

The movie of emotions

<http://www.ilfilmdelleemozioni.it>
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Prologue

My name's Gabriele. I'm 39 years old and I'm ill.

The doctors say there's no hope of my getting better but I don't want to believe them. I won't be defeated that easily; I'll fight to my last breath before giving in.

What follows is either the year I was beaten by it or the year I got better.

The start of the story

Gabriele: "Did you come?"

Michela (annoyed): "It doesn't really matter"

Gabriele: "You women all say that, butplease, tell me the truth, was it good for you"

Michela: "Look, we've just made love, not watched a film"

Gabriele is upset. Despite having got carried away, he'd done his best to try to keep in time with Michela's erratic pace.

He gets out of bed suddenly, digs around in the wardrobe, quickly pulls on a tracksuit and then a pair of running shoes.

Michela: "Stay a bit longer."

Gabriele: "I haven't got time."

Michela: "You NEVER have time."

Gabriele: "It's the last day of the year, there's only a few hours to midnight and I still haven't sorted my problem out."

Michela: "You heartless bastard."

Gabriele leaves, slamming the door.

3.30pm, 31 December 2003

Dressed for his run, Gabriele leaves a block of flats in the middle of leafy Citta' Giardino, in the Montesacro area, in north west Rome.

The black of Gabriele's tracksuit contrasts with his hair specked with grey and the olive complexion of his still young and clean-shaven face. His clothing is sports kit, but at the same time carefully chosen. The running shoes, Saucony3D Grid Hurricane 6s, were particularly expensive, bought following a detailed cost - benefit analysis.

Gabriele throws the rubbish into the bin. He's worried; has his mind full. A small dog suddenly barks behind him and he jumps in fright. Not even having the courage to turn round and face its owner, Gabriele does a few quick warm up exercises and heads off at a run towards Aniene Park, only a few minutes from the house and close by. On the last day of 2003, and for the first time in his life, Gabriele would like to manage to run for least an hour.

Files

File name: **Diary.doc**

Wednesday 1 January
Around 4pm

Why can't I decide to be happy?

Some say that you need to get enthusiastic about things and so, instead of writing the scientific article that they've asked me to have published about my research into the evolution of the brain, I'm trying out the so called diary technique: I have to write about things that make me sad or angry in life, I have to do it for at least 10 minutes a day, write without stopping and without worrying about grammar or spelling. I can write in file on the computer or on a piece of paper and then save what I've written or bin it. This is what James Pennebaker says, a famous American psychologist who has done research and written books on the topic. Maybe this technique will help me to finally understand what sort of job I would like to do!

Do I have to write about what I'm scared of? Of not being smart enough, not understanding things properly, of being indecisive...

I've got to force myself to keep writing without stopping. About my deepest feelings and my most hidden thoughts, but what should I write? What happens to me often is that I can't bring myself to stop what I'm doing, for example when I'm on the internet: it's as if I want to find the final solution that will change the course of my life and make me happy, letting me do nice things without making forcing myself to do so. What I feel is being tired of not managing to do anything without getting tired. I'd like to find my path ahead, buy a nice house, not have too many problems with other people, seeing them, talking with them. Why am I so sensitive to what other people think? I need to open up, confess my doubts, but who to? Can I do it with everyone or do I have to choose? It's true that I don't lead a good life but if I could manage not to worry too much about my feelings I'd feel better; or maybe this malaise has to carry on in order to continue the search, to have a goal that I wouldn't have otherwise.

At this point I should carry on writing this but perhaps I don't feel like it anymore. A doubt arises: perhaps we get bored of everything that we decide to do. If that were the case, then it would be enough just to do what you hadn't decided to do.....but if you haven't decided to do it then there'll be reasons, won't there?

There doesn't seem to be any way out: if you try to stay tied to the rules of the world that want you to be productive, aimed at pursuing a career, making money and being successful, then you get stressed and tired of the effort of living; if you do the opposite, i.e. you don't aim at your goals anymore, you're automatically out of the loop in this world, either because these are the values that govern society or because at that stage you realise the devastating truth that there is no point to this world, the paradox of living knowing that you could die at any moment.

So what should I do? Is it possible that, in making an effort, I won't manage to come up with something new regarding this disturbing truth? No one's managed it so far, so why should I? Who am I? What do I have that others haven't that means I'll manage it?

? January

Grazia, the professor I met in May 2000 at the cognitive sciences convention in Turin, drops by unexpectedly to say hello, and asks me if I'm interested in teaching the psychology of training and

organisation. The course starts in March most likely, as part of the undergraduate course in social sciences. The University is the Sapienza in Rome, where I studied and graduated as long as fifteen years ago. The proposal took me by surprise and she realised this, having been expecting more interest and enthusiasm on my part. I've been teaching the course of Educational Technology at L'Aquila University for three years and I can't decide whether to take on this extra work. I'm not keen on it. Certainly, teaching at the Sapienza is another thing entirely, it's prestigious and I wouldn't have to travel up and down between Rome and L'Aquila. Everyone says I should accept and I don't know what to do. This is a new subject for me and to prepare the lessons I'd have to choose and read a lot of books. I take some time. I'm scared.

