

EUDOKIMA EDITIONS

**HAPPINESS NOW!  
A GUIDED JOURNEY**

**UNLEASH MOTIVATION AND TAKE ACTION TO EXPERIENCE GREATER PEACE, MEANING AND JOY**

**SONIA WEYERS, PhD**

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Formatting by Wild Words Formatting

Cover design by Matthieu Touvet

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Keep the activity booklet close to the book and anytime I ask you to reflect on a question, you will find a place in this booklet to note your thoughts and reflections. I hope you enjoy the journey!

“If you want to awaken all of humanity,  
then awaken all of yourself.  
If you want to eliminate the suffering  
in the world, then eliminate all that is  
dark and negative in yourself.  
Truly, the greatest gift you have to give  
is that of your own self-transformation.”

– Lao-Tzu

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this book to my children:

**Clara, Gabrielle, Oscar, and Stella.**

You are my drivers for bettering myself. My deepest wish is that you have learned from me that life offers endless discoveries, and that you can follow your dreams.

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## **Disclaimer**

This book is presented to you for informational purposes and is not a substitute for any professional advice. It is the reader's sole responsibility to seek professional advice before taking any action on their part. Some issues require more expert intervention than simply reading a book. Depending on the nature of the issue, it may be more appropriate to seek help from a professional.

## Acknowledgements

Private circle:

First and foremost, I thank my parents: you brought me into this world and launched me on this path of continuous self-discovery. I know that you have supported me every step of the way to the best of your abilities.

Next, I thank the father of my children: not only did you always support my changing goals, you have given me my dream of having four children, and I thank you for that; they are my primary source of inspiration.

Last but not least, I thank my partner and lover: your love and appreciation have been the greatest driver of my growth for the last decade; if not for you, I might still be stuck in the claws of unhappiness. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

Larger circle:

For supporting me during the sometimes agitated moods I experienced during the book process, thank you to Valérie, Laura, and Natacha.

For the amazing experience at Self-Publishing School:

- Thank you, Chandler Bolt and Sean Sumner, and all the supporting team for running such an amazing process;
- thank you, Scott Allan, for your friendly and supportive guidance;
- thank you to the mastermind community for the quality of your responses;
- and most of all thank you, Corinne Tanguy, for being the best accountabilibuddy!

For reading an earlier draft and contributing to this version of the book, I thank Dawn Jarish, Vanessa Jolet, Robin de Lafforest, Bento Leal, Bérangère Noyau, Kelly Robic, Marta Urbina, Esther van Weelden, Jacques Weyers, Esther Wojcicki, Clara Zemsky, Gabrielle Zemsky, and especially Kate Philips-Kaiser.

Moreover, I wish to thank Katie Chambers, whose amazing professional editing greatly improved my writing and Marcy Pusey for her final proofreading.

Last but not least, I thank Esther Wojcicki for writing such a well-documented foreword. I respect your opinions greatly and have for all those years. You are truly an inspiration.



## Foreword

Two of the most popular questions today are “What is happiness?” and “How do I get more?” Everyone in the industrial world thinks that happiness will come with the next job or the next new car or the next house. But they need to rethink that assumption. A new consumer item may make you temporarily very happy but research shows that, in the not-so-long term, it does not bring most people the kind of happiness they crave. True happiness comes from ongoing positive relationships and positive experiences. Here is some of the latest research about happiness.

According to an article in *Fast Company*, “Research over the last decade or so has sent out a resounding message: If you want to be happier, invest in experiences rather than things. In their groundbreaking work, psychologists Leaf Van Boven and Thomas Gilovich conducted a series of surveys and found that experiences made people happier than goods. Their findings were summarized in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.” Then in 2010, Gilovich, a professor of psychology at Cornell University, showed why.

Gilovich’s study found that when people buy things, they are more likely to suffer buyer’s remorse. They also tend to compare their material assets with those of others. On the other hand, it’s more difficult to compare other people’s experiences with your own.

[http://psych.colorado.edu/~vanboven/research/publications/vb\\_gilo\\_2003.pdf](http://psych.colorado.edu/~vanboven/research/publications/vb_gilo_2003.pdf)

Additional research shows that the richer we get, the less happy we become. According to an article on Market Watch by Catey Hill, “A study, published this month in the journal *Nature Human Behavior*, found that once we reach a certain household income—\$105,000 in the United States, \$95,000 globally—more income “tended to be associated with reduced life satisfaction and a lower level of well-being.”

<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/the-dark-reasons-so-many-rich-people-are-miserable-human-beings-2018-02-22>

In February 2019, *The New York Times Magazine* ran an article entitled “Wealthy, Successful and Miserable.” I think the headline says it all. Written by a Harvard alumna at her 15th reunion, she says she was shocked to learn “how many of my former classmates weren’t overjoyed by their professional lives—in fact, they were miserable.” <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/02/21/magazine/elite-professionals-jobs-happiness.html>.

