



The 10 Keys to Happiness:

Simple Ways to Be Happy and Enjoy Your Life Regardless of Circumstances

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Happiness is the underlying foundation that influences the quality of life. Have you ever seen someone who lives in a small house and has an older car? They may not be rich in terms of material things, but there are many people like that who are beyond rich in their happiness.

We all go through things in life that we wish we didn't have to. This can change how we feel, and even our outlook on life. Yet you have a choice to either go through life miserable or to be happy. You are the only one in control of that. There may be plenty of variables in life you can't control, but your happiness should never be in the hands of someone else.

One of the biggest barriers to true happiness is that we live in a society that tends to encourage us to redeem ourselves with material goods. Then we compare what we have to what others around us have. If they have more, then we may feel that we are less than them. This can really influence the level of happiness that we experience.

Being too busy can also cause happiness to be pushed to the back burner. If you are always working and running errands, then you have no time for yourself, or time to enjoy life. Slow down and focus on what really matters to you. There is no reason to work non-stop or to take care of everything on your own.

Communication is also important for true happiness to occur. If you don't share with others what you want or what you won't tolerate, they aren't going to know. Never apologize for laying some ground rules in place for relationships so that you can be happy.

Before you can be truly happy, you have to think about what happiness means to you. What it means for you can be very different than what it means for the next person. Once you have that identified, you can work on improving time management, communication, and change that will allow you to really achieve it. Perceptions can hold you back from being happy, so make sure you aren't your own worst enemy.

You may be saying that you can't do much about the miserable people around you. While that is true to a point, you can't let their negativity bring you down to their level either. You need to be happy with the person you see in the mirror and that you think you are.

It isn't possible to be happy all the time, but you can be most of the time. You can also use your happiness to help you get through the most difficult times in your life. As you read through the topics here, you may identify some pitfalls that have been holding you back.

You can also become empowered with ideas and concepts that you can implement into your daily routine. By doing so, they will soon become a habit and something that you automatically take part in every single day.

Being in the driver's seat when it comes to your happiness is important. You can't just kick back and hope it is going to happen. The days turn into weeks, months, and years! Do you want to spend them feeling like you do now or do you want to spend them living life to the fullest?

Your overall outlook on life is a big factor when it comes to your happiness. You don't have to own the best car or the biggest house on the block. You don't have to be the CEO of a company. Defining your life based on material goods will hinder true happiness (even if you have those things).

The quality of your relationships with family, friends, co-workers, and people in general also influence how happy you are. It is time to take a very good look at those relationships and see how they influence your life. Your relationships should help you to feel safe and satisfied. If you often feel anxious, sad, or angry with them, then you need to change them.

Studies show that people who are happy tend to do better in all areas of their life. They get sick less often. They tend to have fewer issues with children or getting divorce. They also tend to do better at work because their bosses notice that they seem content to be there.

You can make changes in your life that promote happiness for you **now**. It doesn't matter where you live, how much money you make, or how old you happen to be. It is never too late to feel happy and to really enjoy life. These 10 keys to happiness will help you to be on the path to making that dream become a reality!

Chapter 2

Positive Thinking

Negative thoughts can make us perceive problems that don't really exist around us. Negativity can cause us to worry, and that worry can cloud out our happiness. The problem, though, is that many people don't realize just how negative they have become. It may be such a habit that they are oblivious to it.

Another part of that problem is that you may be around people that are negative all the time. They can sap your energy if you aren't careful. You are going to need to make some changes around those types of people to help you move forward and be happy. We will talk about that more in the next chapter.

You may be saying that you can't help who you are working with. Maybe the lady at the desk right next to you does nothing but complain. It can reduce you from a smiling, happy person at work to being grumpy and wishing it was time to go home.

You can't change other people or how they think, but you can reduce how you let it impact you. When negativity is around, it seems to ruin the entire surrounding atmosphere. You can let it continue to do so or you can make it better and be happy in spite of what others say.

One of the easiest and most effective ways to get people to stop being so negative is to ask them how they can change their situation. For example, if you are listening to someone complain about another person, tell them politely that they need to talk to that person about it if it is ever going to get better.

If someone is complaining they don't understand a school assignment, tell them they need to talk to the instructor about it. When there is a complaint about something, ask what they can do to make it better. All of these options are very simple on your end, yet it may stop those negative people in their tracks. Whether they take your advice or not, they will stop being like that around you.

Optimism

Pay close attention to how you react to things. If you feel that you are negative with them, change it around. Focus on being optimistic so that you can feel happy. You may be startled at first as you realize the number of times negative thoughts come into your mind.

However, the goal is going to be to change them into something positive every single time. This will take consistent, conscious effort for a time. You will have to look for positive ways to view situations, or things to be grateful for. The negative thoughts won't just go away - you will have to actively replace them with positive ones. However, you will realize over time you are experiencing negative thoughts less frequently. You will also find that

you get into the habit of automatically being optimistic. In time, it will become a huge part of who you are and your outlook on life.

Count your Blessings

When you start to get up in the morning, think about all of the blessing you have in your life. Take a moment each morning to add up the little things that will bring you joy that day. Maybe you will get to meet someone new for a date that evening. Perhaps you are going to enjoy lunch with an old friend.

