HAPPINESS PRINCIPLE #6: TOLERATE NOTHING

By Jim Smith, The Executive Happiness Coach®

In the 13 Principles of Happiness, number six reads:

'Tolerate Nothing. Continually identify and eliminate all the little "stuff" which causes you friction and drains your energy.'

Friction is a Physics term that refers to "A force that resists the relative motion" of something. Friction gets in the way of movement. It drains away the energy of an object in motion; increasing friction ultimately stops all forward motion.

So what are Tolerations? They are the things we put up with, the frictions of life. The stuff that exists in our life just under the radar – the stuff that annoys us yet is not pressing or important enough to take care of.

Examples: the piles of papers on the desk, the dirty backseat in the car, the unresolved disagreement that lies under the surface of conversations with a coworker, the project that sits one step away from incomplete.

Individual tolerations are typically small things that added together create major friction in your life. Imagine your computer running many utility programs. Each is using just a few megafragments of memory, but open enough of them and suddenly your computer slows or even freezes. Most people are, at any point in time, carrying around dozens – perhaps more than a hundred – tolerations. That's a lot of open programs in the brain!

How do tolerations affect us? Consider the analogy of the frog that remains in a pot of water where the temperature is slowly raised to boiling. The frog's body temperature adjusts as the heat is increased and he doesn't even realize he's in danger. We, too, can grow accustomed to our environment even though it may not be a good idea to remain. We can be blind to seeing the clutter in our brains, relationships, physical space, commitments, and so on.

What are you tolerating? If you removed a few tolerations, how much better would you feel? Think about it. One less burden to carry on your shoulders. More space and energy and capacity to focus on what is really important. More space to feel happiness and contentment rather than the anxiety and stuckness that often accompany tolerations.

And who doesn't want to be happier?



Do this for yourself: The Tolerations Exercise

- 1. Write at the top of a page, "What am I tolerating in work/life that I am no longer willing to tolerate?" Avoid editing yourself, just write. Carry the list around with you for at least a day. Visit all the different "environments" in which you live office, car, home, work and personal relationships, career, financial, fun...and notice what you are "putting up with" in each area. Write down everything you notice -- everything.
- 2. **Review the list for any themes that emerge.** You might prioritize by noticing which of the items bother you the most.
- 3. Ask yourself, "What do I want to do about <this> and by when?" Consider your four options: Do, Delegate, Defer, or Dump:

Do: Take action to remove the toleration.

Have the conversation, change the behavior, remove the item, clean it, replace it, buy it, or whatever is required to remove it from your list.

HINT: You'll find that many tolerations will sort of "take care of themselves" once you've identified them as such and written them down, even if you do not put them on a task list. That's because tolerations remain so because we've simply become used to them, and once they are back in conscious awareness, we naturally take action to "scratch the itch." You'll find that eliminating tolerations is incredibly energizing!

Delegate: Turn to someone else to take the action.

Delegate a task to a child, partner, coworker, or contractor. **Automate** it (like setting up all your utilities and car/house payments to automatically come out of your checking account) or **create a system** to complete the action.

Example: My father-in-law realized that he hated mowing the lawn and shoveling his walk in winter, so he hired a landscaper to mow and plow, and then sold his lawnmower at the next family garage sale!

Defer: When you do not have the time, resources, or energy to address the toleration today, you can leave it but put it off for a while.

Pull out your calendar/planner and **set a timeline** to perform a future action to eliminate the toleration. Then forget about it until it pops back onto the radar screen.



NOTE: This is not about continuing to "put up" with it – it is about **CHOOSING to intentionally defer action until a more appropriate time**, e.g. saying, "I don't currently have capacity to handle this. I'm putting it on my list for November. Until then, it will not bother me because I know I will take care of it at that time."

Dump: Choose to have it not matter anymore

Finally, you may find that once you've assembled your entire list that some individual items simply pale next to the entire collection. You might look at some and ask, "you know, in the grand scheme of things, does this really matter to me?" When your response is "not anymore!" then you can give yourself permission to no longer consider the issue a toleration. Cross it off. Done. Let it go.

Can you feel more positive energy flowing already?

I repeat this exercise annually, when I do my beginning of year planning. Clearing that space on a regular basis feels empowering, and ensure I always have maximum capacity to deal with what life puts out there for me!

"Be master of your petty annoyances and conserve your energies for the big, worthwhile things. It isn't the mountain ahead that wears you out - it's the grain of sand in your shoe." - Robert Service

"The happiness of most people we know is not ruined by great catastrophes or fatal errors, but by the repetition of slowly destructive little things." - Ernest Dimnet

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

Jim Smith, PCC, is The Executive Happiness Coach®. He is an international speaker, executive and life coach, and author. He provides his clients with inspiration and practical tools to live a happier life and build more positive work cultures. He is the author of 'Happiness At The Speed of Life: 13 Powerful Strategies for Finding Happiness at Home and On The Job,' and has touched the lives of over 13,000 people worldwide through his work on Positive Emotion and Leadership. You can connect with Jim at www.TheExecutiveHappinessCoach.com



Tolerations Worksheet

Everyone has at least 100 things they are tolerating, right now. Large or small, each of those creates another "open thread" in your brain and occupies space. As tolerations accumulate, your capacity for happiness, creativity, and effectiveness are reduced. When you identify and act on your tolerations, you free up personal energy, reduce your stress load, and increase your capacity for happiness.

Step 1: Write down as many responses as you can for the question: "What am I tolerating in my life/career that I am no longer willing to tolerate?" (Use additional sheets as necessary)

Think about all the different environments in which you operate: Physical (your workspace, your car, each of the rooms in your home), Relationships, (your boss, coworkers, significant others, family, groups you belong to), Spiritual, Self (diet, fitness, personal time/space), and so on.

1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	26

Step 2: Take action: (1) Do it, (2) Delegate it, (3) Defer it until you have the time/resources, or (4) Dump it – let it go, and move on.

oxygen tank! Choo	Each toleration you address is the equivalent of fixing another 'leak' in your ose 2-3 of the items on your list, and make a commitment to yourself: "What' at > and by when?"	
		-
		-