Money, power, and what looks like success, do not always lead to happiness. We need to be careful in our assessment of what brings happiness. In the documentary *Three Identical Strangers*, the identical triplets were separated at birth and purposely put into three different socio-economic homes. One was in a poor home, the second in a middle-class home and the third in a well-to-do-home. When they met years later by accident, it was not surprising how much they looked alike, but what was surprising was that they behaved alike, had the same likes and dislikes and the same expressions. What was the impact of nature vs. nurture? They were identical in all aspects but one: happiness. The triplet with the most loving parents, in this case the lowest income parents, was the one who was the happiest. The unhappiest was the one from the wealthy family who had a less loving and less nurturing childhood. One conclusion you might draw is that

income level did not determine happiness; see the film for the complete explanation, Sadly, the triplet from the wealthy home had a very sad outcome: he later committed suicide.

Back to the real world where I lived in Geneva, Switzerland, from 1973 to 1974. It was a happy time for us. Anne had just been born and we were living out on a large farm with cows everywhere. Eventually we moved to the center of Geneva, where the kids went to the UN International School. That is where I met Sonia and her parents. I have known the author, Sonia Weyers, since that time, when she was a five year old girl, who became a close friend of my daughter Susan. I got to know Sonia, a precocious but serious little girl who loved adventure. Even back then she spoke perfect English and perfect French—at the age of five. We kept in touch over the years, spent multiple summers together, and still know each other today after many babies and life experiences. During that forty-five year period, I have seen Sonia go from what appeared to be a happy child to a stressed college student to a very unhappy wife, mother and parent and then reverse all of that misery and become a very happy person in the last ten to twelve years. How did she do that? That is the question we all want to know the answer to because much of the world is not happy no matter their living situation or their material wealth. Happiness seems to be elusive. However, this book gets at the heart of what makes happiness across cultures. It is not just for Western culture; it is for all people. A lot of the lessons that she shares with you are based on her own life experience. She shows how she went from being totally miserable to being very happy, not for just a short time, but all the time. The question is how did she do it? Fortunately, she breaks it down into manageable steps for all of us. Her happiness has endured for years and now she is helping other people achieve happiness in their lives. We can all do it. We just need the right mindset.

The first part of Sonia's book is focused on creating the mindset for happiness, which is the most important part. You can't be happy if you have a negative mindset. She goes into this in great detail. The second part of her book is focused on taking care of yourself. It is hard to be happy if you are physically miserable, emotionally distraught, socially isolated or lacking meaning. These four areas are covered in the second part of the book. In the third part, there are 23 easy steps that you can use, but they have to be practiced. *That is the key.* Nothing happens in life without practice.

These are suggestions on how to take care of yourself, how to take control of your life—you are the one in charge, not your parents, not your spouse, not your coworkers, not your children—YOU! Blaming people only makes you miserable and being angry only makes it worse. Turns out that holding on to anger is like holding onto a piece of hot coal. You are the one who gets burned, according to a quote from Buddha. Happiness is within you as Weyers points out in the first part of her book. *Happiness is a state of mind*, a decision you make and are responsible for just as Weyers says, and that state of mind is not dependent on material goods. It is a way of looking at the world. It is a state of mind in which gratitude and love of the small things in life play an important role. It comes when people feel like they are part of a community or a team, when they feel respected and trusted and where love and acceptance are part of the culture.

People who live in the blue zones, places with the longest lifespans in the world, have one commonality: they have a supportive sense of community. Here is an Atlantic Monthly article about blue zones.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2017/10/get-rid-of-everything/543384/>

According to the author of *The Self-Aware Parent*, Fran Walfish, "The deepest pleasures are derived from interpersonal love, warm relationships, giving, appreciation, and gratitude." I couldn't agree more,

especially having been a teacher for more than forty years. Children are happiest when they feel love in the classroom; couples are happiest when they feel loved and respected (no surprise here); friends and employees are happiest when they are respected and appreciated for their effort (again no surprise).

Sonia has searched long and hard for how to be happier, not just for herself, but for her friends, family and children, and she has compiled the lessons she has learned in this book. You will love yourself forever for having read and implemented the suggestions in this book and so will your family and friends. It takes only a couple of hours to read and a few more hours to practice—out of an 80 year life span, that is a tiny amount of time to devote to yourself. You can do it and you are worth it! I applaud her for her passionate goal to make the world a happier place.

Esther Wojcicki

Founder of Palo Alto Media Arts Program

author of “Moonshots in Education: Launching Blended Learning in the Classroom”

and “How to Raise Successful People: Simple Lessons for Radical Results”

March 2019

## Introduction

Are you wanting more out of life? Do you wish that you could feel more peaceful? Are you yearning for more meaning? Are you struggling with negative emotions and looking for more joy? Are you wondering what all this is about?

