

Good Leaders are Happy People

Happiness is a Skill

by Jackie Jacobi

What is the purpose of life? I have heard some people say *the purpose of life is to endure it*. I disagree with this statement. I believe the purpose of life is to be *happy* by finding contentment within yourself and your current situation. Continue reading to move your life forward with joy and live a happy life. I've tried this and it does work!

It seems like ever since I read *10% Happier* in April of 2014, everything I listen to or read talks about mindfulness meditation: Strategic Coach's LinkedIn post *Take a brain break!*, Harvard Business Review [The Making of a Corporate Athlete](#), Refresh Leadership's speaker John MacKay author of *Conscious Capitalism*, Intuit's blog *Leadership from the Sea*, Huffington Post *Thrive*, Google's free downloadable curriculum [Search Inside Yourself](#), and the list continues to grow.

What is Mindfulness? It is often defined as 'non-judgmental, moment to moment awareness'. As leaders, it can also be thought of as the cultivation of leadership presence. A mindful leader embodies leadership presence by cultivating focus, clarity, creativity, and compassion in the service of others. Leadership presence is a tangible quality. A function of leadership is to see the ice burg before the ship hits it. This requires full and complete nonjudgmental attention in the present moment. Those around a mindful leader see and feel that presence. You can learn more at <http://InstituteForMindfulLeadership.org>

The benefits of practicing mindfulness are many and myriad – increased focus, decreased stress, improved emotional regulation, better immune function, greater creativity, and more. Making mindfulness a part of your daily routine has been scientifically shown to have an enormous impact on your health and well-being. Daily mindfulness meditation is the key practice that makes all of this possible, helping you develop the ability to be resilient, centered, and present. However, it's not until you take the sense of presence cultivated through meditation with you into your daily life that you are able to fully reap the benefits.

If you are enrolled in *the purpose of life is to endure it* camp, let me give you my six steps to begin the process of getting into the *happy* camp.

Happiness is a skill that we can learn a skill like riding a bike or swimming.

1. Eat healthy – lots of vegetables, beans, fruits and nuts. Avoid Sugar!
Drink Water!
2. Exercise - get outside and try to notice and count details of your environment that you haven't noticed before, make it a game and make sure you use all of your senses –hearing, smelling, and feeling all contribute to where you are right now. It makes me smile when I notice something new, hidden in plain sight!
3. Sleep – get all the rest you need. Sleep is the most underrated health habit.
4. Take deep breaths and relax regularly during the day – when you find yourself waiting in line or at a red light, instead of fretting or busying yourself with your phone, take the time as a gift and use it to take one mindful breath, suddenly you will be meditating instead of being agitated. *Breathing as if your life depends on it* – remember this and you will understand mindfulness meditation.
5. Be kind to yourself and others. Don't worry, 98% of what we worry about never actually comes true the way we project it. Remove negative and toxic people from your life.
6. Mindfulness Meditation – Meditation is exercise for the mind and is about awareness and compassion. Any tool that can help with our self- awareness, listening and mindfulness is invaluable. Find some form of regular activity that trains your mind to be still, fully present and connected to yourself (walking, hiking, fishing, get outside, etc) just do it regularly and integrate the benefits into your everyday life. Just slow down, take deep breaths and if you want repeat positive words to yourself (mine are Healthy and Happy). Practice gratitude! The better you take care of yourself the better you will be able to help others.

Action Plan: Track the Important Stuff on a Simple Sticky Note.

This is a really simple technique for helping you create good habits or break bad ones, that simultaneously develops your ability to be present. Simply

pick the actions you want to reinforce, like eating healthy, exercising, getting enough sleep, or even meditating. Every month, create a stick note for each action, and draw a line down the middle, label one side “*Success*” and the other “*Failure*”, and every evening, put a check mark in the column based on whether you were successful in taking the right path for that action for that day. To make it easier, start small (just track a couple things) and easy (track things you are currently failing at, but are just this close to succeeding at).

Also, be easy on yourself. At first, it may be common for you to fail, and when you do gently bring your attention back towards achieving your daily goal, without judgment. This is the hardest thing for many people to do, but it is the most important part.