Before you go to bed at night, think about the small and big things that occurred that made your day a good one. Did you get some free time to read a book you enjoyed? Were you able to take the dog out for a walk and some time to play at the park? These are the little things in life that really do make us happy!

Be Grateful

If your way of thinking is about what you want and what you didn't get, you will always be disappointed. When your mindset is one that allows you to be grateful, then you can get through the hard times. You will also be happy - because you realize the contentment that comes from the simple things in your life.

Be Kind

Smiling is one of the best ways to feel happier than you do right now. When you smile, others will smile back at you. They are going to see you as someone that they can approach. They will feel comfortable being around you. Being kind isn't hard, it is a choice.

Hold the door open for someone instead of rushing on to take care of your own business. Allow someone else to go first at a four way stop when no one is sure who should go next. Do the dishes sometime when it isn't your turn.

Most importantly, be kind to yourself. Think about all of the positive ways that you have done well at work, at home, and for others that day. Don't focus on the things that didn't go your way or the to do list that never seems to end. Many people are quite cruel in how they talk to themselves - instead, talk to yourself in the way that you would want a friend to talk to you.

Doors Open and Close

Life may not always go according to your plans. Perhaps you applied for a job you really wanted and didn't get hired. However, that means that another door is going to open for you. Don't close your eyes to this or you may miss out on the best things that are soon to come along.

Always look for the good in every situation. No matter how dire it may seem, there is always something to be happy about. When you look at things from such a point of view, you will be mentally empowered. You will know that regardless of what life tosses your direction, you are going to be able to overcome it. When you look at life from such a prospective, you will also appreciate the good things when they **do** happen in your life.

Envision

By closing your eyes, you can spend some time envisioning what it takes to make you happy. This is also known as "visualization." Focusing on the outcome that you want to develop is a great way to start your day of well. It can also be a wonderful way to drift off to sleep at night. When you envision what you really want, you can help to make it happen.

During these envisioning episodes, think about how you FEEL during them. Are you happy? Why are you happy in them? That is what you should be focusing on. It could be due to where you are or who you are with that makes all the difference to you.

Don't Fear Mistakes

Everyone makes mistakes, so don't think you are the only one. If you don't take some risks now and then, you aren't going to make mistakes - but you aren't going to achieve that level of happiness you want either. Put yourself out there and you may get hurt, but you may also get the best possible scenario. Even if you don't get the best possible scenario, there is a chance

for improvement in your life, and trying again (or trying for new things) later. One thing you should definitely remember - your life isn't going to improve at all unless at some point you put yourself out there, take risks, and make changes.

If you don't take the risk, you will be frozen right where you are. You will also end up with regrets concerning "what if" - and those are the kind that can take away your happiness.

This doesn't mean that you act carelessly and then blow off the fact that a mistake was made. Instead, it means you do your very best. It means you learn from your mistakes and continue to hold your head up high. It also means you have the self-worth of knowing you gave it your all.

Chapter 3

Surround Yourself with Good People

If you spend time around happy people, you are going to be happy too. There will be far less negativity in your life. There are plenty of things you can do to ensure you have quality relationships. Too often, people try to have as many friends as possible. They love the idea that people like them.

As the saying goes, *it is better to have 4 quarters than 100 pennies*. Simply put, it is the quality of the company you keep that matters, not the volume of it. Surround yourself with those that you love, that you trust, and that you feel comfortable around. You should be able to talk to them and feel like they support you.

Communication

One of the things that will help you with creating happier relationships is better communication. Listen more than you talk and you will be surprised at how you feel. We are all unique with different points of view. We aren't going to agree with those we love all the time, but we can be respectful of those differences.

Don't make assumptions or allow misconceptions to hinder your relationships. Be open and honest about who you are and what you want.

Tell the truth, even when it is difficult, and you will be a happier person. You won't be filled with guilt or worry that the truth will one day come out.

Get to Know People

Don't hesitate to get to know new people. You can do so through your children's activities, your hobbies, or just spending time walking around your neighborhood. Be a part of what goes on in your community and you will be able to meet people. If you notice someone at work who is positive and seems like a good person, take the time to get to know him or her.

Make an Effort

Relationships need time to develop. Don't be in a rush to go from just meeting to something very in depth. Give the relationship time to grow and to flourish. Don't be a wallflower who waits for others to approach them.

Make an effort to smile and to be friendly.

People aren't always going to remember what you say to them. With that in mind, don't spend too much time being anxious about what to say. **What people will remember is how you made them feel.** If you make an effort to show them that you are fun, positive, and happy, then they will be drawn to you like a magnet.

Personal Contact is Important

While social media is fun, it has changed the way that people interact. Being happy still involves some personal contact. While sending an email or a text is simple and convenient, don't rely on it all the time. Pick up the phone and call someone so you can hear his or her voice.

Send someone a handwritten thank you note and it will really brighten up his or her day. Schedule time to have lunch with a friend or to take a walk at the park with someone so you can get caught up. You will be happier if you are keeping that personal contact in your daily routine.

Ask for Help

There will be times when life isn't what we had planned. When you find yourself in a difficult situation, ask for help. You can rely on friends and family to get you through those rough patches. They may have solutions that you didn't think about. They can also give you encouragement along the way to help you stay positive.

