



Transcript: Wake Up Happy with Debbie Gisonni

HOST

Kym Yancey

SPEAKER

Debbie Gisonni

PRESENTATION

Kym I mean, we are going to have a great time today, and for those of you that have been with us for *Wake Up Happy*, you know what I'm talking about. This is a glorious day. Isn't it? It doesn't matter where you're from, you are now engaged in a part of our third series called *Wake Up Happy*.

My name is Kym Yancey. I am the cofounder and CEO of Live Happy. We are an international organization that is focused on making our planet a happier place. That sounds pretty audacious and I love what we see happening because you being part of this session that we're having here and the things that we're doing all over the country, we're going to get there. We're going to raise and elevate the happiness on our planet. It is definitely going to happen.

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For our returning guests, I want to say welcome back to *Wake Up Happy*. Doesn't it kind of feel like a reunion for us? We started this in September. We did October and now we're here in November, November 3rd. We have a fantastic group of experts that are going to be joining us all week.

I'm so excited about Debbie, who I'll tell you about who is our special guest this morning, but those of you that have been with us you really are going to have a good idea as to what to expect and our new people, our new guests, I wanted to tell you welcome to *Wake Up Happy*. I am so honored to have you here with us.

Live Happy, our organization, is all about the science and the academic proof around happiness and we work with some of the world premier experts in positive psychology around the world to give you content, to give you information, to give you insights, to give you strategies to allow you to live a happy, fulfilled, joyful life.

Here's the thing that we've learned through this is happiness truly is the precursor to success. It's not about the prize at the end of the rainbow. So many people think that when I get this house, when I get this job or this career, when I have the right mate, the right partner, when I have this, and when I have that, I'll be happy, and science has proven that's exactly the wrong way to look at it. It is truly happiness is the precursor and happiness and positive emotions help you thrive in all the things you want to do. They help you get in touch with your true potential.

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The Greeks have a definition of happiness that I really like and I learned this from reading Shawn Achor's book, *The Happiness Advantage*, and a dear friend of Live Happy and the *Wake Up Happy* series. In his book, he talks about the Greek definition, which is the joy you feel striving towards your potential, or growing towards your potential, the joy. Being happy isn't about the absence of stress. When you're striving towards your potential, you're going to go through some stress. You're going to go through some things that are going to feel a little uncomfortable for you.

In fact, when I speak to audiences around the country and I'll say to them, how many people want to be happier and all the hands go up. How many people have the ability and the capacity to accept more happiness into their life and everyone's hands go up. Then, I ask them who is afraid of happiness. I was in Sacramento, California this last speaking engagement. A woman raised her hand and she was afraid of it and I looked at her and I said to everyone in the room, "That's the bravest woman in the room."

Because the reality is, with all of us saying that we want more happiness in our life, being happy is not something that—my good friend, James Pawelski from the University of Penn, who is the director of their positive psychology department said to me one night, he says, "Kym, happiness is not for sissies. Happiness takes work just like any skill, anything that you want to develop and there's a practice and a way to engage yourself with happiness that really can make a massive difference in your performance and in

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everything that you do, but to be happy, and when you look at your life and you say I'm not as happy as I'd like to be or something could be missing, it requires you to hold up the mirror and take a look."

So, we're going to have a lot of fun. We're going to cover a lot of great things. Our goal here is for you to leave these sessions that we have, this is going to be 30 minutes, and take this information and take the things you learn not only to help them in your own life, but to share. Happiness is all about sharing with others.

Now, I want you to get social with this. We love to hear from you. Our hashtag is wakeuphappy. You can get us at Twitter @mylifehappy and our Facebook is MyLiveHappy. Also, the source of everything when it comes to us is at LiveHappy.com. If you forget everything, just think of LiveHappy.com. There, you'll find just incredible content and information that we are hosting. I have to tell you, I am most proud of the Live Happy team and the dedication of our writers and our team and our staff. What they bring to this is far beyond just getting up and going to some career. This is truly a lifestyle and something that we all really love dearly.

The other thing I want to share with you, those of you that are on a computer and you might be watching us on your computer screen, you're going to see I'm throwing up some pictures here of us doing what we call banana smiles. And it's a real fun thing that we started where the curve of the banana makes a great smile and we just for fun started

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doing these smiles where we started including bananas and it's really catching on. I guess you could say we're kind of going bananas.

