

An Ounce of Prevention

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5 Behaviours Guaranteed To Prevent Happiness And Success In Your Life

People write and speak a lot about the behaviours that will set you up for happiness and success, but have you ever considered the behaviours that are holding you back from achieving your goals in life?

I've identified five specific behaviours that are guaranteed to cause you difficulties in life and interfere with your ability to achieve the happiness and success you've been hoping for. If you aren't where you want to be in your career or finances; if your relationships aren't as positive as they could be; if your life in general lacks fulfillment, you might want to take a look at this list and see if you're engaging in any of these behaviours, so that you can begin to change them today.

Here are the five behaviours guaranteed to interfere with your happiness and success in life:

1: Avoidance: So many problems arise when we engage in avoidance. When we avoid thinking about a problematic issue, we can't deal with it, so our problem won't go away and might even get bigger. When we procrastinate about doing something we find challenging, either we'll fail to accomplish our goal or if we do eventually get to it, it will never be as good, because we gave ourselves less time to do it in.

2: Rigidity: Being rigid means not being able to let go of attitudes, beliefs or behaviours that are getting in the way of our happiness and success. If we keep holding on to these counter-productive ways of being, we'll never achieve our ultimate goals.

3: Magical thinking: This is when you believe the hopeful fantasies in your head. Whether you convince yourself that your romantic partner is not the jerk they really are; your boss really is going to give you that raise or promotion; your bills are somehow going to get paid or your addiction will take care of itself, you're setting yourself up for disappointment and failure. You need to face reality and step up to the plate. Otherwise, disaster.

4: Blaming others for your problems: If you have a tendency of externalizing the blame for the difficulties you're facing, you'll never be able to resolve these difficulties in your life. When you take responsibility for the problems you've created, you actually empower yourself to create positive change, whereas when you externalize the blame, you're powerless to effect any meaningful change in your life.

5: Self-criticism: When your inner monologue is constantly putting you down, it can be so detrimental to your self-esteem that you become paralyzed. The negative self-talk in your head can be so destructive to your motivation that it prevents you from moving forward in your plans and achieving your dreams. You need to silence this inner critic and replace the negativity with positive, encouraging affirmations.

If you're repeatedly encountering difficulties, frustrations or disappointment, and you'd like things to improve significantly, there are concrete actions you can take right now.

Read the above list carefully, and if you identify any of the above behaviours as ones that you've been engaging in, you can choose to let them go, and bring yourself one step closer to achieving the happiness and success that you desire.

~Marcia Sirota, Author, speaker, coach and MD

http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/marcia-sirota/5-behaviours-guaranteed-to-prevent-happiness_b_9190374.html?ir=Canada

9 Things Good Listeners Do Differently

Despite being taught the importance of listening from a young age — think about how many teachers have asked you to “put

your listening ears on” — the truth is, most of us aren't as good at the skill as we ought to be.

Research shows that the average person listens with only 25 percent efficiency — meaning there's a *lot* we're letting go in one ear and out the other. But as listening expert Paul Sacco, Ph.D., an assistant professor at the University of Maryland School of Social Work, explains, there are just a few simple habits that set the *real* good listeners apart from the rest.

“We all have a good listener within us,” Sacco tells The Huffington Post. “It all just depends on the ability and desire to be mindful of where you are and who you're talking to. A lot of us are focused on the mechanics of listening — eye contact, nodding your head — but for good listeners, there's a naturalness to that behavior that we should all aspire to.”

As Greek philosopher Epictetus once theorized, “We have two ears and one mouth so we can listen twice as much as we speak.” So how do we start using those features more proportionally — or, as Sacco advises — access our inner good listener? **Below are nine habits that good listeners practice in their everyday lives and conversations that you can adopt for yourself.**

They're present. Being mindful in conversations is a hallmark characteristic of a good listener, Sacco notes. When you're fully aware in the moment, you're more likely to retain what you're hearing and respond with more authenticity. That means stashing those phones and ridding yourself of all distractions. “Good listeners really put everything down and focus on [the person in front of them],” he says. “And as a result, the other person becomes instantly aware that they have an interest in what they have to say.”

