

The High Point Pook

HPC strives to guide, educate, encourage, and support

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'Tis so Sweet to Savor

'Tis the season to be. . .stressed, tired of long lines, dreading the countdowns. Whether we're worried about meeting deadlines or in-laws, getting the right gifts, or what to do with that dang elf on the shelf for the 20th night in a row; many of us muddle through the holidays and then, when they are over and done we wonder where the time went.

Holidays happen all year long but especially between October and January, they seem to pile one on top of the other. Holiday pressure is real especially when you start seeing Christmas trees for sale before you can find the right Halloween costume. Whether you enjoy the holidays or you dread them, there's a helpful technique you can use to help maximize your joy. It doesn't even have to be just to get through a holiday—this technique would be a good practice to get into every day of the year to maximize the joy in life—which seems to particularly joyless in our current world. It's called *savoring*. **Savoring is the scientific term for deliberately enhancing and prolonging your positive moods, experiences, and emotions.**

You've probably done it before. Perhaps you've closed your eyes to help you appreciate the warmth of the sunshine soaking into your skin, or stared in awe at your infant's smile, trying to make sure you remember every aspect of that moment. It's important to note that savoring is *not* a mood or emotion itself, but rather a way of approaching positive emotions. For instance, you could savor feeling awe, interest, delight, love, pride, amusement, or contentment.

Taking time to consciously savor the good things in life is important because negative things tend to stand out in our minds, while positive things tend to be easily dismissed or forgotten. Constantly over thinking what went wrong probably does more harm than good. According to several positivity studies, people who see more positive than negative things in their lives tend to be more happy and resilient. Savoring is linked to increased happiness, satisfaction, and decreased depression.

How can we savor the small things and mini-moments in our busy lives? I'm glad you asked. Practice basking—stopping and being in the moment. We all know about mindfulness, savoring is being mindful in the present, current moment but even more so by soaking it in—thinking about how it is making you feel, a smell associated with it, etc—actively taking time and binding all those things together into a sense of joy. I like to savor (don't laugh—it's a tall person problem) but I like to savor sitting on anything (preferably my bed) that is high enough off the ground that my feet don't touch the floor—yes, it really is that high, most of you shorties would need steps to get up in it—but that's one of my go-to savor experiences.

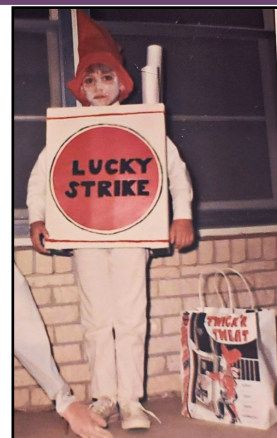
Another trick you can use to help savor the moments is physical reactions. For example, *smiling actually makes you feel happier*, while hunching your shoulders and crossing your arms can make you feel more upset. So as you go through each day and especially the holidays, try intentionally laughing, smiling, hugging, exchanging high fives, jumping for joy, and doing the happy dance. I expect to see you all coming in the office door with big toothy grins and a happy dance step or two.

Savoring takes practice. It's hard to stop in the middle of a busy schedule, crazy dinner, wild family day and just breathe in deeply, close our eyes and let our minds soak in the moment, to savor the beauty, laughter, warmth, peace, whatever it is that is going on around us. With time and practice, these savoring strategies will help you savor the holidays, bring joy to your world, and ring in a happier year.

—Larae Thompson

Do You See What I See?

A child, a child, dressed for Halloween. Can you tell who they are? Some of them you know and some of them are random strangers. Can you tell who is who?



Answer: Left to right—Emily, Madison, Caden Snell, Stranger, Larae, Rene

Thanksgiving BINGO

One of my favorite holiday traditions growing up has been my maternal family's Bingo game. When I was a small child, many of my grandma's 7 siblings and their children and grandchildren would fill my grandma's home for Thanksgiving and we'd have rounds and rounds of Bingo. My great aunt Sue was my teacher for bingo and with her weathered wrinkled face (which now I know she was not that old!), she'd help me listen for the combination of letter and numbers to fill my Bingo card. Our prizes back then were pencils, erasers, cans of soup, and rolls of toilet paper. If you got to be the one to crank the wired holder, you were queen for the moment as all eyes looked to you for that winning number. Now when we play, there are less people and the prizes are trinkets from the dollar store, but there is still the same joy and laughter as we fill our cards and yell, "BINGO!" What traditions do you remember and what ones do you want to try?

