

Be the Euphoria You Want To See In the World

Euphoria, n. A feeling or state of intense excitement and happiness

When I experience euphoria

I'm a pretty stereotypical runner guy now. So I'd have to tell you first about the euphoria that kicks in several miles into a long run. I've written before that it's like:

You become an animal – something far more basic than your everyday self. You feel amazing, transcendent even – and you also feel desperate. You are being tested and rewarded. You sweat out your distractions, your pettiness, your greed, your insecurities.

This sort of thing isn't unique to running, though.

I might get it when I wrap up a difficult jiu jitsu class (or some other session learning some difficult skill).

I just about always get it when I'm vulnerable with someone about attraction, or my failures, or difficult truths.

And I probably get it when I work my butt off to organize an event at work or home, when I'm working late in the office and no one's around*, and when I hit "send" on an email delivering a hard project at 3 AM in the morning.

The common denominator is that I experience this kind of euphoria whenever I confront the things I might tend to avoid. Chemically, it's adrenaline. Psychologically, it's conditioning. Spiritually, it's growth.

The world becomes lighter, I become stronger, and everything falls into place because I know I can take it.

But there's also euphoria in reflection and dreaming.

When I'm going for a long drive I'll reflect on where I've been and the beauty and chance and hard work (my own and others') that has gotten me to where I am. There's a euphoria that comes with realizing that (despite the many problems) you're living in the fairest,

freest, healthiest, wealthiest, and most peaceful society in all of human history.

Also while I'm driving, I'm probably listening to film scores (one of my favorite genres, judge me) and imagining a more adventurous life. If I'm going fast, with the windows down, with courage, and with the hope of a challenge ahead, I'll feel just a bit euphoric. Heck, I get this sometimes on the way to work, right where I get to pick up speed.

When I see euphoria in the world

I wouldn't say I often see euphoria - it's pretty hard to separate from normal happiness or excitement from the outside looking in. But I do see often enough when people come alive - that low-level hum of euphoria and joy that can characterize not just a moment but a life.

You can tell pretty fast whether someone has that low-level euphoria. They voluntarily spend their time exploring a topic. They start talking faster when it comes up. They alternate between grinning with joy and frowning with focus. They own the adrenaline rush, and their initiative is magnetic. It makes you want to work harder.

I see something like this when I see great young apprentices in the Praxis community. They're often just 18 or so and moving cross-country to work in startups. And the ones that are asking questions, doing hard work, and eking all the value they can get from their experience clearly have that "alive" quality that I don't see in most young people.

I also see that low-level euphoria when I see great artists at work, like when I saw Lindsey Stirling perform around Christmastime. She may have been tired after a long tour of the same routine, but she did not show it. In the dancing, the decor, the stories, the music, the humor there was this sense of tremendous effort but also of effortless joy. Stirling was someone who from love brought together all of the best of human potential into this show. You have to be alive to do something like that.

So I suppose the answer is the same - if you want to see euphoria, go where the effort is. You can find it at celebrations occasionally, but you'll find it often where the most sparks are flying.

Be the euphoria you want to see

How do I contribute to euphoria?

I guess I start by experiencing a lot of euphoria (when I can). I'm a big fan of the popular Howard Thurman quote:

"Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and then go do that. Because what the world needs is

people who have come alive.”

What I want to do is show people that it's possible and practical to live a life of joy. Most people don't believe that and so don't find much euphoria.

So a good deal of that is on me. I've had experiences that have convinced me that truth (a big prerequisite for undivided joy) is worth it, and that effort is worth it. I want to communicate that. And I'll do that best by taking as many chances as I can to surprise and delight people into the realization that joy is **right there** for anyone willing to act boldly.

I can encourage euphoria just by finding and encouraging others already on the path to "what makes them come alive." If you're an alive person, you can basically expect to have my friendship, or at least my alliance. Your fire is precious and deserves respect (the world is boring without people like you). I will root for you at least, and I might even be willing to fight for you in the extreme.

And what I'd like to continue to develop is a philosophical grounding for joy. People need to know that their struggles are worthwhile and their joy possible and good. Plenty of good thinkers (Ayn Rand for me, especially) have started this work. I'll continue to try to share the words I've learned and find new ones that make the case for joy.

*The euphoria here is not much different than the state of "flow" in psychology.