Just the mere fact that you hold up a banana and take a picture of yourself, it creates happiness right there on the spot. It just has this effect of elevating your thoughts and bringing mindfulness and playfulness to your life. Listen, you want to have some fun? I'd love for you to take a picture of yourself with the banana, what I call a banana smile, and then e-mail that to me at wakeuphappy@livehappy.com. Take a picture. That's going to come directly to me, wakeuphappy@livehappy.com.

Also, I want you to know if you're first time listening, mark this date down because March 20, 2015 is the international day of happiness and we were the largest worldwide supporter and sponsor of this past March. With the U.N., the United Nations has established this, declared this as a day of international celebration around happiness and our organization, we were at the Today Show. We had these orange walls set up all over the country where people could walk up to these orange walls and post how they're sharing happiness. It was just fantastic, so I just want to share with you that—put that on your calendar because you're going to want to participate with us with what we're doing there and the things we've got happening from that standpoint.

All right, with that, let's meet our very, very special guest. She is a real dynamo. Her name is Debbie Gisonni. She is a bestselling author, healthy lifestyle advisor, and

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corporate leader. At the height of her corporate career, Debbie's personal life was shattered when four family members died in four years, one from suicide. After these life-altering events, she traded high-tech for health and wellness and embarked on a mission to help others make simple changes that radically enhanced their self-awareness, wellbeing, and success. For 15 years, she has advised business executives and individuals alike in adopting healthy lifestyle and work habits, including meditation.

Now, Debbie was recently inducted into the Happiness Hall of Fame at Stanford. She is also the author of the *Goddess of Happiness: A Down-to-Earth Guide for Heavenly Balance and Bliss* and *Vita's Will: Real Life Lessons about Life, Death, & Moving on* and *Note to Self: Love*. She is a certified hypnotherapist and certified health and lifestyle coach. Debbie, it's so great to have you a part of *Wake Up Happy*.

Debbie Thank you. Happy Monday. I'm so glad I'm on Monday just to get the week going.

Kym There was no other way we could do this show without getting you here on Monday, Debbie, so it was designed for you.

Debbie You already got me smiling and wanting a banana, so that's great.

Kym That's great, Debbie. I'd like to jump right into is how did you become to be known as the Goddess of Happiness and what inspired you to write it?

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Debbie Right, well, I will say this. It definitely was not planned. I was always one of these people that felt I was in so much control of my career and all that. I went to college. I got the business degree. I was climbing the corporate ranks. Everything was going great and then what happens? Life happens. Life happens completely out of your control and we all go through these things in life.

We all have challenges, and as you had said in my intro, I went through a lot of tragedy in my life with four deaths in four years and this happened when I was pretty young, late 20s, early 30s, and I think it's when you feel totally defeated that you start looking at life a different way and realizing that you have some choices that you could make.

You can wallow in self-pity or you can try to look at what happened that may be out of your control or maybe not so great looking on the outside and say what can you do to make this better in your life and others. I chose the choice of leaving my corporate career at that time and I wrote my first book, *Vita's Will*, about these tragedies and how I overcame them and then in that process of writing, which is very cathartic, I would definitely recommend it for people that are going through hard times, just write out your feelings, I got a little lighter. I got a little less controlling. I got a little lighter and then I started writing about happiness and started doing some columns in newspapers about happiness and that's how the book the *Goddess of Happiness* came about and then it sort of got branded onto me, but out of the darkness comes light. You can always find

light out of the darkness and that's really how this whole happiness thing came about for me.

Kym Debbie, I want you to talk more, and I also want to say, Debbie, this is a pretty powerful Tweetable moment and I'm going to have to have you help me finish this, but you said, "When you feel totally defeated, is when you—" What? How did you say that? When you feel totally defeated—?

Debbie Well, when you reexamine life and what's important in it.

Kym Yes. When you are going through this, when you are going through this incredibly dark time, dark moments, what were the things, obviously the pain had to bring to your knees, what are the things that you deployed, that you tapped into that started to make a difference for you?

Debbie I realized I had a lot of innate coping mechanisms and that's what I write about in the books and there's tons of ways that you can do that, but the one thing that I always come back to is humor and having a sense of humor. I truly, truly believe that saying that you see sometimes on bumper stickers and all that says, "In order to become enlightened, you have to lighten up."