If you think you have to carry the weight of the world on your shoulders, you don't. Nothing will cause you to feel negative, overworked, and like there is no hope as being on your own and isolated during tough times will. No one can walk that path for you, but they can be there to walk right along with you.

Give Help

Be a good friend and family member too. Don't just contact others when you need help. Be willing to reciprocate by offering your help when they ask for it. Depending on the circumstances, you may be able to offer your help or do something positive for them without even being asked.

Cut Out Negative People

One of the most difficult parts of being happy by surrounding yourself with good people is letting go. Just because someone has been in your life for a long time doesn't mean they deserve to be there. If you have intimate relationships, friends or family, where you feel that someone is taking advantage of you, then you need to carefully disconnect from those ties.

It can be very difficult to do, but it is going to be a step towards happiness that you will be very proud you have taken. With family, it can be hard to completely cut them out. However, you can start to distance yourself and set some ground rules. The same is true of co-workers that you don't feel you have a quality relationship with.

Counseling

If you have a hard time creating quality relationships, you may need to seek some professional help. Through counseling, you can identify barriers that could be preventing you from true happiness in relationships. Perhaps there are trust issues or other factors that you aren't fully aware of.

Chapter 4

Learn to Say No

There has to be balance in your life for you to be happy. We all have the same amount of time in a day for work and for other activities. If your schedule is too full, aren't going to be happy. Yet you may feel like you have to say yes to everything that comes your direction.

Learning to say no is going to make you much happier! It can take some practice, but the trick is to make sure you don't let guilt get to you. This doesn't mean you never pitch in and help with anything. However, it means that you carve out time for rest, for fun, and for your other commitments.

Take Part in Activities that Mean Something to You

When you are asked to take part in an event, think about how you will feel about it. If the activity is something that is meaningful to you, then help with it. For example, if you are asked to help with a fundraiser for the community, that could be dear to your heart.

When the activity is something you are interested in, you will be motivated to continue with it. You will also get a great deal of personal satisfaction from how you have contributed to that cause. Doing so is going to help you feel very happy.

Daily Planner

One way to get your time back is to create a daily planner. Mark out segments of time on that planner each day. Unless an emergency comes along, don't fill that time up with anything else. If you are asked to help with something that you really don't want to commit to - due to a lack of time or other reasons - speak up.

No Explanation Necessary

The most common reason why people don't say no is that they don't have a good explanation. Those that are asking can be very good at getting people to say yes. They may even try to make you feel guilty that you aren't going to take part in what they are asking.

Others will try to flatter you in order to get you to reply that you will do what they want. For example, they may say that you are so creative and that is why they would like you to be in charge of marketing for the fundraiser.

You don't have to give an explanation when it comes to saying no. Say it politely, thank them for asking you, and then stay firm with your "no" reply. You don't have to give any reason at all about why you can't do what they are asking of you.

People Pleaser Mentality

Part of the reason it is tough to say no is that we tend to have a people pleaser mentality. We want people to like us, and we often assume saying yes will encourage that. It may in some scenarios, but you have to draw a line. If you are being pulled in all directions, you aren't going to be happy.

You aren't going to be able to dedicate enough time for rest, for work, and for all of your commitments. Instead, you become resentful of what you have committed to. You may complete it, but you aren't going to be enjoying it. Instead, you have a chip on your shoulder. When that project is done, you feel relief rather than personal satisfaction.

Be Clear

Don't be evasive about why you are saying no. Don't give them any idea that you are thinking about it or that you may cave in. Simply say that you are already taking on too much and you have made a promise to yourself not to take on anything new right now.

They should have enough respect for you to take that as a final no. If someone tries to continue to persist, they should fall into that category of people you need to think about cutting out of your life. They can sap your energy and prevent you from being as happy as you could be.

Chapter 5

Make Time for You

Free up time in your daily life just for you. It can be time for you to enjoy your coffee on the porch or to read a couple chapters in a book. Never feel guilty for making time just for you.

There may be many roles you play: including spouse, parent, and employee. However, that doesn't mean you should lose sight of your own needs and your own desires. When that happens, you may start to feel robotic in what you do and what actions you take. You may not feel like you are realizing your full potential.

Trust Your Instincts

When it comes to doing what makes you happy, go with your gut. As long as what you do doesn't harm others or hurt your overall well-being, then take part in it. I know someone who has always enjoyed live music so he goes to plenty of concerts. Many people think that he is too old for that or that he should save his money.

Yet it is what makes him very happy. For those few hours, nothing else matters. He can let go of stress, not worry about things at home, and just enjoy the show. He has also made some wonderful friends that share the same love of music. Some of them he gets together with regularly.

Others, he only gets to see at a concert so it is even more special when he does get time with them. You know better than anyone else what it is that will make you happy. Think about how you would feel if you didn't take part in those activities. If removing them would reduce your level of happiness, then keep taking part in them. Not everyone will understand that, but spending that time on what you enjoy is for you – not for them.

Own Who You Are

Don't make excuses for spending time on what you like to do. Own who you are and what you enjoy. Your personality should reflect what you enjoy taking time to do. Men seem to have a harder time than women with this, especially if what they enjoy doing isn't always deemed as masculine.

