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The Triumph of a Joy Junky

By Steve Davis

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How choosing joy can change everything

THE DESCENT

Our friend, who we'll call "Kay," started work as the only Social Worker in a medical treatment clinic about six months ago. This clinic employs about 40 people, and runs two shifts, 6 days a week. About 120 patients are served weekly, with each visiting 3 times per week.

A large contingent of the staff, including the director, often uses a language other than English. About 8 months ago, the Director was promoted from within the organization with no prior experience managing large groups.

When Kay showed up on the scene as the lone social worker on staff, she had recently moved from out of state, was new to the medical community, and to the diverse cultural mix in this organization. So she wisely decided to come in with few expectations and do her best to fit into this work culture using her considerable talent as an objective observer.

One of the first things she noticed was that interactions between patients and staff sorely lacked respect. She would often overhear heated conversations in a foreign tongue. All Kay understood was the anger.

The person Kay was replacing appeared very scattered, disorganized, and had generally poor relationships with the rest of the staff. Kay attempted to learn the bigger picture from her by continually asking questions that would help her understand where a Social Worker fit into this establishment. What was expected? How will I be perceived? What are the attitudes of the medical staff about the work I'll be doing? What processes are in place to handle this and that?

Neither the outgoing Social Worker, nor anyone else for that matter, seemed to have any answers for her. The staff simply appeared to operate like a disjointed group of individuals, scurrying about, putting out some fires, and missing others in a haphazard fashion. Sometimes they would repeat each other's work. Other times important tasks would be overlooked. Everyone seemed to operate through a pall of

The Triumph of a Joy Junky

fear and anger.

Kay, normally a very happy and enthusiastic person, soon found herself going to work every morning with a knot in her stomach. "I had no idea where I stood in this culture, where I fit, or how to be appreciated. The Director was constantly yelling at everyone. I didn't know if I was going to be yelled at for something I was supposed to be doing or not doing." Tension was thick in this place. The Director would start yelling early in the day and everyone focused on simply dodging bullets the rest of the day. Sound familiar anyone?

This is certainly not the kind of organization any of you out there can relate to, is it? Don't we wish!

THE SHIFT

Finally, one day Kay woke up and decided she wasn't going to live like this anymore. Unlike many, Kay did not need to work to sustain herself financially, and had enough confidence in herself to know she could find a job elsewhere if she needed to. She decided to try something new, knowing that she had the power to leave if it didn't work out. You see, Kay is a smart cookie. She said, "I know deep down that I make my own joy. And I decided to choose joy on this job!"

Kay decided what she would and wouldn't tolerate. She would be pleasant, kind, and considerate, in the midst of the ongoing turmoil and not let anyone, no matter what their position, treat her with disrespect, including her Director.

Kay sets boundaries. One day shortly after she made this decision, the director began to yell at her. She told her, "Please tell me what you expect of me, but don't yell at me anymore or I'll quit." Many fearful people might call this a threat. But hear this my dear friends, this are simply called "consequences" by those with the heart to exercise them.

Kay pays it forward. Even though people weren't very friendly to one another, Kay decided to start complimenting everyone on the staff who demonstrated even the slightest competence or positive behavior. She began taking extra care to appreciate the secretary who took more abuse than anyone and who interacted with everyone. Kay began to feed the staff's hunger for positive reinforcement. Kay makes the team. Even though Kay wasn't part of a highly functional work team, she began acting as if she were. She would jump in and help with any little job that crossed her path, even if it was outside of her realm, just to take some of the load off of her coworkers. These were simple little things like making a quick phone call, making a copy, mailing a letter, passing on a message, etc.

Kay chooses mastery. Kay decided that she was going to put all she had into her work. She started providing extraordinary service rather offering simply the ordinary.

Kay finds an ally. One day, a new office mate showed up and she recruited her as an ally. Everyday, they found a "mission of the day" to take on. This was sometimes just a small thing, like someone's nagging problem that no one could ever solve. They would solve these kind of things all the time. Kay found that having an ally multiplied not only their results, but their joy too.

Kay doesn't fuel the fire. Whenever Kay was in the midst of a conflict that didn't involve her and that she didn't feel able to impact, she walked away. "No point messing with my joy when I don't have to!" No picnic. Make no mistake, dear reader. The environment here was not all joy and light. Kay was

The Triumph of a Joy Junky

faced daily with death, and the dying, with imminent amputations, sickness, and terminal illness. Joy was a choice. One she had to keep choosing every moment.

THE AWAKENING

After about 6 weeks after Kay decided to choose joy, people started coming to her with their problems and concerns. Kay didn't try to fix any of their problems. She listened hard and suggested things they could do to resolve or reduce them. She helped them find ways to make healthy choices like she was doing. "The next time you feel yourself about to blow up at someone, take a nice long deep breath, tell yourself that you're choosing joy today, and ask yourself, 'How can I do this differently?'"

Kay never took sides. When people came to her blaming others for their upsets. She just listened and made suggestions on how they could think or act differently.

More and more people began dropping into Kay's office on a regular basis. "I don't want to sound conceited here, but it seemed like people wanted what I had... 'joy.' I helped them choose it themselves. I kept telling them, 'Stop bickering. Remember to breath, then choose joy.' We even made a poster that said, 'Remember to breath.' People loved it."

"The Director was one of the worst attackers. Once I built a little more trust with her, she was in my office sharing her problems. One day I asked, 'Are you really getting what you want by yelling at everyone?' She finally was able to see that it simply brought down staff and modeled poor behavior for them."

