

The Happiness Solution Newsletter

December 2008

THE
HAPPINESS
SOLUTION



Quote of the Month

"What we pay attention to can be appropriate or inappropriate. Nurture appropriate attention and release inappropriate attention, noting, 'I am aware that this inappropriate attention will not benefit me or those I care about.'"

-Thich Nhat Hanh

A Bit of Humor?

Did you hear about the thief who stole a calendar? He got 12 months.

&

Headline in a tabloid paper: Man Doesn't Pay Exorcist & Gets Repossessed

Nutrition Corner

The Nutrition Action Health Letter warns us of the dangers of soda: People who drink at least one (regular or diet) soda a day are more likely to be diagnosed with the metabolic syndrome, say researchers who tracked roughly 9,000 men and women for four years.

The metabolic syndrome, which raises the risk of heart disease and diabetes, applies to anyone with at least three of the following:

- waist: at least 35 inches for women and 40 inches for men
- fasting blood sugar: at least 100
- triglycerides: at least 150
- blood pressure: at least 135 over 85

- HDL (“good”) cholesterol: less than 50 for women and less than 40 for men

The risk of being diagnosed with the syndrome was 44 percent higher in people who consumed at least one soft drink a day than in those who consumed less.

There’s more bad news for soda drinkers. Boston researchers have found no connection between long-term coffee consumption (caffeinated and decaf) and the development of high blood pressure among almost 30,000 middle-aged women in the Nurses’ Health Study, even after accounting for other factors like sodium, potassium and calcium intakes and weight. Caffeine intake ranged from 20 to 600 milligrams a day. While coffee was not a risk factor, cola consumption (regular and diet) *was* associated with a significantly increased risk.

A glass of water, anyone?

Recent Research

Feeling burned out is disheartening, figuratively and literally. An epidemiologist at Tel Aviv University has discovered that people who are burned out have two-to-threefold higher risk of heart problems, including recurrent myocardial infarction, stroke, bypass surgery, and cardiac death. Regarding burnout, Professor Melamed states, “The risk is equal to or exceeds that conferred by age, body mass index, smoking, blood pressure, or lipid levels (high cholesterol).” If you’re feeling burnout, it is vitally important that you address the issues and your lifestyle choices. In fact, it may be a matter of life and death.

Story of the Month

“Aha”

Rollo May defines freedom as “the capacity to pause in the midst of stimuli from all directions, and in this pause to throw our weight toward this response rather than that one.” Think about that carefully. Freedom is found in the pause between stimulus and response. Wow. The power in that

pause. It's the pause that breaks conditioned behaviors, conditioned thoughts, and conditioned feelings. It's no longer stimulus -> response. Now it's stimulus -> pause + decide consciously (rather than exist on automatic pilot) how you want to respond -> response. Freedom of choice.

That pause is pregnant with possibilities. In the freedom of that pause, you can change your life. When the best selling author Stephen R. Covey first encountered this idea, he was immediately transformed:

My office was on the outside edge of a college, and one day as I was wandering between stacks of books in the back of the college library, I came across a book that drew my interest. As I opened it, my eyes fell upon a single paragraph that powerfully influenced the rest of my life.

I read the paragraph over and over again. It basically contained the simple idea that there is a gap or a space between stimulus and response, and that the key to both our growth and happiness is how we use that space.

I can hardly describe the effect that idea had on my mind. Though I had been nurtured in the philosophy of self-determinism, the way the idea was phrased - "a gap between stimulus and response" - hit me with fresh, almost unbelievable force. It was almost like "knowing it for the first time," like an inward revolution, "an idea whose time had come."

He did not overreact. The idea has had a similar impact on my life. I think it is the most liberating and empowering idea in psychology. Read it

again. And again. Digest it. We could just as easily say that happiness is found in the pause between stimulus and response. The freedom to be happier and change your life is contained in that pause. That's a lot of responsibility clearly placed upon your shoulders. Some people find it too burdensome. Like Kierkegaard said, "Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom." Therefore, some people would prefer not to get this idea. They'd prefer same old same old. They'd opt for helplessness, dependency, victimization, denial, security (even if it's miserable), anger, anxiety, dysthymia, boredom, and existential despair.

What will it be for you? Read about the pause again. Do you get it? Is it liberating, fear provoking or both? You might want to pause before you answer.

Closing Thoughts

As this year draws to an end, I want to thank each of you for your help. Every book purchased represents an additional contribution to charitable causes. Please visit www.drgettis.com to read about my new book, *In the Beak of a Duck*, which extends my goal of bringing happiness to children as well as adults.

For 2009, my wish for you takes the form of an English blessing:

May happiness be at your door.
May it knock early,
stay late,
and leave the gift
of good fortune behind.

Happy Holidays!
Alan Gettis

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