- Emily Hand



Just Because It's a Tradition Doesn't Mean It Can't Change

Before we know it, Christmas will be upon us and that is my favorite time of year. As a kid, Christmas was the day I looked forward to all year as it symbolized a day of presents, good food, family time, and a long break from school. I have fond memories of Christmas morning waking up at 6 or 7am waiting for the rest of my family to get the hint that it was time get up and open presents. In my house, the rule was we had to wait for presents until everyone in the house was awake, we were not allowed to wake anyone up, they had to do that on their own. As a kid, that was always the hardest part, but years passed, and things started to change. As my siblings and I got older the present opening time would be later and later in the morning until we all hit point where we were tired of waking up so dang early just for presents. Once my youngest brother turned 19, as a family we decided no more waiting until Christmas morning to open presents. Moving forward we were going to open presents the night before on Christmas Eve and sleep in Christmas morning. I will always have fond memories of those early mornings on Christmas, but nothing stays the same forever and I think the change in our Christmas tradition is a good one.

- Madison Dadrick



The Only Broadway Show I Never Got to See

For many people The Nutcracker is part of their Christmas traditions. I actually happen to really like The Nutcracker and have seen it performed several times by various ballet companies in various cities I have lived in as an adult. However, The Nutcracker was NOT a part of our family traditions for about 15 years as I was growing up—and that was all my fault. When I was probably about 5 or 6, we lived in New Jersey. My father had a very well-to-do great uncle who lived within a day's drive and for some reason he decided to gift us all with tickets to see The Nutcracker ballet on Broadway. We drove over an hour to get into the city and parked the car in a large and intimidating parking garage. I can remember to this day how big, cold, and scary it seemed. Again, for some reason unknown but long after regretted, as we were climbing out of the car my father made a random comment to my mom about having to be sure to get back in time to leave before the garage closed and the car was impounded. Why do father's do this kind of thing?! I'm sure my mother regretted and made him sorry he'd said it for years afterwards. My 5 or possibly 6 year-old self immediately was devastatingly worried about not having our car. I managed to cry for the next 6 hours straight. I cried all the way out of the parking garage. I cried all the way down the long NY city blocks to the theater. I cried the whole time we stood in line for the box office. I cried the whole time we were in the lobby waiting to meet my great-great uncle and aunt. I cried the whole time we sat in our plush theater chairs listening to the pre-show hubbub of people finding their seats and music playing. I managed to fill the hush right before the curtains rose with my crying so that everyone in the theater wouldn't get bored. I cried while sugar plums danced, princes fought rats with glittering rapiers, and beautiful snowflake women swirled across the stage. I cried all the way back out of the lobby and down the long NY city blocks to some fancy restaurant my great-great uncle took us to for dinner. I then cried all through dinner. I cried all through our goodbyes and thank you's. I cried again all the way down the long NY city blocks back to the parking garage. I cried all the way back up the cold concrete levels. I cried all the way back to the car. Nothing consoled me, nothing stopped me. I have no clue why my great-great uncle didn't pop me on the nose at some point during the evening. The really sad? Funny? Ironical? Part of the story is that because my father had young children (me—who was still young and energetic enough to cry for 6 hours straight), my great-great uncle had thoughtfully taken us to a special holiday matinee showing so that by the time we got back to the car it was only 6pm. The parking garage didn't close until midnight.

—Larae Thompson



The Ubiquitous Elf on the Shelf

Since 2005, parents have been hiding a toy elf each night from Thanksgiving to Christmas. More than 13 million elves have been "adopted" since Carol Aebersold and her daughter, Chanda Bell, published the book *Elf on the Shelf: A Christmas Tradition* that comes with the toy. For most of us we either love the idea or loathe it so, in keeping with the holiday spirit, there are several of those creepy elves (9 to be exact) hiding in this newsletter so see if you can find them all. Don't forget the elves are here to watch you. So, you better be good or they will take a bad report to Santa and you will get coal in your Christmas stocking.

