



Personal Safety Nets® e-Newsletter



On the Road to Happiness

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Charting a Course

Happy yet? Did thinking about this raise or lower your thoughts about how happy you are? Last month we ran a story about Bhutan and the Happiness Initiative. There was a lot of information there about **being happy, finding out how happy you actually are, and getting happier**. Next month we'll give you some more feedback; and in the meantime

... After reading the info on "**The Happiness Initiative**" some of our readers took a survey that helps predict conditions of well-being. (loosely defined as happiness). We'll have information on those results in an upcoming issue and **if you didn't take the survey yet, and would like to, you can still do so** - and have your friends take it too. (use the "forward this email" button at the end of this newsletter, please!) **The results may surprise you**. And next month it'll be interesting to see how you, our readers, fare and compare to people at large.



Then, a few readers reminded us of **YES! Magazine's Sustainable Happiness edition**, and the story of **Dr. Tal Ben-Shahar**, former Harvard University professor and his class, "Positive Psychology." His was the most popular class ever offered at that University! Hearing this, we just had to delve deeper.

Letters, We Get Letters . . .



Editor's note: Get ahead of the curve - start 2013 off right - by recognizing that we are all connected, we all (or at least, most of us) want to help others, and that letting safe others into our lives is a good thing. Below we've included Peter's letter (not his real name) illustrating how human it is to procrastinate, and how wonderful it is to be surprised by others.

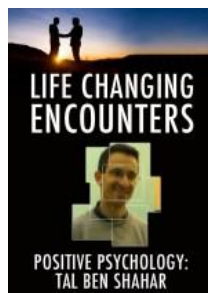
Dear PSN Staff:

I told my neighbors I was off to the hospital and would be gone a few days for tests. They immediately offered (no, demanded) to pick me up and take me home. They then blocked off time to take me home from my next hospital excursion - treatment. A network of support showed up at my front door much earlier than I had expected. As people found out about my undergoing treatment, offers



Known as the "**happiness course**," Positive Psychology focused upon the **psychological aspects of a fulfilling life**, including topics such as happiness, self-esteem, empathy, friendship, love, achievement, creativity, music, spirituality and humor - and the idea of such a class quickly spread with more than 200 colleges and graduate schools

in the United States who now offer a similar class. (Ben-Shahar's topics closely align with those of PSN.)



Dr. Ben-Shahar, is the author of a number of profiles and books on happiness, including: *Life Changing Encounters* (2011), *Being Happy* (2010) and *Happier* (2007). He says that you can learn to be happier, just as you can learn a foreign language, or to be proficient at golf. The best way to master such activities is to have an expert instruct you, and then for you to regularly practice what you are taught so that it becomes second nature.

of help started pouring in. Who knew?

Very shortly I'll have started a "calendar of events" on a spreadsheet - of who is doing what, when and where. I've started reading *Personal Safety Nets - Getting Ready for Life's Inevitable Changes & Challenges* - which is not strange because last year I attended one of their conferences. I just never thought it would be me - I'm so happy I went to the conference!

I'm over trying to figure out "Why me" and just grateful that I learned about reaching out and forming a safety network.

Regards, Peter

"Peter" could also think about involving someone else to set up the spreadsheets or organize assistance for him using some other system such as Care Brigade or CareZone. Yes, there are actually people out there - and you may be one of them - who like setting up systems, filling out insurance forms, giving rides ... They are just waiting for a need to pop up. So ASK ... and remember that a "no" or "not now" is a fine answer. You want the people you ask to feel free to offer when they really can, right? So, say "thank you" and keep asking! By the way, thank heavens Peter's getting along fine now.

Did You See This One . . .



Multigenerational Households

Did you know **51 million Americans live in households where some**

Additionally, he adds, most of us need to unlearn certain habits and practices that undermine our ability to maximize personal happiness. **It's important to live for both today and tomorrow and the need to incorporate both pleasure and meaning into life.**

Tal Ben-Shahar's road-map or tips to happiness:

- **Give yourself permission to be human.** When you accept emotions - such as fear, sadness, or anxiety - as natural, you are more likely to work with them. Rejecting emotions, even terming them "positive" or "negative", can easily lead to frustration and unhappiness.



- **Find that intersection between pleasure and meaning.** This is where happiness lies. Whether at work or at home, the goal is to engage in activities that are both personally significant and enjoyable. When this is not feasible, try to have "happiness boosters", moments throughout the week that provide you with both pleasure and meaning.

- **Remember that happiness is mostly dependent on your state of mind, not on status or the state of your bank account.** Barring extreme circumstances, your level of well-being is determined by what you choose to focus on (the full or the empty part of the glass) and by your interpretation of external events. For example, do you view failure as catastrophic, or do you see it as a learning opportunity?



- **Simplify!** Americans are, generally, too busy, trying to squeeze in more and more activities into less and less time. Quantity influences quality, and we compromise on our happiness by trying to do too much.



- **Remember the mind-body connection.**

What you do - or don't do - with your body influences your mind. Regular exercise, adequate sleep, and healthy eating habits lead to both physical and mental health.

