

HAPPINESS PRINCIPLE #6: TOLERATE NOTHING

By Jim Smith, The Executive Happiness Coach®

In the 13 Principles of Happiness, number six reads:

'Tolerate Nothing. Continually identify and eliminate all the little "stuff" which causes you friction and drains your energy.'

Friction is a Physics term that refers to "A force that resists the relative motion" of something. Friction gets in the way of movement. It drains away the energy of an object in motion; increasing friction ultimately stops all forward motion.

So what are Tolerations? They are the things we put up with, the frictions of life. The stuff that exists in our life just under the radar – the stuff that annoys us yet is not pressing or important enough to take care of.

Examples: the piles of papers on the desk, the dirty backseat in the car, the unresolved disagreement that lies under the surface of conversations with a coworker, the project that sits one step away from incomplete.

Individual tolerations are typically small things that added together create major friction in your life. Imagine your computer running many utility programs. Each is using just a few megabytes of memory, but open enough of them and suddenly your computer slows or even freezes. Most people are, at any point in time, carrying around dozens – perhaps more than a hundred – tolerations. That's a lot of open programs in the brain!

How do tolerations affect us? Consider the analogy of the frog that remains in a pot of water where the temperature is slowly raised to boiling. The frog's body temperature adjusts as the heat is increased and he doesn't even realize he's in danger. We, too, can grow accustomed to our environment even though it may not be a good idea to remain. We can be blind to seeing the clutter in our brains, relationships, physical space, commitments, and so on.

What are you tolerating? If you removed a few tolerations, how much better would you feel? Think about it. One less burden to carry on your shoulders. More space and energy and capacity to focus on what is really important. More space to feel happiness and contentment rather than the anxiety and stuckness that often accompany tolerations.

And who doesn't want to be happier?

Do this for yourself: The Tolerations Exercise

1. Write at the top of a page, "**What am I tolerating in work/life that I am no longer willing to tolerate?**" Avoid editing yourself, just write. Carry the list around with you for at least a day. Visit all the different "environments" in which you live – office, car, home, work and personal relationships, career, financial, fun...and notice what you are "putting up with" in each area. Write down everything you notice -- everything.
2. **Review the list for any themes that emerge.** You might prioritize by noticing which of the items bother you the most.
3. Ask yourself, "**What do I want to do about <this> and by when?**" Consider your four options: Do, Delegate, Defer, or Dump:

Do: Take action to remove the toleration.

Have the conversation, change the behavior, remove the item, clean it, replace it, buy it, or whatever is required to remove it from your list.

HINT: You'll find that many tolerations will sort of "take care of themselves" once you've identified them as such and written them down, even if you do not put them on a task list. That's because tolerations remain so because we've simply become used to them, and once they are back in conscious awareness, we naturally take action to "scratch the itch." You'll find that eliminating tolerations is incredibly energizing!

Delegate: Turn to someone else to take the action.

Delegate a task to a child, partner, coworker, or contractor. **Automate** it (like setting up all your utilities and car/house payments to automatically come out of your checking account) or **create a system** to complete the action.

Example: My father-in-law realized that he hated mowing the lawn and shoveling his walk in winter, so he hired a landscaper to mow and plow, and then sold his lawnmower at the next family garage sale!

Defer: When you do not have the time, resources, or energy to address the toleration today, you can leave it but put it off for a while.

Pull out your calendar/planner and **set a timeline** to perform a future action to eliminate the toleration. Then forget about it until it pops back onto the radar screen.

Tolerations Worksheet

Everyone has at least 100 things they are tolerating, right now. Large or small, each of those creates another "open thread" in your brain and occupies space. As tolerations accumulate, your capacity for happiness, creativity, and effectiveness are reduced. When you identify and act on your tolerations, you free up personal energy, reduce your stress load, and increase your capacity for happiness.

Step 1: Write down as many responses as you can for the question: "What am I tolerating in my life/career that I am no longer willing to tolerate?" (Use additional sheets as necessary)

Think about all the different environments in which you operate: Physical (your workspace, your car, each of the rooms in your home), Relationships, (your boss, coworkers, significant others, family, groups you belong to), Spiritual, Self (diet, fitness, personal time/space), and so on.

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Step 2: Take action: (1) Do it, (2) Delegate it, (3) Defer it until you have the time/resources, or (4) Dump it – let it go, and move on.

Get started now! Each toleration you address is the equivalent of fixing another 'leak' in your oxygen tank! Choose 2-3 of the items on your list, and make a commitment to yourself: "What will I do about <that> and by when?"
