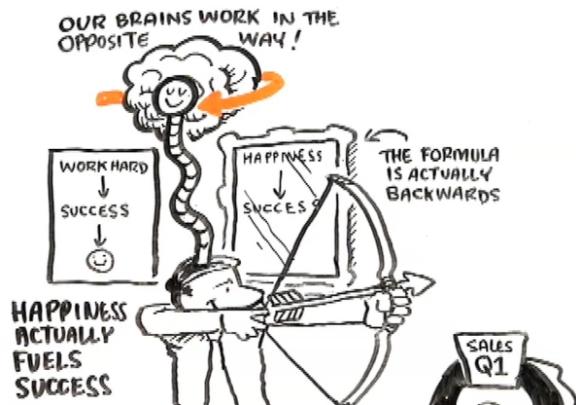


HAPPINESS BRINGS SUCCESS AND DON'T LET THE BIRDS OVERHEAD MAKE A NEST IN YOUR HAIR

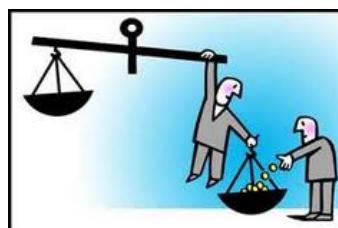
I am reading a fascinating book and have to share. The book is The Happiness Advantage by Shawn Achor. Achor has an intriguing principle about happiness and success that is backed up by loads of research. Traditionally we have been told that if you work hard you will become successful and once you are successful, you will be happy. Achor says the research shows over and over again that this is faulty thinking. Actually, it works in the reverse. People that are happy are more likely to be successful, prosperous and healthy. In other words, happiness comes first, then success, not the other way around.



Hmmm. How do we change our attitude to be "more happy"? According to Achor, there are specific steps to do so. First, recognize that you have a choice on how you view things. Whenever something "bad" happens you can choose to believe one of two ways. One way is to believe it is a short lived event and "things will get better". The other way is the "woe is me approach". If you chose the "oh well approach" rather than the "why is everything terrible happening to me approach" you will be able to recover and move on much more rapidly.



Many lawyers burn out and suffer from depression. According to Achor's book, lawyers are 3.6 times more likely to suffer from major depressive disorders than the rest of the employed population. Why? One reason is the way we are trained in law school. If you are writing a contract, you are supposed to imagine everything that could go wrong, then write a clause that covers that contingency. Litigators are trained to look for weakness in the other side's case. In short, lawyers are trained to look for the negative. This is fine except when it seeps over into our personal lives. Cross examining your kids or spouse is not a recipe for a happy home life.

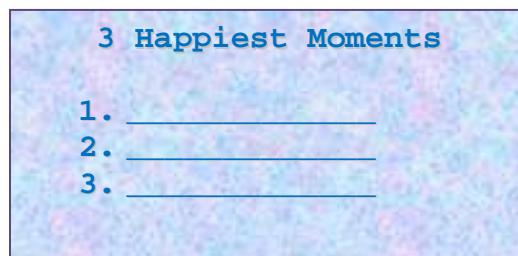


Wire Your Brain to be a Positive Thinking Spam Filter



There is a famous study where psychologists were doing a research project and asked volunteers to watch a film of a basketball game and count the number of times one team passed the ball. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJG698U2Mvo>) About 25 seconds into the video, a person in a full body gorilla costume walks straight through the action, traveling from right to left across the screen for a full 5 seconds. 46 percent of the people that viewed the video completely missed the gorilla. They missed it because they were so focused on counting the number of passes. Their brains just filtered it out.

Likewise our brains get bombarded with many different items during the day. Many of those items, sights and sounds are filtered out. If you are programmed to see the negative, you will miss a lot of the positive things happening around you. You can reprogram your brain by writing down three things that happened that day that you are happy about. Those three things can be as mundane as: 1. had a great hamburger for lunch; 2. it rained yesterday so now I don't have to water the yard; and 3. the line was short at Starbucks. Doing this each day will reset your brain to "notice" the good things around you. You can literally train your brain to have a positive thinking spam filter.



Using Adversity to Grow

One study discussed in Achor's book concerns the Post Traumatic Growth Syndrome. We all know about Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome but there is also Post Traumatic Growth Syndrome. It has been proven that adversities give us an opportunity to grow. Psychologist Richard Tedeschi and his colleagues studied Post Traumatic Growth Syndrome. In their study, it was shown that something good can come from a struggle with something very difficult. Post Traumatic Growth Syndrome provides an increase in spirituality, compassion for others, openness and overall increased life satisfaction. The phrase "what doesn't kill you, makes you stronger" is true. What makes some people have a Post Traumatic Positive Growth Syndrome and others a Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome? Again it is a positive mindset. The same traumatic event can be viewed by one person as a hopeless event and by another person as an opportunity for change and growth. The results of the same traumatic event can be very different. The reasons some people have positive growth and others have continued debilitating stress is based on their individual mindsets. The Positive Growth people saw adversity not as a

stumbling block, but as a stepping stone to change and grow. Growth is change and change is friction. Friction can be painful. But looking back after a painful event, many people can truthfully say they are better off and happier.

Don't Sabotage Your Success with Negative Thoughts

Another point in Achor's book is that it takes three compliments to offset one negative one. You can sabotage yourself and your coworkers with your words. An example given is where the employee is about to give a project presentation to the client, and his boss says, "Don't blow this, we really need this account." What that boss has done is to put failure in the employee's mind. It would have been much better if he had said, "Did you watch the game last night? Wasn't that a great one!" The point is that putting a positive thought in your mind before a performance, guarantees the likelihood of success much more than saying a Debbie Downer comment.

Words of Wisdom from my Mother

My Mother used to drive me crazy with these comments when I was little. Now I see the wisdom in her words. Two of her favorites were:

1. Just because the birds fly overhead, doesn't mean you need to let them make a nest in your hair. (Probably my resentment for this phrase had something to do with my hair problems as a teenager).
2. Don't meet trouble head on. (Prompted by my obsessive worries as a kid about not fitting in).