For example, I once worked with a guy who enjoyed baking. He loved to try new recipes in his spare time. Yet he was very hesitant to tell people what he liked to do. When he would bring goodies to the office, people would comment that he was a lucky guy that his wife made such delicious items for him.

He didn't share with many of us that he was actually the one doing the baking - only those that he really trusted not to tease him about it. In a facility that was mainly men, you can imagine how he thought they might react to the fact that he was their boss but at home baking in the evenings.

It can be hard at times to stay true to who you are and not hide your habits or hobbies. Even so, your personality is unique and you should be proud of it. By taking time for yourself to enjoy what you like, you will become more comfortable in your own skin.

Don't apologize to others if your path is different from theirs. One of the basic skills for quality relationships is not only accepting what you have in common with someone but also respecting the differences.

If you aren't accepting of yourself and what you offer, how can you expect anyone else to be? Learning to love yourself and to be kind to yourself is a huge step towards happiness. If you can't enjoy spending time alone with you, why would anyone else want to?

Reflect

When you spend time alone, you can relax and you can reflect. Think about some good memories that you have. They will put you in a good mood and help you to feel content. Think about challenges you have worked to overcome, and be proud of the steps you took to make positive changes. You can also reflect on the future and how you plan to achieve the goals you have in place.

The process of reflection allows us to slow down and to be in touch with ourselves. We may live a very fast paced life, and that means that we don't always get the results we are looking for. We can develop tunnel vision - so take time for reflection and allow yourself to really see the big picture.

Give your Time

Even though you are making time for yourself, do what you can to donate some time now and then. If you enjoy knitting, make some extra hats and scarves that you can donate to a homeless shelter. If you enjoy baking, take some cookies over to the local senior center for them to enjoy.

Go through your home and clean out clothing and other items you no longer use. There is always someone who can use them. Donate them to a shelter or a second hand store. Do what you can to give back with some of your free time.

Hobbies

Find a couple of hobbies you really enjoy. If you aren't sure what to do, try something new. For example, you could go to a dance class, an art class, or even a hiking group. You can also spend some time creating or joining a book club or you can do some home repair projects. Your hobbies should reflect who you are and what you enjoy taking part in.

They can help you reduce stress and to feel like you are completing something positive. A couple of hobbies can prevent you from getting bored or taking part in activities that are negative.

Chapter 6

Get your Finances Under Control

One of the big factors in life that can sap your happiness is financial stress. It is true that the economy is tough, but that isn't an excuse to be being late on bills and owing lots of debt. Take responsibility so that you are able to feel good about your financial situation.

If you have the mindset that more money would solve your issues, you are wrong. It is true that you should strive to live above the poverty level, but financial comfort isn't going to equate to more happiness. For many individuals, it can mean less free time and more stress.

Love your Career

The number of hours and years that the average person spends working in their lifetime is very high. In fact, it has been said that the average person spends 90,000 hours at work during their lifetime. Therefore, you need to love your career if you are going to be happy. Don't take a career you hate just to make more money. Of course it is important to make sure you have a job that will pay the bills, but you don't want to wind up in a vicious cycle of living just to work and working just to live. It is difficult to overstate the importance of figuring out how to enjoy your work.

Some people get a job and they stay with it for decades. They continue to move up the ladder and they do very well. There are jobs that are a good starting point, but they aren't going to move upward. Don't get trapped in a dead end job. It is never too late to expand your knowledge. Look for a new job, learn a new skill, or even go back to college to earn a degree.

Budgeting

In order to get your finances under control, you need to take a good inventory of your spending. Make a list of all of your monthly bills. This should include:

- Rent/Mortgage
- Car Payments/Leasing/Public Transportation
- Insurance
- Utilities
- Groceries
- Medical supplies/Medications
- Childcare

Next, make a list of all of your variable expenses. These are unsecured debt items that you can pay off. This should include:

- Credit Cards
- Personal Loans
- Revolving Credit

Make a list of all of your income and compare it to your expenses. This is what you have left over each month. With your variable expenses, do what you can to pay more than the minimum each month so you pay it off quicker and reduce overall interest.

Plan of Action

If your budget seems out of control, get help. There are many financial entities that will help you to budget without any charge. They have budgeting classes that help you to get back on track. If you have a significant other, the plan of action for finances should be done as a team. Create goals that you both work towards and re-evaluate your plan regularly.

If your expenses are far more than your income, it is time to make some changes. Can you get a second job to supplement the income and pay down debt? Can you work from home in your free time to generate more money for the household? Perhaps you need to move to a lower priced residence or you need to trade in your car for one that is more affordable.

If you owe a significant amount of unsecured debt, talk to them about lowering your interest or a payoff. If you provide a lump sum of cash for the account they may significantly lower the dollar amount that you owe in order to successfully erase that debt.

It is best to avoid consolidation lenders as they often have high fees and your credit score can suffer in the end. You also want to avoid filing bankruptcy unless it is absolutely necessary.

Extras

Pay attention to how much you spend for extras. Eating out, going to the movies, and even buying coffee at a café can all add up quickly. When you identify where you are spending your money, you can cut down on some of those extras. Identify one or two things you really want to have extra. Allocate an allowance for them and once it is spent, that is it.