The power of this tracking technique comes from the fact that it encourages you to review your day, and hold yourself accountable for your actions. After a short time tracking, you’ll soon find yourself thinking ahead to your “sticky note time” when making decisions throughout the day (like whether to drink that soda, or whether to step out for a 30 minute walk). In other words, you’ll naturally start being more mindful of exactly those things you think are most important.

Something to Think About: The number one regret of the dying is *living a life true to the expectations of others and not being true to the expectations of themselves.* (*Essentialism* by Greg McKeown)

So how do you decide what is essential to you?

1. Give yourself the space to think.
2. Think to see the bigger picture
3. Practice saying NO – get rid of the people and commitments that don’t mean anything to you but keep you from doing the things that are meaningful to you.
4. Focusing on the few things that are really essential makes you more valuable and brings more value to your life. Less but Better!
5. The disciplined focused pursuit of the essential, will bring success.

Why do we focus on the wrong things? We don’t have clarity on what is the most important. We need internal clarity rather than listening to outside sources.

Clarity means: The priority thing (singular)

The Value of Less

Thrive by Arrianna Huffington

Ideas to think about from the book by Jackie Jacobi

What is a Good Life? Do money and fancy cars fully encompass what it means to be successful in life? If we define success solely in terms of money and power, it's like trying to sit on a two-legged stool. The third leg is our Well-being, this includes our ability to draw on our intuition and inner wisdom, our sense of wonder and capacity for compassion and giving. This is how the definition of Success is changing. #ThirdMetric #Thrive

The first step to improving your well-being and balance is your attitude towards your life. *"Life is shaped from the inside out not the outside in"* Arianna Huffington

Arianna's 12 Steps to *THRIVING*:

1. Get all the rest you need.
2. Move your body.
3. Introduce 5 minutes of mediation in your day.
4. Listen to your inner wisdom and let go of something negative.
5. Start a gratitude journal that you share with two or more friends.
6. Turn off your devices and gently escort them out of your bedroom.
7. Focus on the rising and falling of your breath for 10 seconds.
8. Pick an image of something that inspires a sense of wonder.
9. Forgive yourself for any judgments that you are holding against yourself.
10. Make small gesture of kindness.
11. Make a professional connection of people you like.
12. Use a skill or talent you have to help someone who needs it.

Change one behavior (bad habit) at a time:

- Food
- Anger
- Exercise
- Sleep

Resource Depleators:

Hungry
Angry
Lonley
Tired

Arianna's basics of living in the moment (where we can experience wonder):

1. Focus on the rising and falling of your breath for 10 seconds whenever you feel stressed, anxious or nervous. This always helps you to become fully present in life.
2. Pick an image that ignites the joy in you (pet, ocean, painting, etc) anything that gives you a sense of wonder; go to it any time you need to calm down. (take a calming break in front of your computer at www.Calm.com)
3. Forgive yourself of any judgments you are holding against yourself and then forgive your judgments of others; then look at your day with newness and wonder.

The purpose of Life and Death is to release LOVE! We are all terminal and care givers of ourselves.

6 Toxic Behaviors That Sabotage Your Success: How to Recognize Them in Yourself and Change Them

by **KathyCaprino.com**



When I write an article, I truly never know how it will be perceived and received. Last week, I posted a piece on LinkedIn about toxic behaviors that I see every day in the work I do, and the response has been quite amazing this post went viral (1.8 million views to date July 2, 2014)

In my line of work, I hear from hundreds of people a month, and I connect with professionals in a more public, open way than ever before. Through this experience, I've witnessed scores of toxic behaviors that push people away (including me), and I've seen the damage these behaviors cause -- to relationships, professional success and to the well-being of both the individual behaving negatively and to everyone around him or her.

Let's be real: We've all acted in toxic, damaging ways at one time or another (none of us are immune to it), but many people are more evolved, balanced and aware, and it happens only rarely in their lives. No matter how hard your life has been, or the deep challenges you've faced, you can strive to overcome toxicity and become more gentle, calm and loving with yourself and others.

Whether your toxic behavior is a common occurrence, or once in a blue moon, it's critical for your happiness and success that you are able to recognize when you're behaving badly, and shift it when it emerges.

The six most toxic behaviors I see every day are:

- 1. Taking everything personally:** In the powerful little book [*The Four Agreements*](#), Don Miguel Ruiz talks about the importance of taking nothing personally. I teach this in my coaching programs and my book [*Breakdown, Breakthrough*](#) as well, and there is so much pushback. "Really, Kathy -- don't take *anything* personally?"

