



# Happiness@ TheSpeedofLife

**Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter**  
**Edition 48: Change You, Change The World**

**2,105** words of content -- approximate reading time required: **8.42** minutes. And isn't your happiness worth it?

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Welcome to my e-newsletter, which focuses on defining and applying the Principles of Happiness and Positive Emotion in your life and work. SPREAD THE WORD: Please forward to a friend who needs more happiness.

**Let's Connect!** Engage in the [Life With Happiness](#) conversation several times each week at [my blog](#), Ask me a question on [LinkedIn](#), [Friend me on Facebook](#), or [Follow me on Twitter](#).

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### I. CHANGE YOU, CHANGE THE WORLD

This month's newsletter is inspired by the following poem.

*When I was a young man, I wanted to change the world.  
 I found it was difficult to change the world, so I tried to change my nation.  
 When I found I couldn't change the nation, I began to focus on my town.  
 I couldn't change the town and as an older man, I tried to change my family.  
 Now, as an old man, I realize the only thing I can change is myself, and suddenly I realize that if  
 long ago I had changed myself, I could have made an impact on my family.  
 My family and I could have made an impact on our town.  
 Their impact could have changed the nation and I could indeed have changed the world."*

~Rabbi Israel Salanter (Nineteenth Century Talmudist)

I found this poem just after I watched John McCain and Barack Obama speak on Election night. Both men were vying for a position that actually *does* have the power to change the world. Yet on that night – as one conceded and the other accepted – I found myself tearing up not because of the election but because of the humanity they demonstrated.

Each used a portion of their speech to speak from their heart. Each took a moment to connect to me-- yes, to me and to every one of the many millions of people watching across the globe. Their carefully rehearsed words could not hide that they were speaking from a deep place in their soul. For just that moment, they asked us to care -- to do our part, to support what needs to be done, and to show our care and concern for the United States of America.



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So when Rabbi Salanter's poem surfaced the next morning, I took it as a sign from the Universe, and have been pondering what each of us can do that actually CAN change the world.

And so I offer:

## 13 Ways YOU Can Change the World

Through the lens of Happiness, I offer the following 13 actions you can take, everyday, to make the world a better place. These ideas **cost nothing**; you can **implement them immediately**; you need **permission only from yourself**; and each will **create a positive impact** for you and others.

Think of each action like a pebble dropped into a calm pool – there's a small splash from which ripples flow in expanding circles. When you take these actions you will create a positive emotional experience for you (the small splash), followed by expanding rings of impact on those with whom you interact.

### 1. **Smile**

Most people (whether they realize it or not) will automatically smile back, which starts a powerful, positive chain reaction.

*"Your day goes the way the corners of your mouth turn. So smile" ~Bill Keane, Family Circus, 11-17-08*

### 2. **Focus on what is right and good, not just what is wrong.**

A gentleman hired an artist to paint his portrait, and was en route to his sitting when he saw the morning headline, "Experts Fear Economic Downturn." The gentleman cancelled the portrait. When the artist lost that commission, she withdrew her offer to buy a new house. The real estate broker had to subsequently lay off his assistant, who relied on the job to support her family while her husband worked in his new coffee shop. Without his wife's income, the husband had to let go his staff and work many hours himself. Sadly, the stress made him ill, and he had to close the shop. The gentleman, who often stopped for coffee at the new shop, was heartbroken when it closed. "Ah, but it's just a sign of the times," he said, not realizing that he had, in fact, created that reality.

*What gets attention tends to happen – so understand the power of the stories you tell yourself and others.*

### 3. **Focus on solutions, not blame.**

When you speak of what is wrong, steer the conversation toward possible solutions rather than just "admiring the problem" or looking for a scapegoat. Sacrificing goats may have worked for 11<sup>th</sup> century pagans, but it's not a productive practice today. Be the person who says, "Rather than arguing about who's right, how about if we spend our limited energy to fix the problem?"

### 4. **Perform acts of kindness**

Liberty Mutual Insurance runs commercials in which a person performs a small act of kindness for another... and a person who witnesses that does a favor for someone else, and so on. The commercial serves as a powerful reminder that even the smallest actions done out of good intentions can have a ripple effect in the world. Plus, you have the benefit of feeling really great about yourself when you reach out to others!

5. **Say, I Love You.**

One of the regrets of my life is that I never said to my father, out loud, that I loved him. When I grew up that phrase was never spoken. My father battled cancer 22 years ago; the day he moved into hospice I decided to visit him the next day and say, 'I love you, Dad.' Sadly, he died that night. Since then I have never let a day pass without telling my wife and kids that I love them. And I believe that because I raised them to be comfortable receiving and expressing love, my adult children positively impact others.

6. **Recycle**

Does it really make a difference when I toss my milk jug or yesterday's paper into a recycle container? Multiplied by the hundreds of thousands of people doing it, these small actions really do save resources and energy, and contribute to sustainability of our Mother Earth. I don't know a single person who recycles who does not take a small measure of goodness from doing so.

7. **Express gratitude.**

The story is told of an old woman sitting on a park bench. She felt old and alone and useless, and thought of suicide. After awhile, a young man came and sat on the other end of the bench. For a time they fed the birds together. When the young man went to leave, he thanked her for a lovely afternoon. The old woman realized that she did, in fact, matter to others. She went home determined to push forward.  
*When we express gratitude, we experience the pleasure of giving a gift to another human being and the excitement of watching them open it and enjoy it.*

8. **Give Blood.**

Did you know that a pint of donated blood is separated into several components and thus can be used to [save up to three lives](#)? Every time you take one hour of your time to fill a bag, you are spreading a lot of happiness. If you donate every 56 days, you are saving up to 18 lives every year. That's a lot of change in the world!

