**GRATITUDE AND HAPPINESS FOR LEADERS**

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There is a famous Native American story, which goes like this:

One evening, an old Cherokee tells his grandson that inside all people, a battle goes on between two wolves. One wolf is negativity: anger, sadness, stress, contempt, disgust, fear, embarrassment, guilt, shame and hate. The other is positivity: joy, gratitude, serenity, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe and love.

The grandson thinks about this for a moment and then asks his grandfather: “Which wolf wins?”

The grandfather replies, “The one you feed.”

So as a leader to the question ponder is: “Which wolf are you feeding?”

**CHOOSE YOUR FRAME OF REFERENCE**

Being a leader is challenging. There’s the constant pressure to perform in an environment which is constantly changing.

You can’t control what happens to you every day. But you can choose how you respond to what happens to you, by being clear about how you think, where you focus your attention and what you pay attention to. You can focus on the upside or the downside.

This is not about ignoring what is happening around you. Instead it’s about consciously choosing your frame of reference.

 Aristotle said: “Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.”

We all have a set point for happiness. Think of it like a scale. Just as everybody weighs a certain amount, every person has a happiness level they typically operate at. That set point remains relatively constant. There are things that will temporarily adjust it. For example, a new job, winning the lottery, or buying a new car will temporarily make a person happier. Sadly, these are only short-term activators. They don’t last.

**HAPPINESS REQUIRES EFFORT**

In today’s society, people equate money and success with happiness. This is a fallacy. In fact, 80% of happiness is based on your internal mental view of the world and how your brain processes what is happening around you.

Research shows that genetics accounts for about 50% of your happiness quota (i.e. your happiness setting at birth; predisposition and personality traits); 10% is due to circumstances; and the remaining 40% to variants that you can determine; that is, intentional activity that you undertake.

In this research, the researchers (Sonja Lyubomirsky, Kennon M. Sheldon and David Schkade) defined intentional to mean discrete actions or practices in which people choose to engage. These are activities that require some form of effort.

Now you might be sitting back and thinking that’s really interesting but why should I care? You should care because how happy you are impacts your life and likelihood of success.

In further research, Lyubomirsky, Laura King and Ed Diener examined whether happiness leads to success, and the causal factors. They argued that the happiness-success link exists not only because success makes people happy but more importantly, because having a positive disposition engenders success.

Their results showed that happiness is associated with and precedes successful outcomes.

**TIPS FOR SUCCESS**

If you want to change your setting for happiness it is wise to take deliberate and planned action. Consider including activities such as these in your day:

1. Craft a gratitude mantra that you say every day. Expressing gratitude helps you feel happier and builds your resilience. When you look at what you have vis-a-vis others, you can see how much you have to be thankful for.

2. As part of this practice, focus on one to three things to be thankful for every day. This can be as simple as, “the sun was shining” or “I had a great cup of coffee”. Buy a journal and carry it with you. Write those positive experiences in your journal. Do this daily. Writing down your experiences helps your brain relive the event, and so you get the brain’s feel-good chemicals released into your bloodstream.

3. Spend time connecting with nature. Appreciate the grace and beauty of what is around you every day in the natural environment. Take the time to pause. This can be a five-minute pause. Look around you. What do you notice? What do you feel? Connect your feelings with your environment.

4. Exercise and meditate regularly. Build a routine so these activities are mapped out in advance and scheduled in your calendar. Exercise and meditation are as important as eating and sleeping.

5. Get eight hours of sleep a night. Sleep is restorative and your brain can’t function without it. It’s hard to be focused, mindful and reflective when you’re tired.

6. Eat well and drink lots of water to stay hydrated.

7. Do nice things for other people. When you do something nice for someone else it makes you feel good. Helping others helps you realise the positive forces in your life that others may not have.

8. Wish people well — if you are in a busy environment take a moment to stop, and notice those around you. Internally cultivate the wish that you want them to be happy, healthy and free of suffering. Wishing others well is good for your own emotional state.

9. Devote time to important relationships every single day. This goes beyond maintaining connections on social media. King people. Have coffee with them. Send someone a handwritten note. The connection needs to be personal.

10. Close bonds and being comfortable to share how you feel, and being open about experiences is healthy and very good for the soul. People who are happy have strong connections to the community and good friends.

11. Accept yourself and love yourself for your flaws. No one is perfect. Everyone is still learning and evolving. To do this you need to be open to learning and making mistakes.

12. Strive to find purpose and meaning in your life. People with purpose are generally happier and more resilient as they are clear about their goals and where they are heading in life. Set short, medium and long-term goals — each with the right amount of stretch and do-ability.