People are toxic to be around when they believe that everything that happens in life is a direct assault on them or is in some way all about them. The reality is that what people say and do to you is much more about them, than you. People's reactions to you are about their filters and their perspectives, wounds and experiences. Whether people think you're amazing or believe you're the worst, again, it's more about them. I'm not saying we should be narcissists and ignore all feedback. I am saying that so much hurt, disappointment and sadness in our lives comes from our taking things personally when it's far more productive and healthy to let go of others' good or bad opinion of you, and to operate with your own heart, intuition and wisdom as your guide. So yes -- don't take anything personally.

- 2. Obsessing about negative thoughts:** It's very hard to be around people who can't or won't let go of negativity -- when they dwell on and speak incessantly about the terrible things that could happen and have happened, the slights they've suffered and the unfairness of life. These people stubbornly refuse to see the positive side of life and the positive lessons from what's transpiring. Pessimism is one thing -- but remaining perpetually locked in negative thoughts is another. Only seeing the negative, and operating from a view that everything is negative and against you, is a skewed way of thinking and living, and you can change that.
- 3. Treating yourself like a victim :** Another toxic behavior is non-stop complaining that fuels your sense of victimization. Believing you're a victim, that you have no power to exert and no influence on the direction of your life is a toxic stance that keeps you stuck and small. Working as a therapist with people who've suffered terrible trauma in their lives but found the courage to turn it all around, I know that we have access to far more power, authority and influence over our lives than we initially believe. When you stop whining, and refuse to see yourself as a hapless victim of fate, chance or discrimination, then you'll find that you are more powerful than you realized, but only if you choose to accept that reality.
- 4. Cruelty -- lacking in empathy or putting yourself in others shoes:** One of the most toxic and damaging behaviors -- cruelty -- stems from a total lack of empathy, concern or compassion for others. We see it every day online and in the media -- people being devastatingly cruel and destructive to others just because they can. They tear people down online but in a cowardly way, using their anonymity as a weapon. Cruelty, backstabbing and ripping someone to shreds is toxic, and it hurts you as well as your target.

I had a powerful learning experience about this a few years ago. I came into the house one day in a nasty mood and shared a mean, sniping comment to my husband about the way a neighbor was parenting her child through one of his problem phases. In less than 24 hours, that very same issue the parent was dealing with came home to roost in my house, with my child. It was as if the Universe sent me the message that, "Ah, if you want to be cruel and demeaning about someone, we'll give you the same experience you've judged so negatively, so you can learn some compassion." And I did.

If you find yourself backstabbing and tearing someone else down, stop in your tracks. Dig deep and find compassion in your heart, and realize that we're all the same.

5. **Excessive reactivity:** An inability to manage your emotions is toxic to everyone around you. We all know these people -- men and women who explode over the smallest hiccup or problem. Yelling at the bank teller for the long line, screaming at your assistant for the power point error he made or losing it with your child for spilling milk on the floor. If you find that you're overly reactive, losing it at every turn, you need some outside assistance to help you gain control over your emotions and understand what's at the root of your emotionality. There's more to it that appears on the surface. An outside perspective -- and a new kind of support -- is critical.
6. **Needing constant validation:** Finally, people who constantly strive for validation and self-esteem by obsessing about achieving outward measures of success are exhausting to be around. Those men and women who get caught up in the need to prove their worth over and over, and constantly want to "win" over their colleagues or peers, are toxic and draining.

Overly-attaching to how things have to look and be and to achieving certain milestones and accomplishments rather than going with life in a more flexible, easy manner, can wear you out and bring everyone else around you down. There is a bigger picture to your life, and it's not about what you achieve or fail at today or what's in your bank account. It's about the journey, the process, the path -- what you're learning and applying, how you're helping others and the growing process you allow yourself to engage in.

Stop stressing over the particular outcomes like, "I need that promotion now!" or "My house has to be bigger and more beautiful than my neighbor's." Your desperate need to prove your success and build your self-esteem through outer measures of success is (sadly) apparent to everyone but you, and it's pushing away the very happiness outcomes you're longing for.

(To build a more rewarding, successful career, visit kathycaprino.com and [The Amazing Career Project](#).)

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