

The Happiness Solution Newsletter

March 2007



Quote of the Month

**“The first drafts of love are usually in need of considerable revision.”
-Michael Vincent Miller**

A Bit of Humor?

Albert Einstein was a very late talker. At the dinner table one evening, he finally broke his long silence: “The soup is too hot,” he complained. His parents, greatly relieved, asked him why he had never spoken before. “Because,” he replied, “up to now everything has been in order.”

Something To Think About

A take off on the Garden of Eden parable story has it that when Eve ate the apple, God decided to make it difficult for humankind to be happy. He thought of hiding happiness at the bottom of the ocean, but realized people would dive to the ocean bed to find it. Then, he entertained the idea of putting it in the most remote corner of the world, but quickly ascertained that they would travel to the end of the earth to seek it out. He then thought about putting it on the world’s tallest peak, but instinctively knew they would climb the highest mountain in search of it. Finally, he knew what to do. God said, “Ah. I’ll put happiness deep inside each human being. They’ll never think to look for it there.”

How Are You Feeling?

Circle a number after each question. The higher the number circled, the more true the statement is as it applies to you. When you’re done, add all the circled numbers.

- 1) I feel a sense of belongingness. 1 2 3 4 5**
- 2) I’m a friendly and warm person. 1 2 3 4 5**
- 3) I’m relatively healthy. 1 2 3 4 5**
- 4) I can laugh at myself. 1 2 3 4 5**
- 5) I have at least one friend I can confide in. 1 2 3 4 5**
- 6) I know how to relax. 1 2 3 4 5**
- 7) My life is going well. 1 2 3 4 5**
- 8) I’m satisfied with my family. 1 2 3 4 5**

9) I'm satisfied with my career. 1 2 3 4 5

10) I'm a generous person. 1 2 3 4 5

Interpretations:

10-20 You're depressed.

21-29 At the least, you're unhappy.

30-39 May be okay, but I doubt you're singing, "Zip a dee doo dah."

40-50 This is the place to be!

Research Summary

In the United Kingdom on October 2, 2005, the Sunday Times published an article titled, "So what do you have to do to find happiness?" Here are excerpts of interest:

When two psychologists studied hundreds of students and focused on the top 10% "very happy" people, they found that these people spent the least time alone and the most time socializing. Psychologists know that increasing the number of social contacts a miserable person has is the best way of cheering him up. When Jean Paul Sartre wrote "hell is other people," he was wrong. Research shows that happier people are healthier, harder working, more caring and more socially engaged than unhappy people. Unhappy people are more self-obsessed, critical, and less socially active.

"Never Say Never"

To feel discouraged at times is natural. After all, as I've said in many of my stories, life is hard. It's filled with things that don't happen the way we'd like them to happen. We always have to adapt to and deal with changes in our lives while we yearn for security and stability. Of course we'll get discouraged from time to time.

I think the common denominator to most emotional problems is a strong or chronic sense of discouragement. At my office, I have seen thousands of people who struggled with anxiety, panic, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorders, depression, bi-polar disorder, marital or job-related issues, family problems, grieving, and post-traumatic stress disorders, just to name a few. They are discouraged. They get stuck in their discouragement. My job is to do everything I can to help them get unstuck and feel better.

I tell them, "Don't think that the way you feel now is the way you're always going to feel." Discouragement brings with it a myopic tunnel or funnel-like vision. I remind them that change is a certainty. Some people find that comforting; others find it frightening. We work on getting them to think differently and behave differently. If they do that, the feelings will come

along for the ride. We don't want instant replay. If they're very discouraged and don't change their thoughts and behaviors, they'll just get the same day again and again. Groundhog Day! (I'm assuming you've seen the picture. If not, it's worth the rental.)

If you are stuck in a place where you're very discouraged, my advice to you is a bit paradoxical:

- Wait. This too shall pass.
- Do something. Think and behave differently. We're not interested in the status quo.

And keep in mind how resilient you are and keep going in the direction that is meaningful for you.

In 1898, young Albert Einstein applied for admission to the Munich Technical Institute – and was turned down. The reason? The young man, the Institute declared, “showed no promise” as a student.

By 1905, he had formulated his special theory of relativity.

The Nutrition Corner

The #1 variable associated with happiness is health. The American Institute for Cancer Research funded a recent study conducted at the Department of Medicine at Vanderbilt Medical Center in Nashville. It was clearly demonstrated that the brassica vegetables stimulate enzymes in the body that help remove oxidated carcinogens before they can react with DNA or cause damage to cells. In other words, they inhibit the spread of cancerous cells. Brassica vegetables include broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, kale, and cauliflower.

A different study looking at 61,000 Swedish women concluded that high levels of dietary magnesium are very protective against colon cancer. Good sources of magnesium include almonds, artichokes, avocados, bran cereal, cashews, halibut, sunflower seeds, spinach, tofu, lentils, green leafy vegetables, soybeans, and wheat germ. Oops. I almost forgot to mention that chocolate is also a pretty good source of magnesium. Enjoy.

Closing Thoughts

If you're not feeling as happy as you'd like to be, hang in there. Spring is right around the corner. Ah, light and warmth! Try to spend more time outdoors. Go for a walk with someone you love. Take it in slowly. Breathe deeply.

I'm considering posting emails from you on the website. If you'd like to write me with anything pertaining to my books or mental health in general or happiness in particular, I'd like to hear from you.

Keep believing in yourself and make the effort. Remember Michaelangelo's words:

The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it.

The stories on the website have recently been changed. Check them out:

www.thehappinsssolution.com

Best regards,

Alan Gettis

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