

# The Happiness Solution Newsletter

May 2008



## Quotes of the Month

Fear makes the wolf bigger than he is.  
-German Proverb

"Come to the edge."  
"We can't. We're afraid."  
"Come to the edge."  
"We can't. We will fall."  
"Come to the edge."  
And they came.  
And he pushed them.  
And they flew.  
-Guillaume Apollinaire

## A Bit of Humor?

A couple drove down a country road for several miles, not saying a word. Earlier, they had argued. Now, neither of them wanted to concede their position. As they passed a barnyard of mules, goats, and pigs, the husband asked sarcastically, "Relatives of yours?"  
"Yep," the wife replied. "In-laws."

## Recent Research

Just in case you're not already a firm believer in how important a positive attitude and hopeful expectations are in relation to your well-being and healing, a wealth of recent research once again confirms the tremendous power of the placebo effect. Even fake surgical procedures, complete with sedation and superficial incisions, have

yielded remarkably positive results. Dr. Marvin Lipman recently addressed this at [www.consumerreportsonhealth.org](http://www.consumerreportsonhealth.org):

It's interesting to note that IV placebos have a stronger positive effect than those given by injection. However, injection placebos are stronger than pill placebos. One study showed that acupuncture and sham acupuncture (needles are inserted in the wrong places) were equally effective in dealing with pain. Expensive placebos yield a bigger benefit than cheaper ones. One recent study showed that people given a double dose of a placebo did better than those receiving a single dose. All of these results are quite remarkable considering that placebos are inert substances or not legitimate treatments.

I've always emphasized the power of the mind and how your thoughts, attitude, and expectations are crucial to your happiness, healing, and well-being.

### Nutrition Corner

I have to admit that I'm one of those people who read food labels and ingredient lists. I try to stay away from food coloring and additives. MSG has been implicated in relation to headaches, nausea, weakness, and burning sensations, particularly in the neck and arms. MSG is sometimes in "natural flavoring" and "hydrolyzed vegetable protein" (HVP).

You might be interested to know that certain artificial colorings found in ice cream, candy, yogurt, and beverages are made from the dried and pulverized bodies of insects. Bon Appetite! The colorings referred to are "cochineal" and "carmine" and can cause rare allergic reactions ranging from hives to anaphylactic shock (according to May 2008 Nutrition Action Health Letter).

### Stories of the Month

#### **"You Are Not Dead"**

A middle-aged woman came to my office one afternoon and simply stated, "I'm dead." No matter what I asked her, she only replied, "I'm dead."

Finally, out of exasperation and bewilderment, I said, "You sit here and speak just like a live person. Are there any differences between a dead person and a live

one? If there aren't, it really doesn't matter whether you are dead or alive!"

She immediately responded, "Dead people don't bleed."

I quickly went to the desk drawer and got a sterile needle. I popped her finger with it and a drop of blood came to the surface. Feeling exceptionally clever, I smugly asked, "What do you think now?"

She looked with astonishment at her finger and answered, "Oh my gosh, dead people *do* bleed!"

This story did not actually happen to me. It is a story told in the field of mental health to illustrate how people sometimes cling to certain beliefs, even in the face of physical, visual, behavioral, or sensual evidence to the contrary.

There are beauty pageant winners who think they are unattractive. There are very intelligent people who do not feel smart. You may cling to a belief that you're too this or not enough that. It's possible that you will misinterpret what transpires so as to support your core beliefs about yourself. There are people who don't believe others are sincere when they are complimented by them because it doesn't fit their belief system. What beliefs are you holding onto that create low self-esteem, guilt, anxiety, or depression? What beliefs are you holding onto despite any and all evidence to the contrary? I've worked with hundreds of people in therapy in which the only things that had to be "cured" were the false beliefs they held about themselves.

### **"Give Yourself a Chance"**

Courage has been defined as the ability to proceed in spite of anxiety. Life becomes very restrictive when you let anxiety dictate what you do or do not do. When you avoid more and more situations, your world becomes somewhat safer but also much narrower. This avoidance-oriented lifestyle is sometimes referred to as neurosis.

Maslow distinguished between "fear choices" and "growth choices." Decisions where the reduction of anxiety is the primary motivating factor are called fear choices. They are much easier to make than are growth choices, which are decisions in which the primary motivation is to reach potentials and achieve gratification. It is always much easier to make the fear choice. It is much safer and less anxiety provoking to do so. Fear choices lead to "miserable safety." They narrow your world and lead to emotional disturbances or lives of quiet desperation.

Think carefully before you answer. Do the choices you make lead to a life of miserable safety? I know it's less complicated to simply continue with the status quo or the known quantity. Is your fear that if you rock the boat, it will sink and

that you don't have a life preserver? Do you feel trapped in a situation or relationship that saddens you? If you continue to make fear choices motivated by anxiety reduction, you will most likely get instant emotional replay.

Growth choices involve risk. Yet, the only way you can get what you want from life is through making growth choices. Each day you'll have plenty of opportunity to decide between fear choices and growth choices. Take a chance. In the Wizard of Oz, the scarecrow said, "I try to stay away from matches but I'd face a whole boxful if I had a chance of getting some brains."

### [Barnes & Noble](#)

The Goodman Beck Publishing edition of *The Happiness Solution* is being released very soon. Barnes & Noble is offering this edition at a pre-publication special price of \$12.96. If you buy two, you get free shipping. Do you know a friend, colleague, or family member who might benefit from the book? Help someone be happier: <http://search.barnesandnoble.com/booksearch/results.asp?WRD=alan+gettis&r=1>

### [A Great Story](#)

<http://pos-psych.com/news/caroline-miller/20080309652>

The website will be undergoing some changes later this month:

[www.thehappinesssolution.com](http://www.thehappinesssolution.com)