

# SAVOUR

An 8 Week Journey into the Senses



# Introduction

For many of us rushing is the norm. We have too much to do. We have back to back meetings and appointments and we constantly fit in more and more.

Busy schedules drive us so that lingering, strolling, pausing, and of course, savouring, become rare moments in overfilled days.

This eBook is an experiment with how to linger longer, and savour a little more wholeheartedly what is right here in the present moment. It won't take a lot of your timer, maybe 20 seconds to a minute more.

Run over the course of 8 weeks this journey is structured so you can start at any time. There are eight stops along the whole journey, one for each week. Each week engages you with one of the five senses with three wider invitations to savour after that.

You might want to take it a week at a time or indulge with many or a few of the practices on offer. Each week offers practices that build on one of the senses and invite you to be curious and explore. There are also some additional reflection questions as pause for thought.

My suggestion to you is that you take a few moments before you begin each weekly journey to centre yourself before you dive in. What is special about this eBook is that you can do these practices alone, buddy up with another person, or as a family, group or team.

What really helps you to enjoy the practices is to take time at the end of the week to gather your findings and spend a little time reflecting on them.

Not long ago I visited the magnificent Iguazu Falls in Brazil and Argentina. All around me were lots of people taking selfies then walking on to the next scenic spot without taking the time to really look at, and drink in, the glorious landscape of these, the widest waterfalls on the planet. It was as if snapping the image substituted for savouring the moment, but nothing is more powerful, or evocative, as being present to the moment.

Keeping a sense journal during the eight weeks can be an additional way of embracing and embedding the lived experience of engaging with your senses. There is a blank spider gram at the back of the book to jot down key words that arise week by week.

I hope that by the end of the 8 weeks you will have a deeper appreciation of opening more to your senses and really working your savour muscles. Most of all, I hope it will boost how you consciously enjoy even more of the things that light you up and give you joy. What an adventure!

These words by poet Diane Ackerman really ring true for me in the mindful practice of conscious savouring: "I don't want to get to the end of my life to find that I just lived the length of it. I want you have lived the width of it as well."

I offer this free e-book with great joy and excitement. Enjoy your personal voyage and savour journey! Please feel free to send me feedback on your experiences.

*Karyn Prentice*



## Week 1: Sight

Of all our senses sight may be the most used but perhaps one we take the most for granted. You may have a different preference as your first way to experience something.

When we look our brain also filters things out so we can easily miss what is right in front of us because we have not asked our brain to look for that. In fact our brain does this filtering all the time. And we may not even be aware of it. In the well known research in Richard Wiseman's book 'Did You Spot the Gorilla', his experiments show that our minds can be primed to see things and as a consequence we miss see others.

This first week of enhancing your sensorial experiences begins with raising your awareness about how you see and what you notice.

### Practices for the week

- Spend an hour looking from the eyes of someone totally different from you. An alien arrived from outer space, your dog or cat, a 5 year old or perhaps a monk? Notice what draws your attention and what a fresh perspective brings.
- Pick up pencil and paper. Choose an ordinary object in your house and draw it. Try it without looking at the object and then do it again when you look a second time and study it.
- Look for a certain colour all day, for one day, and see how many forms it takes.
- What colours impact on your mood? Try introducing different colours and experience the impact. Try wearing a colour you don't usually pick but would like to try.
- Go for a walk in nature this week and pick something that calls your attention and take a full few minutes to look at in close detail.

## Pause for thought

1. We are constantly looking at and making sense of what we see. What kinds of things catch your eye the most? When you are in a city or town what do you look at most?? Is it the same or different in the countryside?
2. What do you tend to ignore, filter out, or choose not see? When you walk with someone else do they look for different things than you do? What influences you in what you notice for as you go about your day?
3. Sometimes we can see in other ways. Seeing might be through intuition, sometimes used to describe a sixth sense about how we come to know something. Does intuition play a big part in how you 'see'?