Savings

In addition to paying your monthly bills, you should also be paying yourself. Allocate a percentage of your income or a set dollar amount for savings. This is important so that you can have money in place for emergencies - then you won't have to use a credit card or revolving credit should there be an emergency. When you use money you have saved, you don't have that interest to think about.

Retirement

Preparing for the future is also very important. Retirement may seem like a long time from now, but it will arrive. Being prepared for it is very important and you need to start as early as you can.

If your employer has retirement plans such as 401k, contribute the maximum that you can. If your employer doesn't offer this, you should talk to a retirement advisor. They can help you to get accounts set up. If you change from one job to the next, roll over your retirement plan instead of cashing it out.

You should diversify your portfolio so that you have retirement funds spread out. This will help you to avoid a huge loss should any certain investment not do very well. The level of risk you take with your retirement is also important to think about. The closer you get to retirement, the less risk you should take with those funds.

Chapter 7

Offer & Accept Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a very powerful source of happiness. We can hold onto grudges and mistakes for far too long. They can poison our mind, our soul, and take away from the good things in our lives. When we fail to forgive, resentment can get the best of us.

When we talk about forgiveness in order to increase happiness, there are 3 categories:

- Asking for forgiveness
- Offering forgiveness
- Forgiving yourself

Asking for Forgiveness

There can be many reasons why we don't ask for forgiveness. Maybe we have too much pride or we feel that too much time has gone by. Maybe we worry that it won't matter to the other person or persons involved and it will be a lost cause.

Asking for forgiveness is never a sign of weakness. Instead, it means that you want to release those negative feelings once and for all. You can ask

for forgiveness in person or you can write a personal letter. A phone call can be nice too, but if you aren't sure how the other party will respond it may be best not to.

You can always send them a letter and tell them you would like to talk - then they have the opportunity to contact you if they would like to. A phone call or a sudden chat in person can put them on the spot and make it hard for them to come to terms with their emotions due to you contacting them.

With a letter, they have some time to think about all of it and to make the decision to listen to what you have to say. Make sure your request for forgiveness is genuine and that it specifically states what you are apologizing for. You don't have to assign blame and you don't have to get into the specifics of who was right or wrong.

Even if they don't accept your apology, you will have the peace of mind that you extended the olive branch. You will be able to let go of the situation and you will know that you did what you could to make things right. The happiness that it will give you is unbelievable because you will be able to let go.

Offering Forgiveness

When it comes to offering forgiveness, try to be kind. Keep in mind how difficult it can be for someone to reach out to you. If you feel they are genuinely sorry for what happened, then let it go. You may have some

questions that you would like them to answer. It is fine to ask so that you can get some closure with the situation.

It isn't always instant that you will be able to offer forgiveness. It is fine to tell someone that you are no longer angry but that you are hurt. Your emotions can shift before you can fully let go and forgive. You may find that you can no longer let the relationship go back to what it used to be, but that you have some respect for that person now.

One of the hardest things to do in terms of offering forgiveness so that you can be happy is to let go when there is no apology. We have to remember that people do things for a variety of reasons. Perceptions can play a huge role in what hurts us or makes us angry.

Sometimes, we get hurt in the crossfire of what someone else is going through. They may be struggling with addictions, mental health, or other issues that we aren't fully aware of. Try to be compassionate and to forgive when you can. This doesn't mean they win, it just means you are no longer willing to keep replaying that scenario in your mind and letting it get the best of you. Also, forgiving them doesn't mean that you have to let them back into your life or let them keep hurting you - it just means you aren't going to hold on to anger in your life. Anger is one of those negative emotions that can keep you from feeling the true happiness you want.

Forgiving Yourself

We can be our own hardest critics, and that means that we can sabotage our own happiness. You have to be forgiving with yourself. Let go of past mistakes and move forward. Tell yourself that you did the best you could with the information you had at the time.

The fact that you are able to realize now that there was a better way to handle something means that you have grown. You aren't blindly making the same mistakes again and again and not making positive changes in your life.

In life, if you keep looking in that rearview mirror, you will miss what is in front of you. Your past may have left some scars, but they only prove that you were stronger than what was trying to hold you back. That is certainly something to smile about!

Counseling

Sometimes, the issues that have occurred are just too great for us to work out on our own. If you can't forgive, you aren't alone, and you shouldn't feel guilty about it. Give it time to work through emotions and to see a better side of things. Talking to a counselor can be a wonderful way to work through feelings. It can aid in the healing process so that you can move on and so that you can feel happier. Forgiveness doesn't mean that you no longer feel hurt or anger. It simply means you are in control over those feelings and you are empowered by your dedication to be happy in spite of what has occurred in the past.

Chapter 8

Stop Comparing Yourself to Others

If you tend to think that the grass is always greener on the other side, you are reducing your own happiness. It can be difficult at times to be happy for the success of others. However, that often has to do with a lack of self-esteem and a lack of being content with what you have accomplished.

Keep in mind that you don't know the battles they have fought to get to where they are today. Very few people did so without sacrifice, hard work, or without mistakes along that path. What you see is them at the top of the mountain, but often you missed that difficult journey to reach the peak.

Appreciate

Take some time to really appreciate what you have around you. If you are able to make ends meet, have some quality relationships, and you enjoy your hobbies, then you are doing well. It is fine to have goals and to reach for more. Just make sure you don't miss out on the happiness right in front of you due to reaching and reaching.

