

Embracing the Adventures of Life

Life can truly be a beautiful adventure. But we have to be less concerned about what other people think of our life choices and be willing to try new things.

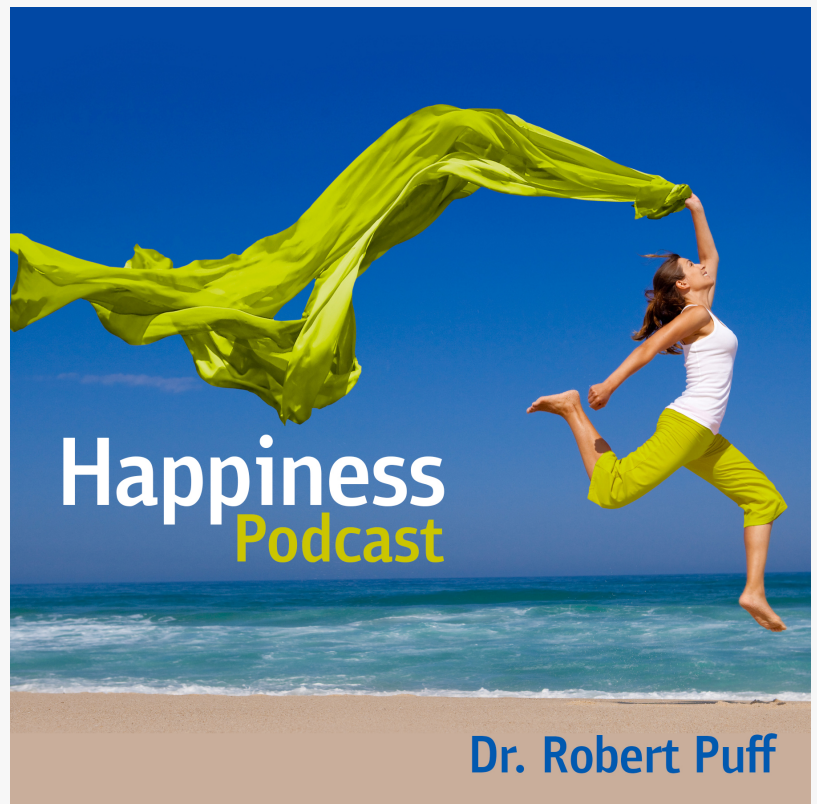
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EINPresswire.com/ -- Life can be such a beautiful [adventure](#) — that is, if you give yourself permission to experience it.

Many years ago, I went on [vacation](#) for a week at an all-inclusive resort in Mexico. This resort offered sporting-type activities, which made it a unique experience for me. It offered yoga, volleyball, rock climbing, hiking — you name it; there was something available to meet the interests of almost anyone who enjoys being active and energetic. They even had a circus setup that let vacationers swing on trapezes and land on a net below. I couldn't wait to give it a try.

I was very excited about this new kind of vacation, and when I arrived at the resort, I decided right then and there that I would try everything they had to offer at least once. I had a terrific time, with different experiences beckoning me from every direction. As you can imagine, there were some things I was rather good at, but others that I was quite bad at because I'd never tried them before, and I had no idea of how to begin. In the spirit



The Adventures of Life



Happiness Podcast

Dr. Robert Puff

of my unusual vacation, I threw caution to the wind and jumped right in anyway.

It was a really enjoyable vacation, but one thing really surprised me. A lot of people participated in only one or two activities the whole time they were at the resort, and if they weren't familiar with an activity, or they weren't good at it, they wouldn't participate. This was true pretty much across the board. Everyone stayed within their own wheelhouse with a handful of activities that they did every day.

Obviously, there's nothing wrong with doing what you enjoy, especially on vacation. For many of us, our working lives involve following someone else's game plan or instructions for an entire workday, and a resort vacation allows us to do our own thing, or to do nothing at all. I'm inquisitive, though, and I wanted to get to the bottom of this phenomenon of embracing one or two activities at the expense of dozens of others. That's when I began to ask questions of my fellow vacationers. Why did they choose to do only a handful of activities, when so many opportunities for fun were available?

