

## In This Issue: Unhappiness: How to Achieve It & How To Maintain It

### Test for Success

Tools, Tips, & Techniques for Avoiding  
Hiring Mistakes and Developing People  
From Helm and Associates, Inc.  
And Kurt Helm

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## Unhappiness: How To Achieve It & How to Maintain IT

Are things going pretty well for you? Great! But if your first thought is, "If things are going well, something must be wrong," you have discovered one of the secrets to being unhappy.

### The Short List

Making yourself unhappy is really pretty simple if you go about it in the right way. As with everything else, there is a right way and a wrong way to rain on your on personal parade. Here are some practical and time-tested suggestions that are guaranteed to help you make even the rosiest circumstances seem gloomy.

1. See that glass as half empty. Focus on whatever is "wrong with the picture" you are looking at. Win the lottery and you'll have to pay a huge tax bill and fight off hordes to people with hard luck stories and/or get-rich-quick schemes. Win that big promotion you've been working so hard for and you get lots more responsibilities and headaches. Lose twenty pounds and you are going to have to spend a fortune on new clothes. As Rosannadanna used to say on Saturday Night Live, "If it's not one thing, it's another thing. It's aaalllways something!"
2. Blame others for your "bad luck." See your life as a zero-sum game in which there will always be only one winner and one loser, and then be sure to see yourself as the loser. Cultivate victim status for yourself. Make "Why me, Lord?" your personal mantra. Don't

be encouraged when things go your way. Look for the downsides and you will find them. Remember, a rose is just a thorny stick with a red thing on the end.

3. Don't let yourself be happy until you achieve the next big goal. Convince yourself that you can't be happy until you get the big raise or promotion, pull off the big deal, win the contest, or whatever. Then, and only then, can you be happy. See happiness as a permanent end state that you can only achieve as the result of a big win. And once you achieve it, you will be happy forever.

On The Other Hand...

Know someone who looks at the world this way? What would you suggest to this person to help them break these negative thoughts? Here are a few ideas:

1. Count your blessings. Regardless of your circumstances, you have many things to be thankful for. It is easy to take the blessings for granted, to allow them to become wallpaper in our lives. To avoid this, begin each day by writing down three things you are grateful for. If these involve another person, express gratitude to that person by saying something like, "I want you to know that I really appreciate your (fill in the blank)." Writing down the things you are grateful for gives them form, changes them from wallpaper to something that is real, not just "in your head." It's hard to be unhappy and be grateful at the same time.

2. Perform acts of kindness without expecting anything in return. Look for opportunities to help others with no expectation of recognition or reward. You don't have to give thousands of dollars to cancer research or donate a kidney. Simple kindness can be the most rewarding. Hold the door for someone. Give that server at lunch a big tip (it will mean more to him or her than it means to you.) Smile more often. Helping others isn't something you only do for the person you are helping. It is something you do to help see yourself as a good person.

3. Reframe difficult situations in a more positive light. Look for and find, the positive in each difficult, challenging or downright bad situation that arises and focus on them. This doesn't mean ignoring the negative aspects of a situation. These are a part of the package and must be dealt with. But let your focus be on the positive. What can you learn from the experience? How can you stretch and grow and be a better person because of the circumstances? These lessons are not always obvious, particularly when you are up to your rear-end in alligators, as the saying goes. But the lessons are there; all you have to do is make the effort to dig them out.

None of the Above Will Work UNLESS...

None of the above will work unless you make an effort to make them a regular part of your outlook. These are new habits and they require a commitment on your part to actually apply them today, and tomorrow, and the next day, until they become ingrained in the way you look at the things that happen to you.

In the long run, whether or not these strategies help you produce satisfaction and happiness will depend on how willing you are to apply them. Put simply, if you don't practice these strategies regularly they won't work for you. If you do practice them regularly they will work for you.

Both happiness and unhappiness are habits of mind, ways of looking at what happens to us. A couple of years ago my son gave me a good example of this. I was talking with him about his experiences in the Marine Corps Boot Camp. He was telling me about completing a physically grueling hike with an ankle that he had sprained a couple of days before. I know how painful it is to walk on a sprained ankle, so I asked him how he had dealt with the pain. He said with a smile, "It's mind over matter, Dad. If you don't mind (the pain), it (the pain) don't matter."

Most of what happens to us includes both positives and negatives. It is harder to be unhappy if you remind yourself to focus on – "mind" – the positives, and "don't mind" the negatives.

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Remember, People ARE your most important asset!

To Hire the Best, Test!

To Reveal Management Potential, Test!

To Diagnose Problem Behavior, Test!

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