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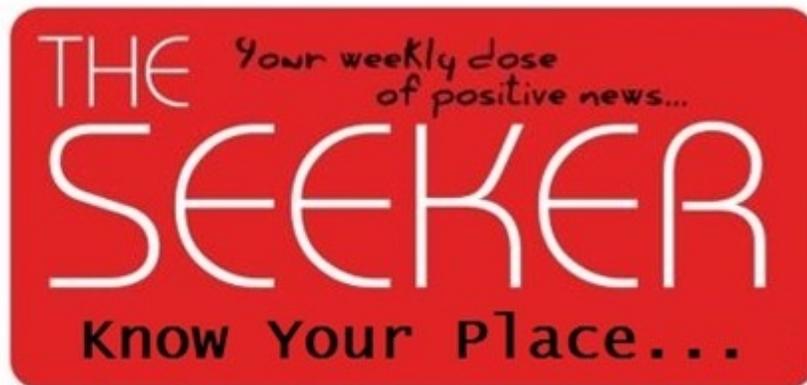
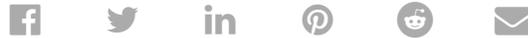
Know Your Place by Alyssa Blais – March 15

by **SeekersAdmin** — March 18, 2013 in **News and Announcements**

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Last week was the celebration of International Women’s Day. This special worldwide celebration arose out of a long-standing movement for women to participate equally in society, and we Canadians partake fully in this great day. Hurrah Canada!

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What concerns me though is the lack of women in Canadian politics. Canada is showing a huge gender gap on the political landscape ranking 45th for the number of women represented in Parliament compared to other countries. I know, I know, we have had one female prime minister, one in twenty-eight I might add since the year 1867!

Not only do I think this is disappointing, it is downright blasphemy as women's lives reflect a different set of experiences that requires appropriate representation and we represent 52% of the population.

I think we don't enter into the political arena for a variety of reasons. One, who has the time? If you are a typical career woman with kids and a house to maintain, we are busy. Busy with the childrearing, shopping, housecleaning and did I forget to mention pleasing your man and looking like a super model. Ok maybe not a super model, but like we just stepped out of a salon? We do it all. So, we should only enter into this arena when our husbands have moved onto their second "younger" wives, kids off to University and we have spent the last 20 years of our lives gaining the necessary experience of domesticity which also now includes pseudo stripper.

Also, the political arena is tough, aggressive, intimidating and dominated by males. As we all know, most women really don't like to get their hands dirty, nor fight as they fancy naughtiness, wink-wink, instead. They would prefer to spend their quiet time sitting in a salon getting their nails done and talking about the latest Brangelina saga, "Is that Angelina pregnant again?", then take on the serious business of government.

Seriously! I think the reason why women don't enter is because women haven't been asked and our current political culture isn't conducive to supporting women in politics in the first place. We have not prioritized, like other countries, the advancement of women in the political domain. We also trash and criticize harshly female leaders today. Who wants the constant barrage of extremely nasty, sexist and seriously inappropriate criticism. It's not for the faint of heart.

I don't want to pit one gender over another and I believe in the "best human for the job", not a leprechaun (Happy St. Paddy's day by the way) however, we need a more balanced culture and the positive contribution that women can make in the political arena cannot be ignored.

So to all you women out there, put down that frying pan, take off the apron, unplug the iron, and put your best leg, um your best self forward and give politics a try.

Author



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Rats – Know Your Place by Alyssa Blais