I do believe laughter can be found in failure, in challenges, and even in death, and not only can it be found, it's almost necessary for survival. It's like survival humor. Right? You have to get through these hard times and you have to allow yourself the ability to find humor. No matter how terrible this big picture looks in your life, you can always find little isolated moments that were funny.

My mother was an extremely funny woman. She had this very interesting accent from Italy and we kind of grew up in this what I would consider it was almost like a sitcom family. It was very, very funny even though no one was trying to be funny. She used to say she quit smoking cold duck because she didn't really know the English language that well. I remember she went to the doctor once and she said, "I'm not seeing that well. I think I have Cadillacs." So, this is kind of like her mode and this was what we grew up in.

So, when she was sick for ten years, during that ten years, she had a brain tumor and she was on a respirator a lot and they had her hooked up to a breathing tube, and when you're on that, you can't speak, which was horrible for my mother. She was quite spirited and loved to talk all of the time. So, I remember the nurses, they gave her this alphabet board. Now, they didn't know that she had one year of English schooling and we didn't really know Italian, so she would have to use the alphabet board to communicate with us and she would have to point out the letters to spell literally words and sentences for us.

Now, you can imagine, given her background and her frustration being on the ventilator and all that, what came out of that, it was like we were playing Password and Wheel of Fortune all wrapped up into one and we laughed hysterical at this sequence of events even though the big picture was terrible. We didn't know if she'd ever get off her respirator. We didn't know if she'd ever walk again. We never knew if she'd ever even breathe again or eat again, but yet, we could find these little isolated moments to laugh together as a family and that's really what got us through a lot of those bad times.

Kym Yes. Laughter can be found in failure and challenges. Powerful, powerful. That's a great Tweetable moment. Laughter can be found in failure and in challenges. Debbie, let's talk a little about self-love. If there's one thing that I see is—I don't want to say it's an epidemic, but feeling a lack of appreciation from people and people feeling the sadness that hits so many of us. It's a fact when you look at all the prescriptions for antidepressants, that kind of thing. Talk to us about self-love and the research and what you've discovered and what you can share with us about that topic.

Debbie Right. Well, this is something that was really important for me because, as you mentioned, I had a sister who committed suicide, and when you have someone like that and your survival guilt and all that, you kind of go through this period where how could somebody get to that point where they really want to just check out of life and it really comes down to how much you appreciate yourself and self-love or how much you hate yourself or how you're living your life.

I believe that self-love is probably one of the biggest, if not the biggest, lesson we're all here to learn and many of us struggle with this daily, and even if you get to a place of self-love, the next day you could just be knocked down by something someone tells you or whatever and I think what self-love does is it helps you go from a fear-based reality where your happiness is dependent upon external circumstances to a love-based reality where you can always find happiness within no matter what circumstances you're in or no matter what anybody says to you.

What I mean by a fear-based reality is what most of us live in every day, whether things are going well or not. If things are going well, you're afraid you're going to fall off. Right? You're afraid something bad is going to happen or you're not going to have everything you have now that you love. If things are not going well, you're fearing that you're going to go down even a more slippery slope or things are going to get worse.

So, going from that to a love-based reality where you can really get to a place of inner awareness, find that shining light that is inside of you and light that up, and know that that shining light inside of you and me and every one of us is just pure love. It's that simple and that we're all deserving of love and we're all needing of love.

Any practice I think that helps quiet the mind can help you kind of get to that place of inner awareness, but when I do talks or workshops, I say to people, "Just look in the

mirror. Find something from yourself to love.” It could be your ear lobe, maybe you have to start that small.

Debbie For women maybe we’ll get to our thighs someday. That’s the big thing. Or even a personality trait that you love about yourself. Maybe it’s your sense of humor, your compassion for animals, whatever it is focus on that and every time you feel not good about yourself go back to that place where you do feel good about yourself, that one thing, and then kind of build that list over time, and as you light more of these areas in your being up, you’ll eventually realize and start seeing that you are a being of pure light and love and that nothing can invade that space.

You are the eye of the hurricane. Nothing can invade that space no matter what’s going on around you and you can live a love-based reality, and when you get to that spot, you can really be in a mode of self-love and get yourself back to that place when things are challenging in your life.

