

1. You're Scared

Fear. Self-doubt. Thinking small. Feeling stressed and anxious and overwhelmed. Not feeling safe, wanting to hide, staying small.

Working hard not to be:

- too loud,
- too smart,
- too angry,
- too black,
- too white,
- too *what-ever*.

The list of fear-based thinking and behaviors is infinite. Fear holds you hostage. And it's very (very) smart.

Fear can look incredibly fierce and ferocious, like a great warrior's energy. As though you are absolutely on top of your game, gosh darn it.

It can masquerade as *I'm on top of everything, My world is perfect, I don't really want that/him/her after all, It doesn't matter.*

Or, it can keep you acting like a scared little bunny, either frozen in place (when everyone is looking right at you), or running around in circles (when everyone can see exactly what you're doing).

When you start learning to how to tell the difference between the actual facts and fear-based funky thinking, you can then begin to unpack this happiness block.

Here's what one of my happiness heroes, neuropsychologist Dr. Rick Hanson, says about fear —

"When we're afraid, we dream smaller dreams, speak less freely, cling tighter to 'us,' and feel more fear and anger toward 'them.'" (from *Hardwiring Happiness*)

Action Step

Try and notice a time when you're feeling afraid, especially if it's that yucky free-floating anxiety. Then, do what author and novelist Barbara Kingsolver suggests:

“Stop a minute, right where you are. Relax your shoulders, shake your head and spine like a dog shaking off cold water. Tell that imperious voice in your head to be still.”

Did you shake anything off? Release some of that anxiety? Physical movement can be a huge fear release-valve.

Another idea: Watch the Youtube video of “Happy,” with Pharrell Williams. Dare you not to wiggle a little bit ... and feel a little bit better.

2. You're Living in a Fantasy Future

You're waiting for happiness until you have:

- more money;
- (*way*) less work;
- a *good* relationship, for once in your life!;
- travel to exotic lands;
- perfect health

Really, this waiting until something else happens to find your happy can last a whole lifetime.

And oh, what a tragedy that is!

When you keep your attention on a fantasy future, you're missing every single day of your real life. The one that's right here. The one that has the seeds of happiness sown throughout every experience.

No, this doesn't mean you're not supposed to dream, and use your imagination, and go all out for what you want. Reach for those stars — that's why they're glittering so enticingly.

At the same time, though, also remember that your life is happening right now. To the extent that you can be present today, and deal with the laundry and the bills and your health and kids, you can also find little islands of sanctuary.

Right here, right now, as the mindfulness folks say.

Become an explorer of your own right-now happiness. I promise, there are incredible treasures waiting for you, just around this corner.

Once you've established a solid foundation for feeling just a wee bit happier right now, you can start calling in more of that fantasy future.

Because success is built on happiness, not the other way around.

Action Step

Start keeping a short log of daily goodness. In the evenings, jot down 3 Good Things that made you happy that day. Simple is great! Add a couple of specifics: who/what was there, how did you feel, what else did you get reminded of. (Doing this helps strengthen the positive neural pathways in your brain.)

You'll quickly begin to see 1) how much goodness is all around you (and maybe how much resistance you have to seeing it), and 2) tangible examples of what floats your boat.

Start doing more of those things that have been good during the day — it's not hard — and you'll have the clues you need to start making the changes that are necessary in order to manifest magic.

3. You're Confused About What Happiness is, and What it Feels Like

This Harvard Medical School article (<http://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/the-power-of-positive-psychology-finding-happiness-in-a-cold-oceanswim-201107273197>) highlights some of the key components to feeling happy.

Flow, sometimes called being in the zone, is an optimal brain state first defined by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Flow state is one of the defining components of consciously cultivating happiness.

Best-selling author Daniel Pink talks about it in his book *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*. When you're in a flow state, you feel good. Work feels good. Life feels good. You're engaged, productive, curious, and connected to what you're doing.

Flow is a subtle, sophisticated brain-state, associated with full engagement in an activity that takes you out of your small ego self, and allows you to merge with something larger than your little self.

It's one of the top indicators for true happiness.

Another hero of mine, Leo Babauta, wrote this article about it: <http://zenhabits.net/creative-flow/>.

Action Step

Take a couple of minutes each day to remember any times you felt in a flow state. What were you doing? Was anyone with you? If you can't think of anything, can you remember the last time you were in a flow state?

What's coming up for you as you think about this? No judging yourself (even though, of course you will ... you're human). Just notice what you notice.

Self-knowledge is self-power.

4. You Don't Understand How Powerful Your Honest Vulnerability Is

Brene Brown, the goddess of vulnerability, says it like this:

"To love someone fiercely, to believe in something with your whole heart, to celebrate a fleeting moment in time, to fully engage in a life that doesn't come with guarantees – these are risks that involve vulnerability and often pain. But, I'm learning that recognizing and leaning into the discomfort of vulnerability teaches us how to live with joy, gratitude and grace." (from *The Gifts of Imperfection*)

The rest of us need you to be honest, to be vulnerable. To stand in your power. Not as an ego trip. Rather, as a collective joining together of real, true, deep happiness.

Because it matters.

Being happier is better for everyone. In *The Art of Happiness*, by The Dalai Lama

and Howard C. Cutler MD, it says:

“... Survey after survey has shown that it is unhappy people who tend to be most self-focused and are often socially withdrawn, brooding, and event antagonistic. Happy people, in contrast, are generally found to be more sociable, flexible, and creative and are able to tolerate life’s daily frustrations more easily than unhappy people, and, most important, they are found to be more loving and forgiving than unhappy people.”

People who are committed to happiness not only feel better about themselves, but everyone (I mean, *everyone*) else also feels better. What a simple solution to evolutionary progress!

Here’s to the journey, my friend. Want more nuggets about how to use happiness to jumpstart your *aaahhh*, yes? Join our tribe. We’d love to have you with us.