It pretty much boiled down to this: They liked doing the things they were good at, and if they couldn't be confident that they would be adept at an activity, they chose not to try it because they didn't want to embarrass themselves.

Imagine that. These people — a majority of whom were U.S. citizens — traveled out of their country to a resort where chances were they would know no one, and they allowed themselves to feel embarrassment at anticipated negative judgment of strangers. And incidentally, these were strangers who had their own lives and companions and vacations to focus on; strangers who very likely never gave them a second glance or thought, and if they did, it probably wasn't one of scathing indictment. What's more, everyone was in a place where they were invited and encouraged to let their hair down and try something brand new.

I suppose it's possible that in other people's eyes, I was embarrassing myself with some of the things I was doing. For me, though, the approval of others has never been a strong motivating force for me. I do things because I enjoy trying new things, and that's how I manage to get the maximum enjoyment out of my life. I expect others have their own lives to think about, and it's unlikely that they're noticing my lack of skill on the volleyball court.



I want to relate this to life — our lives — because we're here to get the most enjoyment we can out of life. When we do, life can truly be an adventure.

But for many, that isn't true. Life for them becomes something to fear, or something that they're just not willing to try because of what others may think, or because they fear they might embarrass themselves.

This is what I think happens: When we're very young, we really don't yet observe what others think about us, and thus we're willing to try a lot of different things. If kids are raised in a comfortable environment, they are open to experimenting with new activities that lay before them. But as we get older, we begin to notice the comments of others about our behavior. If people don't approve of what we do, they may share their opinion with us and look down on us.

The disapproval of others can have a lot of power over us. When we feel it, we are less likely to want to try that new activity or to fully embrace and explore our world. We start to get the idea that we should stay in our lane or stick with what we're best at, and we begin to think that we should never allow ourselves to be seen as inept or not proficient at the things we do.

When we begin to observe what others think about us, it can affect our choices in life, and sadly, I believe it starts to keep us from living life well.

Think of life in this way: Life is like a week vacation at a resort, and there are thousands of things we can try during our week, metaphorically, living on Earth. Of course, instead of a week, we may actually have 80 or 90 years in which we can try whatever we like. There are so many things we can explore, we can touch, we can dance with — that's life on Planet Earth. Has there ever been a setting more resplendent or more rife with possibility?

Sadly, we miss out on so many things because we do care what our behavior can look like to others. In the process of considering that, many of us can miss out on the chance to live our lives to our fullest capacity.

I have a friend who loves to dance. She would be the first to tell you that she has no sense of rhythm whatsoever, and she never really knows what to do with her hands. She's so embarrassed by what she looks like when she dances that she has taken to doing it only on those rare occasions when nobody, and I do mean nobody, she knows can see her. Once she stayed in a hotel where a conference was going on, and she left her room to go to the association's yearly dance party, where she blended in with dentists or brokers or English professors — she wasn't quite sure.

It's sort of a cliché or a T-shirt slogan that we should "Dance like nobody's watching." But how about if we dance like we're all looking upon each other with a soft, kind gaze, full of appreciation for one another during our short time here on Earth? These bodies and their movements are

holy, and they were put here to move with wild abandon.

I believe life can be a beautiful adventure, with so many opportunities to try things, explore things, engage with others, and grasp opportunities that come our way. But if we live life in such a way that we are concerned with what others think or feeling embarrassed that we don't do things very well, we can become inured to trying. Then, instead of sampling hundreds of things, we try only two or three.

Life is our adventure, and we are given just one chance to embrace it. None of us for sure know what comes after this life, but we know that this is the one we're supposed to live well. Life can be such a beautiful gift. I know there are struggles we have and things we have to work through, but this doesn't mean we can't live life to the fullest, through exploration and the desire to learn and to feel.

I'm talking about the willingness to go for the gusto, and to do things "just because."

Some of you may be wondering, "What about things that are harmful to myself or others?" We need to ask these questions:

1. Does it hurt others?
2. Can it potentially hurt ourselves?

Skydiving is a good example. If we do it enough, don't we face an ever-increasing risk of experiencing a catastrophe? But this risk is still exponentially small. The existence of some risk doesn't mean not to attempt skydiving; it only means that we should consider what it means to do so as we decide if we're willing to take that literal plunge.