by **SeekersAdmin** — May 28, 2013 in **News and Announcements**

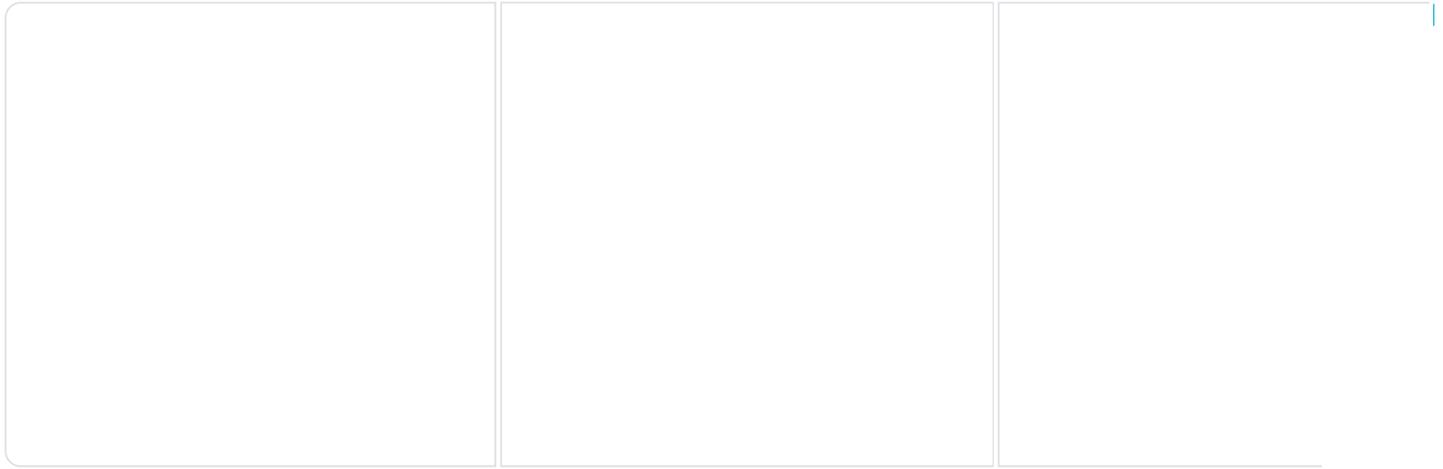
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I recently read a pretty neat story the other day about a controlled study related to addictions, the behavior of rats and how this could relate to us humans.

Before I write this story, I just want to mention that I am no expert on social behavior or a psychologist by any means, however I can tell the difference between a happy person and a miserable person. You can see it and sometimes even feel it. This is a story about realizing how important it is to be you and as the famous Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote “to be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to change you is the hardest thing of all.” Hard but well worth the struggle as you shall see.

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The infamous study is known as Rat Park and is a fascinating take on behavior and controlled environments. I am generally not a fan of animal studies due to the sometimes unethical treatment of laboratory animals however scientists use rats because they share a surprising number of similar characteristics to human. Physically, psychologically, behaviorally and socially and because of these similarities, rats have been instrumental in saving human lives due to their use in laboratories.

The premise of this study conducted in 1981 by psychologist Bruce Alexander shows that when you give rats a "Rat Paradise" they will avoid addictive drugs.

Let me explain:

He took two sets of Lab Rats. For the first group, he built a 200 square foot rodent paradise called Rat Park. These were luxurious accommodations for all their favorite pastimes – mingling, food & play toys, mating and raising pups. Stuff that rats in their world like to do!

The second group of rats was housed in traditional, metal cages.

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The psychologist offered both groups a choice of plain water or sugar water laced with morphine. Many times over, the traditional caged rats became instant addicts. Yet, the residents of Rat Park avoided the drug treated sugar water. Add to that, even when rats were addicted beforehand (by the experimenter), then put into Rat Park, they stopped taking the drug treated sugar water. Wow. Think about that for a moment. Two completely different environments, one where there is freedom to be and enjoyment, the other drudgery and misery.

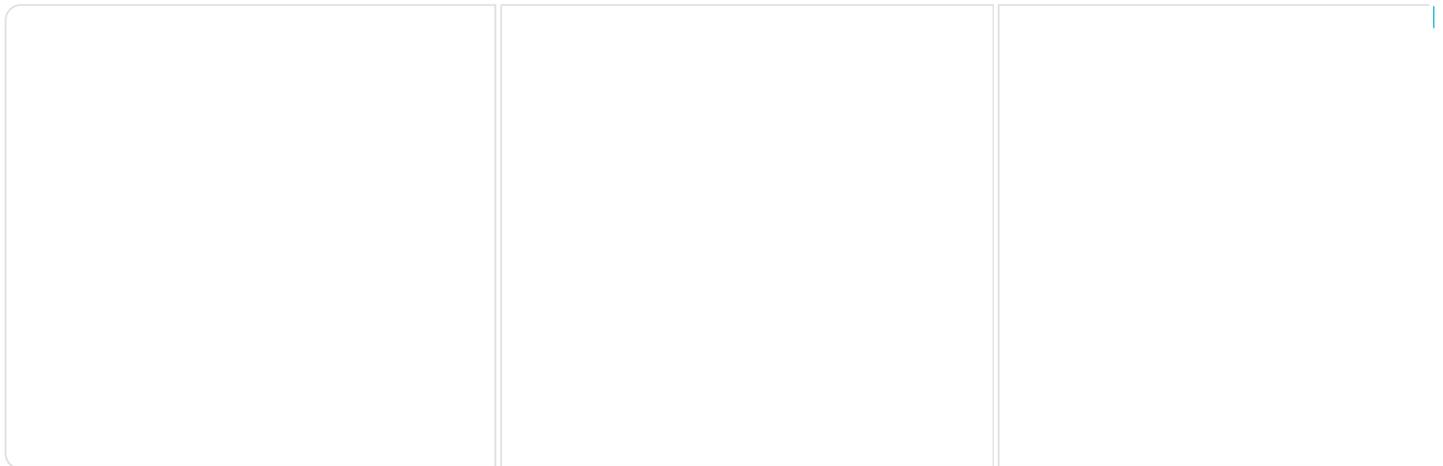
How does this relate to us humans? Are we taught to find joy, purpose in our lives, be ourselves? Or are we pressured into conventional roles so that we fit to conform to society's



