

The Happiness Solution Newsletter

June 2007

THE
HAPPINESS
SOLUTION



Quote of the Month

“I have accepted the complex notion that the contradictions in our lives will remain, and that in the midst of those tensions we must try to be happy and love the world.”

-Robert Hardies

A Bit of Humor?

When the new patient was settled comfortably on the office couch, the psychiatrist said, “I’m not aware of your problem. Please start at the beginning.” “Of course,” replied the patient. “In the beginning, I created the Heavens and the Earth...”

Recent Research

A study by Sonja Lyubomirsky et.al reaches some interesting conclusions. It seems that people aren’t happy because they’re successful, but rather that they are successful because they are happy. It’s not rocket science to understand that it’s easier to like a person who’s upbeat than it is to like a person who’s frequently down. And people who are down don’t get along as well with co-workers or bosses and have less job satisfaction. Happy people are more willing to take on challenges and are more inclined to seek out others and engage with the environment at large. Happier people are more open, less defensive, more able to laugh at themselves and are less hostile. The researchers conclude that happy people are more successful at work and in relationships, and are generally healthier than their less happy peers. Previous studies seemingly got it backwards by believing that being successful and having good relationships lead to happiness. Lyubomirsky and her colleagues believe that happiness comes from within – from the cultivation of a collection of thoughts, behaviors, and attitudes that then lead to more success in life. Their research suggests that reading *The Happiness Solution*, which in essence teaches happiness, would give you the opportunity to have better relationships and more life successes.

Interesting Articles On Happiness

“Unity Is the Key to All Happiness”

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/jun122007/city200706127001.asp>

Top 10 Health Tips

- 1) Eat at least a half-dozen servings of fruits and vegetables every day. Veggies are not just for dinner. Yes, as strange as it may sound, you can have vegetables for breakfast.
- 2) Take a multiple vitamin daily. Add extra calcium, magnesium, and vitamin D.
- 3) Practice developing a more positive outlook. Optimism, kindness, and generosity breed happiness.
- 4) Practice stress reduction. Consider yoga, meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery, etc.
- 5) Don't smoke, and avoid second-hand smoke.
- 6) Simplify your life. It's easy to become over-subscribed. Prioritize. Don't take on too much.
- 7) Stay hydrated.
- 8) Get fit. Develop an exercise routine that you enjoy.
- 9) Wear your seatbelt.
- 10) Get an annual physical, complete with comprehensive blood tests, a urinalysis, and an EKG. Find out what other tests are indicated for someone your age, i.e., bone scans, colonoscopies, PSA, etc.

Stories of the Month

"Take It Easy"

I have a message that I want you to get. Slow down. That's it. That's the message. I have noticed that in essence, I'm a different person when I'm not in a hurry. I take more time to talk to people, drive a bit slower, take a little more in than I usually do and hum a pinch more. I won't race to get into the post office before the person coming from the opposite direction and I won't tailgate or curse at the driver in front of me. I'll spend a little bit more time with people on the phone without feeling harried or put upon. All this seems to happen when I'm not pressed for time.

Studies have been done in the field of social psychology to get at this phenomenon. Researchers have enlisted the help of actors to simply lie on the ground as if they had passed out or were hurt. In large cities during the morning rush to get to work, a very high percentage of pedestrians walk right by or over the person lying on the sidewalk without stopping to assist the person or assess the situation more closely.

The percentage of people stopping to help increases in non-rush hours and it also increases in suburban areas where life may be a little less hurried. It seems we are all somewhat nicer and more concerned when we are not rushing around. Yet, many of us create such busy lifestyles with non-stop agendas that it's almost as if we don't have the time to feel as good as we can or be as nice as we're capable of being. Try to slow down a little and take things as they come.

I'm reminded of the story of a man who puts on a coat that he hasn't worn in three years. In the pocket he finds a shoe repair ticket. He goes to the shoemaker and silently presents him with the old ticket. The shoemaker takes

the ticket with him into the back of the store and emerges a few minutes later. Handing the ticket back to the man, the shoemaker calmly said, "They'll be ready Tuesday."

Slowing down is learning how to stop and smell those proverbial roses. It's taking the time to enjoy, appreciate, and savor the "miracles" of our ordinary lives. Where are you rushing to anyhow? Take it easy. Your happiness depends upon it.

"Junk Mail"

Neurosis refers to a condition in which the individual is unhappy and worried much of the time. The great theorist, Alfred Adler, once said that, "Neurosis is largely a matter of attention." Recent studies conducted at the University of Georgia Psychology Department support Adler. The findings show that people with social phobias do not disengage their attention from socially threatening ideas. Rather, they indulge the ideas that point to the likelihood of their being rejected, embarrassed, humiliated, or ignored. Another recent study presented in the international journal *Behavioral Research and Therapy* further confirmed Adler's premise. Research stemming from the Department of Psychology at San Diego State University focused on what highly anxious people attended to. It turned out that the negative meta perceptions of those with social anxiety were more a function of their own self-perceptions than the negative perceptions of others.

When you are feeling unhappy or anxious, remember to ask yourself, "What is it that I've been paying a lot of attention to that's contributing to my feeling this way?" If you were listening to music on the car radio and determined that it was quite grating on your nerves and in fact, was irritating and un-enjoyable, you would change the station. You wouldn't try to bring it in clearer or turn up the volume. You'd simply change the station until you found one that played music more suited for your enjoyment. That's what you need to practice doing with your attention. What you do and do not attend to will definitively influence how you feel. Pay attention to what nourishes you and keeps you hopeful and inspired. Don't cling to or pay undue attention to self-defeating and dispiriting messages. Change the channel.

When junk mail arrives, you don't need to open the envelope and read its contents in order to identify it. It's obvious. There are the bulk mailing rates, advertising propaganda, and the not so unusual address label marked "occupant." Even when they try to personalize it, it's still pretty easy to recognize that it's junk mail. Many of your current thoughts, fears, and worries are the equivalent of junk mail. Get better at recognizing them as such. No need to open them. No need to pay attention to them. No need to save them. You won't need them later. It's just junk.

Your Two Cents

Several readers emailed me to ask where the profits from my books are donated to. Recent checks have been sent to the following:

**ALS Association
American Cancer Society
American Heart Association
Special Olympics
Paralyzed Veterans
Christopher Reeve Foundation
Cerebral Palsy
March of Dimes
Salvation Army
Muscular Dystrophy
Children's Hospital
Lance Armstrong Foundation
Progressive Supranuclear Palsy
Nat'l Multiple Sclerosis Association
Parkinson's Disease
Avon Walk for Breast Cancer
MADD**

Thanks for your support. Please consider giving the books as gifts, so we can continue to make generous contributions to charities.

Closing Thoughts

As spring morphs into summer, I wish you much happiness, and, as always, may you always land on your feet.

**The legs of the crane
have become short
in the summer rains.
-Basho**

The stories on the website have been updated. Please visit:

www.thehappinessolution.com