

The Happiness Solution Newsletter

2009, Issue II



Quotes of the Month

So long as we are addicted to our tale of woe,
we can never be happy and free.

-John Welshons

The only thing standing between you and happiness is you.

-Alan Gettis

A Bit of Humor?

During a visit to the mental asylum, I asked the Director, "How do you determine whether or not a patient should be institutionalized?"

"Well," said the Director, "we fill up a bathtub, and then we offer a teaspoon, a teacup and a bucket to the patient and ask him or her to empty the bathtub."

"Oh, I understand," I said. "A normal person would use the bucket because it's bigger than the spoon or the teacup."

"No," said the Director. "A normal person would pull the plug. Do you want a bed near the window?"

Nutrition Corner

Many studies have reported less dementia in coffee drinkers. A 2009 study in Finland followed 1400 people for 21 years. Coffee drinkers (3-5 cups daily) had a significantly lower risk of developing Alzheimer's or other dementias. Caffeine seems to protect the aging brain. It's been speculated that it is caffeine's anti-inflammatory effect that offers protection not only against dementia, but also against Parkinson's. Of course, if you have anxiety attacks, arrhythmias, uncontrolled hypertension or are pregnant, it is most likely best to limit caffeine. Otherwise, it may help you with memory and alertness and offer the protection noted above.

In addition to the caffeine in coffee, black tea and green tea are other rich sources (roughly half the caffeine of coffee). Drinking soda to get caffeine is not recommended due to the extremely high refined sugar content.

Recent Research

Sam Shoeman was diagnosed with end stage liver cancer and given months to live. In fact, he did die months later. An autopsy revealed that the doctors had been wrong. He only had a tiny, contained tumor that did not spread. Dr. Clifton Meador of the Vanderbilt School of Medicine put it this way: "He didn't die from cancer, but from believing he was dying of cancer."

Derek Adams and his girlfriend broke up. He became depressed. He was prescribed anti-depressants as part of a clinical trial of a new medicine. Feeling hopeless, Adams ingested the entire bottle of pills. Fearing he might die, he quickly regretted it and asked to be taken to a hospital. He was shaky. He felt lethargic. His skin paled. Hospital evaluations showed his blood pressure dropping and a rapid respiration rate. Over the next four hours, he received all the appropriate treatment for drug overdose, including six liters of IV saline. There was little improvement. When a doctor from the clinical trial revealed that Adams was in the control group and had "overdosed" on harmless pills, Adams quickly became fully alert. His heart rate returned to normal, as did his blood pressure, and he felt immeasurably better.

The above two examples illustrate the nocebo effect, which essentially states that believing you are ill can make you ill. It is the evil twin of the placebo effect. This may help explain a strange phenomenon like voodoo death, but also is related to what might happen to you if a white coated doctor armed with lab tests and sophisticated scan results suggests you are seriously ill. Again and again we have stressed the power of your expectations and beliefs in relation to your psychological and physiological health and well-being.

(Adapted from a May 2009 article by Helen Pilcher in *Science*, Issue 2708)

Interesting Article

You may enjoy reading the article at the following link:

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/05/science/05tier.html?_r=1&em

Story of the Month

"Max's Sandwich Shop"

There has been a lot of fuss lately about the "Law of Attraction." A book and video called *The Secret* made it to Oprah, and the rush was on to discover the latest key to the universe. As it turns out, *The Secret* wasn't really much of a secret. It was based on the aforementioned law of attraction, which has been around in some way, shape or form for centuries. The essence of it is that people experience physical and mental manifestations that correspond to their predominant thoughts, feelings and actions. What you think, believe and feel attract and produce related positive or negative experiences.

In other words, the law of attraction states that to a large degree, you get what you think about. Your thoughts determine your experience. In essence, you create much of your own world. According to quantum physics, thoughts have energy that attracts similar energy. So, the idea is that if you know what you want and ask the universe (God, nature, the Force, etc.) for it, and you focus enthusiastically on this, and you feel and behave as if you've

already acquired it, and you're open to receiving it gracefully and gratefully, you'll get it.

All that being said, I don't believe it. Yes, certainly to a degree, it's true. But overall, it's too naïve and simplistic. What I do believe is that we do have tremendous power and influence over how we feel and whether we are ultimately happy and successful. Our thoughts, expectations and beliefs are crucial with regard to the quality of our lives, but they don't guarantee that you'll get all you want and don't get what you don't want.

In *Zen and the Art of Happiness*, Chris Prentiss tells the story of Max's Sandwich Shop:

Max owned a thriving sandwich shop. There were almost always people waiting in line to eat at his little shop. He gave away free pickles, free potato chips, sometimes a free soft drink, and his sandwiches were famous for being overstuffed.

One day his son, who lived in a distant city, came to visit. They had a good visit, but as the son was leaving, he told his father, "Since I've been here, I've been observing how you run the sandwich shop, and I have to tell you for your own good that you're making a big mistake giving away all those extras. The country's economy is in bad shape. People are out of work, and they have less money to spend. If you don't cut back on the free items and on your portion sizes, you'll be in a bad way before long too." His father was amazed, thanked his son, and told him he would consider his advice.

After his son left, Max followed his son's advice. He stopped giving away free items and he cut back on the generous portions of food in his sandwiches. Before long, after many disappointed customers had stopped coming, he wrote his son: "You were right! The country's economy is in bad shape, and I'm experiencing the results of it right here in my sandwich shop!"

Closing Thoughts

The economy has taken its toll on many people and has affected their summer vacation plans. Cutting back on expenses doesn't necessarily mean you have to cut back on fun, relaxation, rest or recreation. Brainstorm. Get creative.

There are many ways to kick back, explore and regenerate without spending a lot of money. If you send me your ideas, I'll share them with others in our next newsletter.

The Second Edition of *Seven Times Down, Eight Times Up: Landing on Your Feet in an Upside Down World* is now available at www.drgettis.com.

It can also be purchased at Amazon (http://www.amazon.com/Seven-Times-Down-Eight-Up/dp/0979875528/ref=sr_1_9?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1244522464&sr=8-9)

and

Barnes and Noble (<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/Seven-Times-down-Eight-Times-Up/Alan-Gettis/e/9780979875526/?itm=1>)

