

The Happiness Solution Newsletter

August 2008



Quotes of the Month

When life is stripped down to its very essentials, it is surprising how simple things become. Fewer and fewer things matter, and those that matter, matter a great deal more.

After all these years, I have begun to wonder if the secret of living well is not in having all the answers, but in pursuing unanswerable questions in good company.

-Rachel Naomi Remen

A Bit of Humor?

When Getting Surgery, 5 Things You Don't Want To Hear:

1. "Nurse, did the patient sign the organ donation card?"
2. "Everybody stand back! I lost a contact lens!"
3. "Hand me that...uh...that uh...thingy."
4. "Accept this sacrifice, O Great Lord of Darkness."
5. "Whoa, wait a minute. If this is his spleen, then what's this?"

Nutrition Corner

For decades, celery has been touted as a food having a role in weight loss programs. A May 2008 study stemming from the Division of

Nutritional Sciences at the University of Illinois finds another possible benefit of eating celery regularly. Green peppers and celery contain a flavinoid compound called luteolin. This compound was shown to reduce inflammatory brain conditions. The researchers concluded that luteolin may be useful for mitigating neuro inflammation. They published their findings in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. Since inflammation can lead to many physiological problems as we age, it might be worthwhile to eat foods containing luteolin. Food sources are celery, green peppers, beets, cabbage, cauliflower, spinach, rutabagas, Brussels sprouts, and chamomile tea.

Recent Research

A longitudinal study of 32 years duration involving 28,000 people ages 18-88 yielded some interesting findings. This research from the University of Chicago showed that the odds of being happy increased five percent with every 10 years of age. It seems that older people, despite dealing with more illness and loss, have learned to be more content with what they have than younger adults. They have more acceptance of what is and spend less time regretting the past or worrying about the future than their younger counterparts. Remaining social and keeping active were also correlated with happiness.

Story of the Month

"Trust Me on This One"

Many years ago, I was running an inpatient therapy group at a state psychiatric facility. It was my first day there. After introducing myself, I asked the seven patients to tell me their names, prefacing it by saying that it might take me some time to remember all their names. As it turned out, it wasn't going to be that hard. The first young man simply said, "I'm Jesus Christ." When another man told me that he was

Jesus Christ, I thought, 'This is going to be interesting.' I didn't blink an eye when the last gentleman to introduce himself said, "My name is Jesus Christ."

Thinking back to an old TV game show called "To Tell the Truth," I almost shouted, "Will the real Jesus Christ please stand up!" I didn't. I was able to control myself. Thankfully. Three Jesuses in the same group. More validation that life is fascinating. With paranoid schizophrenia, the Jesus delusion is not a rare occurrence. It naturally encompasses both delusions of grandeur and delusions of persecution. It may seem kind of crazy, but psychologically and spiritually speaking, it's a beautifully crafted and meaningful delusion. Years ago, I wrote a scholarly treatise on the subject that was published.

Years later, I ran a walk-in group each morning at a community mental health center. I'd put up a coffee pot and see if anyone showed up. Most of the people who did were psychotic, usually schizophrenic. We'd talk about whatever they wanted to. One of my regulars was a guy named Terry who also believed he was Jesus Christ. We spoke regularly about the joys and burdens of being Jesus. He felt he was doing a world of good.

One of the points to be made here is that everyone wants to matter. Me and you too. It's not necessary to be famous or to be Jesus in order to matter. Of course you matter. Do you love someone? Does someone love you? Have you ever been kind or compassionate or generous of spirit? Everything you do matters. Becoming schizophrenic largely stems from a fundamental mistrust of one's environment and one's self. Trust who you are and know that you matter.

Oriah Mountain Dreamer has written a beautiful prose poem entitled "The Invitation."

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living.
I want to know what you ache for
and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are.
I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool
for love
for your dreams

for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon...
I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow
if you have been opened by life's betrayals
or have become shriveled and closed
from fear of further pain.

I want to know if you can sit with pain
mine or your own
without moving to hide it
or fade it
or fix it.

I want to know if you can be with joy
mine or your own
if you can dance with wildness
and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your
fingers and toes
without cautioning us to
be careful
be realistic
to remember the limitations of being human.

It doesn't interest me if the story you are telling me
is true.

I want to know if you can
disappoint another
to be true to yourself.

If you can bear the accusation of betrayal
and not betray your own soul.
If you can be faithless
and therefore trustworthy.

I want to know if you can see Beauty
even when it is not pretty
every day.

And if you can source your own life

from its presence.

I want to know if you can live with failure
yours and mine
and still stand on the edge of the lake
and shout to the silver of the full moon,
"Yes."

It doesn't interest me
to know where you live or how much money you have.
I want to know if you can get up
after a night of grief and despair
weary and bruised to the bone
and do what needs to be done
to feed the children.

It doesn't interest me who you know
or how you came to be here.
I want to know if you will stand
in the center of the fire
with me
and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom
you have studied.
I want to know what sustains you
from the inside
when all else falls away.

I want to know if you can be alone
with yourself
and if you truly like the company you keep
in the empty moments.

Closing Thoughts

If you can, keep kicking back a little this August. Slow down, look around, take some deep breaths. Keep taking that vacation from worry, guilt, and fear.

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