



Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter
Edition 86: Are You a Maximizer?

862 words of content including **four tips to reduce anxiety, and a free assessment of your decision-making angst.** Approximate reading time required: **3.45** 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.

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I. ARE YOU A MAXIMIZER?

We were waiting to pay for our groceries and realized we'd forgotten the pasta for that evening's dinner party. I raced back down the aisle and... um... did you know there are over 50 different options for linguini alone? Which will our guests most prefer? Egg-free, whole wheat, organic, tomato or spinach-infused, fresh or traditional, generic or brand name...??

By the time I returned to the checkout I was in a state of high anxiety from trying to make The Best Linguini Decision. "Don't ever send me to the pasta aisle alone," I begged my wife. She just shook her head.

We're like this with clothes, too. If I need new pants they must be The Best Deal, so I check ads for sales, visit every rack in at least three stores, try on numerous pairs, then (finally) choose. Cheryl, on the other hand, will visit one store, try on maybe two pair, and buy one. Done.

Maximizer versus Satisfier

When it comes to making decisions we all fall somewhere along the Maximizer-Satisfier scale. (to find where you land, [take this assessment](#))

Maximizers need to be assured that every purchase or decision they make was the BEST possible. Yet how to know if any given option is the best? Research. Get more data. Delay the decision. Talk to friends. Make the decision, but... then worry about whether it was the absolute best choice.

Satisfiers simply want to make a GOOD decision. Like Maximizers, they set out to meet specific criteria in their decisions and purchases. The difference is that Satisfiers seek excellence, yet don't obsess over achieving the Absolute Best. Once they make a decision that is good enough, they never look back.

Let Go to Feel Happier



A continual focus on making the absolute best decisions can be a core talent but, like any strength, can become a weakness when overused. We live in a world of seemingly infinite choices anymore. If you are unaware of your own drive to always make perfect decisions, you can end up generally unhappy because you're constantly shy of a near-impossible standard.

Other ideas to help Maximizers reduce the anxiety of decision-making:

1. **Choose when to choose.** Decide to restrict your options when the decision is not crucial. For example, make a rule to visit no more than two stores when shopping for clothing.
2. **Learn to accept "good enough."** Settle for a choice that meets your core requirements rather than searching for the elusive "best." Then stop thinking about it.
3. **Don't worry about what you're missing.** Consciously limit how much you ponder the seemingly attractive features of options you reject. Practice by focusing on the positive aspects of the choices you make.
4. **Temper expectations.** "Don't expect too much, and you won't be disappointed" is a cliché. But that advice is sensible if you want to be more satisfied with life.

I hold high standards for my work, but have learned that striving constantly to create perfection is not only exhausting but it tends to feed my procrastination. To counter my own Maximizer tendencies, I've asked others for advice. Now, when I am working on non-critical project I remind myself that "80% is good enough," and when it comes to meeting deadlines, I consider the words of thought leader [Seth Godin](#), "Done is better than perfect!"

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Speaking of perfect, [The 13 Principles of Happiness](#) provide a perfect framework for living a happier life. [Download a copy](#) to post at your workplace or on your fridge at home.

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**III. IN THE WORKPLACE: WHAT, NOT HOW**

**The Maximizer in your can make a great manager when you leverage your thoroughness, are careful about decisions, and hold your teams to high standards.** On the extreme end, however, you can come across as a controlling perfectionist who is impossible to please and who overanalyzes everything.

**Satisfiers' strengths as managers can be your flexibility, your speedier decision-making, and your willingness to set general criteria without obsessing about the details.** If your Satisfier is on steroids, you may be too willing to settle quickly, fail to review decisions made, or accept mediocrity.

**The best leaders recognize that a balanced and flexible style works best.** Sometimes the project or decision really IS important, and in those circumstances it is important to follow the details closely and progress carefully at every stage. Let's face it, though – most of the work done in organizations needs to be done well, not perfectly.

**So the best approach, which lies halfway between Satisfying and Maximizing,** is to work with your team to set very clear expectations about outcomes and deadlines – the WHAT you



want – but then leave the smart people you hired to identify the path they will follow -- the HOW -  
- to meet those expectations, without you watching over their shoulders or demanding perfection  
at every step

**Remember, Leadership is not about a title:** Anyone can be a leader who adjusts their  
decision-making style based on the relative importance of a the work – knowing when to hold  
high standards and take it slowly & carefully, and when to allow flexibility and focus on progress  
vs. perfection.

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**III. ABOUT THE COACH**

Hi, I'm Jim Smith, PCC, The Executive Happiness Coach®. **I work with smart, successful  
people like you, who secretly struggle with stress and overwhelm as you strive to succeed  
at the next level. I help you become a better leader AND dump the stress.**

*At the end of a recent coaching session, one of my clients exclaimed,  
“Jim, you are like the Fred Astaire of coaching!”*

Well, I'm not a dancer, yet I invite you to engage in the Dance of Coaching! I have helped  
thousands of leaders and business owners just like you to increase effectiveness at work AND  
live a happier, more balanced life. [Contact me for your free Leadership Strategy Session](#) to learn  
how you can create a **less-stress leadership presence.**

If you received this from a friend, [SUBSCRIBE](#) now to get your own copy in the future, plus you'll  
**get a valuable leadership report!**

**All things Happiness Coach:**

Blog: [www.LifeWithHappiness.com](http://www.LifeWithHappiness.com). Connect on [LinkedIn](#) or [Facebook](#)

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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[www.TheExecutiveHappinessCoach.com](http://www.TheExecutiveHappinessCoach.com).”* If you choose to do otherwise, I will be very unhappy  
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