

The Happiness Solution Newsletter

February 2008

THE
HAPPINESS
SOLUTION



Quotes of the Month

"Enjoying the journey is more important than getting everything you desire. Once you get what you want, you just want something else that you don't have. Value the journey in and of itself. It is enough just as it is. You are enough just as you are."

-Alan Gettis

"It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

-Charles Darwin

My Two Cents

Wherever we go, we always arrive at the same place - Here and Now. Stop dwelling on the past or getting too far ahead of yourself by worrying about the future. Whatever you are thinking and doing now affects what will happen next. Tibetan monks believe that if you want to know your future, look at what you are doing and thinking about now. Between now and then, there is only now. Between here and there, there is only here.

Story of the Month

"2012"

Sylvia Boorstein writes of her father's seven year struggle with multiple myeloma, an incurable cancer:

One day, when his illness was quite advanced, his spirits seemed particularly flagging. The day loomed long before us, and I said, "Let's go to a movie." He looked at me, seemingly incredulous, and said, "You know, I'm *dying!*" I said, "Yes, I know, but not today." We saw *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. We both loved it. We had dinner at the Pacific Café, his favorite restaurant.

and,

When my father was dying, I remained at his bedside for his final days. The last few days of his life he was primarily in a coma from which he would rouse from time to time. We knew he was dying, and we were making him as comfortable as we could, waiting for his last breath. Every once in a while he would seem to breathe his last: his body would shake and he'd have the kind of apnea that people do when they are dying. I would hold his hand and say my prepared speech: "Go to the light" and "Now is your chance to get out of this body." I'm pleased that I did that; those are all the right things to say when someone is dying. ("You've done a good job in this lifetime." "Everybody loved you." "It's time to move on." "You don't need this old body anymore.") Each time he would struggle with his last breath, I would give him the speech again. Then he would relax and fall asleep, and I would go back to waiting. Very near the end, he began a siege of apnea, and I leaped to my feet, beginning my talk about "Go to the light." He opened his eyes, and he looked at me and said quite clearly, "You know, it's not that big of a deal."

But, of course, we do think and feel that death is that big of a deal. As I write this in 2008, there are many reports, television shows, and abundant websites devoted to Nostradamus and the forthcoming end of the world on December 21, 2012. Supposedly, the ancient Mayan calendar, the medieval predictions of Merlin, and the Chinese oracle of the I Ching all point to that date as being the end of civilization as we know it. When a 16th century "lost" book by Nostradamus was discovered at the National Library in Rome by journalist Enza Massa, the media and cultists and doomsday forecasters from all corners of the globe were off and running.

In case you're not familiar with him, Nostradamus was a French apothecary who evolved into a mystical seer and published prophecies that were vague and subject to varied interpretations. His elusive style in which he employed metaphorical and cryptic language may have been necessary so as to avoid persecution based on his beliefs. However, that same style has insured his immortality as people essentially interpret his writings as they wish, kind of the way a person looks at a Rorschach ink blot and tells you what she sees.

I wouldn't advise you to give a lot of credence to December 21, 2012 being the end of the world. On December 20th, it's probably not a good idea to tell off your boss, admit to your affair, go to confession, or eat ice cream, chocolate and french fries the whole day. The predicted end of the world has come and gone many times before. If you're going to think seriously about your demise, it will not be in your best interest if you become immobilized or consumed with fear.

In the cult classic, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, it was on a Thursday when the feeling was prevalent that the earth was about to be destroyed.

Barman: Did you say the world is coming to an end? Shouldn't we all lie on the floor or put paper bags over our heads?

Ford: If you like.

Barman: Will it help?

Ford: Not at all.

[Ford runs out of the pub]

Barman: Last orders, please!

Okay, so we all know that we are finite, mortal beings. We all know about death, but please make sure that you're living your life well and courageously. Don't sit around waiting to die with a paper bag over your head.

Recent Research

Dr. David Schkade, a University of Texas professor, published his research findings in *Science*, Volume 312, No. 5,782. He found that people who made \$90,000 yearly were much more likely to be "very happy" than those making

less than \$20,000 a year. But, there was virtually no difference in happiness levels between people earning \$50,000 and \$90,000. It seems that once you have enough money to satisfy your basic needs of food and shelter, and you're able to pay most of your bills, there's something more important than money in determining how happy you are. Dr. Schkade's study concludes that "...it comes down to how you are spending your time: Are you doing the things you would like to be doing?"

Surprisingly enough, it turns out that as people's incomes go up, they don't spend significantly more time engaged in leisure activities. What seemingly comes with the territory of making lots of money is an increase in responsibilities and time spent at or commuting to and from work-related endeavors. Take an inventory regarding how you are spending your time. It's probably more important than how you are spending your money. Are you spending enough time with your friends? Your family? Yourself? Are you spending enough time on hobbies, recreation, spirituality? And where are you overspending your time? If you are feeling stressed out and/or unhappy, carefully review how you are spending your time.

Nutrition Corner

The National Weight Control Registry is comprised of over 6,000 people who have lost at least 30 pounds and have kept it off for over a year. The registry was founded by Dr. Rena Wing, a professor of human behavior at Brown University Medical School. She summarizes these success stories. The people in the registry:

- eat a low calorie diet
- eat a consistent diet from day to day
- eat breakfast
- are very physically active
- watch only a limited amount of television
- weigh themselves frequently
- don't let a small weight gain become bigger

They gradually work themselves up to an hour of exercise daily. Walking is the number one activity. Many wear pedometers. In the course of a day,

they typically take 11,000 - 12,000 steps (roughly 5 ½ - 6 miles). They watch roughly 10 hours of television weekly - a third of what the typical American watches. They eat low fat diets and do not focus on low carb diets. Most weigh themselves daily at the same time. Food for thought.

Closing Thoughts

Valentine's Day is a commercial reminder to open our hearts and express our love. Give generously of yourself. Tell those who are important to you how much you love them. Go beyond a card. Show them. Hug them as if it might be the last time you ever hug them.

The stories on the website have been updated. Check them out at:

<http://www.thehappinsssolution.com>

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