

## **“I’m Aitch Ai Pee Pee.... Why?” by Judith Lowe**

*“I don’t know why we are here, but I’m pretty sure it is not in order to enjoy ourselves.”  
Wittgenstein*

*The happiness police are onto you. Now’s not the day to wear your “I said, “Half Empty!”  
novelty pyjamas.*

*“I stood by a pond that winters day  
And the sun was white as tho chidden by God...”*

*Poverty...war ...illness... loss... the sorrows of the world...climate change, injustice.*

*Hey, be cheerful, count your blessings, grow a plant, phone a friend, exercise, turn off  
the TV and... SING!*

Guess what? It sort of works.

The new Science of Happiness ( DIY; *insert well known facts about serotonin and  
immune system functioning*) is taking centre stage in the related new field of Positive  
Psychology. Research is being funded to follow the effects of making simple behavioural  
changes on mood and perceived well-being. And as we know it’s the cognitive  
approaches – CBT etc - that are being pursued as ‘*bang for yer buck*’ by insurance  
companies and workplaces.

Being happier is better for you... you’re healthier, more successful, more loved and  
loving...longer-lived, more interested in the well being of others and a fair and just  
society.

*“I want to teach the world to sing... in perfect har..mon..eeee..”*

It’s a funny thing, but lots of people upon realising that you can actually experiment with  
your feelings, begin to worry that somehow they will become false and inauthentic.  
They’ll be unable to grieve properly or even grumble and lob abuse at their loved ones in  
formerly entertaining ways. A dull future of Stepford Wives’ compliant cheerfulness  
looms before them. Everything is wonderful – yes everything, all the time, wonderful,  
yes, even as you’re standing on my foot and ..ouch,..right,..er wonderful. Just drill a little  
hole in my head right here, please doctor.

And yet it is nice to be happy, isn’t it? Things are easier, more fun, we enjoy each other  
more... have a laugh, get things done? And its easy isn’t it..?

*“I’d rather have a full bottle in front of me than a full frontal lobotomy.”*

Or even a half full one.

And whereas before it was thought that if you woke up in a bad mood in the morning you were obliged to remain dour and hatchet-faced for the day, we now know more about how fluid and fleeting feeling can be, and also some of the principles of self-influence and management.

We know more about the contribution of 'focus' and 'attention', physiology and physical movement, perceptual framing and labelling, and the power of making distinctions and comparisons. Blake says 'All comparison is odious.' And surely this wonderful human ability is verily our downfall too! In the West we are more prosperous and healthy and yet apparently less satisfied than fifty years ago – directly related, some researchers think, to the way we compare our achievements and possessions to others with more and 'better'.

I'm wondering why NLP is being called a cult (see Wikipedia – be warned, its not all a pretty site)? Maybe its because, as we await the mothership ... (did I just say that out loud?)...one possibility is that we are perceived as being overly optimistic about human potential? And also, maybe, we can come over as a bit too cheerful.. sometimes incongruently so. And just sometimes there's almost a kind of tyranny involved in state management as if it's not OK ever to be upset or frustrated...or raging or sobbing in pain!

However on the good side, at last the world is catching up. 'Emotional Intelligence'/'Positive Psychology in all its forms and NLP are really a marriage made in heaven. They have the theory and research – we have the 'know-how' and the wild explorer's hat and attitude.

So how can we use what we know in NLP about 'states' and 'resources' to contribute to a field of research and scientific knowledge of happiness and well-being? And is there anything special about what we know and how we know it? And is there a particular kind of human integration and human experience that we are going for? And if so, which kinds of tools and approaches we offer are most beneficial?

Happiness is not unproblematic – especially very self-oriented, 'thing'-acquiring happiness. Some of the hype that surrounds NLP definitely sells on the ideas of 'control', power, manipulating others and owning the most toys before you die. 'Speed seduction' of course is one of our most well-known applications. How everyone in the wider field of neuroscience and psychology must look up to us!

The ideas I'm currently interested in exploring relate to compassion, gratitude and resilience – fabulous 'nominalisations' of course. And the NLP I'm interested in tends to relate to more 'whole brain', mind-body connection and to gently encouraging a more generative, evolutionary relationship with self and socially with others – ditto re nominalisations.

We know that compassion for others actually contributes to developing self-esteem and other attributes which connect to self-belief and personal confidence. Lucky scientists have peeked inside a meditating Buddhist's brain and seen the pretty colours on the scans as these previously identified, associated key areas light up. Studies in gratitude have found that focussing on the positives – good friends, health, realistic challenges, the beauty of the world, etc. develops certain habits of attention, reinforcing to the kind of good moods that support a general sense of well being.

And I would say too that these kinds of underlying states and moods almost certainly contribute, as per 'curious rat' type experiments to the kind of attitudes we require – the robustness in exploration, the thrill of the chase, the ability to endure confusion and ambiguity, the constant extension of our sense of the possible, the fun and laughter – that support our adventures with NLP, our adventure with life.

It's all an illusion. Maybe Wittgenstein was right, who knows? We don't know why we are here. We can make up comforting reasons and most of us do. Its not all doom and gloom, except sometimes. And we're not all happy, fluffy bunnies skipping off into the sunset....well, apart from every now and then.

*"On the seashore of endless worlds the children meet with shouts and dances."*  
Tagore

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Some of my references:

Neutral Tones - poem by Thomas Hardy

Tagore quote from 'Gitanjali'

Destructive Emotions - Daniel Goleman and the Dalai Lama

Happiness - Lessons from a New Science Richard Layard

Whispering in the Wind - John Grinder and Carmen Bostic St. Clair

Encyclopaedia NLP- Robert Dilts and Judith DeLozier