedofLife

Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter Edition 73: Be Grateful For What You Have

2,184 words of content including four **Life-Shifting Gifts** and a powerful tool for leaders.
Approximate reading time required: **8.73** 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.

If you received this from a friend, [SUBSCRIBE](#) Now to get your own copy in the future.

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I. BE GRATEFUL FOR WHAT YOU HAVE

As I sat in my office last week, a police cruiser raced by in a commotion of flashing lights and sirens. A few seconds later an ambulance followed, then a fire truck.

I stepped outside to witness an enormous tower of thick black smoke billowing up from the house eight doors down. Engines from three surrounding cities soon joined the first truck. The inferno totally consumed the house and took three hours to extinguish. One of my neighbors, an elderly woman on a respirator, died at the scene.

Their house was identical to mine, so as I looked at its blackened remains I found myself reflecting on how I might handle such an enormous loss. I hope to never know. And in the midst of my sadness for their loss, I also noticed a deep sense of gratitude for the gifts that I have in my life. From that mood of Gratitude I offer you, my dear friends, clients and subscribers, Gifts of Positive Emotion for the New Year.

Gift #1: Be The Real You.

Notice all the places in your life where you feel distracted and stressed by how you're behaving. Happiness Principle #13, Be Authentic, reminds that when you stop trying to "play a role" to fit what you think other people expect of you, you give yourself the space to truly shine based on your real gifts and strengths.

One of my executive clients began a new job earlier in 2010, and spent the past couple months trying to figure out "what the heck happened" to the happy, joyful person she used to be. She went on holiday the week of Thanksgiving and, after relaxing with friends and family, she started to recover herself. And then the best part happened.



She spent a week+ in Sierra Leone on the horn of Africa, coordinating an enormous charity initiative for her organization. She lived in primitive surroundings, sleeping in 100F degree heat and 99% humidity. She had facilities to put on her “usual mask” so she spent her days sans makeup, hair curling in the humidity, and on some days without even a shower.

And when she called me last week, just hours after arriving home, **she described herself as “Happier than I can remember feeling in a long time.”** The ten days of “deprivation” had helped her get back in touch with that happy, joyful person she really is behind the “serious senior executive role” she’s been trying to play.

Gift #2: Use Your Power to Change the Weather

Don’t treat your emotions like the weather – something about which one speaks but does nothing at all to change. In other words, don’t assume that you have no control over your world.

One of the primary determinants of weather is the wind – the prevailing winds bring us hot or cold fronts, dry weather or precipitation. Every change in weather is preceded by a shift in the winds.

In similar fashion, you can change your personal “weather” – or emotional state – by engaging the power of your personal wind: your Breath. Breath high and shallow in your body and you can fall into depression or sadness. Speed up your breath to bring on the stormy weather of anger or fear. Or create a space of calm, predictable weather by pulling your breath deeply into your body and slowing it down. And notice how, when you change your personal weather, it spreads quickly to others.

Gift #3: Practice Optimism

As Martin Seligman (the father of Positive Psychology) realized decades ago, we can train ourselves into any number of emotional states. He first noticed the phenomenon of Learned Helplessness in lab animals subjected to random reward/punishment activities over which they had no control. When he replicated the experiments with humans he concluded that, if we can train people to feel helpless and hopeless, we can ALSO train them to feel empowered and optimistic.

You can train your Optimism “muscles” by working in several areas. First, notice what you focus on in language. Do you spend more time talking about what failed and what you expect to go wrong tomorrow, or do you spend more time focused on what you feel grateful about and what you expect to go well in the future? Keeping a gratitude journal or Joy List will help you retrain your brain to notice what’s right versus what’s wrong.

Then engage your body in the practice. Simple shifts can make a big difference. For example, when you walk or stand, do you look down at the ground and your feet, or do you look up at the horizon and the sky? It may feel strange at first, but try lifting your chin and looking ahead with a smile versus looking down and with a frown, and notice how your mood shifts. (note: don’t do this if you’re walking outside on an icy day!)

As you approach stressful holiday gatherings, make time to list your POSITIVE expectations for those events, and then practice showing up in confidence and with a smile. You won’t change how stressed other people are, but you’ll change how YOU feel. Plus,



emotions – like viruses – are contagious, so if you’ve practiced your optimism (or hope, or cheerfulness, or acceptance) you’ll show up in a stronger emotion, and you’ll infect others in a positive way.

Gift #4: Believe In Santa Claus

At my coaching group’s annual holiday gathering, we exchange used, gift-wrapped books. When your book is opened, you stand and tell the story of how that book impacted you. One woman’s personal story really touched my heart last week.

“My entire life,” she began “I thought happiness was a fantasy. All my friends kept telling me things like how our country is based on the right to happiness, but I just pointed out that only meant we could pursue it, not have it. I went through my life convinced it could never be something I’d have. Then one day a few months ago I was in a bookstore, and for some reason I picked up this audio book because the title spoke to me. [jim’s note: the book is Become Totally Positive Auto-matically (while you drive)]

I listened to it for a few days, and after it was done I realized, ‘you know what? I actually feel happier.’ And for the first time I believed that maybe it really IS possible to feel happiness!”

