

CHOOSE JOY?

Look for glimmers, do micro acts of joy



By Leslie J. O'Connell, ACC, Executive Coach

I was in a hurry. Annoyed, even. I was rifling through files to find my husband's birth certificate that was needed for a financial application. Fruitless effort, but I discovered a small scrap of paper with the combination to unlock a safe that belonged to my great grandfather. Plus, the instructions were handwritten in my father's characteristic scrawl. Seeing the familiar handwriting of my dad - who passed on more than 20 years ago - spontaneously sparked joy.

I couldn't keep the find to myself - so I texted a photo of the scrap to my brother Rich. Not only did it make him smile; he committed to try to open the safe.

In those moments, I experienced a glimmer - and then made it into a micro act of joy. Have you heard about those? They're a "thing," according to experts - that can fuel a healthy mindset and well-being.

It's January, after all. We're in the thick of winter chill and sparse sunshine. We all could use a daily dose of joy to strengthen our well-being and boost our immunity.

Think of glimmers and micro acts of joy as vitamins "be" and "do."

What's a Glimmer?

In short, a glimmer is an impromptu pause for appreciation. Social worker Deb Dana first coined the term "glimmer" in her book for therapists who work with trauma patients, *The Polyvagal Theory In Therapy: Engaging the Rhythm Of Regulation*.

Glimmers are micro-moments of joy or peace that make us feel happier, hopeful, safe, and connected. It's the opposite of a trigger - something that sets us off. Perhaps it's noticing the red cardinal at your bird feeder, seeing stars sparkle in a dark sky, or appreciating your child's voice. Dana encourages us to set glimmer intentions. Simply - seek glimmers. Tell yourself to spot a glimmer before lunchtime. Tune into the possibility, and chances are good that you'll notice one.

So What's a Micro Act of Joy?

Think of micro acts of joy as a deliberate action to spawn happiness. Recently, scientists with the BIG JOY Project - a collaboration between the University of California-Berkeley Greater Good Science Center and other research institutions - released intriguing preliminary findings. In their research initiative, they found that people who intentionally commit to and do micro acts of joy daily experience an increase of approximately 25% in emotional well-being over the course of a week.

People reported feeling an uptick in their sense of hope and optimism. To date, more than 70,000 participants in 200 countries have taken part in the study.

Micro acts of joy can be very personal, such as:

- Give props to a team member for a "win"
- Send a text message with encouraging words - "You've got this!"
- Journal "one thing" you're grateful for daily
- Reflect on a trying situation to find its silver lining

Life asks so much of us. Friends sigh at the stress of a packed 2024 calendar and nonstop "have to's". Plus, we live against the

backdrop of a complex and unsettled world.

Think about what's in your control. Just press pause. Choose joy to build your resilience muscle. Try glimmers and micro acts of joy.

Oh, by the way, there was no fortune hidden in the safe, but Rich enjoyed being the safe-cracker!