You are not alone! In this world where material goods have become so easy to desire and acquire, more and more people are looking for peace, for meaning, for joy, for a greater purpose, for a life well-lived.

This book gives you a grounded, no-nonsense approach to examine what is lacking in YOUR life and how YOU can take action to change that. As a therapist, coach, and leader of workshops on “Cultivating Well-Being, No Matter What!,” I have helped many people just like you over the last 15 years find a better quality of life.

The reflections, exercises, and calls to action in this book have already helped busy professionals, stay-at-home parents, and many others create a better quality of life. A participant in one of the workshops related to this book said, “Sonia’s workshop gave me great insight into how I could spontaneously spark positive emotions on a minute-to-minute or day-to-day basis that made a genuine difference in my way of interacting with my ‘self’ and others in my life.”

I guarantee that if you read this book, do the exercises, and pick at least one action step to durably incorporate into your life, you will feel improvement in *your* quality of life.

This is not a one-size-fits-all approach; on the contrary, it could not be more personalized. I will lead you to reflect on a variety of topics, and it will be up to *you* to make some choices about what you do and do not want to incorporate in your life.

Don’t be the person who complains about their life and then does nothing about it; don’t be the person who passes up an opportunity to take positive action for their life.

Be the kind of person who integrates positive change in their life. Be the kind of person who inspires others with their positive changes. Be the kind of person who takes charge of their life now.

The life-satisfaction-boosting tips you will find in each chapter are all tried and tested, and most of them are backed by science. To reap some of the benefits for *your* life, all you need to do is follow the invitations, and you’ll create a life that you once only dreamed of.

In this book you’ll be able to:

1. Craft some routines
2. Clarify your sleep needs
3. Reflect on your social needs

4. Make some choices about food
5. Make some choices about exercise
6. Experience gratefulness
7. Experience self-compassion
8. Experience forgiveness
9. Visualize your ideal life

I promise this book will take you on a journey of personal growth as you explore your views on different important areas of your life. You may find that it stretches you in places, and you may even experience some discomfort; however, I promise you that if you follow through and take action where prompted, you will find yourself on the way to creating a life more true to your core and experiencing a sense of self-realization.

There is one caveat: while a good life obviously includes a professional activity and the balancing of some financial issues, I do not talk about these in this book. Instead, I focus on how to have better experiences in your life, whatever the circumstances, and this really works for most sets of circumstances.

I can promise you these things because I have personally experienced them myself. When I was 20, I was quite unhappy without any externally visible reasons, stressed out a lot, and did not exercise. I was blessed with fairly good health but did get regular sinus infections and took antibiotics at least a couple of times most years.

I am now nearing 50; I am happier than I have ever been, a lot of the time; I know how to manage my stress; I exercise regularly; and I enjoy better health than I have ever had and haven't taken antibiotics for several years now.

For the last three decades, I was on a journey fraught with unhappiness where circumstances didn't seem to warrant that, soul-searching when my path seemed traced for me already, and an unrelenting search for better times. What you will find in the pages that follow is both rooted in my own quest and also validated by scientific studies.

My biggest hope in writing this book is that you will find some insights that expand your perspective, some clues that will lead to some positive changes in your life and some inspiration to get up and take charge of your life. I am inviting you to invest some time and focus to create a better future for *YOU*.

Take your quality of life in your own hands today. Engage in increasing your life satisfaction and start reaping the benefits of creating a life that suits *YOU*.

Enjoy the ride!

The rest of the book is structured in three parts. Part I will focus on cultivating your mindset to help prepare you to receive maximum benefits from the explorations that follow.

In Part II, you will look at different areas of focus, in which you will discover levers for increasing your well-being. You will look at your Health, both Physical and Emotional, Relationships, and Spirituality and Meaning.

In Part III, to help you incorporate these principles into your daily life, you will focus on action steps: 23 activities to help enrich the various areas of focus outlined in Part II.

Editorial note: to avoid cumbersome he/she, his/her and the like, whenever the gender can be either masculine or feminine, I will arbitrarily choose the feminine. This book can be one place for reversed gender bias.

## **PART I: Mindset**

In this first part, I invite you to stroll with me through the garden of the various flowers that constitute the great mindset needed to pursue your goals. In Part II, you will go deep into the four areas of focus for increasing your wellbeing, and in Part III, you will learn a selection of activities that can make an amazing difference in your life.

For Part I, Chapter 1 is about Motivation; Chapter 2 is about Commitment; Chapter 3 is about Beliefs; Chapter 4 is about Perseverance; and Chapter 5 brings it all together to create your future, in which you will be empowered to Cultivate your Well-Being.