Monday 27 January

Union meeting: Antonella pushes me again, this time openly, to stand as candidate for the Rome branch of the National Research Association (NRA): I show reluctance, saying I don't feel ready for it. In an attempt to convince me, Antonella says that it's not true because I'm 'someone who has bags of ideas'.

I'm amazed to see a squabble between two union colleagues who, casually and diplomatically, hurl accusations of serious inefficiency at each other: I think with horror that, if I was involved in such a situation, I'd hide myself in shame. The meeting's generally negative air pushes me to Feltrinelli in search of books on emotions: I buy two books by Daniel Goleman (*Emotive Intelligence* and *Working with Emotive Intelligence*) that, amongst other things, could be useful for the course at the Sapienza.

Thursday 30 January

Things done today:

- read my notes on the scientific article that I'm writing
- read my e mails: looked at American psychologist William Glasser's site: running and transcendental meditation are good for creating positive dependency in those who do them (whereas drugs create a negative dependency).
- had lunch with other colleagues in my research group
- email from Holland: from Freek, the Dutch student from Utrecht University, asking me for news on evolvability simulation that he worked on last year during his placement with me as part of his Masters
- thought about and wrote a list of points for the article on emotions and work organisations
- started reading the book *Working with Emotive Intelligence*; **by means of the practice of focusing, I made a decision about my new hobby**: writing film scripts
- looked at the site for the Holden School in Turin, where they teach writing (decided to buy a scriptwriters' manual)
- skipped swimming because of the rain. At home I carry on reading Goleman's book: I discover something interesting - meditation defuses the limbic system and, therefore, negative feelings also.

Friday 31 January

Saint Giovanni Bosco Day (*yet again the first day of the rest of my life is one linked to the Salesians*)

- wake up at 7 and go for a run (frost on grass): the Glasser principles work.

Results of run:

- believe in my own abilities
- future job: writing film scripts under a pseudonym
- write beginning of film script: title, ideas

1-2 February

-Read *I Think and I Feel Better* (book that Michela lent me): discover very useful techniques for certain emotional problems

-Read *Emotive Intelligence* book again: discover emotional brain

Monday 3 February

Exams at L'Aquila University: I use cognitive techniques and avoid panic (I have to do exams for 32 people). As a teacher I'm maybe more scared of my students than they are of me. Who knows what they'd think if they knew.

Perhaps it's not so important to me, being a full time University teacher. There are always so many more students to examine and it's very difficult to make a decision in so little time. Instead of agreeing to teach at the Sapienza as well, perhaps I'd do better dedicating myself just to research?

4 February

-Go for run at 7.30

-Get to work at 9.45: read my e mails, jot down a daily work plan

-Read notes on modularity and evolvability

-The post: read European research and development journal

-Have lunch on my own: read the newspaper while I eat

-Read research on psychology of emotions and attention

-Look at ManagerZen site (they recommend reading books by Goleman and Domenico De Masi)

File name: **Diary.doc**

5 February

-Go for run at 7.30

-Breakfast with Stefano

-Write introduction to the paper on emotions and organisation

(add idea that came to me while running)

-Go to Michela's to get keys, speak to director about lines research will take

-Have lunch on my own

-Work on paper on emotions and work: write plan plus 1500 words!

-Feltrinelli's: buy books (*Emotional Alchemy*, scriptwriting manual by Syd Field)

-English course: back to the British Council after two months, do two mid course exams

6 February

Phone call from the Sapienza: a decision is to be made on Monday on whether to run the course on the Psychology of training and organisation. At that point I'll have very little time to decide whether to accept the position or not. I start to panic. I'd like to put it all off until next year but I don't know if I'll get the same opportunity again.

Hurriedly ask Domenico for advice - I ask him if he sees me more as a researcher or a teacher. He says that if my priority is my career then, despite the current problems with financing, university offers more possibilities; if getting a job in a university was to become my priority, the sooner I start to teach the better. Talk about it with Michela at dinner: even if I decide not to accept the Sapienza post, it's ok with her; she loves me as a person, not as a successful one. She advises me to do what I think is right for me.

Saturday 8 February

I spend the weekend weighing up the pros and cons of possible decisions, drawing diagrams and smoking like mad. If I accept, I don't risk losing such a fantastic opportunity but I take on enormous stress, a race against time. I don't have the energy. Stefano says that if I'm interested in a university career then I'd do well to accept the offer immediately. Phone my analyst - he says that if I don't feel ready to accept the teaching position immediately, then I could try to postpone everything to next year.

Sunday 9 February

I decide to phone Professor Romeo, the director at the National Research Centre where I started work as a researcher: I explain to him the difficult time I'm going through at the National Research Centre due to the lack of any career prospects and the possibility of restructuring that doesn't bode well for basic research: I admit that I'm losing interest in research and that I'm also thinking about the possibility of a transfer elsewhere, public or private. His view is that I'm in an excellent position: I've got a job and I can look around if I want a change. He advises me to do what I enjoy doing. He advises me against the private sector because "I'm not ruthless enough". I go to Domenico's to get some advice. He says that I must be the one to decide whether to throw myself into this project, but that I mustn't worry about not being good enough. I ask him how much time he thinks I need before I can try for a position as associate professor. He answers curtly that I shouldn't be thinking immediately about trying for that, I'll need at least two or three years to be at the right level.

