

The Building Blocks Of Happiness



With Erica Terblanche on the Lundi Khoisan show
on Mix FM 93.8

Tune in every Wednesday at 10h10 for your weekly
soundbite of scientifically validated, practical happiness
coaching and learn one new happiness habit every week.

WEEK 3

ENGAGEMENT

I am excited to talk about the E in PERMAV.
E for engagement.

You know that feeling - when you are doing something that you love, and your phone is nowhere in sight, and you become completely and wholly absorbed in the task - we know that place where a sense of time disappears and we forget about ourselves, our ruminations and self-judgments we are just deliciously absorbed in the thing at hand.

We see kids do that when they play - getting so deeply absorbed. And forgetting that they are hungry or cold.

Through this kind of play, children learn how to maintain their focus and to persevere in a task. It builds their self-esteem and their ability to master new skills.



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It also turns out that going offline in this way is extremely beneficial also for adults and especially for our mental health because it helps our fragmented minds to come into a state of blissful focus where we no longer follow our mental chattering.

Psychologists like the famous Micheal Chickszentmilhay call this state of complete single-minded absorption the wonderful state of flow.

And what science tells us is that FLOW is a high-performance state where we have laser focus and can get a lot done in a shorter space of time and with fewer errors and greater mastery.

Now here is the magical part of this talk - and the most useful part: The more often we practice getting into flow by doing what we love the more often we can get into flow in the other tasks of our life. Like at work.

The sad reality is that as adults we most often neglect giving ourselves the time and space to do the thing we love. We quit our hobbies because we think they are self - indulgent and we stop doing the things we love.

When in fact we need this downtime to be healthy, happy, and whole. And to learn what it feels like to get into the flow and to perform at our best.

Just take a moment and think of something that you love doing, that requires a certain level of skill and concentration, perhaps something you used to do a lot of before you got too busy with life. I can offer some examples - maybe playing an instrument, reading, building puzzles, gardening, cooking, doing crosswords, swimming, dancing, writing, playing soccer, playing chess, painting, running, growing daffodils or building bicycles, fixing a car engine, or knitting - you get the picture.

What is it that you love for the sake of doing it? Where is your special place in the world where you can get happily absorbed?
Give yourself permission to re-kindle that flame.

Get your soccer boots or chess set out of the cupboard and carve out a space for you and make the time to get into your zone. The truth to be told is that everyone benefits when you get to do something you love.

EXERCISE

Today's happiness habit is the exercise of MORNING PAGES. It is a great practice for getting into the mental flow.

I call the practice 'my boat to the other side.'

"The other side of what?", you may ask.

"The other side of almost anything.", because it can help you get unstuck from feeling depressed or low-energy, from poor concentration, from being stuck in ruminating or negative self-talk, or from even fear, doubt, lack of clarity, or Indecision.

This tool is FANTASTIC for getting you to the other side - into a place of calm, peace, creativity, and centredness - to set your mind and energy free in a universe of creative potentiality.

It's a great place - being unstuck.

INSTRUCTIONS:

You will need two blank A4 pages and a pen/ pencil.

The instruction is to start writing - anything that comes to your mind.



For example: "what a strange exercise I don't know what to write but maybe something will come to my mind even if it is just about these apples in front of me I love apples especially green ones. My boyfriend prefers red apples I have no idea why - his tastes are very different from mine. I always date people who are different to me..."

- and so you go on to follow whatever comes into your stream of consciousness and write it down without spellcheck or stopping or even worrying if the writing is legible. Just write without stopping for three pages of the four blank sides of the pages.

You will feel it about two-thirds of the way through how your thoughts are beginning to break through the fluff and how clarity and insight begin to drift to the surface. It is a beautiful practice. You don't have to ever read it again. The value is in the process.

When you leave the clutter behind on the page you walk away with a clear and calmer mind and more ready to get into flow in whatever your task is at hand.

OK, so that's it for this week.

Reignite your hobby. Give it the time it deserves - not only for your own but for everyone else's sake too.

And do your morning pages when you feel stuck. Get into the boat and get into the flow.

Your life deserves that.