Jobs

It can be tough to work with someone day in and day out that has a better role in the organization than you do. Perhaps you applied for that same job

when it came open and you didn't get it. Find reasons to be very content in the job you do have. Stop to consider how many unemployed people would love to have your job if it was offered to them!

If you aren't happy in your job, think about making some changes. Perhaps you can learn a new area of the business you already work for. Maybe it is time to take on a new adventure in another company. You aren't held down to the job you have unless you have a contract for a specific period of time. A fresh start, new faces, and new challenges can be just what you need in the workforce to make you happy.

House

Our house is our castle, but we can take it for granted over time. Maybe you are tired of seeing the same thing day after day. If you want to remain in that home, make some changes. New windows, new curtains, and even new paint can certainly change the appeal of it. Add some lovely paintings to offer new focal points in each room.

If your home is too large or too expensive, consider selling it and downsizing. Moving to a smaller place can mean less upkeep and it can save you money. Of course you may have to get rid of many items, too, so you need to think about what you would be willing to part with.

Don't be upset if someone has a bigger home than you do. Don't be angry that it is in a better location than where yours is. Be proud of what you are in and make sure you don't overextend what you can afford to keep up with

others you know and their homes. Unless you're Bill Gates, there will always be someone with more money than you. Just how far up the financial ladder do you need to be before you allow yourself to be happy?

Car

Safety and affordability should be key factors when it comes to buying or leasing a car. Don't buy one just to compete with what your neighbors have in the driveway. Even though it can look sharp and fun to drive, a sports car isn't going to make you happy.

Children

Don't compare your children to those of someone else! We all have concerns about our kids. Each child has a different rate of learning, different interests, and different behaviors. You can't compare what your child does in terms of learning or achievements to others. Focus on what your child offers and that is what will keep you happy - as well as them!

Appearance

You have to be content with your appearance in order to be happy. You don't have to look like a model. We often see celebrities that look amazing just a few weeks after giving birth. Keep in mind, they have personal trainers and chefs. They also have help with the baby so they can get enough rest. Someone selects their clothing, does their hair, and their makeup.

The average person doesn't have access to those things. Yet we tend to compare ourselves to the looks of celebrities. It is fine to admire celebrities but make sure you keep in mind that they aren't doing it all on their own.

Don't compare your looks to those of your friends or family either. We all have unique features that work for us. If you don't like things about your body, work to change them. For example, lose some weight or tone up. If you aren't happy with the way your face looks, consider different makeup products. Changing your hair color and haircut can also make a difference in how you look.

Be happy with the person you see in the mirror. While we do live in a society that puts a huge impact of physical appearance, it really is the person inside that will get noticed. If people are only paying attention to you due to physical attributes, those aren't the right types of people to associate with.

Chapter 9

Face Your Fears

Nothing will destroy happiness or prevent you from achieving it like fear. There are many types of fear that people experience that can hold them back. The fear of failure is the biggest one. As we touched on previously, if you don't try then you will never know. Mistakes can happen, but so can success.

It can often take many trials, errors, and mistakes to be able to find success. Some of the most successful people in the world were once in dire straits due to not giving up on their ideas. With each failure, they learned one more way not to do what they were trying to achieve.

Being positive and moving through fear is very important. Think about the best-case scenario that can result from your efforts. Think about the worst-case scenario too. Be ready for the best but prepare for the worst.

The funny thing about our fears is that they are usually not as bad as the monster we had created in our own minds. When we face those fears, we become empowered and we move forward. We are able to say that we are strong and that brings us a sense of happiness too.

Doubt

Always believe that you can do what you set out to do. If you don't have confidence in yourself, you are going to cave in to doubt. If you have positive people around you, they can help you to erase such doubt. If your social structure consists of those that put you down rather than lifting you up, doubt will win.

When you have doubts, tell yourself why you CAN accomplish what you would like to do. Keep in mind that you will always fail if you say nothing or you take no action. It is only when you take steps to move forward that you are able to really see the difference. If you have doubts, make a list of them. Then make a list of what is at stake for you to gain. Seeing it all on paper can give you the edge you need to take action.

Calculated Risk

Facing fears doesn't mean you throw caution to the wind. Some types of fears actually keep us safe from harm. Think about what you are going to try and why you want to try it. You have nothing to prove to anyone but yourself. Don't allow dangerous antics to be part of facing your fears.

A calculated risk involves looking at the options and coming up with the best fitting solution for your needs. It helps to look at the common pitfalls and ways to avoid them. With this type of risk, you can significantly reduce the risk of failure.

Stay Positive

If you are positive, you can even get some great energy from your fears. Any time that they start to feel negative, twist them around. When you have positive thoughts, you will attract the success you really want. Focus on breathing regularly when you feel fear so that it won't hold you down.

Focus on victories you have accomplished to help you stay positive. If you have only reached part of your goal, you are still further than when you first began. Don't let failure be all or nothing in your book.

Realistic

You don't want to set yourself up for failure either. You need a realistic plan of action that isn't too difficult or too easy. For example, your plan can't be to lose 25 pounds if you don't plan to change how you eat or to exercise. You may want to find a better job, but you have to realistically be willing to learn some new skills if you want a better job.

