



# Happiness Starts With You

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## Introduction



## Happiness Starts With You

We go through life doing our best to reach our dreams and our goals. We think that once we've achieved success, we'll finally be happy and at peace with the world. This may be true. However, the simple fact is that not everyone's going to end up successful. Only a small minority will reach the pinnacle of wealth and power. Most of us are going to get stuck living mediocre lives.

So, the question is, does that mean only a small percentage of people are going to live happy lives? Are the rich, powerful and successful the only ones with the right to be happy?

The answer is, fortunately, no. You need neither money nor power to have a happy and fulfilling life. After all, happiness is a state of mind.

You can have all the money in the world and still be unhappy. On the other side of the coin, you can have no worldly possessions but still live a very happy life.

In this in-depth guide on happiness, you're going to learn that your happiness isn't dependent on money, career, or status in life. It starts with you.

# Chapter 1: The Road To Happiness



*“The most simple things can bring the most happiness.” -Izabella Scorupco*

We all have different definitions of happiness. What might make you happy may not be a source of happiness for other people. What others call their source of joy and fulfillment, may be a source of disdain for you.

For instance, many may say their happiness comes from their families and their good health. For others, it might be their jobs and their careers. For some, it's their wealth and their social standing in the community. For more than a few people, tasty food and drinks light them up like no other. And the list goes on.

With that said, researchers have long debated on a single definition of happiness. This is because there are far too many factors that affect and contribute to a person's happiness. The consensus, however, is that “happiness is the state of being happy.”

I know this definition still seems a bit vague, but the point is that happiness is a mental state that reflects the range of emotions you encounter on a daily basis. It defines how you view your life, that is, whether you're satisfied or unsatisfied with your quality of life. If you're dissatisfied, then obviously, it means you're not happy. However, if you are, then good for you!

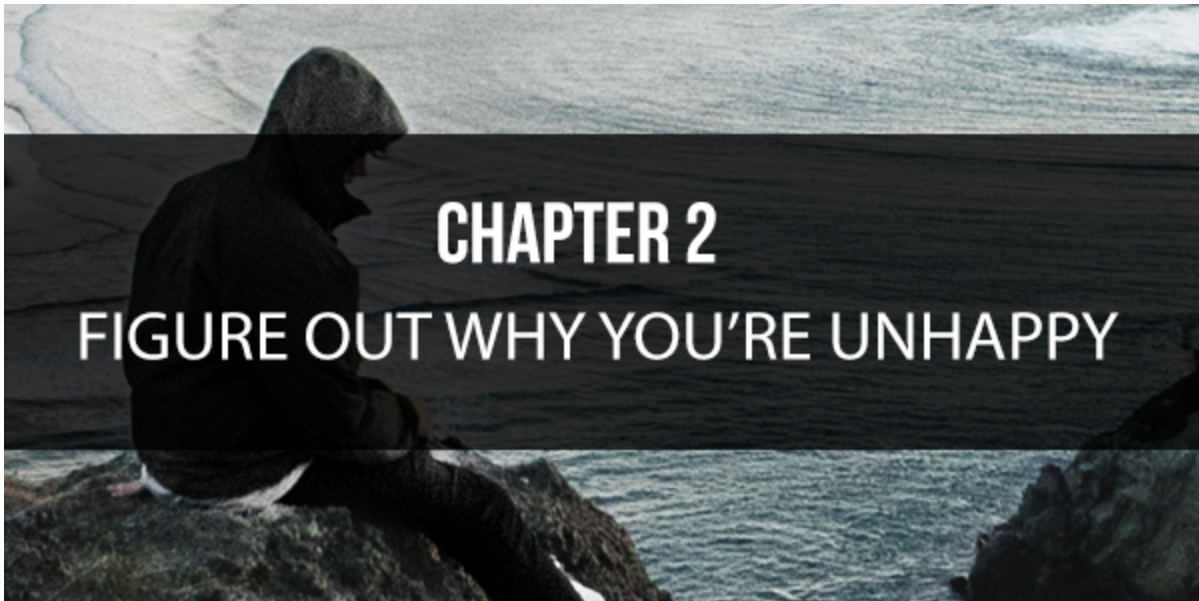
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Now the thing is, just because someone's happy doesn't mean they're going to be immune to negative emotions. Nothing can be further from the truth. Happy people still encounter trials and challenges, but they deal with these differently than unhappy people would. This is what sets them apart from the rest of the population.

