

# The Happiness Solution Newsletter

2009, Issue III



## Quotes of the Month

You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough.

-Mae West

Adventure is worthwhile in itself.

-Amelia Earhart

## A Bit of Humor?

There was a story on the news this morning having to do with police being called to a day care center. A three-year-old was resisting a rest.

My thought for the day:

To write with a broken pencil is pointless.

## Nutrition Corner

The Nutrition Action Health Letter discusses food additives you might want to avoid:

- (a) Aspartame (NutraSweet). Recent animal research suggests that long term usage may increase the risk of leukemia, lymphoma, and breast cancer. Dizziness, headaches, and seizures in relation to aspartame are also being investigated.

- (b) Olestra. This fat substitute wreaks havoc with the gastrointestinal system. It can cause fever, diarrhea, cramping, and flatulence.
- (c) Butylated Hydroxyanisole (BHA). This preservative used in cereals, chewing gum, potato chips and other products is “reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen” according to the federal government’s National Toxicology Program.

In general, eat less:

- sugar substitutes
- fat substitutes
- preservatives
- dyes

Look for products that do not contain long names of chemical compounds that you never heard of. And, of course, the best low-fat and nonfat foods continue to be fruit and vegetables.

### Recent Research

I recently read a report on the “Public Health Significance of Neuroticism” by Benjamin B. Lahey of the University of Chicago. Neuroticism refers to personality traits in which the individual overreacts with negativity (i.e. worry, anxiety, anger, self-criticism, other-criticism, feelings of inadequacy, sadness, irritability, self-consciousness) to ordinary, frustrating or challenging life situations.

Those manifesting strong traits of neuroticism don’t do as well as their less neurotic counterparts. Studies confirm that high neuroticism accurately predicts shorter, less happy, less healthy, and less successful lives to a meaningful extent. Being less neurotic improves occupational success, marital satisfaction, and overall quality of life.

You can certainly learn to be less neurotic. That’s what cognitive behavioral therapy and positive psychology help with. That’s what my books are about. It’s never too late to start. I’m a firm believer that you can teach an old dog new tricks.

## Story of the Month

### "A No Win Situation"

In 279 BC, King Pyrrhus of Epirus defeated the Romans during the Pyrrhic War at Asculum. It was the second casualty filled battle with the Romans in a short period of time. His best soldiers and chief commanders were killed as were many of his troops. Afterward, Pyrrhus said, "Another such victory over the Romans and we are undone." The term "Pyrrhic victory" has come to be known as a victory that has a devastating cost to the victor.

We are not only referring to military battles. A Pyrrhic victory also applies to politics, sports, business, and many other arenas. As a therapist, I have frequently heard about and have sometimes witnessed this phenomenon in relationships. For example, a husband might attain a Pyrrhic victory over his wife. This is a very sad thing. It is traumatic for both of them. Things may never be the same for them again. When you know someone intimately, you know much about her including her insecurities, history, and vulnerabilities. These can become targets as words are used like ammunition, piercing the heart and spirit of the defeated.

There is a high cost to the health of a relationship in any Pyrrhic victory. Trust is shattered. Foundations crumble. Anger and resentment breed with the hurt and wounds festering underneath. I frequently ask people, "Would you rather win or would you rather be happy?" Be careful with going for the jugular. It's generally a terrible idea. Err on the side of biting your tongue, buying time by going for a walk, and rethinking how to get your points across. A war of words will only lead to a Pyrrhic victory, and in that victory, everyone loses.

Douglas Steere, a Quaker teacher, says that the ancient question, "Who am I?" inevitably leads to a deeper one, "Whose am I?" - because there is no identity outside of relationship. You can't be a person by yourself. To ask "Whose am I?" is to extend the question far beyond the little self-absorbed self, and wonder: Who needs you? Who loves you? To whom are you accountable? To whom do you answer? Whose life is altered by your choices? With whose life, whose lives, is your own all bound up, inextricably, in obvious or invisible ways?

-The Rev. Victoria Safford

## [Seven Times Down, Eight Times Up](#)

Here is the link to the Updated & Expanded Second Edition. It is on sale at Barnes & Noble: <http://search.barnesandnoble.com/Seven-Times-down-Eight-Times-Up/Alan-Gettis/e/9780979875526/?itm=5>

### [Closing Thoughts](#)

In Medieval times, Arthur became king after he pulled Merlin's magic sword from the stone. With that sword that he believed was magical, Arthur was capable of performing wonderful things. However, when he drew the sword without cause to use against one of his knights, the blade of the sword shattered into a million pieces.

As we grow older and take refuge in being able to embrace the life we have been given, with courage and sometimes even with gratitude, we need to be kinder with ourselves and others. Teddy Roosevelt said, "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." Be loving and compassionate with yourself and others. It's your life. Show up. Step up. Make a difference.

Enjoy the summer.

My best,  
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