In the next chapter, we will talk about a plan of action and how to use it to move forward in your life. As you do so, you will feel achievement, self-worth, and you will be happier!

In the end, we tend to really only regret the chances we didn't take. That is why you have to face your fears and move forward. It isn't always going to be easy, and it won't always work out the way you want it to. Yet you won't stay awake at night wishing you hadn't let such an opportunity pass you by.

Chapter 10

Make a Plan for Change

If you can't accept what you have in your life and be happy with it, then you need to make a plan for a change. There can be plenty of types of changes that occur to make you happier. Take an inventory of what you need in order to reach true happiness.

Maybe you need to improve relationships with your family and friends. Maybe you need more time for yourself and for your hobbies. Less stress about money can help you to be happier. Accepting yourself and being positive can also be part of the plan for change.

Time

One of the biggest barriers for change is time. People feel that they just don't have enough of it. By saying no - as talked about in a previous chapter - you can open up time. Start to carve out those periods of down time on your monthly calendar before you fill it up with everything else.

In order for change to occur, you have to be willing to embrace it. Change isn't going to come easy, and it can take time and patience. You need a plan of action to help you get there. For example, if you want to become more active, develop a plan that allows you to exercise 30 minutes a day. If the day tends to get away from you, carve out time first thing in the

morning. If you are sluggish in the morning, the afternoon may be a better option.

Enjoyable

Next, find activities that you enjoy so that you won't try to get out of it. Exercise needs to be something you look forward to rather than try to avoid. However, when it comes to change, you won't always get to take part in activities you like. That is where discipline comes into the picture.

When that is the case, think about how enjoyable it is going to be when you do make those changes. Visualize (we talked about "envisioning" achieving your desires in a previous chapter) the level of happiness it will give you to stop smoking or to complete your degree. That will help you to be motivated and to move forward with the necessary tasks.

Support

Get encouragement and support from family and friends. Let them know what you want to change and why. If you are surrounding yourself with good people, they will encourage you and be proud of your efforts. This support also holds you to a higher level of accountability than before.

You may find that you get a buddy to help you make the change with too. For example, your spouse may decide they will stop smoking or they will make diet and exercise changes along with you. It sure is easier to do something like that with someone than on your own!

Rewards

Finally, have a way to track your progress and reward your efforts. If you are consistently working out day after day, treat yourself to something such as a new CD or a night at the movies.

You want the rewards to be consistent with what you have in place for your ultimate goal. For example, if you are planning to complete a four year degree, a reward at the end of each completed semester is a good idea. However, you should have a very large reward waiting for yourself come graduation day!

Resources

Keep in mind that you don't have to take care of everything on your own. There are resources out there to help you with your plans for change. If you want to feel better, talk with your doctor. If you want to eat better, sit down with a dietician. A financial planner can help you with budgeting and with retirement. Use the resources that make it easier for you to have a clear path to your goals.

Write it Down

Your plan of action for change and a happier you should be written down. This makes it more concrete. Have a start date and an end date for reaching your ultimate goal. If the goal is large and long term, break it down

so you have mini steps to achieve along the way. Being able to celebrate that success will keep you motivated.

Evaluate

At regular intervals, evaluate your plan of action for change. Are you happier? Do you feel the plan is still working for you? If not, revamp it. You may find that tweaking certain elements of your plan allow you to get beyond any pitfalls that you didn't foresee in your path.

Chapter 11

Take Care of Your Mind and Body

If you want to be happy in life, you need to take care of your mind and your body. The mind and body work in sync with each other in order to offer you the very best. When they aren't in sync, you have to make an effort to get them back to that point.

Chemicals in the Brain

In order to experience happiness, there are certain chemicals in the brain that must be present. The chemical balance of the brain is very complex. Taking part in exercise will help to release "feel-good" chemicals. Some individuals don't have the right combination of chemicals that they need.

If that may be the case, medications may be necessary to help regulate them. Many people suffer from mental health concerns including depression that prevent them from being as happy as they would like to be. Talk to a professional about the possibility and see if they can help you to be happier than you thought possible. If all your efforts alone don't raise that level, this may be the next step to explore.

Lifestyle Habits

The mind needs to rest just like the body does. Getting enough sleep each night is good for the mind and the body. It will provide you with more energy and allow you to be alert. When the mind is sharp, you get more accomplished in less time. You can also be more creative.

Avoid bad habits including drinking excessively, using illegal drugs, and smoking. They can all contribute to serious health problems. It can be hard to stop using such products due to the physical and mental addiction they cause. However, there are resources out there that can help offer solutions so that you don't have to feel alone in your efforts.

Eat Well

Your mind and your body benefit from eating well. You need your body and brain to get enough of what they need from the foods you consume. When you eat foods that are high in antioxidants, it offers a boost for the immune system. This includes fresh fruits and vegetables.

Your body and brain need plenty of protein too in order to help with energy. When you consume foods that are high in processed carbs or sugars, it can reduce your level of happiness. It can cause the brain to get smaller and increase the risk of depression.

Checkups

Routine checkups for your medical needs, dental care, and vision are also important. Such checkups should be scheduled annually. Don't wait until you have a concern to take action. If you have a family history of health issues, make sure your doctor is aware of them. Early testing can play a role in prevention.