They're empathetic. Part of effective listening is the effort to empathize with the person you're speaking with. Whether or not you're able to fully relate, your compassion won't go unnoticed. “Spend a moment putting yourself in their position, what's going through their head and what it must be like for them,” Sacco says. “Understanding what their experience is even before you talk to them [can help you connect with them]. And it sounds bad, but even if you blow it, you're still better off because the other person will see the attempt.”

They realize their shortcomings. It may be a strange way of thinking about it, but accepting yourself is key to being a good listener overall, Sacco says. In other words, we can't pick up on everything everyone is saying all the time — and that's OK. “I've definitely had my share of reflective listening failures,” Sacco admits. “Sometimes... having that intentionality to listen and allowing yourself to miss the boat sometimes [is good enough].”

They have an open mind. Great listeners know that every conversation they have isn't going to resolve a larger issue — but it puts them one step closer to understanding the people they communicate with on a daily basis. “Listening isn't magic,” Sacco explains. “If I have a conflict with my daughter, I still have a conflict — but it puts you in a position where you can start to problem-solve. ... It allows each person to understand the other's thoughts.”

They're emotionally intelligent. Emotional intelligence, or the awareness of our emotions and the emotions of those around us, can help enhance any interaction — especially when it comes to listening.

According to Travis Bradberry, author of *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, cultivating a high “EQ” is paramount when sharpening your listening skills. And all it takes is practice and focus. “When you're caught up with thinking about what you're going to say next, you aren't listening,” he told the Chicago Tribune in 2011. “But if you stop what you're doing, and really focus on the person talking, you activate neurons in your brain and your body starts to hone in on the other person. This helps you retain more information.”

They pose significant questions. Part of active listening isn't just lending your ear, but asking appropriate follow-up questions to draw out more information. This ability to provide thought-provoking feedback is one of the best ways to show you're engaged in what the other person has to say, Sacco says. "People who are good listeners validate other people's feelings," he adds. "It shows that what they're saying makes sense."

They're not on the defensive. Not all of the things you hear are going to be rosy. "I'm great at listening when someone is telling me things I want to hear," Sacco explains. "It gets a little more difficult when someone gives you feedback that you find troubling or you perceive as being damaging to your ego."

Effective listeners don't block out negative criticism. Instead, they listen and develop an understanding of what the person is trying to convey before responding. "They're aware of their own reactions to other people," Sacco says. "The difference between a terrible listener and a great listener can sometimes be the response time. A lot of conversations ... can go pretty bad or pretty well depending on the ability to step back and just take a moment [before responding]."

They're OK with being uncomfortable. In addition to not playing defense, Sacco also advises embracing every emotion during your conversations — even feelings of discomfort or anger. "You need to get comfortable with being uncomfortable," Sacco says. "When you're having difficult conversations with people, if you want to be fully listening, that may be a hard thing for you to do but it's important to try."

They're good leaders. Research has shown that there's a direct correlation between strong leadership and strong listening skills — and it really comes as no surprise. As Richard Branson, CEO of Virgin Group writes, the most effective leaders and entrepreneurs listen more than they speak:

To be a good leader you have to be a great listener. Brilliant ideas can spring from the most unlikely places, so you should always keep your ears open for some shrewd advice. This can mean following online comments as closely as board meeting notes, or asking the frontline staff for their opinions as often as the CEOs. Get out there, listen to people, draw people out and learn from them.

Lindsay Holmes Deputy Healthy Living Editor, Huffington Post

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/14/habits-of-good-listeners_n_5668590.html?ir=Healthy%20Living&utm_campaign=081414&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Alert-healthy-living&utm_content=Photo

It's Not My Fault

Accepting the blame and taking responsibility are learned skills. Start teaching them now.

By Sally Marshall

"I didn't do it!" My 7 year-old daughter, Coco, recites that phrase like a mantra. Her explanations for why she's blameless fall into three main categories: Someone hit her first, it was the other kid's idea, or some adult (usually me) was responsible.

