

It's Up To You – Part III

By George "Bud" Wassell, MS, LPC, CEAP, Director, Solutions EAP



5. *A fresh coat of paint can work miracles.*

50% of the house front was covered in dark brown siding. After two coats of light green paint, the house literally leaped from the shadows to claim a proud new position in the neighborhood.

Consider the power of a SMILE. We catch our emotions from others - and when one person shows up with a smile on their face, the emotional contagion can ripple across a room in minutes. Putting on a different "face" can be just as transformative as a paint job, for a heck of a lot less work!

6. *Take Before and After shots to really appreciate your progress.*

Despite a month of hard work, the interior of the house still looks far from livable. In the moments of discouragement we turn to the shots I took the day after we got the keys. Quickly, we appreciate our progress and return to the project with a greater sense of optimism.

When you strive to change a habit, there will be lots of days when you feel like you're in the same place as always. To help you along, take time before you start to create a "picture" of the old You. Maybe that's an actual photo; or perhaps it's an assessment, a checklist, or a letter to yourself that details your starting point. Then use that to boost your spirits and remind yourself of the progress you've made since you started your journey.

7. *Ask for help - it's there.*

As we began this huge project - on our own - we assumed we'd be making it up as we went. Turned out that many of our friends and neighbors are excited by our project and incredibly eager to help us out. Some have lent us equipment, some their expertise, others merely moral support, and it all helps.

When you seek to shift a behavior, habit, or attitude, do you think, "I have to do this myself"? Sharing a goal with others can often generate more ideas and create an unexpected network of support. Friends like to help friends.

8. *Don't be afraid to be bold.*

During our planning discussions, many ideas were tossed about, from combining rooms to designer kitchens to painting a 12' high wall dark purple. Because we entertained the ideas, the final plan - while mostly conventional - includes several splashes of excitement!

When it comes to living a happier life, consider this: If you continue to do what you've always done (the "safe" route), you'll end up exactly where you are. What shift in thinking or habit would, for you, be the equivalent of painting one of your "walls" a bright purple?

9. *The plan is ALWAYS evolving.*

The only thing certain about the future is that it will turn out differently than expected. We've had to redraw the kitchen plans several times - wiring won't work that way, the wall won't support the extra weight, cabinets don't come in that size, and so on. Yet each time we redesign for something we *can't* have, we find new tweaks that often improve the outcome.

Above all, a personal plan for change requires flexibility. Don't get married to the details; rather, fall in love with the concept, and remember that there are multiple, multiple paths to more happiness in your life!

Copyright (c) 2007, People Inc. Reproduction for publication is encouraged, with the following attribution: "From *HAPPINESS @THE SPEED OF LIFE*, by Jim Smith, *The Executive Happiness Coach*, 440- 885-3247 or www.TheExecutiveHappinessCoach.com."

Call Solutions EAP at 1-800-526-3485 for assistance for all of life's challenges. It's free, confidential and open to your family members. Check us out on-line at <http://www.solutions-eap.com>