rules, you know like go to school, get a job, get married, have 2 kids, work for 40 years, retire then die.

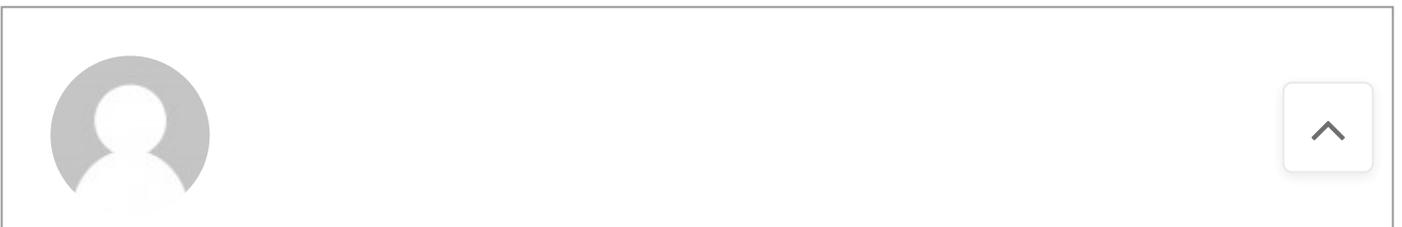
Do you think there are parallels between junkie rats and humans who are addicted to something? I think we can hypothesize that if you spend hours playing roles that don't match your innate personality, you will most likely dull that pain with alcohol, food, shopping, gambling or drugs. Miserable with your job, go out and drink a bottle of wine (or 2) after work. Can't stand your boyfriend, eat a bag of chips and drink 2 cans of soda. And it's not just experiences; I think your own mind can create a prison as well. You have an idea stuck in your head like you need to act a certain way at work. This belief traps you and you gulp happy pills by the dozen while fantasizing about squishing your coworker's head in the photocopier machine.

My point is this, the rats in Rat Park were lucky to be hand-picked to live in paradise. You know what though; we humans have the incredible ability to envision our own Rat Parks. We can make choices that will get us closer to being happier and freer. Even if this Rat Park smells like a rat, it stands to reason that life is a series of small choices and we can choose to be happy. As the famous poet and writer Oscar Wilde once wrote "be yourself; everyone else is already taken." You were born to stand out, not fit in.



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Currently, Cornwall is positioned as the optimal location to service Canada in terms of distributing goods across the country. Companies are setting up in Cornwall as it is geographically and strategically located and start-up costs for these companies are relatively low. Cornwall's location provides distribution centers with easy and direct access to their suppliers as well as to their customers.

Cornwall needs to be known as an ideal spot for young entrepreneurs and this will in turn bring young families that will grow and be the next generation of Cornwallites. A university coupled with our growing St. Lawrence College will ensure our young people will remain here in Cornwall.

We need to be working hard to make sure our city continues to develop local economic development. Our city could create an Incentive Fund, offering micro-grants to businesses to assist them in setting-up shop in key strategic locations. Supporting entrepreneurship and promoting our cultural flavors will drive a better profile of Cornwall locally and nationally.

It is critical that we create sound awareness as to why shopping locally and supporting our local people will create a healthy economy, as well as, help our local businesses compete internationally. If we do not believe in our City, how will we attract newcomers? Supporting our city's business community, hosting key events and business summits and developing "shop local" incentive programs will promote ongoing growth, investment and jobs.