

The Happiness Solution Newsletter

July 2007

**THE
HAPPINESS
SOLUTION**



Quote of the Month

**“What lies behind us and what lies before us
are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.”
-Ralph Waldo Emerson**

A Bit of Humor?

Why is it that you have to wait a month and a half for an appointment with the doctor, and after examining you, he says, “I wish you’d have come to see me sooner.”

Recent Research

Approximately 75% of “at risk” kids do well later in life. These were kids who came from families in which there was either significant physical abuse, substance abuse, neglect, mental illness, poverty, or any combination thereof. What helped these children do well was establishing continuity of care, a stable environment, and meaningful day-to-day patterns and rituals. History is not destiny. The human being is resilient (more about this later) and will continually strive to achieve happiness, purpose, and meaning.

Stories of the Month

“The Nature of the Beast”

I like the Gilda Radner line that seems to be a parsimonious synopsis of life:

It’s always something...

It’s true. Life is very difficult. We don’t get much of what we want and we seem to get much of what we don’t want. Relationships are disappointing. Health issues inevitably turn up. Job and family stresses add to our burden.

What are we to do? Here's what I do. I do the best I can. That's probably what you need to do too.

It's always something. Try not to take it too personally. Practice being more of an optimist. An optimist believes that the "bad" things are both time and context limited. The pessimist believes that they are permanent. The pessimist credo is "this too shall not pass."

Part of optimism is getting in touch with our resilience. There is a reason that dinosaurs are extinct and we're not. What helps build the foundation for resiliency is a sense of belongingness or connectedness. Good friends, supportive family, community, and healthy rituals are the building blocks of that foundation and you are the glue or cement that holds it all together. If you trust that you'll be able to deal with whatever comes your way, you'll feel less anxious, less discouraged, more empowered, and more secure.

It's always something. If we are to be happy, we need to co-exist with what is while we do the best that we can with the circumstances that we're dealing with. And those circumstances will pass. You are a survivor. You are resilient. Yes, it's always something, but you're capable of handling it, learning from it, and moving on to happiness.

**The obstacle is the path.
- Zen proverb**

"On Living In Potemkin Village"

In the 18th century, Grigori Aleksandrovich Potemkin had elaborate fake villages built in order to impress Catherine the Great on her tours of the Ukraine and the Crimea. So it was that the term, Potemkin Village, was born. It refers to an impressive facade or display that hides an undesirable fact or state. It is the equivalent of a false front.

One of the obstacles to happiness is rooted in the discrepancy between how you present yourself to the world and how you really feel about yourself. Many people believe that if others got to know them intimately, that ultimately those others would be very surprised and disappointed. You could be taken aback by the percentage of people who feel like imposters. They feel as if they would never stand up to the scrutiny of careful assessment with respect to their being as loveable or worthwhile as they would like to be.

In other words, there is a large gap between the outer and inner. They show the world a façade, perhaps a very impressive one indeed. But it is like an illusion. It is like building a Potemkin Village, hiding what they deem to be their undesirable traits or essences. This may be at least a part of the rush to own designer clothing, fancy cars, and the newest and best of everything. That is neither the antidote nor the answer to the question of "How can I be happier with myself and my life?"

I would invite you to work on narrowing the gap between who you think you are and who you would like to be. And, I have two words for you that can make all the difference. Start now! It is never too late to become the person you

feel good about being. You don't need to impress Catherine the Great, you need only to practice cultivating characteristics and behaviors that continue to narrow the aforementioned gap. For example:

- If you believe you're selfish, practice generosity of spirit.
- If you believe you're angry, practice patience.
- If you believe you're uncaring, practice compassion.
- If you believe you know best, practice humility.
- If you believe you're rigid, practice flexibility.
- If you believe you're weak, practice assertiveness.
- If you believe you're critical, practice kindness.
- If you believe you're distant, practice loving.
- If you believe you're controlling, practice letting go.
- If you believe you're immoral, practice morality.
- If you believe you're hateful, practice forgiveness.

Develop your list of what creates the gap. What is the false front hiding that you wish wasn't there or don't want others to find out about? Figure out what you need to practice and begin now. Not being a Potemkin Village is part of achieving happiness. Don't be discouraged. Anyone who ever got to be who she wanted to be had to begin where she was. It will definitely be worth your while, most likely not only to you, but to others as well. Start now.

Nutrition Corner

Experts recommend 4,700 mg. of potassium daily. Vitamin pills only contain 99 mg. Therefore, it's imperative that you eat a lot of high potassium foods. In addition to lowering your blood pressure and risk of stroke, potassium strengthens bones and reduces the risk of many other disorders.

Food	Potassium
Baked potato (1)	1,080 mg.
Tomato sauce (1 cup)	940 mg.
Sweet potato (1)	690 mg.
Edamame (soybeans) (1/2 cup)	490 mg.
Orange juice (1 cup)	480 mg.
Cantaloupe (1 cup)	430 mg.
Banana (1)	420 mg.
Spinach (1/2 cup)	420 mg.
Yogurt (nonfat) (6 oz.)	400 mg.
Beans (1/2 cup)	350-400 mg.

Most fruits and vegetables are good sources of potassium.

Closing Thoughts

Happiness has everything to do with your choices. It's directly related to the thoughts you indulge and the actions you choose to take or not to take. You are your choices. And, you always have the choice to decide how you wish to respond emotionally and behaviorally to the circumstances in which you find yourself. Your mind is extremely powerful if you harness it to work for you rather than against you. You can't change history, but you can reinterpret it. You can set yourself free. You can empower yourself. You can be miserable or you can be happy. It's up to you. And that's the beauty of it. Would you really want it any other way?

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

www.thehappinessolution.com