File name: **Diary.doc**

Monday 10 February

12.00

After much hesitation, I phone the Sapienza and agree with a trembling voice to teach the psychology of training and organisation.
Now I have no excuse, I simply must get the lessons prepared as soon as possible.

Tuesday 11 February

-Wake up 6.30

-50 min run, in office for 9.30

-Feel happy and proud about yesterday's e mail from the L'Aquila University student. Perhaps I really am cut out for teaching!

-Focus on and finish the introduction to the scientific article on emotional training. Send it to colleagues for comment (initial reaction - they like the title).

File Name: **ScientificArticle.doc**

A dream job

Emotional training for jobs that are more satisfying and to improve organisations

Have you ever got up in the morning to go to work feeling happy about it and full of enthusiasm, almost looking forward to the pleasures of the working day? Sadly, the answer is almost always in the negative. In the majority of cases the worker, regardless of social class and type of job, has to make a huge effort to find the will to get up in the morning, held back by the desire to spend a lovely long day in bed or time on a favourite hobby. The phenomenon of absenteeism at work demonstrates the reality and the seriousness of this problem: in Italy, in the public sector alone, over 15 million working days are lost every year (see the report on the position in public administration at www.funzionepubblica.it/).

Understanding why it is so difficult to enjoy one's job is not simple: just consider how often free time is spent doing particularly demanding things, for example skiing - a very expensive and tiring activity but one that is seeing the number of people in Italy practicing it on the increase year after year.

The objective of improving job satisfaction becomes an even more stimulating one when one thinks how this improvement would have important repercussions on various sectors of society: a more content worker would certainly be a more attentive spouse and more present as a parent; in short, a better citizen.

Managing to identify, at least in principal terms, the most relevant factors that, in the majority of cases, make work such a burden, would be an excellent result. This would involve taking a multiplicity of causative factors into consideration relating to education at school, professional training, the organisation of the workplace, contractual terms (pay, career possibilities, duties and responsibilities of the job) the social reality of various living arrangements, etc.

Can anything be done to improve the situation? Naturally the answer is yes, and there are many proposals that can be made in various areas. Simply to give an example: an improvement in the orientation of school education and professional training, shortening the working day, increasing facilities at work (nurseries, shops) better professional training, etc.

In particular, professional training is increasingly being seen as necessary in order to tackle problems in the world of work. When we say 'training' in these cases, we intend the usual standard updates and learning new professional techniques with which one can better adapt to the increased flexibility in the job market.

Very rarely does one consider the possibility of, and the necessity of, a type of training that aims at developing a worker's emotional skills: the ability, that is, to recognise and better regulate one's emotions. This is all despite the importance of these emotional skills having been emphasized by many in recent years, not just to improve the relationship between the worker and his job, but also to increase business productivity (Goleman, 2000).

The proposal put forward in this article attempts to deal with what is considered to be one of the central features of the problem of the lack of job satisfaction: the inability on the part of the individual to adequately regulate his emotions. To increase job satisfaction, a new type of training is therefore proposed, one that is little known but efficient: training in the correct use of emotions. Emotional training.

In response to the question at the beginning of this article, some may have said in jest that, in fact, the pleasure of going to work is one that they have already experienced, but only in their dreams. The aim of this article is to show how it is possible to improve the situation in reality.

13 February

Today I read Syd Field's manual '*Writing Film Scripts*' in detail. Chapter five of the book is called "What makes a character real?" To make the film character believable, he advises setting out the character before writing the script, i.e. describing him in detail, describing his actions, his dramatic requirements, his standpoint, his manner, and how he changes. It was difficult, but in the end I managed to write the character for Gabriele, the main character in my film, being me in fact.

File name: **ForFilm.com**

My current life in Rome

I work a lot. I'm a researcher at the National Research Centre, I teach at University and I'm starting to be quoted on an international level on the matter of my studies on the evolution of the human brain. Every now and then I spend time working at Yale University.

I take care of my appearance, I always dress fashionably, I do a lot of sport (mainly running: I've recently done swimming, tennis, skiing, salsa, yoga and tai chi chuan classes). People say I'm nice, I've got a lot of friends, I organise nights out in bars and clubs, parties, group dinners (mainly at times when I'm smoking). But, at the same time, I never waste money; I'd feel almost ashamed buying an expensive car. I'm a real contradiction. I don't want for anything; people say that I should be happy. But I'm always discontent with my life. And that's what my problem is! I'm never satisfied with what I've managed to achieve, perhaps because I realise that it isn't what I wanted. I often ask myself: what do I really want from life?

Action

Gabriele wants to be successful, completely and immediately, and thinks that success is getting recognition from others. Via his scientific research he discovers mental patterns that condition the way he views the world. He discovers that his desires have been instilled in him by society and by his family.

[...]