*“Every journey, no matter how great, begins with a single step.”*  
– Lao Tzu

*“Dare to live the life you have  
dreamed for yourself.  
Go forward and make your  
dreams come true.”*  
– Ralph Waldo Emerson

Later in the book, I will invite you to write some things down. I have created a companion PDF Activity Booklet, which you can download for free by going to

[www.soniaweyers.com/en/free-download](http://www.soniaweyers.com/en/free-download)

Alternatively, you can use a notebook. In that case, I invite you to choose a special notebook that you dedicate to your journey in this book.

## CHAPTER 1: Finding Motivation

### **Why?**

First, ask yourself, “Why?” Why do you want to embark on this journey? What led you to pick up this book?

The first ingredient of any motivation is the answer to a “Why” question. If you want to start a new behavior or change a habit, you must have a reason for doing it. Is something in your life not working for you? Do you have a pain point? Or do you have an objective? A dream? Something you really want that you do not yet have?

Think about it, when do you ever do anything without a reason?

There can be a variety of reasons! Think of how you spend your days, your weeks. You probably get up every day, go to work or to school or some activity, and do some chores like going grocery shopping for your household or doing the laundry. Now these are what a lot of us might consider obligations. We do them because we have to.

Well, I invite you to think slightly differently, to think of a motivating “why” for those obligations. I do laundry so that I have clean clothes to wear. I shop for food because I need to eat. I work to earn an income that allows me to do things. But even if you consider that there are things you do “because you have to,” I encourage you to think about some things that you do by choice.

Take a few moments right now to think of something you do by choice and think of why you do it.

Try to feel how that “why” gives you motivation to do the behavior.

Now take some time to clarify why you are reading this book? It probably has something to do with wanting to live a more satisfying life.

### **What?**

*“Knowing what you want is  
the first step in getting it.”  
– Louise Hart*



Second, you must ask yourself, “What?” What do you want to get out of reading this book? What is your objective? What are you yearning for that you don’t have yet? Take a few moments to dive into that a bit more. What, specifically, do you want to improve in your life?

You might find that your life is bland and you want some excitement. You might wish to feel sadness or anger less often. You might feel lonely even though you are surrounded by people. What is your specific reason for reading this book?

### ***Why Now?***

Lastly, in determining your motivation, ask yourself, “Why now?” What happened that caused you to pick up this book now? Was there an event that triggered your quest for a stronger well-being, or have you had a lingering feeling for a while? Spend a few moments now to reflect on this.

I appreciate you for taking this step and for taking charge of your well-being, and I invite you to appreciate yourself as well.

Some of you may want to have a measure of how much better your life can get if you follow my lead throughout this book. If this is your case, I suggest that you take Diener's Satisfaction with Life Scale, which you can find by searching on the internet for “Life Satisfaction Scale Questionnaire – Excel at Life.” With this questionnaire, you can assess your current well-being, and then you can take it again after about three months of implementing some of the changes I suggest in this book. You can also try one of Martin Seligman’s tests on his website “Authentic Happiness” at the University of Pennsylvania.

### ***What to Do?***

OK, so you have a better idea of why you are reading this book and what you want from it. But, now what? Often, even if you know what you want, you feel lost as you don’t know what to do to get what you want.

*“Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”  
– Albert Einstein*

If you want to see a change in your life, you will have to change some behaviors. It really is that

simple. If you want nothing to change, keep doing what you're doing. But you are holding this book so I trust that you want something to change.

Let me tell you a bit about my own journey here.

I was quite depressed when I was a young adult, and I had absolutely no clue what to do about it. On the surface, I had everything I needed. I had no material strife, had not been abused, and was doing well in school. I often heard, "You have everything needed to be happy." Let me tell you, that is completely unhelpful when you are NOT happy.

This made it even harder to know what to do. I had everything, and I wasn't happy so I went into therapy. Fast forward 30 years, I spent about half of that time in therapy and searched just about every course, every tool, every approach and can honestly say I have found a level of peace and fulfillment that I never even knew was possible 30 years ago.

### ***I Lead You***

This book is not offering therapy, don't get me wrong, but I do intend to lead you through activities and deep reflections that will allow you to make choices for yourself, to choose some new behaviors, and discover what gives you the effect that you are most looking for.

I cannot emphasize enough that you can read this book all you want, but you will only see the changes you are hoping for if you implement some new behaviors.

Throughout the coming pages, I will suggest things for you to try, TRY THEM! I don't promise that everything works for everyone nor that it will be easy. I do promise that if you don't try anything new, nothing will change.

### ***Doubts***

Of course you may have doubts: you might be thinking that this is a scam, another set of worthless promises. You may seriously doubt that it could be that simple.

I am just asking that you please give me a chance. What I am presenting to you in this book is a collection of possibilities that are abundantly verified, some by many scientific studies, and others by their sheer timelessness. I have also personally experimented with everything that I propose to you.

- Request #1: I will make a few requests of you, and the first one is that you withhold judgment until after you have tried what I suggest. I request that you grant me your open-mindedness for the duration of our journey together in this book.

