

## The Being Happy Podcast

### #06 The Most Important Thing You Were Never Taught in School

When I was a kid there was no such thing as a *digital* watch. There were no *plastic watches!*

A watch was a piece of *machinery*. You bought it from a *jeweler*. The jeweler probably got it from *Switzerland!*

Owning a watch meant you were grown up, you were responsible.

On my 10<sup>th</sup> birthday my grandfather came to dinner ... and he gave me a watch.

I put it on my wrist. I told myself, "This is the most beautiful thing I have ever owned." I told myself, "Don't break it." I just kept looking at it 6.46, 6.47, 6.48 ... all through dinner 7.10, 7.11, 7.12 and 35 seconds.

You see, it even had a minute hand – it was red. I was so proud.

My bed time was eight o'clock. After dinner I had my shower.. I checked the time – it was 7.42.

I didn't want to get my brand new watch wet. I told myself, "Don't damage it." So I put it by the sink, next to my pajamas. I showered and I dried myself – and as I grabbed my pajamas, I somehow flicked my watch off the benchtop and I can see it now, in slow motion as it fell face-down on the hard floor.

Smashed it. The time – at which it stopped – was 7.50.

I waited ten years for my first watch. It took me *exactly* one hour and four minutes to smash it. It was shattered. I was shattered. And I wondered, "How can life be so cruel?" Even though I kept telling myself all the while, don't break it!

But I'm not alone ...

Has this ever happened to someone you know ... or to you?

You drive an old wreck for ten years and you never even dent it. You save up. And finally you buy a new car.

Now you are telling yourself, "Don't damage it."

You even start parking your car in safer places and you tell yourself, "I don't want anything to happen to my beautiful new set of wheels!"

And the second day you have it, you are driving into a parking lot that you have used a hundred times before – and you smash your right headlight on the gate post.

And all the while you were telling yourself, "Don't damage your car!"

Or do you relate to this?

You borrowed a book from your best friend – and now she wants it back. In fact, she has already asked you twice to return it and now she is angry.

You are meeting for coffee later today. You tell yourself, don't forget the book. Don't forget the book. You put it on the kitchen table with your house keys.

An hour later you meet her in *Starbucks* and she says, "Where's my book?"

It's on the kitchen table!

Why, when you told yourself "Don't forget!"?

Can you see a pattern here? When you tell yourself not to do something, you do exactly what you told yourself not to do.

Don't break it, don't scratch it, don't forget it!

What about don't spill it?

You are eating Italian. You are wearing your best white linen shirt. Now, you are an adult. You don't spill much food anymore.

But just in case, you tell yourself, "Don't spill spaghetti bolognese all down your ... *oh damn it!*" It's all over you!

### **The Reverse of an Idea**

So the question is, "Why does this happen?"

It is because our mind works on pictures. When you give your mind a picture, your mind delivers.

When you say, "Don't forget", your mind has a picture of you doing what? Forgetting! So that is what you get.

Your mind CANNOT, DOES NOT, WILL NOT operate on the reverse of an idea. I'll prove it to you.

I am going to tell you not to do something ... "Don't think of an elephant."

What are you thinking of?

You see, you must always give your mind the thought/ picture of what you want.

### **music**

See it this way: you are in a restaurant. The waitress says to you, "Can I help you?" And you say, "Yes, I don't want a hamburger!" Wouldn't that be stupid! And yet, we use that language on ourselves.

Have you ever heard anyone say, "I don't want to be broke!" "I don't want to be lonely." "I don't want to be fat."

They continue to plant pictures in their minds of what they **don't want** and they wonder why life is so hard.

If you think, “I WANT THAT”, you move toward **WHAT YOU WANT**.

If you think, “I DON’T WANT THAT”, you move toward **WHAT YOU DON’T WANT**.

**This is probably the most important thing that you were never taught in school.**

Why? Because your teachers – and your parents – mostly, didn’t understand this. So they told you:

- “Don’t break the window.”
- “Don’t fall out of the tree.”

You need to plant safety in kid’s minds, “Climb safely. Be careful.”

Advertisers mostly don’t understand this. So they make TV ads that tell you,

- “Don’t forget!”
- “Don’t miss out.”
- “Don’t drink and drive.”

You say, “Well, advertisements seem to work.” They could work better!

If you are a parent or a teacher or a coach or an advertiser, you need to plant pictures in people’s minds of what they need to do.

- Remember!
- Be there!
- Drive sober!

You say, “So does anyone understand this principle?”

Absolutely. High achievers understand – and so they focus on what they want.

Some people do it automatically, some figured it out for themselves, some had coaching.

Top performers, that is, singers, musicians, Wimbledon champions, golf champions, leading coaches, entrepreneurs, managers, top sales people all know this and it is precisely why they achieve.

Here’s what all racing drivers know ... when you lose control of your car and you are about to hit a wall at 200 kilometres an hour, you **MUST** keep your eyes focused on where you want your car to go. Keep looking at where you want your car to go and your subconscious can arrange the rest.

Focus on the wall and you hit the wall.

This is not simply positive thinking. It’s about how your subconscious delivers.

Focus on what you want.