Kym Debbie, walk me through a little bit. I want to just visit a conversation. When you’re talking to someone that is coming from a fear-based reality, what might that conversation—what kind of words, what kind of statements would they be making so that as you’re talking to them you’re like, “Okay, he or she is really coming from a fear-based reality.” What does that sound like?

Debbie Right. Well, I think that most people don't know what they're afraid of or they don't want to admit it. So, I think first of all asking the right questions about how they're feeling and what are they really fearing and you'll be surprised. A lot of people don't know what that it is. Maybe it's fear of failure. Maybe it's fear of a divorce that is impending. Maybe it's fear of losing their house.

You have to get to what the fear is and then sort of break it down from there and say, "Okay, what's the worst thing that could happen if this should happen?" And then go through a series of questions from that angle and what I keep doing is I keep asking, "Okay, what is the worst thing that could happen if that happens and what's the worst thing?"

Then, people, when they start breaking it down granularly like that, they find out that it's not really as bad as they think and just talking about the fear actually helps expose it. It helps release it. It releases the burden and it gets them to a place where they can actually start. "Okay, I have this fear. How can I turn it around into a love?" I think one of the ways to turn it around and a good thing to do is to get to a place of gratitude. Gratitude is so important. I can just give you a little simple example of this.

Kym Yes.

Debbie I just recently had some hand surgery, and so, my hand is in a cast. My one hand is in a cast and the first few days, and it's still in a cast today, the first few days I was like, "God, why did I have to go through this?" It was just something that had to be fixed on a joint and I was just feeling so bad about it. I'm like, "God, I can't do this. I can't do that. I can't." I just was thinking about all the things I couldn't do and then somebody, a friend of mine, sends me an e-mail that says, "Gosh, I'm really thinking about you. I know how terrible a friend of mine just fell down and broke both her wrists and has both wrists in a cast." I said, "Oh my gosh, thank you so much for that e-mail. That makes me feel so much better."

Because all of a sudden I was so grateful for just having one wrist in a cast and I hate to say this, but there's always someone that's having a worse time than you, and when you get into that victim mode and saying, "Oh, everything is terrible. Why me? Why me," think about all the other people in the planet that are suffering. Maybe they don't even have fresh water that day or fresh air and think of all the things that we have that we can be grateful for every day and that really gets you to a place of loving your life more, loving yourself more. Gratitude, that's the key. That is the key to get to a loved-based reality.

Kym What are some of the things, Debbie, that you've kind of practiced? Take us through kind of a Debbie day in a way in terms of—

Debbie Debbie day.

Kym Well, you're hit with it. You're hit with the traffic. You're hit with different things, but the things that you do to consciously bring mindfulness and elevate your own personal happiness. What are some of the things that you do and the things that you prescribe to others?

Debbie Right. Well, I will say this. I was thinking about your show, *Wake Up Happy*, and I was thinking, "You know what? I do wake up happy every day." First of all, I go to bed every night, and before I fall asleep, I go through my list of gratitude in my mind. Some people do this in a journal. I just do it in my mind because it actually helps me fall asleep.

So, I go to sleep, and even if I've had the worst day, I can say, "I had this beautiful sunshine. I had legs to walk my dogs. I had a wonderful—," I always go through food because I'm a big foodie. I go through my breakfast, lunch, and dinner whatever I ate that day and I feel really grateful for all that food that I ate and how nourishing it was and how delicious it was. Every single night. So, I go through my list. Then, I wake up in the morning—

Kym First of all, that's huge. Let me just say. Just that, listen, the whole notion of going to bed and filling your mind with gratitude. The whole notion before I lay my head to sleep or, down to sleep you focus on gratitude instead of—

Debbie Right. Instead of what went wrong that day and how tired you are and all that.

Kym Exactly. So, I love that. All right, continue.

Debbie Then, I wake up and I have little ritual when I wake up. I had never planned to do this or anything, but I wake up and I have my—I have like kind of a morning ritual where I get the shades up, get some light in the house, and I have two Huskies so there's a lot of hair on my floor all the time and I very slowly do my dust mopping, get the hair off the floor for the day. Right?

Kym Right.

