

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 6

Meaning And Purpose

We all want to feel that our lives matter - that we have made a difference.

Having a clear sense of meaning and purpose in our lives helps protect us against depression and heart disease. It makes us more resilient through the tough times and it has even been shown that people with a sense of purpose - an **ikigai** as it is called in Japan - something to live for - live on average seven years longer.

Dr Victor Frankl - the famous psychologist and neurologist who survived five years in a Holocaust concentration camp documented that inmates who had something to live for were far more likely to survive the ordeal. Famously he wrote "he who knows his why will be able to withstand almost any how". He taught his fellow prisoners in war to rekindle a sense of purpose in their lives and reported how suicide rates dropped dramatically among his students.

So where do we find our meaning and purpose?
To be truthful it is created and made step by little step - rather than found.



Learn more and download the Building Blocks Of Happiness:
www.thrive-guru.com

Are you familiar with Abraham Maslow, and his hierarchy of needs? Maslow showed that beyond satisfying the basics of survival and belonging, human means are made to seek self actualisation - Maslow said that for a person to be happy - "one must become what one can be."

But it turns out that this is only half the story and that there are many highly successful and self actualised people who are not all that happy.

It turns out that the secret to a happy and fulfilled life - according to science and robust research findings - is to use one's strengths and talents, and ones best most actualised self in service of something greater than ourselves.

But even in this, there is a trap - a sense that one must have some great hairy audacious and seemingly important societal goal - some great and glorious sounding purpose.

Many people ask - what is my purpose? Which is sometimes a self centered question, and one that is much more about self worth, and self esteem.

A better question to ask is **WHO DO I HAVE MEANING FOR - AND IN WHAT WAY?**

For example - I have meaning for:

- My child - I am a good mom and a mentor
- My wife - I am a good partner and a reliable source of emotional comfort
- My colleagues - I am a supportive colleague and I aim to inspire them to be healthier
- The attendant at the gas station - I am that friendly and interested customer who sees and respects the man beyond the job title.

The sources of meaning are deeply intertwined with the people in your immediate circle of influence. And with the things we are naturally good at doing and enjoy doing.

What Dr. Seligman called our character strengths.

Dr. Seligman said "The meaningful life is when you use your character strengths and virtues in service of something beyond your own ends and means alone."

I have a lovely exercise today for listeners - to use Dr. Seligman's

VIA CHARACTER STRENGTH ASSESSMENT

To identify your unique character strengths and how you can put them to use in the world.

Dr. Martin Seligman and his team have identified 24 character strengths and have tested the model with more than 7 million people.

It is a beautiful way to understand how you stand in the world and what you can bring to others.

For example, some character strengths include bravery, curiosity, kindness, leadership, love, perseverance, prudence, social intelligence and teamwork.

One of mine is curiosity - I love learning, studying and researching - and to synthesise everything I learn and to then in turn bring it back to my readers and listeners in a useful way, to help others who don't have the time to go do all the digging on what makes a happy life.

In your quest for meaning and purpose, I suggest you go and complete the survey at www.viacharacter.org and make a note of your top five character strengths, and actively consider how you can use them in service of others and especially in your immediate circle of influence. This is the pathway to a happy and fulfilled life.

There is also another way to make a difference and arrive at a purpose driven life... Often another source of meaning are the challenges we have struggled with in the past - perhaps overcoming an addiction, or a trauma, or a tragedy.

OFTEN OUR MESS BECOMES OUR MESSAGE.

And what we have come through, we can in turn use to help other people navigate through the same troubled waters.

Remember meaning and purpose is made, not found, and it is ultimately not about "me", but about others.

Identify your character strengths and put them to good, daily use.

Next week we will talk about **ACCOMPLISHMENT** and setting worthwhile goals, and better yet - busting through procrastination to achieve them.

