



Happiness Action Plan – May 31, 2009 – June 6, 2009

Topic: Being Stopped

Do you have an area of your life where you feel stopped or stuck? You may be starting on a business venture, stretching yourself in a different direction, or simply challenged by everyday life. In any case, here is one technique to become unstoppably happy as we plunge into our lives.

What's stopping me?

In 1988, I attended a class hosted by my employer (and created by Basadur Applied Creativity in Burlington, Ontario, Canada). The class got employees thinking about cost-reducing ideas for the company. However, I applied the techniques taught in the class to my personal goals. Here is my favorite technique from that class.

Ask yourself “What’s stopping me from doing what I am not doing (stopped at, stuck at) that I want to do?” This question, “What’s stopping me?” gives you a chance to bring some rational thoughts to what is causing you to stop, which is probably some kind of subconscious fear. It also helps you get to the roots of what you really want to do. Ask it repeatedly in a drill-down fashion for best results. Here’s an example.

- What’s stopping me from traveling? -- Having only three weeks of vacation a year.
- What’s stopping me from having more than three weeks of vacation? – Not quitting my job.
- What’s stopping me from quitting my job? – Fear of not finding another one.
- What’s stopping me from being able to find another job when I return? (This was in 1988, please use caution with this example today.) -- Nothing really; my fear is not realistic. I had a masters degree, great references, Fortune 50 experience in two stable industries, and enough savings. It didn’t make sense for me to be so fearful about losing my job and not being able to find another.

This idea was so powerful for me that I did go ahead and quit my job (that I loved) and traveled around the world for seven months. Not only did I get a job within two months of my return, my employer offered me a position to return to as well.



“What’s stopping me?” is a much better question than “What’s the worst that can happen?”
“What’s stopping me?” helps you uncover the blocks that are keeping you from a future that you want. It propels you forward and gets you to go after what you want.

Areas of your life that this affects:

- Anywhere you are blocked and not moving forward.
- Take a look at where you have happiness challenges and see if this method is appropriate there.

Questions to consider:

1. Where are you procrastinating the most?
2. What project has been sitting on the dining room table for months?
3. What’s on your to-do list that’s been there a while?
4. What are you putting up with in your life for no good reason and that’s not bringing you happiness?

Action steps for this week:

1. Do the “What’s stopping you?” exercise in a little area of your life, and take action.
2. Do the “What’s stopping you?” exercise in a big area of your life. What did you learn from it?

Happiness Action Plans are AHA member benefits of the Star level and above and are distributed every week on Sundays.