And at this point, some people will still argue, “Andrew, you are just being technical. Telling myself, “***I want to be successful***” and telling myself “***I don’t want be a failure***” are basically the same thing.

Telling myself “***I want to be slim***” and telling myself “***I don’t want to be fat***” are basically the same thing.

“***Remember***” and “***don’t forget***” ... surely they are basically the same thing!”

NOT EVEN CLOSE! They are a million miles apart. They are complete opposites which is why some people continue to achieve their goals and many live lives of quiet desperation.

## music

Lots of people – especially guys – are fascinated by sport. They will watch anything – football, bowling, ping pong – even cricket, which can last up to five days and often ends in a draw!

And we might ask, “Who cares and why is sport fascinating?”

Here’s why I am fascinated by sport. Sport gives you instant feedback on how an athlete is thinking. And when you are playing, you get instant feedback on how you are thinking. For example if you tell yourself, “Don’t miss it!”

And in any sport, fear, courage, intention, self-belief, show up on the scoreboard almost instantly.

Sport teaches us about the power of thought.

How often have you seen this? Your favorite football team is absolutely thrashing the city that you most love to beat. You’re ecstatic. And then, with fifteen minutes to go, what happens?

They get so far in front, they start playing *not to lose* and they get smashed in the last ten minutes.

You can’t win a game by **trying not to lose**. You can’t succeed in life by **trying not to lose**.

## So What Makes a Champion?

Ordinary golfers can sink some great puts – during practice.

Average footballers and basketballers can score some great goals – when there is no pressure.

But when the pressure is really on, ordinary athletes begin to tell themselves, “Don’t miss it, don’t screw it up, don’t hit a double fault.”

There’s a name for it and it is called “choking”.

Meanwhile the champions – the Roger Federer’s and the the Usain Bolt’s of the world – are telling themselves – “I have got this. This one is mine!”

What defines a champion? Champions focus on what they want.

## **music**

You say, "Aren't we talking about confidence?" Yes, but confidence is just a label.

It's all about the **thoughts that you have** because you are confident.

So what do you do?

### **1. Always, always, always give your mind a positive target.**

Here are targets that don't work:

"Don't forget the book."

"I don't want to be fat."

"I don't want to be broke."

"Don't be nervous!"

And here are thoughts that do work:

"I will remember my book."

"I am getting slimmer every day."

"I always have enough money."

"I am relaxed."

### **2. Play Mental Movies**

And here's the good news – you can take this a step further.

Not only can you use positive self-talk. You play mental movies of your own success.

That's why all the great singers, athletes, speakers, managers practise in their imagination. It is called "mental rehearsal".

And how do they rehearse? They practise being perfect in their mind.

So how do we use these mental movies?

## **Public Speaking**

Let's imagine that you have a "nervous pattern" where you can't speak in public.

Whenever you try to speak in public, you stand up but your mind sits down!

You shake, you sweat, and nothing comes out of your mouth - all because you have been feeding your mind bad pictures.

So now, you begin to play mental movies of the confident new you. You regularly picture yourself standing in front of a group with a big smile on your face.

You see yourself speaking effortlessly.

Now some people can close their eyes and see things and some people will say, "I can't see anything!" It makes no difference. You don't actually have to see things but you can feel them, think them.

So you begin to see yourself in front of a group – relaxed like people you have seen on television – or confident like friends of yours who seem to handle any situation. In this imaginary movie you are happy, relaxed and in control.

As you start to play these mental movies your old pattern will begin to fight you. It will be whispering, "This isn't right. This isn't you. You should be wetting yourself!"

But keep playing the positive mental movies and you'll see more and more of the new you.

This is how it happens:

- The first day you play the new movie in your head, it seems ridiculous.
- After a week of playing the movie, it still seems hard to believe.
- After a month, it seems possible - but not that likely.
- After a couple of months, it feels comfortable.
- Give it a little more time, and it feels like you. It is no big deal.

You may have doubts or scary moments. But keep playing those movies in your head. Each time you stand up to speak it will be easier and easier.

Eventually you'll become so confident, you'll forget you even had a problem.

Successful people aren't super-human. They just know how to use their mind. They do this automatically.

Now you might say, "This pretending in your imagination, this is child's stuff!" Precisely!

As a child you used your imagination like this. This is why kids learn so fast! The problem is we grow up. We become sophisticated and intellectual. We stop using what comes naturally. We stop using what works.

So if we are sophisticated and intellectual we might dismiss these childlike techniques – so we *stay* sophisticated and intellectual, but we also we stay stuck for the rest of our lives.

Many people spend their whole lives with their mind stuck in reverse!

If you think about what you don't want, you get more of what you don't want.

When you focus on what you do want, you give yourself your best chance ... in every relationship, interview, piano recital, tennis match, examination, speech. You drive more safely, you stay more healthy.

Now you are simply using your mind the way it is meant to work.

Focus on what you want. You become what you think about.

**music**

I expand on these principles in my books – in particular in **Being Happy!** and in **How Life Works**.

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Also, join me on Facebook at **Andrew Matthews – Author** – I post happiness tips and cartoons.

My next podcast, #7, is on Happy Relationships. Until next time I wish you success and happiness.