- **Express gratitude, whenever possible.** We too often take our lives for granted. Learn to appreciate and savor the wonderful things in life, from people to food, from nature to a smile.



combination of parents, grandparents and children are living together?

This may not sound new to you - it's something that's been done in societies for centuries - but **here's what is news - the number is increasing in the U.S. by more than 10% per year - a growth rate never seen in our country's history!**



Multigenerational households have rapidly expanded in the last few years: one in six Americans currently lives in a multigenerational household. (see *Money Magazine's The New American Household: 3 Generations, 1 Roof*) In 1980 multigenerational households accounted for 12% of the U.S. population. By 2010 that number had climbed to an estimated 16.1%, with **about 4.2 million of the 113.6 million U.S. households consist of three or more generations.**

In "How I Did It: Survived Dad Moving In" (USAA Magazine, Fall 2012) award-winning writer, Laura Bond explains the emotional and financial sides to having a parent move in. Bond regales us with stories of some awkward moments, including tiptoeing in after midnight, running out of toilet paper, and loss of personal space. She also reminds us of the many benefits that have resulted from the growth of her multigenerational household. **Shared resources, shared work loads, splitting costs, consolidation, and increased communications have enriched and eased her life.**

- **Bank happiness. It's a currency, the ultimate currency for which all other assets/experiences are traded.** You might work hard to make money but you make money so you can buy things or experiences that bring happiness. Focus on what matters.
- **Pursue meaningful and pleasurable activities to significantly raise your level of well-being.**



- **Avoid thinking that happiness and pleasure are the same thing.** Pleasure is the experience in the here and now - from having the sense of purpose that comes from the future benefit of today's actions. Experiencing positive emotions is necessary but not sufficient for happiness. Living for the day, but only the day, will not bring optimal happiness.

Dr. Ben-Shahar's work is music to our Personal Safety Net's ears. **We've long been saying that we all need: 1) to be seen, 2) to be heard, 3) to matter to others.** His work supports this wholly. And it also supports our belief in the importance of seeing the abundance about us, and expressing gratitude.



Happiness may not be a specific goal, but a pathway, worn one step at a time, as we humans walk together toward the future. It's a state of mind that invites

participation and community. Sometimes rocky, sometimes soft . . . this path leads to good places.

Please join us in the journey. And happy holidays to one and all!!



Connections

Have something, a service that's worked for you to recommend? An approach to putting together a team for yourself or someone else? That worked or didn't? We'd love to hear from you. Please send us stories, articles, citations, and the helping organizations you'd love us to share with our readers.



Volunteering:

Some readers highlighted the December issue of the **AARP Bulletin**, specifically an interesting poll on Volunteering. People were asked if, in the past year, they had volunteered for an organization or group. 46% of those aged 18-49 said "yes", while 54% of those aged 50-plus said yes.



The growth of multigenerational households has spawned new ideas and an industry in mini-abodes that might be just the ticket for those who wish to have parents and/or grandparents live very close but not under the exact roof. MEDCottage (also called GrannyPod) - is a prefabricated 12-by-24-foot bedroom-bathroom-kitchenette free-standing structure for the backyard. It's more than a miniature house - it's decked out with high-tech monitoring and safety features that rival those of many nursing homes. It may be expensive, but there are plenty of benefits to such an idea.

Before you commit to move-in, multi-generational or not, check out our two compatibility checklists. Using one (#1) before you start, and the other (#2) before finalizing will have the potential of saving you hours of grief, and supplying you with many moments of mirth. Whether you are thinking of having your sweetheart, your parent, an adult child, a cousin, niece, friend, or friend-of-a-friend move in, spending some time **thinking through predictable issues will provide peace of mind and good boundaries for going forward.** Enjoy!

Where did they choose to help? The younger volunteers helped with children's groups most often (50%), followed by helping people experiencing homelessness (25%) and seniors (21%). Those in the 50-plus group gave their time to seniors (39%), children's groups (30%) and those experiencing homelessness (21%).



Where can you help out during this next year? The answer is anywhere your heart draws you! Many organizations need your help, so please consider giving of your time and talents. Ask friends, check with local synagogues, mosques or church groups, or google "finding volunteer opportunities". See you there!

Two wonderful quotes came our way this month: The happy heart gives away the best. To know how to receive is also a most important gift, which cultivates generosity in others and keeps strong the cycle of life.

- Dhyani Ywahoo

Voices of Our Ancestors

We need to go back to being people who think in terms of the needs of others. Learn to be kind in the Maori way, be grateful for what you have instead of asking for too much. Notice when your neighbor feels pain, sorrow, sickness . . . We have to try to rebalance things.

- Ellman Emery

Want More Good Reading?

If you're fairly new to the Personal Safety Nets® newsletter and interested in seeing "back editions" - it's simple - click here and you'll have access to our entire **Newsletter Library** - and every edition we've produced.

Approximately ten times a year we pull together interesting research, stories, tips, answers to questions, upcoming events, Cool Free Downloads and more. If you're not a subscriber, click here and you'll get all future issues sent directly to you.



Newsletter



Our goal is to help you understand that creating a personal safety net is not only a continuing process but also a process that is done the world over.