## ***Curiosity***

Open-mindedness is rooted in curiosity. Come back to why you are reading this book. What would it be like to have the results that you are longing for; what would that feel like? What might happen if you actually implement some new behaviors?

I invite you to be curious. Be curious what you can find out, curious what resources you can find, inside yourself, that you didn't know existed, and curious how your life could change.

Have you ever met someone and wondered what it would be like to be like them? Well my aim is for you to transform your life so that you can experience being a different version of you.

In the following chapter, you will explore the next ingredient of your mindset, the fuel for it: commitment.

## CHAPTER 2: Commitment

It's important for this journey that you "work" to get to know yourself even better. When I ask you a question, please take time to think about it, close your eyes, and reflect. To begin with, I would like you to think about what commitment is like for you, what your habitual responses are to commitment.

Do you treat commitment as though it has little to no value? Do you commit to something and then just pursue your life as though nothing happened?

Or do you take your commitments more seriously than anything else? Do you put everything else aside to make sure you respect your commitments?

Do you have an easy time with commitments? A hard time?

Can you think of a few examples of commitments you have kept? Can you think of at least two or three?

Now think of how you kept them, whether it was easy or difficult, and the various ways you stayed with your commitments even when it might have been difficult.

Now can you think of a couple of examples where you didn't honor your commitments? Can you remember what happened? Was there an incident that propelled the breach or was it sort of negligence, did it slip your mind, did you not pay proper attention?

Changing your habits is difficult. Habits have become automatic ways of doing things so changing them will require different strategies. In this chapter, I encourage you to broaden your awareness of your own relationship to commitment, just so you know what you are up against.

*"Most people fail,  
not because of lack of desire, but,  
because of lack of commitment."  
– Vince Lombardi*

To help you honor your commitments, you have a precious ally, which is willpower. Let's explore a bit how willpower works.

First, how is your willpower? Are you able to will yourself to do things you don't feel like doing in the moment, even though you know that later you will have wished you had done them? Or do you have a hard time completing things that are not appealing in the moment?

If you want a whole book on willpower, I recommend *The Willpower Instinct* by Kelly McGonigal. What I present here is a very condensed version of that. In a nutshell, the ingredients of willpower fall into five different categories.

First, there is the physiology of commitment. All willpower challenges are easier if you:

- sleep enough
- eat healthy
- exercise
- meditate

Ironically, we ordinarily think these things require willpower, when in reality they support our willpower better than most other things.

Can you think of a time when you went out and had too much to eat or to drink, too much sugar, whatever food excess? Perhaps you didn't sleep quite as well as a result and perhaps you couldn't quite motivate yourself to exercise the next morning, or to work on that project you have been wanting to take care of for weeks.

Conversely, imagine you just had a fun evening with a reasonable amount of healthy foods; you had a good, restful night; and you woke up eager to go for a run and make progress on your goals.

This should convince you that there is such a thing as the physiology of willpower, so you should use what willpower you do have to focus on sleeping enough, eating healthy, exercising, and meditating as those in turn will help further your willpower for everything else. I will come back to that in Part II.

The second thing you can do to promote your willpower is to be kind to yourself if and when you fail. Self-compassion helps with willpower. I will talk more about self-compassion in Chapter 7 but for now, just remember that you will be more successful if you are kind to yourself when you fail.

The third ingredient of willpower is visualizing your future self. This helps you realize that future-you is connected to present-you and will make you care more about what happens to that person.

The fourth element of willpower is that thinking about the ways in which you might fail and planning how you will recover is more effective for willpower than tracking your success.

A number of studies show that when people are reminded of their success and take note of their progress, they are much more likely to do something inconsistent with their goals. In order to combat that, you want to think about how you might fail. To do this, you can use defensive pessimism, which is a strategic use of pessimism to help you stay on track. It works by answering the following questions:

1. What is my goal?
2. What would be the most positive outcome?
3. What action will I take to reach this goal?
4. What is the biggest obstacle?
5. When and where is this obstacle most likely to occur?
6. What can I do to prevent the obstacle?
7. What specific thing will I do to get back to my goal when this obstacle happens?

The fifth and final element of willpower is the ability to “surf the urge.” This means to have the ability to tolerate discomfort when you are tempted to stray from your goals. One example of surfing the urge is to hold your breath just a little longer than what is comfortable. The ability to hold your breath for 15 seconds, even though you may have the urge to breathe, is actually linked to your ability to follow through on your goals.

Now, to summarize willpower rules:

1. Train your willpower physiology (meditating, sleeping, exercising, healthy diet).
2. Forgive yourself (next time you have a willpower setback).
3. Make friends with your future-self (think about the future in a way that feels real)
4. Predict your failures (even if it’s really nice to imagine success, be interested in how you might fail) and plan your response.
5. Surf the urge (when you are facing temptation).

So there are things you can do to promote your willpower. It remains that when you commit to something, the first person you are committing to is yourself. Unfortunately, your mind has a way of arranging for things to be okay even when they are not in your best interest.