9. **Keep your promises.**

Do what you said you would do. What's in it for you? At worst, the avoidance of guilt; at best, the deep satisfaction of knowing that your word is good. When you keep your commitments, those who depend on you can reduce worry; plus they have the confidence to do their own work well, knowing that you'll deliver for them.  
*Corollary: when you cannot keep a promise, open a conversation to renegotiate the terms, rather than appear untrustworthy.*

10. **Forgive everyone, including you.**

Forgiveness is not about forgetting – it is about letting go of the resentment you hold today about a past wrong. Living in resentment is like taking poison and expecting the other person to die. When you fight every day to hold on to old wrongs, you live constantly as a half-person – half present, half in the past. When you forgive, you free your whole self up to live in the Now, which benefits you, your loved ones, and your world.

11. **Visit someone who is lonely.**

The worst punishment ever invented by humankind is Solitary Confinement; people can survive torture, but they go mad when they are deprived of human contact. When you



reach out to someone who is alone, all you need to do is be with them. Listen, exchange stories, read aloud, just be present. You create the gift of a memory to savor.

**12. Mentor a young person.**

A mentor is “a wise and trusted counselor or teacher.” Take someone who needs support under your wing. Become a Big Brother/Sister. Volunteer at a youth retreat. You have life experience that can benefit others. I’ve set up mentoring programs at many organizations, and the most common feedback that emerges is from the mentors, who say, “I was surprised at how much I learned about myself.”

*“A rising tide lifts all the boats” ~J.F. Kennedy, 1963*

**13. Wear Colored Socks\*\*.**

Colored socks start conversations. Colored socks make people smile. Colored socks give people hope – the possibility that the world does not require conformity. And colored socks make you feel just a teeny bit wild when you put them on in the morning.

*\*\*“Colored socks” can also show up as: one-of-a-kind jewelry, a flamboyant scarf, a fun tie, pearls with jeans, a purple pinpoint oxford, or a fabulous pair of bright red pumps!*

Do you have more ideas on little things you can do that can change the world? [Drop me a line and share your ideas!](#)

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The 13 Principles of Happiness provide more ideas for increasing your happiness: take care of yourself, focus on your values, choose your response to situations, simplify, let go of what drains you, and so on.

Why not download and post a 1-page summary of all 13 as a reminder? You can do so here: <http://www.theexecutivehappinesscoach.com/happiness/philosophies.cfm>. Take care of you.

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**II. IN THE WORKPLACE: HAPPINESS FLOWS DOWNHILL**

When you are a leader, everything you do impacts your team. Do you “get” that? When you pay attention to people, they notice; when you smile, frown, appear confused, or take charge in a crisis, they respond in kind. You are a major factor in the culture of your team.

This is not just Jim Smith sayin’ that. It’s been nine years since the groundbreaking Gallup study (the foundation for the business bestseller, *First, Break All The Rules*) that established the following reality: People may come to work for an organization, but when they leave – or when they stay – it’s because of their supervisor.

That’s right – the person who directly manages you probably has more to do with your experience at work than anyone else. Think about it – who decides where you sit and what you do, sets your goals, gives you feedback (or not), provides formal evaluation, and administers your pay? Your boss.

A boss who lives in anger generally presides over a culture of fear, while a boss who shows up grateful every day often leads an organization full of creative risk-takers. The mood of the



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manager flows down through a work team, infecting everyone with that same emotional state, be it fear, anxiety, and suspicion, or trust, gratitude, and ambition.

Do you realize the responsibility that places on you? People will – and do – notice and respond to the emotions you carry. If you don't care for the mood of your team, look first to yourself; consider what you say and do and how you react to situations, and you'll likely find a key source of the issue.

If you want to impact the workplace culture, then, start with YOU. Happiness rolls downhill.

**Remember: Leadership is not about a title.** Anyone can be a leader who works to improve themselves in order to impact others in a more positive way.

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### III. CHANGE THE WORLD – TRULY!

#### Google's Project 10 to the 100 (10<sup>100</sup>)



Based on research that shows what the mystical traditions have always espoused - *"the only thing that increases individual happiness over time is helping other people"* -

Google has designed a lucrative project that marries creativity, service, and financial support. **Project 10tothe100** is a call for innovative ideas that will change the world by helping as many people as possible. You think of the idea, and Google will fund launching it. It is based on numbers - how many people your idea can serve.

The idea collection phase of the project is closed, but the judges are sifting over 100,000 submissions and will post the top ones in February 2009, and will fund those that generate the most votes from the general population. I love it...this is about one person REALLY changing the world! Check it out and register to vote: <http://www.project10tothe100.com>.

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### IV. INSTRUCTIONS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Jim Smith is The Executive Happiness Coach®. He is a recovering corporate executive whose passion is to help people increase the amount of Happiness they experience in their lives and work, and to help leaders build a Positive Culture.

Join the Happiness Conversation (you get to talk back!) at [www.LifeWithHappiness.com](http://www.LifeWithHappiness.com). Ask me a question on [LinkedIn](#), [Friend me on Facebook](#), or [Follow me on Twitter](#).

View past editions of this newsletter at <http://www.TheExecutiveHappinessCoach.com/newsletter/archives.cfm>

Drop me a line anytime with your feedback and queries! Jim <mailto:Jim@TheExecutiveHappinessCoach.com>

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**Happiness is a decision, not an event.  
How will YOU decide today?**





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