

# **The Happiness Solution Newsletter**

**December 2006**

## **Quote of the Month**

I like living. I have sometimes been wildly, despairingly, acutely miserable, racked with sorrow, but through it all I still know quite certainly that just to be alive is a grand thing.

-Agatha Christie

## **Thought of the Month**

Too many people are having near-life experiences.

## **Haiku of the Month**

street violinist –  
on his old top hat  
the snow gathers

## **Story of the Month**

### **“All In the Family”**

Decades ago, we began to hear about the concept of the dysfunctional family. Those were the families where people were enmeshed or estranged or had relationships with each other that didn't support psychological health and well-being. Some families reeked of symbiosis and over-dependency; others of detachment or aloofness. Subtle patterns of verbal and emotional abuse characterized many family relationships. Sometimes it was physical or sexual abuse. Lots of families had secrets. In other families, you may not have been allowed to have or express certain feelings or engage in certain behaviors without there being a significant price to pay. That price may have been an expression of anger or the withdrawal of love from a parent or parents. Family members would try to make other family members guilty so as to be able to control their behavior. And so on and so on and so on.

Of course, we all wanted to have the family that Norman Rockwell painted, showing the holiday dinner where normality reigned supreme, all were happy, and life was good. If we compared our family to that one, we knew that there was something wrong with ours. Here's what I think: Norman Rockwell should have painted the dysfunctional family. That would have been more realistic. Monogamy is difficult. Witness the divorce rate. Parents have had little to no training in raising children, and learn as they go. We all know about Cain and

Abel and sibling rivalry. Family alliances within families can be divisive and destructive. Parents are just ordinary people with their own idiosyncrasies and issues. Just because blood is thicker than water, it doesn't guarantee unconditional love, fair treatment, kindness or compassion.

All of this is to suggest that the dysfunctional family may indeed be the norm. If you've been fortunate enough to have a non-dysfunctional family, you've been quite lucky. If you've had a dysfunctional family but you've survived pretty much intact, you're also quite lucky. If you haven't been so lucky, keep trying to come to terms with what happened. You may have to forgive him, her, or them. You may have to forgive yourself.

Forgiveness is the price you  
have to pay for freedom.  
-Tom, student of Silvia Boorstein

## **Announcement**

I am pleased to report that my latest book, *The Happiness Solution: Finding Joy and Meaning In An Upside Down World*, was chosen as the "Best Mental Health Book of 2006" by USA Book News.

## **Need a Holiday Gift?**

If you'd like to give the book as a holiday gift, I'd be happy to sign each copy and ship them to you free of charge, in time for the holidays. You can order at [www.thehappinesssolution.com](http://www.thehappinesssolution.com) or by emailing me at [DrGettis@aol.com](mailto:DrGettis@aol.com). Or, you can call toll-free, 888-782-3500.

## **On a Personal Note**

My books and newsletters are personal. I have no editors, screeners, webmasters, or staff. All of your correspondence comes directly to me and will be answered by me. Please feel free to email me with your thoughts, concerns, ideas, issues, and so on. I'm looking forward to hearing from you. I'd like to think of this as our newsletter. Please bear with me. This newsletter is in its infancy and is a work in progress. You are receiving this free e-newsletter because you signed up for it. If you would like to opt out for any reason, just email me at [DrGettis@aol.com](mailto:DrGettis@aol.com) and write the word "unsubscribe."

With warm holiday wishes,  
Alan Gettis

P.S. – The website has just been revised. Check it out at [www.thehappinesssolution.com](http://www.thehappinesssolution.com).