She went on to say how much her life has shifted since she started believing in Happiness and that it was available to her. She came up to me after the meeting to speak some more (she said that my title, The Executive Happiness Coach, sort of jumped out at her!). She shared that many people in her family suffer from depression. She, herself, has never been diagnosed with depression but because she grew up in a family where happiness was always considered an “Impossible” goal, that’s what she believed.

Happiness was, for her, as unreal as Santa Claus. Now that she believes in Happiness, she has more energy and enthusiasm for life. And hope -- for a happier future.

So believe in Happiness, my dear readers. Know that my fondest wish is that you accept and honor the great power you have to change your life by changing how you respond to what happens around you.

And have a Merry Christmas and bring joy to any holiday you celebrate!

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The 13 Principles of Happiness can provide a framework for living a happier, gratitude-filled life. Visit <http://www.theexecutivehappinesscoach.com/happiness/philosophies.cfm>, where you can also download a colorful 1-page PDF Poster. Post it on your workplace wall or your fridge at home, and use it to coach yourself and others to Choose Happiness.

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**II. IN THE WORKPLACE: THE GIFT OF GREAT EMPLOYEES**

**Last week one of my clients told me that he was stunned by the resignation of a star employee --** a woman he’d been developing for an executive role, possibly even as his





**My wife and I experienced a veritable tidal wave of Bookmark Events in 2010**, and we feel incredibly grateful to have had so many opportunities to share with friends and family.

**Exactly one year ago my wife was diagnosed** with a “Massive posterior parietal occipital **menigioma** with extensive invasion of the superior sagittal sinus with local obstruction, mass effect ventricular system” – in other words, an enormous brain tumor. On December 24 she had brain surgery to remove 99% of the mass (it was not malignant), and in August she had Gamma Knife Surgery (high-intensity laser radiation) to kill off the remainder.

**We are intensely grateful for the quality of healthcare to which we have access in Cleveland.** She was back at work by mid-February, in time to provide service to 95% of her tax clients. Brain surgery, by itself, was enough to keep us full of stories for the year. As it turned out, that was only the beginning – in fact, in May, we could barely catch our collective breath.

**First, our youngest son, Jared, graduated from Kent State University** with his degree in Marketing, and was one of the fortunate 1 out of 4 college graduates to land a professional level job. (thanks, Enterprise Rent-A-Car!)

**Over the next two weekends our older son, Justin, was married to Katie** in a beautiful outdoor ceremony on the north shore of Lake Michigan, followed by a party/reception in Chicago on Memorial Day weekend to celebrate their marriage.

**Then in September we upgraded our status to Grandparents** as our daughter and son-in-law, Kelly and Paul, welcomed Jonathan Wesley into the family.

**In little pockets between these Bookmark Events we took short vacations** with family and friends, and on several occasions hosted house guests as people came to town to visit in the wake of these various life events.

There may have been times in the past year when we felt stressed and lacked sleep... but **we never lacked for Gratitude and Happiness!**

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**IV. SHAMELESS COMMERCE DIVISION**

- **Fill their Stockings with Happiness:** Over 110 practices for building your Positive Emotional muscles, plus dozens of practices specifically for the workplace: [Happiness At The Speed of Life: 13 Powerful Strategies for Finding Happiness at Home and on the Job.](#)

**Here’s a recent testimonial about Happiness:**

*“... it seems like ages ago that I was truly happy and worry free. Over the years life got me into the autopilot mode and I forgot what was important in my life. Time passes by that I have taken things for granted ... including the people that I care so much about, and I forgot to notice the little happiness that surrounded me. You know, I felt that God has a mysterious way of sending his angel to help me when I desperately need some guidance ... and you came to my rescue at the right time. You reminded me of how I want to live my life, and to be true to myself. I just want you to know that I truly appreciate you. Thanks again for this wonderful book!” ~Chad C, Wash, D.C*

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**V. CONTACT**

Hi, I'm Jim Smith, PCC, The Executive Happiness Coach®. I work with smart, successful people like you, who secretly struggle with overwhelm, negative self-talk, and fear of more success. I help you become a better leader by "holding up a mirror" to show you where you are now, helping you paint a clear picture of a better future, and then supporting you **as you build powerful new behaviors that transform how you "show up" in your life and work.** You will achieve more clarity, build broader leadership skills, and expand your capacity to LEAD your life on a MUCH bigger stage!

I have helped thousands of leaders and business owners just like you to increase effectiveness at work AND live a happier, more balanced life. I invite you to contact me for a free Leadership Strategy Session to learn how you can create **a less-stress leadership presence.**

Reach me directly: <mailto:Jim@TheExecutiveHappinessCoach.com> or +1-440-885-3247

**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>

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**Happiness is a decision, not an event.  
How will YOU decide today?**

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