

HOW TO FEEL HAPPIER & LESS STRESSED EVEN WHEN LIFE GETS MESSY!



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I am a child of the 60s! I remember watching sitcoms like *Leave It to Beaver*, *The Dick Van Dyke Show* and *Andy Griffith* where everything seemed perfect. Similar to today's Facebook posts, they highlighted the perfect moments in life! Watching these old shows or perusing Facebook often leads us to believe that everyone else is living the perfect life. Our life seems like a mess in comparison. The truth is life is messy! The dictionary defines messy as disordered, untidy, muddled, chaotic, disorganized, confusing and cluttered. I think that about sums up the unexpected stuff that can happen in life. When our expectations aren't met or the unexpected happens life feels messy and we feel stressed.

We can alleviate much of the stress we feel by simply accepting that life is messy. Most of us want what we want when we want it. When it doesn't happen in the time frame we expect we get impatient, upset and feel stressed. Stress is caused by wanting the moment to be something it's not.

I use this stress stopper process to get back on track when I'm derailed with the unexpected.

- Breathe deeply in through your nose and out through your mouth for 30 seconds
- Observe the emotion you are feeling at the moment acknowledge it and let it go as you exhale
- Go into creator mode; start thinking and processing a plan of action by asking yourself the question, "So now what can I do?"
- Triage the situation
 - a. What has to get done
 - b. What can be let go of
 - c. Do the best you can in the situation – *it's not about perfection*
 - d. Take the next step

Here are five life style practices to help you feel happier

and less stressed even when life gets messy:

LABELING

We often label the uncertain and the unexpected as negative or bad. Words are powerful. Emotion attaches to our words. How can we label something as bad if we don't know what happens in end? None of us have a crystal ball. So how do we really know if something is bad? Instead, label it interesting. Interesting is a neutral word. Life is interesting. There have been many things in my life that at the time seemed ... negative or difficult, that actually turned out generating a very positive outcome. Two awesome outcomes from going through interesting times are my wonderful husband Steve Mausolf and my business. Haven't we all thought or said, "This is going to be bad," at one time or another and yet it turned out to be one of the best things to happen to us? Life's difficulties often set us up for our greatest successes!

POSITIVE THINKING

You may have heard that happiness is an inside job. Our level of happiness in life depends on what we think about. What do you think about on a day-to-day basis? We are the sum total of our own thoughts. The stories we tell ourselves become the life we live. If we believe we can't ... We can't! Luckily, the same holds true that if we believe we can... we can.

The average person has 60,000 thoughts per day, and 95 percent of those thoughts are redundant from day-to-day. 80 percent are negative unless we are mindful of our thoughts. We get in a rut worrying about the same things today that we worried about yesterday.

The awesome news is we can hardwire our brains to get out of the rut and start thinking more positively! When we have mindful talk, actively choose where to focus our

thoughts, and repeatedly apply it to a wholesome and constructive thought, we create a new path of positive thinking.

"Your life is a reflection of what you believe it can be!" ~ Judy Kay Mausolf

Positive affirmations are like planting seeds in the ground. It takes time to go from a seed to mature plant. It takes consistency and time from the first declaration to the final demonstration. You can't just say something positive once and expect it to appear.

I had the privilege of growing up on a farm in North Dakota. We had dairy cattle that were milked every day at 5 a.m. and again at 4 p.m. The cows had a daily routine of heading out to the pasture after they were milked and being home by 4 p.m. They took the same exact path every day following one behind the other. Eventually they would wear a deep rut into the ground. We would have to physically block off the path in order to get them to take a new path to avoid having the rut get too deep. This is an analogy of how we think. Our thoughts get into a rut following a certain worn path. If we want to change how we think to be more positive, we have to create a new path. Highlight the positives instead of the negatives. Look for a minimum of three potential positives in any situation or person. It doesn't come natural and may feel awkward and uncomfortable at first. We have to force ourselves just like with the cows to take a new path. It takes focus, consistency and persistence until a new path has been formed and worn deep enough to become a habit. The average habit takes 66 days of precise and consistent practice. Today's affirmations drive our future happiness and success!

FOCUS

It is our focus that creates our attitude. We can be happy and less stressed even when life gets messy. Here is the big secret about staying happy and positive even in messy times. It does not take any superpowers or anything special, although a TA-DAH or Smile & Shine Band can give a burst of positive super power (www.PracticeSolutionsInc.net/resources/products tab). It is simply a clear understanding of the power of focus. Our attitude is a learned behavior. Having a positive attitude is a skill we can learn. If we focus on the positive, we will have a positive attitude. Find a reason to feel good and you will feel good. When you hear people say they are in bad mood, it is because they choose to linger in the negative emotions. The physical part of any emotion only lasts 30 seconds or less. Any emotion after 30 seconds comes from hanging onto the motion. Woe is me people, or what I like to refer to as wallowers, choose to be victims of their emotions.

CHOICE

Why do you feel happy? If our why to our happiness depends on external circumstances we lose our power to be happy. Our happiness will be at the hands of others and whim to our circumstances. Have you ever thought I was in a great mood until "_____" happened or I was in a great mood until that person made me in angry? When we allow _____ whatever blank is at the moment to affect how we feel we are in essence relinquishing our power and allowing circumstances or other people to control our emotions. Once we have given up our power we are no longer a creator we become a victim. Circumstances and other people can only dictate how we feel if we allow them. It is always our choice.

I am often asked how I stay so happy and positive. I will share with you that it is not because I only meet nice people. I meet some of the same people that you meet who are not always so lovely! It's also not because my life is perfect or that everything goes my way. Trust me, I fly often and things usually don't go my way. Instead, it is a choice I make when I wake up every day! It's a choice to be happy and positive *regardless of what may come my way*. I choose to smile and impact others in a positive manner regardless of their behavior and whether I think they deserve it or not. It has nothing to do with them and everything to do with how I choose to show up. I choose not to relinquish my power to circumstances or other people or allow them to dictate whether I'm happy or not. I want to be the creator of my day and my life.

GRATITUDE

Life is messy. Difficult times can force us to realize there are no guarantees in life. What we have in the moment may only be there for a moment. When we realize things in life, and life itself, are temporary, we are inclined to no longer take them for granted. We become grateful for what is.

When we push aside the noise, it becomes easy to be embraced with gratitude for all our blessings. How clear it all becomes - colors are more vibrant, sounds are more musical, smells are sweeter, relationships have become precious, and everything comes alive.

"Life is a gift. Our attitude determines how we live it!" ~ Judy Kay Mausolf

The simple truth is we will never be happy with ourselves and our lives until we are grateful for what we already have. This concept may sound so simple and yet it can be so hard to master. Think about it for a moment. It is only when we give thanks and appreciate what already exists in our lives and stop comparing ourselves to others, that we find peace and happiness.