Regular checkups can help with early intervention if a problem is detected. It can make a huge difference in the types of treatment that are offered for the health care need. It can also determine the difference between the need for ongoing treatment or a one-time solution.

Pay Attention

Don't ignore any signs from your mind or your body that something isn't right. If you are experiencing anything that is unusual, take action. Too many people ignore it because they are afraid or they don't have the time to deal with it. Yet those early warning signs can prevent problems that can't be reversed later on.

Be proactive when it comes to taking care of your mind, your body, and your overall well-being. It is a significant step towards feeling great and towards being happy.

Chapter 12

Considering Minimalism

I've talked about happiness quite a bit now, and mentioned 10 keys to achieving it. There is something else, however that I feel should be noted in this little guide - **the concept of Minimalism**.

I'm certainly not going to try and tell you that simple living and a minimalist lifestyle is the only way to be happy - it isn't. However, minimalism is all about being able to focus in on those things that make you truly happy and fulfilled. Those things that are most important.

I hope you can see how simple living ties into many of the things we have talked about already. We've talked about the power to say "no." Simple living advocates also tell you to say no to unnecessary clutter in your life. Say no to making new purchases that don't add something great to your day-to-day life. Reject consumerism, and get your finances under control. You don't need credit card debt. You don't need a lot of things. And you CERTAINLY don't need to "keep up with the Joneses." If you feel the urge to show the world that you've accumulated the same amount of "stuff" and material goods as your neighbor, perhaps you should refer to Chapter 8 again, and stop comparing yourself to others. Even within that bad habit, comparing your physical accumulation with someone else is a particularly wrong way to go. Advertisements are bombarding you all day with the idea that you need more things. With minimalism, you can let go of that pressure.

Chapter 10 mentions making a plan for change. If you want change in your life, minimalism is a great tool for achieving it, and I believe it should be considered as part of anyone's plan.

Minimalism can help you find balance in almost all areas of your life. If you're interested in learning more, there are many, many resources online to help you. Many people are currently taking the minimalist journey, and there is no shortage of bloggers and communities sharing their experiences and knowledge on the subject.

If you enjoy what you've read of my work so far, check out other things I've written, and visit my website at <http://discoverminimalism.com>

A more detailed treatment of the subject can be found in my book, ["Discover Minimalism: A Minimalist Lifestyle."](#)

Discover Minimalism also has a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/DiscoverMinimalism>, which posts information about and inspiration for living simply – and it's a great place to find a community.

This won't be the path to happiness for everyone, but it has certainly helped me, and I'm dedicated to helping others with the journey to greater happiness.

Chapter 13

Conclusion

Are you happy? Maybe you think you are happy enough? Perhaps you have been unhappy for so long that it seems like just a part of life. Now is the time to mix things up and see what materializes. Don't let fear of the unknown or fear of failure hold you back.

Don't be so worried about what others think. As long as your efforts to be happy don't hurt anyone else, then hold your head up and confidently take part in them. Do what you can to keep financial strife from reducing your level of happiness. Worrying about money can make it hard to be happy about much else.

For many people, just finding the courage to say no to numerous time draining commitments is a huge step forward. They feel more in control of the day. They enjoy seeing some blank spots on the calendar rather than every single time slot filled in. They like having time to do nothing or time to visit with someone they love.

What will people say about you when it is time for your funeral services? Hopefully, they will be able to say you were fun, happy, and lived your life to the fullest every single day. You have the choice to be happy - so you can start to change things around or leave them exactly as they are right

now. If your self-esteem is low, you need to fix that. If you are often not feeling well about who you are, it is tough to be happy.

Don't be so focused only on physical beauty either. It may surprise you just how many people out there that are gorgeous aren't happy. They often wonder if people like them for anything else. The same goes for people with lots of money. They always worry that people just want some cash and not really anything about them personally.

What this means is that we all have our inner issues and our outer variables that we have to learn to contend with. The real world isn't always kind, so make sure you are always kind to yourself first. Take time to be kind and generous to others in your life as well as strangers on the street. It may make more of a difference to them than you will ever know.

One of the easiest ways to change your mindset is to take part in a daily exercise where you express gratitude. Make a list of a few things you are grateful for and start your day off with positive thoughts. It can really change the way that your entire day plays out.

As soon as you realize it isn't about material things and money, you can find happiness. It gets harder and harder for the younger generations to get that message. We live in a society that seems to promote material objects as the way to a happy life. So much of the advertising out there shows this. They never show someone in an older car that is paid for smiling and happy. They want you to think that to be content you need a new car and the payment that goes along with it!

While we don't have control over everything that happens around us, we do have the choice to be happy. People who are happy and successful in life aren't just lucky. Instead, they appreciate the small things and they surround themselves with people who are positive.

They make time for themselves so that they aren't overwhelmed. They take time to relax and to engage in activities that are fun for them. They strive to have a healthy body and a healthy mind so that they can continue to feel happy at any age.

Identify what true happiness means to you, and then do all you can to make it happen. You have some very good insight from this material to help you make positive changes that will influence your life for the better. Pick one change to make at a time and really focus on it.

As you do well with it, add another to the mix. You will notice that you start to feel happier in no time at all. Stop spending your time on activities and people that bring you down. Life is simply too short to be anything but happy!