

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 7

Accomplishment

We are autotelic in nature - humans are fundamentally goal-driven.

We need worthwhile goals to help us align our actions towards a happy, fulfilled and worthwhile life. Our goals are like a rudder in our life. Without them, we just float and you can be sure someone else will set goals for you - even if it is Google algorithm. When we have clear goals in the priority areas of our life we have a focal point for our energy, our attention, our daily micro-decisions, for our behaviours.

TYPE OF GOALS

But the science shows us that not all goals are equal and differentiates intrinsic and extrinsic goals.

The simplest way to think of it is that extrinsic goals are about worldly goals - like wealth, fame, beauty - and ultimately depends on external validation and reward.

Intrinsic goals are goals of the soul - personal growth, relationships, self-mastery.

The research has shown that extrinsic goals can actually be harmful to wellbeing - these goals put us on a never-ending treadmill of having to earn validation and acclaim through achievement.

Exhausting.

Never mind the other issues of constant competition and comparison with others - especially on social media as we mentioned last week.



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Whereas intrinsic rewards - the inner goals of doing something for the love of it, of growing as a person, of getting healthy and fit for my own sake and not for being seen to do it, of having good and deep relationships with others - these are the goals that are correlated with increased wellbeing.

[The reasons are many but one plausible reason is that these intrinsic goals satisfy our deepest human psychological needs. In self-determinism theory people seek autonomy, mastery and relatedness as their primary psychological needs and intrinsic goals far more often satisfy these.]

So when we get to the goalsetting exercise today, keep this lense in mind "is this goal an inner goal of my soul, a private goal that I will enjoy even if no one is watching or does it need external validation, recognition and reward?" And try to make the majority if not all of your goals intrinsic.

DOING IT

There are three things that will help you set better goals.

Write it down

There is great magic and power in writing down your goals - because it gives your mind and attention and energy to concentrate around.

I once found a piece of paper on which I had written 100 things I want to do before I die. What was staggering was that - even though I had forgotten about the list and it found its way to the bottom of a box in storage, I had achieved 85% of my wishlist.

Write it down.

Aim high

We know that we are not fixed - we know that our DNA determines only 30% if not less of where we end up. We know that everything we do repeatedly helps us to grow new neuronal pathways and new ways of being and thinking. WE ARE NOT FIXED.

Carol Dweck is acclaimed for her work on GROWTH MINDSET which shows that children who have a growth mindset are more willing to try and less fearful of failure than kids who believe that they are fixed. And of course the more things and the more often you try the better you get. So whether you think you are fixed or not becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. She advises that we don't praise our kids because "you are so smart/ or you are so fast/ pretty/etc." She says we should praise our kids for their effort and for trying.

So when it comes to goalsetting - notice that backseat critic in your head saying "you can't do that!" And respond with "I can learn". Aim high - we can only become what we allow ourselves to aim for.

• **Visualise the actions, not the outcome only**

The research shows that visualisation of the outcome only can be detrimental to us achieving our goals - because there is already such a degree of satisfaction gained from the imagined attainment. A much better way is to visualise the actions and steps to get to our goals.

A GREAT GOAL SETTING METHOD

So now we are ready to do a bit of goalsetting.

- List your life priorities (5 to 8 priorities e.g. Family, finances, health and fitness, career, hobbies, spirituality/belief, character, overall mood, community, friends, romance, contribution/ legacy, etc.)
- Now rank them in order of importance (I know this is really difficult). Rank them 1 being most important.
- Now rate your satisfaction with where you are at right now in each priority - give a rating out of ten where ten is over the moon and one is not happy at all.
- Now choose a priority to work with for the rest of this exercise. Choose a priority where some change will make a huge positive difference in your life.

Take a moment - close your eyes and do 4-7-8 breathing (see session 2) and imagine what 10/10 looks like in this priority. What does it look like when your wildest dreams are met? Who is there? What does it feel like? What are you doing? What are the actions - be specific. What are your daily habits?

Whom are you being in this place of 10/10? How is it impacting those around you?

- Why is getting to 10/10 in this priority important for your life - and for those you care about?

WE NEED TO KNOW OUR WHY TO GIVE US THE ENERGY TO CHANGE.

Simon Sinek has done a fantastic Ted talk on knowing your why.

SO... Why?

- What can you do in the next 24-48 hours to take the first small step towards your 10/10? Describe exactly what the action is, and exactly what day and at what time you will have completed it. Be very very specific. This helps us to take that first high-inertia change-resistant step. It helps us BEGIN.
- Get a buddy - find a friend or partner or colleague and tell them exactly what your action is, what time it will be completed and ask them to visit/ phone/text you to check that you had done it. It is their job to hound you. The rest search shows that change is significantly more likely if we have an accountability partner.

Please take the time to do this exercise for all your most important priorities in your life. If you put all the 10/10s together it forms the tapestry of a worthwhile vision for your life.

I am going to finish with how to relate to our goals so they don't become a burden to us but rather that they inspire and motivate us.

When I talk about goal setting many people tell me that they don't set goals because they are afraid of not attaining the goals and the disappointment in themselves.

But we know now that it's not all about achieving the end goal - in fact the most valuable part of having goals is that they give us a direction for our life and that they help us to stay on a journey that is worthwhile for us and that they help us to not get swept up in other people's expectations for our life.

And the wise person knows that there will be detours and switchbacks and never a straight line to the end goal. So hold the goal, but hold it lightly.

[Because - who knows what is good and what is bad. It is the title of a Zen Teaching about the fact that we don't know whether an event is a blessing or a curse.

So there was a Zen farmer and he had a jealous neighbour. One day the farmer bought a beautiful stallion - and of course, the jealous neighbour was there in an instant - "what great fortune neighbour" but the farmer shook his head and said, "who knows what is good or bad fortune."

That night the stallion runs away - and the neighbour duly pops over "what great misfortune my friend." The farmer shakes his head. "Who knows what is good or bad fortune." During the night the stallion returns from the mountains with 20 feisty wild young mares in tow" and of course, you can already hear the neighbour the next morning exclaiming "what great fortune!" To which you know the farmer's response. Two days later the farmer's son saddles a mare to break her in - but she throws him off and he breaks a leg. "What great misfortune" the neighbour exclaims.

"Perhaps," says the farmer because he was a wise man and understood that things are not as they appear to be.

The next morning a battalion of soldiers came past the farm to conscript all the young men for a brutal war that had broken out and found the farmer's son immobilised by a broken leg.

Who knows what is good and what is bad.

Set your goals high, write them down, and hold them lightly knowing that life is infinitely more imaginative than our planning].

- For the sake of your one precious life - go set your goals.

NEXT WEEK

We will talk about Vitality - and specifically our eating, our genes and what huge health wins we can achieve with small tweaks.