So it is useful to have an accountability partner. Someone who knows what you are trying to achieve and who is there to keep you honest.

It is time to ask yourself a hard question. Can you commit to trying out what I propose to you in this book? How much time can you commit every day to the pursuit of your own well-being?

Think about that, please!

You are in it for the long run so exploring your commitment is the first step. You must also then think about how to support the commitment so that you really get to the results. I don't want you to put this book on your shelf, not look at it, and not do anything with it; this book is aimed at helping you bring positive and durable changes in your life. But, you must be committed to doing something with it.

- Request #2: Give yourself a real chance.

In the next chapter, you will explore how your beliefs affect your mindset. It is quite possible that your beliefs are holding you back more than you think.

As you work on cultivating the needed mindset to begin your journey, it often helps to collaborate with others. You may want to join the Facebook group "Happiness Now! A Guided Journey."

To join it, just go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com); if you don't yet have an account you will have to create one and then search for the phrase "Happiness Now! A Guided Journey." You should find the group, click the request to join, and I will be happy to welcome you.

## CHAPTER 3: Beliefs

Now that you are better able to motivate yourself and commit, you need to explore your beliefs. I am not talking about religious beliefs here, but rather your beliefs about the world, people, and situations. These beliefs are often unconscious or at least not completely conscious.

For example, if no one in your family has attended college for several generations, you just might believe that you don't have what it takes to go to college, and you might not question that belief for even a second, perhaps giving up dreams and aspirations in the process.

Conversely, if your family consists of highly academic people, you might believe that academic success is in your DNA. You might not work hard at all, as DNA-stuff must surely come naturally, and as a result, you might be academically mediocre and end up being the "black sheep of the family." In a similar academic family, your aim might be to become a carpenter, but your implicit belief that you "should" be academically inclined just might derail you, in spite of your passion and competence.

*"Your beliefs become your thoughts,  
Your thoughts become your words,  
Your words become your actions,  
Your actions become your habits,  
Your habits become your values,  
Your values become your destiny."  
– Mahatma Gandhi*

You have picked up this book with the intention to change your life in some way. You must first ask yourself, do you believe that you can do this? Do you believe there is something you can do to improve your quality of life from the inside? Do you believe, like Mahatma Gandhi, that your destiny stems from your beliefs?

If you have never thought about it, that might seem crazy! It took me a really long time to come to terms with the idea that my beliefs could shape my reality and not the other way around. To some extent, it all starts with a leap of faith. If you are not ready for that, please bear with me for a bit longer.

- Request #3: Suspend judgment for the moment.



In Chapter 1, you looked at your objectives for reading this book. Now I invite you to prepare to think differently about beliefs. If you think about the changes that you want to bring upon your life at this time, what beliefs would support that? Think about that for a moment. I strongly suggest that you include something like “I have what it takes to improve my quality of life.”

If you are new to this exercise, it may be easier to think of someone else who already has what you want. What might they believe? Try to put yourself in the shoes of someone who already has made the changes you want in your life.

Take a moment to formulate and write down in this book some of the beliefs that would support the life you dream of:

*“Thoughts become things...  
Choose the good ones!”  
– Mike Dooley*

As an illustration to this, I would like you to consider the well-known story of Jim Carrey. He grew up in a very poor family, and even though it seemed likely that he would follow his parents in poverty, Jim always had a lot of hope for his future.

In 1990, Jim Carrey was a struggling young artist trying to make it in Los Angeles. That night, he drove his old beat-up Toyota to the top of a hill. As he sat there, looking over the city, dreaming of his future, broke as he was, he wrote himself a check for \$10 million 'for acting services rendered,' and dated it for Thanksgiving 1995. He stuck that check in his wallet—and the rest, as they say, is history. By 1995, Jim had had amazing success and was making up to \$20 million per film.

You may be wondering if this is magic, but I assure you it is not. Yet, it sure feels like magic when three ingredients are put together:

1. Purpose: you feel aligned, in agreement with your deepest values, congruent, and confident that you are on the right path.
2. Commitment: you are committed and have put in place a way to honor your commitment.
3. Hard work: you go after your goals; you don't just sit and wait for them to materialize.

You may have heard of the law of attraction. It does not say “sit on your couch, visualize your dreams, and they will appear!” The law of attraction invites you to be really clear on what you want, commit to it, and then orient your life towards it. And then things will start to shift.

If you are more scientifically-minded and find this a little hard to swallow, consider the cognitive biases studied by psychologists. Our human brains process so much information that it uses heuristics to make decisions and this leads to biases. One such heuristic has us looking for evidence that confirms our current view of the world.

This is called the confirmation bias. Basically, we dislike it when our beliefs are in contradiction with the circumstances we are in. As a result, we have a mostly unconscious habit of acknowledging the perspectives that confirm our pre-existing views, while simultaneously ignoring or dismissing opinions—no matter how valid—that threaten our world view.