## Week 2: Touch

Our skin is the largest organ of the body and each part has the capacity to feel something. Skin receptors transmit information via the nervous system to the brain. Savouring a moment of touch helps us to be fully present. I love having my hair washed and scalp massaged at the hairdresser. I love the way my head tingles and I find it very relaxing. I push the pause button on my busy mind so I can really savour the brief experience.

There are many ways we use touch. Little children use the sense of touch (and often taste) to experiment with 'finding out about'. Does it rattle? Is it scratchy? Can I eat it?

It can be a cursory contact or it can be the confirmation of deep feelings and connection with someone else.

### Practices for the week

- During the week note the different ways you touch things, people or animals. When it is most important, where and even why?
- Notice the objects you pick up and come into contact with. Now and again during the week take a full minute to explore the way an object feels when you hold it. Try closing your eyes so you can briefly block out any other senses. It is smooth, bumpy, slippery, dry, warm, and cold? Soft or hard?
- During the week share any of these experiences with someone else and invite them to share something as well if they wish.
- Who needs a loving kindness touch or a hug in your circle of friends or family? It is said we need a good dozen hugs a day to thrive. Think of someone who would

welcome the calming, caring touch of another human and do it. Of course ask permission before, if you are not sure.

- When you wake up take a few moments to really feel the weight, texture and warmth of the covers of your bed. Stick out a foot and feel the change of temperature on your skin. What's it feel like when your foot finds the floor?
- • When you take a bath or shower really take time the feel of the water on your skin. Notice the smell of shampoo, soap or body gel, and its texture. Turn the water on the shower from hotter to colder and back again and notice your body's response.

## *Pause for thought*

1. Think of a time when you were physically touched that brings to mind being cared about, or reassured in some ways. What was it like?
2. When you touch others how do you do it? Hug, kiss, pat? Where do you tend to touch loved ones? Arms, back, cheek, lips? Does it vary with intensity, focus, connection depending on who, where, when?
3. What was the history of touch in your family of origin? How does that play out today in your relationships?
4. What kinds of touch bring surprise, positive sensations, like kneading dough, running your hands over soft fabric, the feel of the shower on your back?



## Week 3: Taste

Taste is a remarkable tool for learning. Infants will put almost anything in their mouth as a way to learn about it. Of course, this has drawbacks and parents need to monitor this for safety reasons. The tongue can identify five basic taste groups: bitter, salty, sweet, sour and savoury. Because the sense of smell and taste are so connected sometimes just smelling something we get a sense of anticipation about what we expect it will taste like. Texture makes a difference too; how food feels in the mouth and on the lips has its own impact. We can also taste things metallic, watery or fatty too.

### Practices for the week

- Gather something from each taste group on a plate: something sweet, sour, salty, savoury, and bitter. Close your eyes and taste each one very slowly and notice what happens in your mouth as you do so. To make this activity a bit more challenging do it with a friend. Each of you collects items, without revealing them to each other. Take turns testing the items as they are given to you by the other person. See how good you are at guessing what you are eating without the visual information of seeing the item.
- Pick any single meal this week and take the time to slow down and savour what you are eating without doing other things at the same time like reading, watching TV or the telephone.
- When is the last time you tasted something completely new? This week try and eat one thing entirely new to you. It can be a food, a spice or it could be a drink. For the first few bites try and close your eyes so you can focus on the tasting experience and the texture of the foods itself. Take your time to really engage with it using your tongue to explore it. Capture in your sense journal what arises.

- The texture and contact with a food is often cursory. Get up close and personal and try this very well known mindfulness meditation practice called the raisin meditation. You can find a good example of it at <http://www.mindfulnessolution.com/DownloadMeditations.html>
- If you cannot abide eating a raisin you can substitute something like a small square of chocolate or a Satsuma/tangerine slice.

## *Pause for thought*

1. What are your favourite tastes? What textures feel most satisfying in your mouth? If savouring invites us to linger a little longer to really taste the food we eat what tastes would you most enjoy savouring even more?
2. What tastes are particularly evocative for you? Perhaps there are certain foods from childhood? What else do you remember about the foods you ate as a child?
3. How have your preferences for certain kinds of flavours and kinds of food or drink changed over time?



