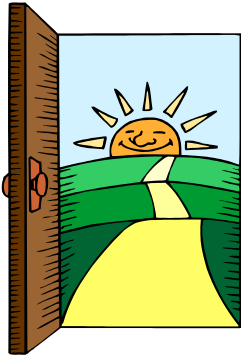


THE SIMPLE LIFE

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What is Happiness Anyway?



Simplicity Life Coaching Ltd.

Helping you de-stress, simplify and re-prioritize your life through better understanding of yourself and others

Hello again. I can't believe a month has passed since the last newsletter! Is this a sign that I'm getting older or that I'm having too much fun?

This leads me to the theme for this month's newsletter - 'Happiness'. Spring is now fully in progress and here in Vancouver we've been enjoying gorgeous sunshine...

It's been a busy month and over the next few weeks I will be writing the first of a series of free mini-workshops to help us feel better about life and enjoy ourselves more. Watch this space for dates and times!

Simplicity Life Coaching offers coaching and (soon) workshops to help you simplify, de-stress and re-prioritize your life. To answer any questions you may have, for more information or a complimentary discussion, get in touch! Contact details are at the bottom of this news letter. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Emma-Louise.

THOUGHT OF THE MONTH

"Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be"

Thanks to Abraham Lincoln for that one!

"The Happiness Within"

For years study has been going on into depression and psychological disorders with great movement forwards in understanding and treatment. In the meantime people who are not depressed and have not been diagnosed with any mental illness are becoming overwhelmed by the "busy-ness" of life. They are left wondering what happiness is and where they can find it.

Recently, there has been a trend towards researching 'happiness'. Various studies have been conducted and have come up with formulas and theories. Happiness however, is a very complex and individual feeling and academics are now realizing they don't really understand it!

So far, research suggests that maybe 20% of our happiness "factor" is in our genes – so for those who think how happy we are is not entirely in our control – you're right! However, that also means that 80% of our happiness is...

We can all think of people who always seem to look on the bright side, who always seem to be happy. It's not that nothing bad has ever happened to them – it's the way they choose to look at life. This suggests happiness is not something that is 'found', it's something we make – ourselves.

So, what stops us from being more upbeat and positive? Well actually, that's a very good question. What stops us from choosing to see the bright side of a situation, looking for the positive?

As children we knew how to let go and enjoy ourselves. Then we get older and gain responsibilities; jobs, a family, a mortgage, retirement plans etc. I'm curious, how specifically do any of these things prevent us from having fun?

Just for a moment, consider how much happier you could feel if you made a habit of noticing what you have to be thankful for. *ACTION: You could keep a daily record and write down all the great things you have seen, heard, felt and experienced that day – from seeing your first hummingbird (me – yesterday!) to just being thankful your cat didn't have serious injuries after falling off the deck, even though you spent over 3 hours of your Sunday evening at the vets (also me).*

I'm sure some of you are saying - but what if this or that happens? How can that be positive? Famously, a patient diagnosed with breast cancer was lying in hospital feeling miserable. As she looked around, she noticed all the cards and flowers she had received and realized how truly loved she was. Not a great situation, but a great realization.

It's not always easy to look for the positive. It takes work, and even the most accomplished positive thinkers slip up occasionally. However, in every situation there is something to be thankful for, or a learning we can take forwards. If we train ourselves to focus even just a little more on these it will be a giant step forwards!

RECOMMENDED READING

1. **The Art of Happiness (a handbook for living)**
The Dalai Lama ISBN: 0743506308
I've got the CD version. 2500 years of Buddhist meditations mixed with common sense! Also a book.
2. **Don't Sweat the Small Stuff and It's All Small Stuff**
Richard Carlson ISBN: 0786881852
This has been recommended by so many people. Easy to read with thought-provoking short chapters. It's on my wishlist...
3. **The Positive Power of Negative Thinking: Using Defensive Pessimism to Harness Anxiety and Perform at Your Peak**
Julie K. Norem ISBN: 0465051391
For those who don't want positive thinking forced upon them. Reader review "... the balanced approach in this book helps the reader understand both the dangers of unrealistic optimism and the virtues of constructive pessimism."

INTERESTING WEBSITES

www.petecohen.com/microsites/happiness/index.html
Pete Cohen has come up with a formula for happiness!

There is no such thing as... "A Bad Day"

Have you noticed how we place our own judgement on things and make assumptions without thinking about it? Are we really aware how much this can impact our day?

For example, we say "It's a miserable day" or "They're avoiding me". What if it was just "Raining" or your friend was "Not in when you called"?

I was in a store downtown recently and a voice come over the tannoy, "It's miserable, grey, dreary and wet out there - why not come down to our cosy coffee shop and cheer up with a hot latte". I remember thinking that if they had said "It's raining outside and its winter, come and have a coffee" it really wouldn't have worked that well. Such is the power emotional labels and judgement.

Suppose over the next month you noticed how you 'label' things and how this influences your mood. If you like, you could then try removing the emotion, assumption and judgement and replace with just the facts, noticing the impact this has on you.

THOUGHT: Emotions are just self-generated 'energy'

THOUGHT: Without suffering, we would have no measure by which to appreciate happiness

ACHIEVEMENTS EXERCISE

1. Write down all your achievements - EVERYTHING you're proud of, from as early as you can remember to now!
2. Once complete, congratulate yourself! Wow, what a list!
3. Review the list and ask yourself:
 - i) "What do I notice?"
 - ii) "What's missing from the list?"
 - iii) "What can I do more of?"
4. Finally, write down something you would like to achieve in the next month. Tell someone, put an action plan together and DO IT!

NB: We usually enjoy things we are good at. We are usually proud of things that align with our values. And we are happiest when living our values!

Happiness is just one of a range of emotions. Ignoring feelings does not make them go away, so it's important to acknowledge even the 'less pleasant' feelings. However, then looking for the positive in situations helps us to move forwards.



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REMEMBER

Life is as enjoyable or as dreary as we make it. Once we recognize we have control we can choose to have more fun with life.

5 ways to have more fun in 30 minutes:

1. Get out of the house/office and take a **STROLL**; for 30 minutes be only in the **present moment**, think **positive** thoughts, notice only **good things**.
2. **Shorten your workday** by 30 minutes. Do this by identifying and eliminating those little time-wasters we all have, and **ENJOY!**
3. Play your **favourite music** - **LOUD**. In the car, at home, who cares! Sing along if you dare!
4. Pick **something small** you've been putting off - and just **DO IT!** You won't believe how much better you'll feel!
5. **Make someone else's day** (just for the sake of it) - do something nice for someone else and bask in that **FEELGOOD** factor!