"She promised me one day to not yell for the entire day and hasn't done so publicly for six weeks. She now takes issues with individuals privately into her office and handles them in a civil tone."

TODAY?

"Today things are about 60% better. I look forward to going to work. People are more pleasant. They still come in now and again, but the atmosphere is good enough now to start the real work of making this organization hum. People are now more solution-oriented rather than blame-oriented. Now that people don't have to be so concerned with defending themselves, there's more energy available to focus on solutions and processes that will make life better for everyone."

KAY'S TIPS FOR CHANGE.

– New choices yield new results. Kay was amazed at how little effort can yield such a huge change. Choosing joy is simply a decision. I just decided that I'm here to have the best day I can have and be as productive as I can be, and have joy in my heart.

– Sometimes the most positive thing you can do is to leave an organization. I've helped a couple people make the decision to leave this place. If it takes too much from you over time, at some point, you have to realize you can't affect this place without losing your joy.

– Find your passion and choose mastery in your work 100% of the time. Find a place for yourself that holds passion for you, a place that has space for your joy.

– Be a steward of trust. You can have bad days, and you can be frustrated, but don't lash out at others, just own it and let people know what's going on with you so they don't take it personally.

– Joy is not simply a smile on your face everyday. It doesn't necessarily equate to happiness, though it

The Triumph of a Joy Junky

may lead there. It's being true to everyone, especially yourself.

- Empower people to solve their problems and to make different, more effective choices.
- Consciously model functional behavior.
- Chose to lead yourself. Ask what you can do in your little piece of the world. Develop options for yourself so your survival isn't at stake if you have to leave an organization.
- Know that anyone taking on a new behavior in a system changes the system.

About the Author:

Steve Davis, M.A., M.S., is an Facilitator's Coach, Infopreneur, and free-lance human, helping facilitators, organizational leaders, educators, trainers, coaches and consultants present themselves confidently, access their creativity, empower their under-performing groups, enhance their facilitation skills, and build their business online and offline. Subscribe to his free weekly ezine at www.MasterFacilitatorJournal.com.

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Music of the Heart Will Not Be Silent

By Stephanie West Allen

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Most of Beethoven's masterpieces were composed while he was deaf. He had inside him music that would not be stilled by life's circumstances. His music triumphed over suffering.

The last movement of the Ninth Symphony is choral music Beethoven set to Friedrich von Schiller's poem "Ode to Joy." Beethoven believed this poem celebrated the brotherhood of man.

On May 7, 1824, when the Ninth Symphony premiered, Beethoven was on-stage conducting. Also on-stage was a supplementary conductor necessary because of Beethoven's deafness. When the "Ode to Joy" movement was over, the audience erupted in applause. Beethoven did not turn around as he could not hear them.

Turn Around and See What You Have Created

The Triumph of a Joy Junky

One of the chorus members broke protocol and moved towards Beethoven. He took hold of the composer's arm. Beethoven gave him a fierce look but the chorus member persisted gently turning him around. By then the applause had subsided.

As Beethoven looked out into the audience, they began to rise in standing ovation. First one person and then many and then all. It is said that a single, small tear of joy slipped down the composer's cheek. It is also said that another tiny companion tear rolled down the cheek of the chorus member standing next to him.

Some Questions for You

What gift inside of you is so strong that it must triumph over any adversity (or shyness or inactivity or busy-ness) and come out for others to enjoy? Are you still holding it in, sapping creative energy by squelching it? What will it take for this ability, this genius, to flow out of you on a stream of inspiration?

We all have our genius with which we can make our world and that of others a more beautiful place. Part of being a member of the brotherhood of man is sharing our gifts with each other. What will bring your tear of joy?

And one more question, who in your life gently turns you around when you are facing in the wrong direction so you can see your standing ovation?

And Today . . .

Read these words from "Ode to Joy":

"Let us raise our voices in more pleasing and more joyful sounds!"

Sing today. Sing, sing, sing the happiest songs you know. As the words flow out of your mouth with gusto, feel every cell in your body spinning and dancing and cavorting with joy. Each song will be a workout of gladness for your whole being. Yeah, it may feel silly at first but do it anyway. Soon the happiness will permeate you and all feelings of silliness will fly out the window,

The Triumph of a Joy Junky

never to return.

Get others to sing with you. Let's make this day an international day of song

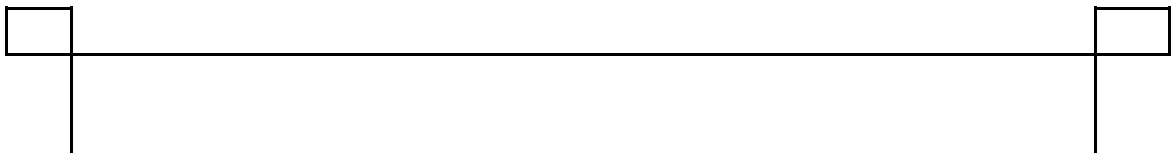
if you find yourself in a situation where you cannot sing right that moment, hum in your head. Head humming is highly beneficial for you, too.

Make today a symphony of song and jubilation. And before you go to sleep, give yourself a rousing round of applause. What a day this can be.

Merry Method To Accelerate Success_. Excerpts at <http://www.allen-nichols.com/success.cfm> She coaches people in using the two MerryMaxims, WYTUG (What You Think Upon Grows) and LULU (Loosen Up, Lighten Up), to achieve health, wealth, creativity, and harmonized relationships. Contact her at <mailto:Stephanie@allen-nichols.com>



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