## Week 4: Hear

Sounds are constantly around us whether by our choosing to tune in or out, for example to conversation and music, or through the world around us conducting its daily business. Trains, planes, cars, birds, machines create noises and sounds all around us. Sound can be emotional- a friend crying, a good belly laugh, the chirping of birds in spring. Silence is also very evocative and often powerful.

This week the focus is on raising your awareness of the variety, quality and impact of what you hear and the range and variety of sounds you are aware of. Capture what you need in your Sense Journal.

### Practices for the week

- Take a sound walk. The purpose is to be completely present to all that you can hear. Walk for a while listening for near, medium and as far away as possible sounds. When it feels good to do so find a spot to stop and listen to sounds with your eyes closed. Try this outdoors, or indoors, in nature or cityscapes.
- Here is an activity to try when you feel caught up in unhelpful thinking. Find a place where you can close your eyes and focus on any real sounds around you. Take a few minutes to focus only on what you can hear and try to let go of thoughts and feelings that bubble up. Stick with only the sounds you hear. Maybe name them. Try it for 3 minutes letting your mind rest while you stay in present moment awareness.
- This week create a top 10 sounds well-being playlist. It can be music, voices or other sounds. Include sounds that calm, relax or boost energy.
- Pick out a piece of music that you like. Consciously listen to the rhythm, lyrics, pauses

between notes, the different instruments and elements and voices in the music. Try different kinds of music and notice the impact on your savour muscles as you listen more intently.

- During the week find somewhere where there is silence. Record in your journal what the absence of sound is like for you.
- Have a meal where you eat in silence with no TV, conversation or other distractions. Focus on multiple sensory aspects like smelling, seeing, tasting and feeling the food in your mouth as you chew.

## *Pause for thought*

- What sounds sooth you or evoke good feelings for you?
- What music makes you smile, feel heartened, calmed, relaxed or give you a natural boost of well-being?
- Is there a key piece of music you grew up with, or that represents a special occasion or makes you want to get up and dance, or that calm you straight away?



## Week 5: Smell

Smell can produce strong impact. Smells can transport us to places and times. There is a certain deodorant that, the moment I smell it, I am back in my high school gym locker room. Our sense of smell can alert us to dangers, like fire and smoke.

Each season can bring to mind a particular olfactory response: fresh blossom in spring, the first sniff of a BBQ in summer, bonfires in autumn. The thalamus picks up a scent and takes it to regions in the brain involved in learning and memory.

### Practices for the week

- Do a blind folded sniff test, with others. Choose five common items from your kitchen. It is surprising how things we know very well can be a challenge when we cannot touch or see them. Try liquids as well as food and even variations on a theme like perfumes, teas, coffees or wine.
- Before you begin a meal take some time to explore the scents and smells of the food. What stands out? What is more subtle? Allow your olfactory system to do some exploring for a few seconds longer than you might ordinarily do.
- Pick up something you enjoy the aroma of and take some time to be with that smell. Close your eyes to really focus your attention about what comes up for you. Linger over it.

- During the week find a bench in a park. Feel your feet on the ground and the sense of where you are sitting. Leave your eyes open if that is better for you. Do a smell sweep- what can you pick out? One single, many smells or none at all? Try to suspend judgment. Try it indoors and outdoors and compare the difference. Capture your thoughts in your scent journal.

## Pause for thought

1. What are your favourite smells? What are some of your earliest scent memories?
2. When you smell something you really enjoy what other senses enhance it the most?
3. How aware of smells, perfumes and scents are you as you go about your day? What impact does your sense of smell have on a daily basis? Does it guide any of your choices?
4. What smells do you like to surround yourself with for comfort, pleasure? Which smells invade your senses in strong ways?

