

## TRANSCRIPT FOR PODCAST EPISODE 194-MAKE AN 8-MINUTE PHONE CALL

I'm Jill Baughan, and you're listening to the podcast called Find Joy...No Matter What.

This is Episode 194.

If you're in a tough place right now, your joy may seem like it's hiding--or gone.

I understand. But it's still there, I promise, just waiting to be resurrected. And this podcast is designed to help you do just that...no matter what else is going on in your life.

For just a few minutes each week, I'll tell you a story--one that just might inspire a way to uncover a piece of joy you might be looking for. Then, we'll consider how it might speak to your life, because even though you'll hear quite a few of my stories during our time together, I believe you'll find your own in every one of mine.

Finally, I'll offer a benediction to send you into your day--or into your night.

So. If you're up for doing joy shots with a friend today...have a listen.

Ever hesitate to call someone you'd love to talk to because you just didn't have time?

Guilty.

When I want to "catch up" with a friend, I want a good hour, anyway. But with this mindset, I end up not calling at all, and so I've missed many many opportunities to connect with someone I cared about, just because I didn't have an hour.

*In The VeryWell Mind Podcast, social worker Amy Morin asks this question: How often do you talk on the phone these days? If you're like most people, you might be more likely to send a text message than to call to chat.*

*And while you might think those text conversations save you time or make you even happier than phone calls, texting isn't a good substitute for an old-fashioned phone conversation.*

*We often avoid calling our friends and relatives simply because we don't have time. You might think your aunt is impossible to get off the phone with, or your friend can't hang up until she's given you every detail of her life over the past month.*

***But there's evidence that a quick phone call is possible and might also be the key to some happiness.***

*Rather than connect for an hour a couple of times per year, your psychological well-being might be better served by more frequent, shorter calls.*

*Eight minutes seems to be the sweet spot. It's enough time to connect and boost your mood.*

In response to that piece of good news, the *New York Times* in 2023 issued a 7-day happiness challenge. If you signed up, you received an email for seven consecutive days that contained a simple research-based task designed to add a little joy to your life. Day 2 was possibly the most challenging challenge of all—for some of us anyway: The instructions were to make an 8-minute phone call.

Jancee Dunn, writing for the *Times* tried it, and had this to say: *I just had an eight-minute call with my good friend Tina, whom I've known for over three decades. I could never seem to connect with her (she has a very demanding job) until I sent her a text last week proposing an eight-minute phone call.*

*"That seems weird," she wrote back.*

*"Come on," I wheedled. You can do it. The President of the United States could probably do eight minutes! I promise not to go long. Name a time."*

*At the appointed hour, I gave her a ring. In short order, we talked about our mothers' health, made birthday plans, gossiped about a friend who abruptly quit his job and moved to a tiny Mexican town, traded book recommendations and talked about the afterlife. Intently focused, we knocked out subject after subject, before Tina announced that our eight minutes were up — and besides, she had arrived at the dry cleaner's.*

*I hung up, smiling and humming a little tune. I had missed her, and didn't realize it until I heard her voice. I was also surprised by how much ground we covered without the call feeling rushed. Our connection was brief, but it was real.*

So Jancee issued the day's challenge to her readers: *to think of a person you [care about]: someone you miss, someone you wish you connected with more often.*

*Send that person a quick text asking if they can chat on the phone for eight minutes — ideally today, but if not, schedule it for sometime this week. You can even copy and paste the following:*

***Hi! I read this in The New York Times (reference the article) and it made me think of you. Want to schedule an eight-minute phone call this week?***

*After the eight minutes are up, decide together when your next such catch-up will be — and then honor your time commitment and sign off promptly. (Unless your friend is having some*

sort of crisis, in which case it's good that you got in touch anyway.) Hang up and enjoy that little glow of well-being.

*Dr. Bob Waldinger, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and the author of the new book "The Good Life: Lessons From the World's Longest Scientific Study of Happiness," said that most busy people "tend to think that in some unspecified future, we'll have a 'time surplus,' where we'll be able to connect with old friends." That may never materialize, he said, so pick up the phone and invest the time right now.*

*Hearing the sound of a loved one's voice says psychiatrist Claudia Glauser-Meusen, "is emotionally regulating."*

*"In eight minutes," she added, "I can call my friend Mary Beth from high school, and say, 'I love you so much, here's what's happening,' or 'Listen, I want to run something by you really quickly.' It's a short period of time, but you can get a lot in, and it's deep enough that all the bonding hormones start to hit."*

Having a time limit can solve the challenge of being on the phone with someone you care about, but also who is someone who doesn't know when it's time to go. I had a friend long ago like this. Whenever the name came up on caller id, I either didn't answer or I answered and then grabbed a dust rag so I could do something productive while said friend talked a Very. Long. Time.