So when you think that the world is a nasty place and that there is no opportunity anymore in this day and age, you will be drawn to the abundant media coverage of all the tragedies happening all over the planet. When you think that the world is full of opportunity, you can find an equally abundant amount of information on truly inspiring stories of people who took actions that improved the lives of hundreds or thousands of people.

The law of attraction works with that too. Your beliefs will orient your attention and your experience of life. This in turn will change the way you act, based on your expectations. Hence, your experience of life will be different, and it is then easy to see how your beliefs can profoundly impact your life.

I can illustrate this from my own life. I walked around for a long time with a belief that nobody could really love me. It was painful. Every close relationship I had somehow confirmed that belief.

Fast forward a couple of decades of therapy, of learning new ways of thinking and being, and I no longer have this issue in my life. It wasn't easy, and it certainly wasn't quick. I think if I had discovered some of the ideas I share in this book earlier, it might have saved me a lot of time!

A good starting point for shifting your beliefs is to use affirmations. Affirmations are short, powerful statements. They are you being in conscious control of your thoughts. Most of our thoughts are unconscious and research shows that about 80% of our thoughts are negative. Affirmations, then, are your conscious positive thoughts.

Affirmations capture something you wish to include in your life; their job is to support you. We read affirmations to reaffirm what we are committed to, we read affirmations so that our subconscious mind will hear them and—little by little—we incorporate them into our beliefs, and they will support and sustain our mindset.

I recommend that for the moment you choose affirmations that reflect the beliefs you identified above, that support the goals you have for this book. Try to pick two or three affirmations at this point.

- Affirmation 1:

- Affirmation 2:

- Affirmation 3:

One of my affirmations is “I commit to opening myself up to receiving the love that I need.” Remember the story I told earlier about believing that no one could love me? I refuse this belief now and put things into place to change it.

It’s important when you read an affirmation that you use your imagination so that it feels true. If I read the above affirmation and a little voice in my head goes “Yeah right, like *that’s* gonna happen!” then that totally defeats the point. We will come back to affirmations in Part III when we talk about morning and evening routines.

Now that you have explored the impact of your beliefs on your life and started on the path of consciously choosing your beliefs, you need perseverance, which is the next building block for creating the life that you want.

## CHAPTER 4: Perseverance

Even when you have motivation, you are committed, and you are working on aligning your beliefs, the going sometimes still gets rough. So the question then is: “How do you keep going when the going gets rough?” The answer: perseverance!

If you have a goal, you probably have a strategy for implementing it. But, you might feel tired and feel like you lack the energy to do your goal-related activity. Other things might come up, which are more exciting, more urgent, more compelling, easier, the list goes on. You might be distracted by the news on TV, by the kids making noise, by the phone ringing. You are vulnerable to all that when you don't prioritize adequately.

Because discouragement WILL strike, it's hard to change your habits, to take on new behaviors. But I'm going to help you find ways to keep going. You need to put systems in place to better deal when these issues come along.

I will start with a somewhat counterintuitive idea, which links to a key insight of the Greek and Roman Stoic philosophers: sometimes the best way to address the uncertainty of your future is to focus, not on the best-case scenario, but on the worst.

According to the Greek and Roman Stoic philosophers, if you feared a certain condition, you should try it on; so for example, if you feared losing your wealth, Seneca would advise that you live as if you were poor, all the while reminding yourself that this is what you feared.

Without going quite to those lengths, defensive pessimism is one of the best ways to prevent yourself from derailing; I detailed defensive pessimism in Chapter 2. It's a great technique for preventing you from giving up.

In order to increase your chances of reaching your goals, think about what might go wrong and then plan what you can put in place now, so that when you derail, you can get back on track. For perseverance, much like for willpower, it is also critical that you show self-compassion if you stray from your goal-related path.

I will talk about self-compassion later in the book but just be forewarned. There is abundant scientific evidence to show that beating yourself up is much less effective than showing self-compassion. It's important to stay focused and to forgive yourself for your momentary lapses.

Moreover, it will help you stay the course if you are accountable to more than yourself. Your commitment to yourself is very important. But when the going gets rough, that is the easiest commitment to let go of.

So I strongly encourage you to get a buddy, someone who is either on this journey with you or who is on another journey, so that you can support one another. Then tell people that you are engaged on this path. The more people you tell, the more people will expect you to do it, and that will make you more accountable.

What do YOU need when the going gets rough? Take some time now and think about how a well-intentioned person could best support you in a way that would motivate you to stay the course.

Your needs:

Don't hesitate to reach out and get support. Find someone in your environment, who is reliable, and tell them what you need from them. You might be surprised to receive exactly the support that you need.

Most of all, to help with perseverance, it's important to remember your "why," to remember your motivation: what you want, why you want this, and why now. If you pick a "why" that matters to you, it just might suffice to motivate you!