## Weeks 6-8: Widening the Savouring Net

For the next three weeks we are going to continue exploring three more ways to savour. We are going to expand the savour experiment to bring in thoughts, emotions, and/ or body experiences into a wider context. The headings will be: People, Places, and Experiences. For the next three weeks besides bringing your full attention to what is in the present moment, now we are going to invite in appreciation and gratitude for past memories we want to savour too. . .



## Week 6: People – the relationships that matter

Savouring the moments we have with people that matter to us is life enhancing. Many times in the course of my work I hear individuals lament about the time not spent with loved ones. This can happen when someone we meant to connect with isn't there anymore. They have moved away, turned away or have passed away. People can be passing ships in the night and a single encounter can change lives and may not get followed up... Conversely, there may be someone in our lives today who, in even the smallest way, by their mere presence adds a dimension to our lives that is worth savouring with appreciation and gratitude.

### Practices for the week

- Look for moments in the week when you can expand your awareness of others and the good things they do, or bring to day to day life. You may recognise a skill, a quality, or ability in them that you appreciate. It might be the positive impact they have on a group. Name it in the moment this week and share it with the person concerned.
- Take the time to write a letter to someone key in your life; now or in the past. Savour what that relationship brought to you. Rather than posting the letter take the letter to them and read it out loud. If they live too far away to do this, face to face, then use SKYPE or FACETIME to connect so there is a visual aspect there for both of you.

- Journal about what you savour most in yourself as a friend, colleague, parent, lover, mother, leader, or whatever roles you have. Make a list of the features, qualities, attributes and values that you bring. Does the list change depending on the role you are in? What stays the same? Stop and pause sufficiently to really take in these good things you bring.

## *Pause for thought*

1. Bring to mind someone close to you who is regularly in your life who makes a difference in a positive way. What are the qualities they have? What do they do that makes you smile, or feel safe, or any kind of feeling?
2. Cast your mind back to a time in the past, to someone who was a positive influence in your life when you were young, whether a peer, a neighbour, a teacher or a relative. Take some moments to remember why they were important to you.
3. Reflect on the qualities and capacities that you bring to your relationships. What do you hope are the qualities that are appreciated by others? How can you appreciate and maximise your very best self and savour it even more?



## Week 7: Places

We don't always have to travel far to find places that have a big impact on us. Our own back garden can be a favourite place. Sometimes particular places stand for significant times. Maybe it was grandma's house in the countryside or a special spot where you met someone special. There's a cafe I like to write in. It's no great shakes to look at but it feels cosy and I can stay for ages, feeling welcome, even with the noise of the coffee machine and clatter of cups. This week the exploration is to cast your thinking heart and your feeling mind to those places that have been important in some way for you and to salute and savour them afresh using all your senses.

### Practices for the week

- Visit somewhere this week that you particularly like or feel good in. Take some time to get in touch with what makes it special for you. Use all your senses to check in with what makes this a real 'savour spot'.
- This week, whatever your daily mode of travel is, especially where you might find yourself a bit on 'autopilot' do something different. Really tune with all your senses. Look with a beginner's eye to see afresh and really pay attention... Be a curious observer of yourself and pay attention to what you do and where you are.
- If you were to invent the perfect place that had all the right criteria for an awesome savour spot what would it include? Consider
  - ◇ colours
  - ◇ animals
  - ◇ plants
  - ◇ scenery
  - ◇ people

- ◇ weather
- ◇ ambiance
- ◇ furnishing
- ◇ landscape
- ◇ other

## *Pause for thought*

1. What places have been especially evocative for you? Are the places you are drawn to now different from the ones that you enjoyed when you were young?
2. When you need time to think or gather your thoughts, where do you go as a place of haven and sanctuary and rest? Why there?
3. When you are somewhere you know is special how do you savour it and what are the important factors for it to be memorable for you?



## Week 8: Experiences

This final part of the senses journey week is about highlighting, enhancing and savouring good experiences with conscious awareness. The focus over the course of the week is to be on the lookout for these experiences; big or small.