Debbie Usually, my husband is out walking the dogs at that time because he's getting ready for work and I sing a song, and for a long time, I used to sing 5th Dimension "Age of Aquarius/Let the Sunshine In" because as I'm lifting my shades I'm singing let the sunshine in. Love will steer the stars, all that stuff. Peace will guide the planets and whatever, but recently I was in—

Kym Oh, geez. Debbie, I won't be able to get it out of my mind now forever.

Debbie I know, but I'm going to give you another one [indiscernible]. So, I was in New York City, where I'm from originally. I was visiting family earlier this year and I saw the Carole King play called *Beautiful* and Carole King is a singer/songwriter from the 50s, 60s, 70s.

Kym Oh yes,

Debbie Very popular. I didn't know of the song that she sung, but they start out the play singing this song called, "Beautiful", and the lyrics of this song help me wake up every day, and as I'm lifting my shades, I actually sing this song and I sing it out loud. I sing it to my dogs and I sing to my husband and I won't sing it on the air. I'll give you the lyrics, but I won't sing it because we'll probably lose half our audience if I try to sing. I'm a great speaker, but singing was not my forte.

She starts off, she says, "You've got to get up every morning with a smile on your face and show the world all the love in your heart. Then, people gonna treat you better. You're gonna find out, yes, you will that you're beautiful as you feel." I just sing that over and over again in the morning and I just love it. It just makes me start the day so great and so happy and so fun.

Kym Oh my gosh. You're just really programming yourself to happiness, right?

Debbie It should be your theme song. It should be your theme song for the show.

Kym Yes. It's beautiful. It's beautiful. I love that.

Debbie That's the title of it, "Beautiful", Carole King. So, the listeners can go out and download that, I don't know, iTunes or whatever, and she sings it beautifully and it's just a really upbeat beat and whatever and it just gets you smiling and gets you going, and between that and "Let the Sunshine In", I'm ready to start my day.

Kym Let me ask you a question. As you look at the clients you have and the things you counsel them on, do you find, as you're both a certified health coach and hypnotherapist, are there one or two kind of specific themes that you see running through your practice or you see with people that you can tell us about?

Debbie Well, I do a lot of group workshops instead of individual now, but what I see is that people are, well as we talked about, they don't know what their fear is. They know they're in fear, but they don't know what their fear is, so identifying that is really important, and I also see that as you said earlier in the broadcast, Kym, when you were doing an introduction there about happiness is not something that—it's not the end all to success.

Success comes from being happy first and I think people have that mixed up. And the other theme I find is when I ask the question when I'm doing the talk just as you do, who

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wants to be happy, happier, everybody raises their hand and the theme that I see is that people are as happy as they want to be, as their mind tells them to be, and that it's probably the single most thing people want most out of life is to be happy and to be acknowledged that they're worth something.

Really, the only person that can really make you feel the most acknowledged is yourself because if you can't get to that place of self-love there's nothing anybody else is going to do or say that's going to help you there. It really is an inner job. It's an inside job. Right? [Indiscernible] happiness.

Kym

To that point is what we've learned through all of this and with science is the fact that if you are having a horrible time trying to figure that out, give and serve others, volunteer, engage in some activities where you can help people who can never pay you back. Your calling, your purpose, your meaning will start to blossom just by giving a look out for other people.

Listen, Debbie, I want you to give—we're going to end up with you giving them what I call the call of action for the day, what you want everyone across the country to walk away with and take with them if they just take a couple of things. Before we do that, I just want to make sure that you guys are aware that this is what we do at *Live Happy Magazine* and we are a magazine. We're on major newsstands, Barnes & Noble. You'll see us in the airports or Whole Foods. We just celebrated our one-year anniversary.

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We've also gone digital, so now you can actually get, no matter where you are in the world, you can plug into *Live Happy Magazine* and I'll tell you it is transformative. There's no other way to describe this. There's nothing out like this based on happiness and the science, a lifestyle publication with stories on literally everything you can imagine from aging to parenting to career to life to relationships, finances, it's all there.

The other thing I want to tell you is that if you decide that you want—I'm really going to ask you to be a part of our movement. This is really—this is our calling and I want to invite you to be a part of the Live Happy movement. So, just go to LiveHappy.com and our editorial team has put together three incredible happiness reports for you. So, just know that when you subscribe to *Live Happy* and you get our physical publication, you also get our digital publication, and if you only want digital, that's fine. You can just order the digital side. So, just go to Live Happy, hit the subscribe button.

