

The Happiness Solution Newsletter

January 2007

Quote of the Month

The truth is that our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers.

-M. Scott Peck

Thought of the Month

This is a new year. It doesn't have to be "same old, same old." If you're not as happy as you'd like to be, don't just recycle your typical ways of thinking about and relating to yourself, others, and your day. Brainstorm. Decide to approach something or somebody differently than you typically would. Then, do it. Take action. Don't keep putting off. Don't wait for the perfect time. Act decisively and with wholeheartedness. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said, "Whatever you do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it." Have the courage to act. That's the 2007 action plan.

Recent Research

Since 1972, the Pew Research Center has surveyed Americans to find out what percentage consider themselves to be 'very happy.' The latest survey results point out that only a third of us (34%) consider ourselves to be very happy. The other two thirds consider themselves at least somewhat less than being very happy. Other findings of the survey include:

- Married people are happier than unmarrieds.
- People who worship frequently are happier than those who don't.
- Republicans are happier than Democrats. Although this is a non-partisan survey, this finding has held up every year since 1972, when the Pew survey began.
- 50% of those reporting a family income of \$150,000 or more claim to be very happy.
- There is no difference in happiness levels when considering gender.
- Young adults are less happy than middle-aged people or seniors.
- Retired men and women are equally likely to be very happy, as are working men and women.
- Single parents with children under 18 are among the least happy.
- Feeling healthy is the strongest predictor of being very happy.

My 2 Cents

Since being healthy is the variable most associated with being very happy, consider the following:

- (a) Make sure you've had a recent physical including lab work. For those of you over 50, don't forget tests such as PSA (men), Bone Density, Mammograms, etc.
- (b) I am also a nutritionist, so please remember to eat your fruits and vegetables, beans, whole grains, raw nuts, and omega 3 fish, and low-fat or non-fat dairy. Don't forget the multiple vitamin, extra calcium, magnesium, and vitamin D.
- (c) Walk or do some workout 3-5 times per week. You'll get those chemicals and brain compounds that are related to feeling good moving in the right direction.

Poem for January

Coffee With Milk

It is very deep to have a cup of tea
Also coffee in a white cup
with milk
a hand to go around the cup
and a mouth to open and take it in
It is very deep and very good to have a heart
Do not take the heart for granted
it fills with blood and lets blood out

Good to have this chair to sit in
with these feet on the floor
while I drink this coffee
in a white cup
To have the air around us to be in
To fill our lungs and empty them like weeping
this roof to house us
the sky to house the roof in endless blue
To be in the Midwest
with the Atlantic over there
and the Pacific on our other side

It is good this cup of coffee
the milk in it
the cows who gave us this milk
this
simple as a long piece of grass

-Natalie Goldberg

Story of the Month

“Let It Go”

There's something you're holding onto. It may be a fear, or a feeling such as anger. Whatever it is, it's not in your best interest to hold on to it. Holding on creates a physiology of stress. Picture holding on to the edge of a cliff and how your body would react as you continued to hold on longer and longer. Or, picture holding up a pitcher of water with one arm. The longer that you hold on to it, the more tension and stress accumulate. Holding it up for ten seconds is very different than holding it up for minutes or hours.

Holding on has its own unique biochemistry. In the animal kingdom, stress is dealt with by the classical fight or flight or freeze response. Animals attack or flee or become immobilized because of their fear. With humans, I propose a fourth F be added. When under stress, humans respond with fight or flight or freeze or fester. The holding onto is the festering. Holding on creates psychosomatic illnesses, real physical maladies that have psychological roots. This festering is the stuff that migraines, high blood pressure, anxiety, depression, and various gastrointestinal disturbances are made of, just to name a few.

The antidote to holding onto is to let it go. Learning to let go is an important principle of mental health. Whatever it is that you're holding onto is not worth it. It's too high a price to pay. Let it go and you'll start to create the physiology connected to relaxation. Whereas we had four F words connected to holding on, we have four R words related to letting it go:

**Release
Relax
Restore
Regenerate**

Letting it go leads to the release of the pent up emotions, which will help you to move into being more relaxed, which will restore your energy and equilibrium, enabling you to regenerate and feel markedly better. The suffering comes from holding onto. The solution comes when you let it go. Let it go and give yourself the freedom to be happier.

Closing Thoughts

I'm not sure if you've visited the website recently. If not, you'll probably find new stories there. Check it out: www.thehappinesssolution.com

I'd like to wish all of you a healthy and fulfilling 2007. Keep challenging your self-limiting thoughts and behaviors and practice the principles put forth in *The Happiness Solution*. There's no time like the present. What are you waiting for?

Happy New Year!

Alan Gettis

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