Something else many people try in an attempt to squeeze every drop out of life is recreational drugs. This, of course, is a choice made by many, but it's important to think of the possible consequences of this decision. We could lose our jobs; our loved ones could turn away from us; we could lose our homes and end up on the street. This strikes me as very dissimilar to skydiving, a much less frequent activity that carries with it only a remote risk of harm, if we place ourselves in the hands of professionals. Drug users jump from their airplane sometimes multiple times a day, and whatever precautions they take may not protect them in the end.

Sometimes our actions have the potential to hurt others. That's also a very good indication that these activities are not good things to do.

If we keep in mind these two considerations — whether it hurts others and whether it hurts ourselves — that can be a very good guide to what we should allow ourselves to do. It certainly makes more sense than entertaining an idea of what other people might approve or disapprove of, particularly when we consider that our ideas of their opinions may not even match the reality. There's a chance that when we picture other people judging us for our actions, they're not

thinking of us at all. Even if they do have an interest in what we do, it's very fleeting.

The thing we carry with us every day is our own thoughts. When we project a sense that others are judging us, chances are that we're really just judging ourselves.

We have to be careful about what we think about ourselves, and we have to be careful about judging others for doing things they're not good at, or things that are different from what we would do. If we judge others for their actions, we are more likely to judge ourselves, and that can keep us from doing what we can to live our life to the fullest. It is an exhilarating feeling to say, "Wow! I want to try that," and then to give a new experience a go. That's a much more enriching feeling than the anticipatory shame of failure.

The other day, a friend invited me to play Scrabble, a game I hadn't played in a long time. When I did play, I remember that I wasn't very good at it, and guess what? I still am not very good at it — but I enjoyed it immensely. Those activities we attempt don't necessarily have to be about doing things well; sometimes, the point is to live in the moment and to stay vigorous and excited by life. We should be about exploring life and trying new things, even if we fear we may look silly to ourselves or to other people.

We should stop judging ourselves, but I want to close by noting that we should also stop judging what other people are doing. Life really is a beautiful adventure if we keep our heart open and we are willing to try new things. It can be hard, but if we are able to overcome our fear, we may discover that we are at a resort of a lifetime, and it's called life on Planet Earth. There are thousands and thousands of things we can do, and each possible adventure is calling to us, saying, "Come, try us out." If we do so, then in life, we can be explorers of all that the world has to offer us. This means that when we take our last breath, we can look back on our life and its pinnacle moments and say, "I lived very well."

Try Something New

I hope that as you were reading, you thought of an activity that you might like to try — something fun you can jump into with both feet, just to experience the thrill of it.

Here are some ideas.

Physical challenges: Have you ever tried ziplining? Someone straps you onto a taut rope and you step off to coast over treetops and valleys. Other fun possibilities: skydiving, skiing, waterskiing, ice skating, trampolining, rock climbing, watersliding ... the list goes on and on.

Natural experiences: Have you ever explored a cave? It can be exhilarating to step into total darkness, unsure of the dimensions of the chamber or what else may be inside. You can also try camping, stargazing, hiking, canoeing, rafting, hot-air ballooning, snorkeling, deep sea diving and more.

Relationship fun: Why not try speed dating or meeting someone online? If you're in a committed relationship, try doing something brand new with your date — like axe throwing or roller-skating. Anything from a new location to a new lovemaking position can spice things up, and you won't know how much you can enjoy them unless you give them a try.

Games and sports: Are you even aware of all of the ways you can compete against yourself or others and have a wonderful time? Maybe you'd like to hit a rifle range or join a softball league. Your gym probably offers everything from water aerobics to pickleball. If it sounds fun, give it a try. You may find an activity you can enjoy for the rest of your life.

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If you would like to learn more, this episode of the [Happiness](#) Podcast, hosted and created by Dr. Robert Puff, is now available. It is titled, "#303 Happiness – The Journey Towards Happiness" and can be listened to at:

<https://www.happinesspodcast.org/303-happiness-the-journey-towards-happiness/>

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