The next set of tips may be enough to jumpstart you if you are only mildly derailed or just tempted to derail from your plan.

First, choose an action to improve your mood such as purposefully laughing in front of a mirror or doing a few jumping jacks.

I also suggest using a power song. This is a song that makes you want to move, to dance, to get into motion, one that energizes you. Have it on whatever device you are likely to have around you when your motivation sinks so you can listen to it. If you have chosen it well, it will re-motivate you.

Second, start small. Set a timer for five minutes. Do the behavior that you want to start doing for those five minutes. Chances are you will want to keep going once you have started, but even if you don't, five minutes is a lot better than nothing.

Finally, if you have a role model, think about what *they* would do in your situation and see if you can do the same.

You now should have explored a bunch of different ways to muster some perseverance. What is going to work for you? In the next chapter, I will bring together the elements of a Great Mindset that were covered in the last four chapters. This will send you on the path of exploring your life improvements.

## CHAPTER 5: Creating Your Future

You have now explored your mindset, one ingredient at a time: finding motivation, committing, identifying your beliefs, and finding perseverance. Together they give you the elements of a great mindset.

By developing this mindset, you have found reasons why you are on this journey, you have shed light on your commitment to walking the walk, you have clarified a set of beliefs that support the life you want to create, and you have learned some tools for finding perseverance when the going gets tough.

With all this, you are now ready to go into Part II of this book, which teaches the various areas you can focus on to help you change things. My objective with this book is that you will find ways to become a greater and grander version of you and live a great life.

What that means to you is entirely up to you! I am merely showing you different things to try, and I am one hundred percent convinced that among those you will find a way to significantly improve your quality of life.

I will lead you through exploring your health, both physical and emotional, your relationships in this world, and your spirituality and meaning, how you can connect with a sense of being part of something bigger.

I will cover one area at a time. In each area and sub-area, I will give you some information, and at times, I will invite you to experiment with a specific behavior or reflect on your deep wishes for your life. In each area, you will explore and experiment with different things for you to clarify what YOU want for yourself in this area, in order to live life to its fullest.

After reading Part II, you should have a better idea of which area(s) you want to focus on. In Part III, you can then determine which action steps you will take to help you improve those areas of focus, which will enhance your overall experience of life.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of actually trying things out. Reading personal development books does NOT develop people. What helps you to evolve is trying on different behaviors and having new experiences. Reading may change the way you think of the world, but no amount of thought will have any impact if it is not followed by some action! Experience is what expands your sense of possibility.

Once you have tried a variety of new behaviors, your mindset will help you decide which behaviors you want to keep, and then you can use the skills you have developed to keep doing the behaviors that support your goals for improving your life.

I strongly recommend, however, that you try one thing at a time and that you do not try adding all the suggestions into your life all at once. Just like a baby starting on solid foods, if you give a baby six new foods at once and she gets a rash, you will not know which food suited her and which one caused the reaction.

If you try to revamp your entire life all at once, you WILL get indigestion! And that is likely to have one and only one consequence: you will quit and go back to the way you were doing things before. That is NOT why you are reading this book; so, pace yourself.

Try the things I suggest, see how you like them, see if you'd like to incorporate them into your life, make a note of which behaviors you would like to incorporate, and then proceed with caution. Don't overdose on well-being, for Heaven's sake!

As you embark on Part II, it is useful to refocus on why you are reading this book in the first place. This is your ultimate motivation, your goal. Write down your goal now. I invite you to look at it every time you pick up this book.

Your Goal:

Having your goal clearly in mind will help you in your exploration. If you are too stressed, you might be particularly interested in contemplative practices that help soothe you. If you are too tired, you might want to focus on your sleep habits. If your diet is not working for you, you might be more interested in exploring eating habits.

Sometimes you might be surprised by the effects of a small change so I recommend that you be open to having unexpected benefits from behavioral changes. As I will emphasize again as we progress through the different areas, I strongly encourage you to try things at least once or do at least five minutes of a new thing. Start small but become an unrelenting explorer.

As you begin to incorporate new behaviors, you will see changes and others just might notice. One of the best rewards for doing transformational work is when someone else gets inspired and begins to shift her own life.

This book is about using tools to help you cultivate a better well-being, no matter what, regardless of your circumstances. Life will throw curve balls at you, that is a near certainty. But it turns out that feeling bad, feeling anxious, feeling angry etc., never changed anything *out*

*there*, it only makes you more miserable *in here*. In this book, I invite you to develop skills that will allow you to take life in stride, handle the tough times more peacefully, and enjoy the good times more fully.

As I move through the areas of focus, note that your situation may warrant a specialist. You may, for example, need to consult a nutrition specialist or a sleep doctor to help you with your specific needs. With that being said, I offer to you my scientifically-backed recommendations which have helped me and others along our journeys.



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