I've got a couple of things, Debbie, I want to share with them that I know you're going to love this, but we've just recently launched what's called Live Happy Notes and these are, for those of you that are you on your computers, you'll be able to see this. If you're just listening, what I want you to picture in your mind is a post-it note with custom handwritten words and there are ten custom statements on these notes.

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Let me give you an example. "You are unique. Embrace it." is one. Another one is, "You make a difference. You matter. Thank you." Another one is, "The beauty inside you makes me happy." Or, here's another one, "Thank you for being you. You're awesome." One of my favorites is, "You are loved and appreciated."

So, several more, but let me tell you how we use these. This is called, for me, I kind of refer it to as happy graffiti, so I've got this package of happy notes and no matter where I go, restaurant; the other day, Debbie, I had breakfast and I left the woman a \$5 tip, I had five singles, normally I just write it on my credit card receipt, but this time I gave her the singles and I put a note on there and I said to her, "You are loved and appreciated," and I left the note there.

Debbie I love that.

Kym I have to tell you, Debbie, I went to the register and I looked back. She went to pick up that money and held that in her hands and just stared at it. She was just stopped right there. I put it at gas stations.

Debbie Made her day. It made her day.

Kym It made her day. So, what I want to say to you, this is probably one of the hottest ways that we can spread happiness and do it easily. Put it in your purse and guys put it your

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pants, put it in your pocket, and no matter where you go, men's room, put it up on the mirror, put a little note. So, we have those and the other thing we're really excited about, I just want to tell you about this, especially with the holidays here, is we just came out with this *Live Happy: 50 Happiness Facts and Quotes*, which is our editorial team put together these incredible facts around happiness in a beautiful book, just beautiful and it's fabulous. You can find that there at LiveHappy.com, you can see our store.

I'm just sharing this with you because I'm excited about it, but I want you to know—with all the stuff going on in the holidays, what could be better than saying to someone, "I couldn't think of anything else better to do than to give you the gift of happiness," and that's what you're giving them. You've got this book. You've got the magazine. We have lots of people doing this where they buy subscriptions for their friends for the holidays. It's just incredible.

We've come out with our Live Happy apparel and you can find that there too, the shirts and the different things. We have some cute shirts for kids, but you'll love our Live Happy apparel and what I want you to know is, just so everyone knows this, I'm going to give you a special code so that if you decide you want to get anything from our store, purchase \$50 or more from the Live Happy store and receive free shipping when you enter this discount code. So, here it is, it's pretty easy, it's called wakeup3. So, you enter that discount code, wakeup3, and you get free shipping. Okay? So, I want you to know that.

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I just love this quote from Debbie and I want to read this before she gives you her steps for the day, but it's a great quote, Debbie. Here it is. "Laughter gives you as much emotional release as crying. Personally, I'd rather laugh." Great. "Laughter gives you as much emotional release as crying. Personally, I'd rather laugh." Great, great quote, Debbie.

So, with that, I want you to know that tomorrow we've got Louisa Jewell and we'll be talking about flourishing with confidence with Louisa and that will be tomorrow at 9:30. So, Debbie, with that, what are our steps for the day? What would you like to see us all do?

Debbie Well, first of all, I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to get on the site and put in the wakeup3 code and buy some stuff because I'm sure I'm going to love that stuff and I'm going to be giving it out for gifts for Christmas, so thanks for that tip

I think everybody should write themselves a little love note this morning, one sentence, just take your time, but doesn't have to take a lot of time and just say, "I love this about myself," and find out what it is and keep that thought with you all day long no matter what happens.

Kym I love that. I love this about myself. You guys, you have to tweet about this. Go to our Facebook page. I'd love to know it. You can also, if you want to communicate with me directly, wakeuphappy@livehappy.com. Debbie, thank you so much for the gift of your time and contribution to this.

Debbie Thank you. This is great.

Kym Listen, you've definitely provided some ideas and insights that will help thousands and thousands of people. We really appreciate it. So, with that, have a great day. We'll see you back tomorrow at 9:30 central time/10:30 eastern. Out there in the pacific, it's 7:30 for you. Don't miss it. We'll see you tomorrow. Bye bye for now.