I used to let these comments slide, figuring every child her age blames others when something goes wrong. But when she said "I didn't break the cup-my hand did," I knew I had to teach her to own up to her behaviour.

"Kids this age have difficulty taking responsibility for their actions and behaviour, especially when they think their parents would disapprove of something they did," says Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Ph.D, Professor of child development at Columbia University Teachers College, in New York City. Since they are still not adept at anticipating consequences, admitting culpability can be daunting. For school-age children, understanding rules and consequences is still a developmental work in progress, says K. Mark Sossin, Ph.D, professor of psychology at Pace University, In New York City.

Even if you know why your child is reluctant to admit that she's done something wrong, you may be baffled by the strange things she says when confronted with something that's obviously her doing. Keep in mind that, for most children, accepting responsibility is a learned behavior, like manners or taking turns. So the next time you run into one of

the following situations, use it as an opportunity to teach her how to react appropriately.

Your son knows the rule is to never touch the papers you bring home from the office, but he doodles on them anyway. When you confront him he claims "it was an accident." Resist the temptation to yell, punish, or try to force him to admit that he did it on purpose—none of those responses will teach him to own up to his mistakes, says Dr. Sossin. Instead, let him know the real consequences his doodling has for you-and him. You might say, "Now I have to print this whole thing out again, so I won't have time to play checkers." Then ask him to help you fix the problem or keep you company as you do it so he has an opportunity to make things right. Remember, from your kid's perspective, this probably was an accident in that he didn't understand the impact of his actions. By allowing him to experience the results of his behaviour, rather than feel ashamed or defensive, you'll help him learn to do the right thing.

Your daughter is running around the house, falls, and then blames you because she tripped over her untied shoelaces. Though it's maddening to be the fall guy, don't take it personally. Just ask, "What can we do so that doesn't happen again?" says Dr. Sossin. Listen to her ideas and then make a suggestion of your own like, "why don't we practice making a double knot so your shoes won't keep coming untied?" Do this often enough and she'll start looking for a solution when things go wrong—rather than playing the blame game.

You see your son pull his sister's hair. He says she made him do it, because she hit him first. "I'll tell my kids that they're in charge of themselves- not blaming others," says Lee Mackenzie, of Mason, Ohio. Don't play judge and jury just make sure your child understands that no matter what another kid does he's still responsible for his actions? When the heat of the moment has passed, ask your son what he thinks a good response might be the next time someone makes him angry. It's more likely to stick if he comes up with it himself. Finally, encourage empathy: "How does it feel when someone pulls your hair?"

Your daughter ransacks your jewelry box and even though she denies it, you're sure she did it. "I always tell my 7-year-old daughter that I'll be angrier if she tells me a story than if she tells the truth," says Amy Ramson, of New York City. How do you get a kid to confess? Try non-accusatory statement such as: "That's an interesting explanation, but I'm waiting to hear what actually happened." Then matter-of-factly go about your business. Most kids will come forward if they aren't put on the defensive. But once you get your confession, make sure you applaud her honesty—even if there's a consequence for her deed.

Net News

Here are some web sites you & your family may find helpful.

10 Most Inspiring Personal Development Quotes

<http://livelearnevolve.com/10-most-inspiring-personal-development-quotes/>

Be Healthy-Stay Well: Good Health is Choice, Not Chance

<http://behealthystaywell.com/>

For information or links to health tips, visit:

www.canadian-health-network.ca

Parents, The Anti-Drug Website:

www.theantidrug.com/advice/

Self- Help Corner:

Alcoholics Anonymous: 780-424-5900

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org

Al-Anon/Alateen: 780-433-1818

Support Network / Referral Line: 211

Distress Line: 482-4357

Cocaine Anonymous: 780-425-2715

Informative Links:

The National Women's Health Information Center:

<http://4woman.gov/>

Active Living Website: <http://www.centre4activeliving.ca>