I'm sure you have experience with this. How do **you** try to wrap up phone conversations?

Lots of people start with words like, "WELL!" with a raised voice, as in "WELL, it's been good to talk to you." Actually, WELL!" (and its variant, "WELP!") followed by almost anything is a signal that it's time to leave. Pay attention sometime. Some people result to little white lies like "WELL, I've got a meeting" (maybe with the refrigerator or the bathroom or the TV); "WELL, someone –name them—is waiting on me, so I've got to go." Some people turn the reason for parting company back to the other person ("WELL, I don't want to keep you.") But almost always, the volume shoots up, and you're hoping that the person on the other end of the line can read the room, if you know what I mean.

*But, writes Jancee Dunn, a hard out, agreed upon in advance, solves a common conversational issue revealed in a 2021 study. Researchers looked at 932 conversations between pairs of people and found that they almost never ended when both people wanted them to. Some preferred to continue, while others felt that the interaction dragged on too long.*

*When one person shuts down the conversation too early, the researchers wrote, or chats away while ignoring standard wrap-up, the result is what's known as a "coordination problem." A clear boundary of eight minutes avoids that.*

So you might be wondering, what exactly can you focus on—at least initially? Here are a few ideas from communications professor Jennifer Cummings:

1. You might follow up on the last time you talked: “Hey, how did that dinner with your in-laws go?”
2. Choose just one issue in their life to ask about: “Just wanted to see how the kitchen remodel is going.”
3. Ask for highlights: “I’d love to hear a quick minute on how each of the kids is doing.”
4. Ask for advice: “Hey can I get your opinion on something?” “How could I handle this tricky situation or awkward conversation?” Or, “You’re such a great cook. Can you give me some idea on what to make for this special dinner?” Or “What the heck do **you** put on a charcuterie board?” “And how do you spell “charcuterie”?”
5. (And one of my favorites): Give thanks or a compliment: “I just wanted to thank you for encouraging me yesterday,” or “You did such a great job at running that meeting” or “playing that music,” or “comforting that little girl.” Or “you looked so nice when I saw you yesterday. Just wanted you to know.”
6. (And also one of my favorites), Share a memory: “I was buying toilet paper at the store today, and I started laughing, remembering about the time we tp’d the inside of our pastor’s home.” Or “I was knocking down a wasp’s nest today, and I started laughing, remember about how Grandma used to cut wasps in two in midair with the scissors.” Or “I was swimming yesterday, and started laughing about the time we were church camp counselors, and we left our little campers at midnight, sleeping in their cabins, to go skinny dipping in the lake.” Just hypothetical examples. To get you started.

Bottom line: a very short phone call from you has the power to reduce levels of loneliness and anxiety by making someone special to you feel “seen” and connected and appreciated, and even loved.

There’s a gold mine of joy out there that we’re not paying attention to.

And so, my friend,

May you make room in your day for **this** joy shot with a friend, and not put off a simple 8-minute (or 5- or 10-minute) point of connection that could make someone’s day. Or life.

God knows, you’ve got the time.

If you know people who hesitate to get in touch because they feel like they just can’t fit it into the schedule, please share this podcast with them, and subscribe yourself on iTunes, or wherever you listen to podcasts. Or you can go to my website at [jillbaughan.com](http://jillbaughan.com), click on a

podcast episode and sign up to receive episodes in your inbox. Just don't miss a single one, because I so look forward to being with you again soon.

Make a little phone call, friend. And always, always remember, if you go looking for joy, you'll most likely find it.

Till next time...

NOTES:

Dunn, Jancee. "Day 2 of the Happiness Challenge: The Secret Power of the 8-Minute Phone Call." *New York Times*, January 2, 2023.

<https://www.whitehalledger.com/story/2023/01/18/community/challenge-your-happiness-in-2023-part-2-the-secret-power-of-the-8-minute-phone-call/5995.html?m=true>

Morin, Amy. "Friday Fix: This 8-Minute Phone Call Will Make You a Happier Person." *The VeryWell Mind Podcast*.

<https://www.verywellmind.com/happier-phone-call-podcast-7108021>

"Been meaning to reach out to a loved one? An 8-minute phone call is all you need..." Studio 5 with Brooke Walker. February 2, 2023.

<https://studio5.ksl.com/meaning-reach-out-loved-one-8-minute-phone-call/>