

Hi, everyone. This is Wayne Rivers at FBI, and *We Build Better Contractors*.

This week I want to talk about... Well, sort of ask a rhetorical question, are happy contractors better contractors? And I think it might have an answer for you. This is a book review, *The Happiness Equation* by Neil Pasricha. Neil spoke at the AGC Convention in March and really did a bang-up job and got us all excited. And of course, I went out and bought his book and all that. It was really, really, really a book worth reading. There's a lot of books now available on happiness studies. I think we did a blog earlier from Jonathan Haidt. There're some other guys that are doing great work. But in a sense, what they're telling us is happiness is a choice.

Now, I'm excluding mental illness or physical illness from this equation, I think. But for most of us who are reasonably well adjusted, happiness, to a degree, is a choice. Neil started off saying that anxiety, depression, and loneliness are at historic highs right now. And I think about the world we live in and COVID and all that I know, but you think about the world we live in, we're kind of in boom times at the moment. Most of us have no fear of material want. We're doing okay. We have electronic wizardry at our fingertips that our parents and grandparents could never have dreamed of. We've got entertainment sources. We've got sports all over the world. We have so many things in modern life that theoretically should make us more happy. And yet, anxiety, depression, and loneliness are at historic highs.

He said that suicide is the number two cause of death for people under age 29. Automobile accidents being the first, of course. I just found that so distressing. Why are people so miserable? Well, we're going to dig into that. Now, what about all this is important to you? You're not going to believe this, so University of Kentucky researchers struck academic gold. They found simple, informal autobiographies written by nuns in the 1930s and '40s. These were the originals.

Now, why would autobiographies by nuns be so valuable? Because it removed all those variables. When you read about a research report, they say, "Adjusting for the variables." Well, in this case, they didn't have to adjust for any variables. They didn't smoke. They didn't drink. None of them got married. None of them had kids. They lived in the same cities, lived in the same buildings, wore the same clothing, ate the same food. They didn't have to adjust for any variables. What these researchers found was that their attitudes, the nun's attitudes were the primary indicator of how long they were going to live. The happiest ones lived 10 years longer than the least happy.

54% of the happy nuns lived to at least age 94. Of those who were less happy, only 15% made it to age 94. And not only did they live longer, they lived happier, which is a wonderful byproduct of being happy, right? The mantra in my lifetime and maybe yours too, was you get an education, you work really hard, you earn success, and you go up the ladder. And then one day you can relax and be happy. Okay? Neil says that that is absolutely wrong. Earl Nightingale talked about this 50, 60 years ago, and Tony Robbins has talked about it too. Tony Robbins said he always thought he had to be intense to be an achiever. And one day, he woke up and said, "Why can't I be a happy achiever?" I mean, it's really rather simple, isn't it?

Earl Nightingale talked about someday I'll, this mythical, tropical place that we'll be able to go to one day, someday I'll. I'll work really hard until I'm 65, and then someday I'll be able to relax. I'll work really hard until whenever, and someday I'll be able to turn my company over to the next generation of leaders. If you wait until someday I'll, it's never going to work. Neil says the formula is this: be happy first. Choose to be happy first. Second, work hard, everybody has to work hard, and then earn success. Why would you defer your happiness for 20 to 50 years instead of just deciding to be a happy achiever like Tony Robbins? It makes perfect sense to me.

He says that a Harvard study says that happy people are 31% more productive, 37% higher in sales generation, so your BD people, and three times more creative. Are happy contractors better contractors? Maybe they are. Five techniques, five quick techniques that Neil prescribes in his book and also in his AGC speech, the first thing, three walks. People that get outside for 30 minutes of walks in nature tend to be much happier. Even people who had been formally clinically

depressed, the three walks per week technique makes them much happier. The second thing, random act of kindness. It could be a kind word. It could be opening a door for someone who's laden with grocery bags or something like... Five random acts of kindness per week apparently became for Neil the single most reliable... created the single most reliable increase in wellbeing among people. Being nice works.

The third thing, five gratitudes per week, things that you're happy about. Again, this was an Earl Nightingale exercise from 50 or 60 years ago. Write down five things that you're grateful for. We talked in a previous blog about gratitude being the most noble emotion and perhaps a competitive advantage in construction. Gratitude works, practice it. The fourth thing, Neil prescribes two-minute mornings. You sit down in the morning for two minutes, pencil and paper, and you answer three questions or three statements actually, I will let go of blank. I will let go of blank. The second thing, I am grateful for blank. Again, gratitude. The third thing, I will focus on blank. Two-minute mornings, it's excellent. The fifth thing, put away your cell phone. Neil says that cell phones impair happiness for three reasons. Number one, you'll never be the best. You'll never have the coolest pickup truck. You'll never have the best car. You'll never have the best house. You'll never have the best golf swing because you can easily compare it to things on social media and you always look second best at best. Okay? So that bothers people.

The second thing is 31% of the time that we spend on our phones, and keep in mind, we look at our phones about 150 times a day on average, a third of that is just scheduling stuff, checking lists, administrivia type things, which are largely a waste of your time. The third thing is really important, the light from cell phones impairs sleep. So, especially if you're looking at your phone right before bedtime or you wake up in the middle of the night with a little bit of insomnia, like a lot of us, and you look at your phone, big mistake. The light impairs sleep, and we know that we need sleep and recovery to be healthy and to be productive.

I'd like to hear what are your techniques? What do you do to keep yourself on top, to keep yourself happy, and to make yourself a better contractor and also be a happy achiever? This is Wayne Rivers. Looking forward to hearing from you. *We Build Better Contractors.*