Research supports the fact that when we spend even 30 seconds extra to really digest a good experience it stays available to us longer. Positive emotions have not just a momentary effect of widening awareness but also, over time, build our resourcefulness.

### Practices for the week

- Write a reflection at the end of the day about three things that you were grateful for during the day. Do it every day for this week.
- Make a note of three or four happy moments (or where you were content, or felt satisfied with life) and make a point of sitting and holding that memory for a little longer, even 30 seconds, really savouring every aspect.
- Pick a positive emotion from this list below. Spend the week looking for and taking photos or gathering images that represent the particular pleasant state you chose. This can be a fun one to buddy with others.
  - ◇ Joy
  - ◇ Gratitude
  - ◇ Serenity
  - ◇ Interest
  - ◇ Hope
  - ◇ Pride
  - ◇ Amusement
  - ◇ Inspiration
  - ◇ Awe
  - ◇ Love

## Pause for thought

1. What emotions do you notice most during an average week? When you feel any particular kinds of emotions what do you notice about how you hold on to, or let go of, them? What supports or hinders that process?
2. When you most need to be in a good thinking and feeling place what experiences do you bring to mind that help and support you to be your best?
3. How does the quality of your thinking and feeling help or hinder when you are in a negative place? What senses did you use, or do you use, to bring those moments back into present moment consciousness?

## Finally

I hope you have enjoyed this book and the eight week journey of the senses. Your Sense Journal will be a good reminder and an invitation. Potentially, it is a doorway into further exploration with benefits for you, your relationships at home and work. I certainly believe that savouring can help us be better in how we connect, live and work with ourselves and with others.

Savouring is an art and practice. We can get better at saluting the moment if we want to by lingering a little longer, paying a bit more in-the-moment conscious attention before the rush of life whisks us onwards yet again, as it does. We can learn to tune in and turn up to ourselves and our own nature and to those around us. We can, as the poem says, take the time to smell the roses.

*"To be alive not just the carcass  
But the spark.  
That's crudely put but...  
If we're not supposed to dance,  
Why all this music?  
Gregory Orr*

