

# *On Life and Meaning*

MARK PERES

## **Episode 14 – Karen Geiger – Leaders at Work**

### *Mastery, Belonging & Autonomy*

And now a personal word,

Karen Geiger values time and living life on her own terms, inspiring a very different idea of an MBA.

In a class I teach called *The Good Life*, we ask these questions: How do we live good lives? What does it take to lead a full, thriving, and meaningful life in community with each other? How do we avoid mis-living? We look at these questions across disciplines through the lenses of philosophy, psychology, literature, leadership theory, and the arts.

This past week we explored what positive psychology tells us about happiness. Traditional psychology seeks to repair our weaknesses by treating pathologies and mental illness. In contrast, positive psychology seeks to build on our strengths by developing what leads to well-being.

Martin Seligman, a psychologist at the forefront of the positive psychology movement, talks about five pillars that support and are signs of a highly functioning and fulfilled life: (1) positive emotions like joy, love, and serenity; (2) engagement or active participation in the events of life and community; (3) relationships with others that are secure and enriching; (4) finding who we are and what we do worthwhile and significant; and (5) having authentic and earned pride in what we achieve.

Key habits or strategies for happiness include being in flow. Flow is absorption in one's work that is a perfect blend of challenge and skill. Creative insight is heightened, and time flies by. Having more flow in our lives makes us happier.

Another habit or strategy for being happy is practicing mindfulness. Mindfulness is being in the present moment. It is fully attending to what is happening, both outside us and within us. We are alert to the sensations of our minds and bodies. We can become more mindful through any conscious intention and movement.

A third key habit or strategy for being happy is learned optimism. The idea of learned optimism is that we can cultivate resilience and empowerment. We can practice replacing negative self-talk with positive thoughts and behaviors. We can gain a greater internal sense that we control events and outcomes.

All of these ideas help us become our true and best selves. A popular concept within the heart of self-determination theory is the acronym MBA, short for “mastery, belonging, and autonomy.” MBA is what we want in our lives. Mastery is highly skilled competence in what we enjoy. Belonging is connection to higher purposes. Autonomy is control and independence.

Karen Geiger helps people and organizations earn their MBAs every day. She helps others live good lives.

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