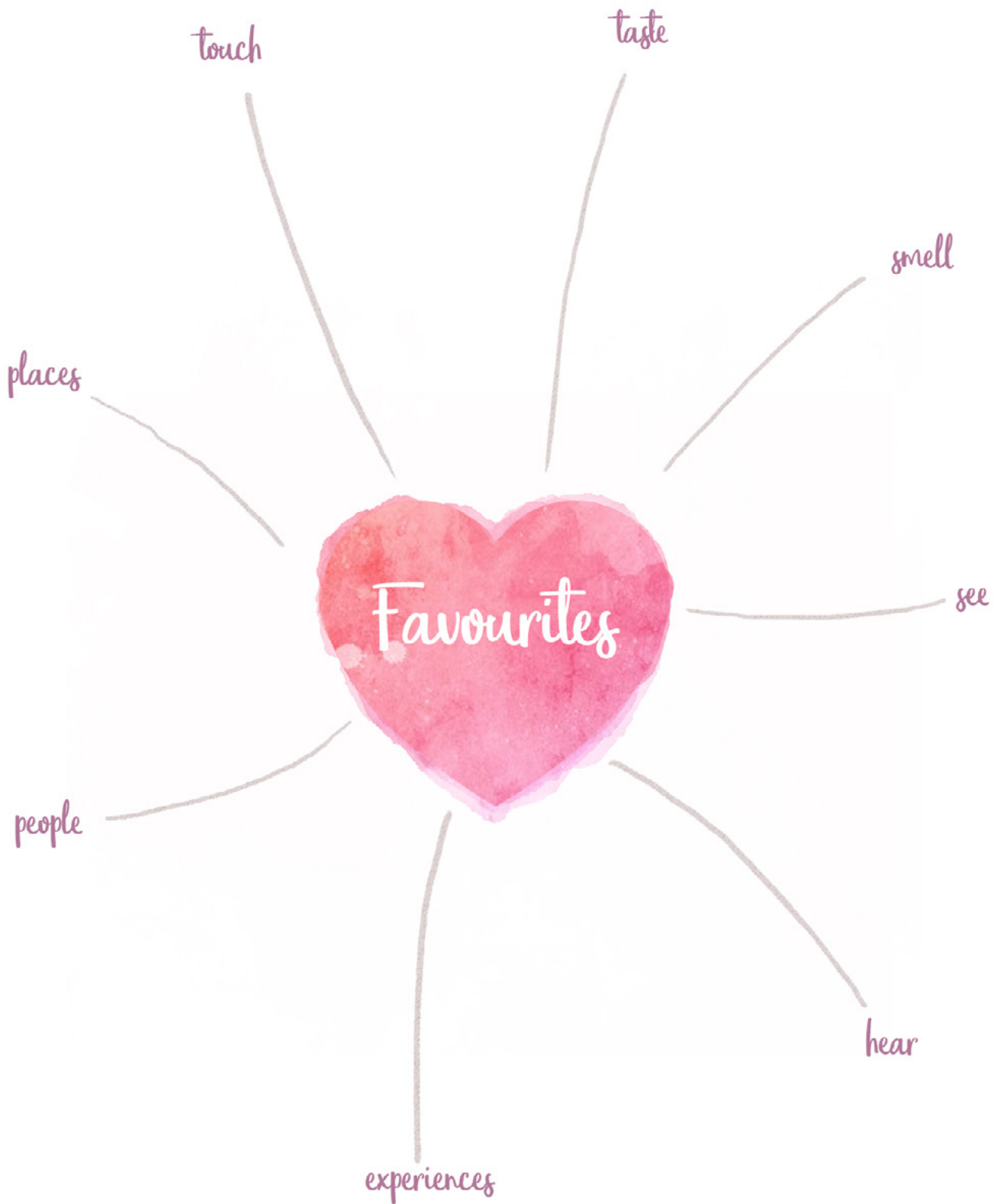


## Summary Reflections

- Over the course of this SAVOUR journey what has emerged for you about savouring?
- As the weeks progressed what did you notice in terms of your preferences and pleasures in exploring the senses?
- What can you do to keep your savour muscles in fine form going forward?
- How might exquisite attention to being in the moment with your senses contribute to what you do in your work or life with others?

On the next page capture the key moments.....

My key savour words



# A Basket of the Senses

Here is a bonus Senses activity. It lasts a month and the invitation is to take a word a day and use that to guide you in touching base with any of the senses. You can use your Sense Journal, take a picture, or just give your pause button a push and spend a few minutes with the word and what is evoked for you.

Enjoy!

1. I am
2. Water
3. Solid
4. Trees
5. Warmth
6. Perfume
7. Yellow
8. Look down
9. Nature
10. Little Shiny
11. Soothing
12. Happy
13. Loving
14. In my bag
15. Morning
16. Patterns
17. Red
18. Lunch
19. Spicy
20. Music
21. Monochrome
22. Noisy
23. Feathers
24. Soft
25. Furry
26. Full
27. Round
28. Edge
29. Buzz
30. Heartfelt
31. Funny

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See the clip called *Monkey Business* on YouTube for an example:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK\\_ZfY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK_ZfY)

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Barbara Frederickson and the University of North Carolina PEP lab has been responsible for some ground breaking research into the impact of positive emotions:  
[www.uncdf.edu/peplab](http://www.uncdf.edu/peplab)

See also: Barbara Fredrickson: Positive Emotions Open Our Mind on YouTube:  
<https://youtu.be/Z7dFDHzV36g>

Gregory Orr poem from 'Concerning the Book That is the Body of the Beloved' Cooper Canyon Press, ( 2005)

Hardwiring Happiness (downloading the good stuff) see Rick Hanson  
<http://www.accidentalcreative.com/podcasts/ac/podcast-dr-rick-hanson-on-hardwiring-happiness/>

Illustrated by Claire Adele - [www.claireadele.com](http://www.claireadele.com)