Happy people aren't deterred easily. They're less susceptible to negative emotions. They don't allow others to walk all over them. Their happiness is contagious, and people naturally gravitate towards them. You'd know a genuinely happy person when you meet them. They can literally light up a room just by being in it.

No matter what your personal definition of happiness is, this simple truth remains: we can all use some more happiness in our lives. The world will be a much better place to live in if everyone on this planet radiates happiness.

## Chapter 2: Figure Out Why You're Unhappy



*"Unhappiness is not knowing what we want and killing ourselves to get it." - Don Herold*

When you're constantly feeling the blues and you can't remember the last time you've felt happy and free, then you need to figure out why as soon as possible. Getting stuck in an unhappy state is obviously not ideal for any sane person as unhappiness can quickly spiral into depression. Hopefully, it isn't too late. Here are a few questions you can ask yourself to figure out what's causing your unhappiness.

### **Are you doing what you want to be doing?**

Ask yourself this very important question. If you answer "no," then what are you doing about it? Are you taking any steps towards the job or career you want? Or, do you feel like you're trapped in a

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day job you don't particularly like, but you stay in it because it pays the bills?

For many people, this is a common dilemma. They know they're not happy with their current jobs, but they stay in it year in and year out. They may not like it, but they feel like they have no other choice. Over a period of time, their day jobs become their comfort zone. They become afraid of pursuing their passions. If you're one of them, then you need to figure out how you can free yourself to pursue your interests and your passions in life.

In the beginning, you probably didn't have a lot of say in the matter. Your parents probably didn't support your dream to become a musician or a professional athlete or an artist. They've probably heard horror stories of people who pursued their passions and ended up hungry and homeless. Since you're too afraid to disobey your parents, you do their bidding and work at a job you dislike.

If this story sounds familiar, or if you're still trapped in this position, then it's time to do something about it. Can you not find a

way to pursue your passion? What steps are you taking to free yourself of this trap?

Your answers will hopefully help you see the light, so you can finally start pursuing the career that will make you happy.

### **Are your thoughts making you unhappy?**

You have a say about what goes on in your mind, that is, you have a choice about the kind of thoughts you allow to run through your head. You can choose to think positively, or you can choose the opposite. If you choose the latter, then obviously, it's going to make you unhappy.



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Of course, you can easily tell yourself to stop thinking negative thoughts. But this is easier said than done. We can bump our heads all we want, and the negative thoughts will still continue in the background. This is literally why some people go crazy. They hear voices, and they can't stop listening to it no matter what they do.

Visualization plays a vital role in overcoming negative thoughts. But it's also important to be self-aware and to pay attention to your thoughts.

Here's a trick you can try right now: Every time you catch yourself thinking negatively, tell yourself to stop. Take a deep breath and imagine your whole body's coated in oil and the negativity's sliding off of you. With the negativity banished from your mind, you can then let your positive thoughts take over.

### **Are you aiming for perfection?**

There are lots of things you can be aiming for – perfection isn't one of them. Why? Because when you set perfection as your ultimate goal, you're inevitably setting yourself up for failure. Not just any failure, but a catastrophic one at that, especially if you give it your all.

Instead of perfection, aim for something more realistic, like excellence, for instance. It's still higher up on the achievement scale, but at least, it's more attainable. Not a single one of us is perfect, so why aim for perfection?

Perfection is, to put it bluntly, overrated. When you aim for perfection, you set a bar so high that when you make a single, tiny mistake, it can cause everything you've worked so hard for to crumble.

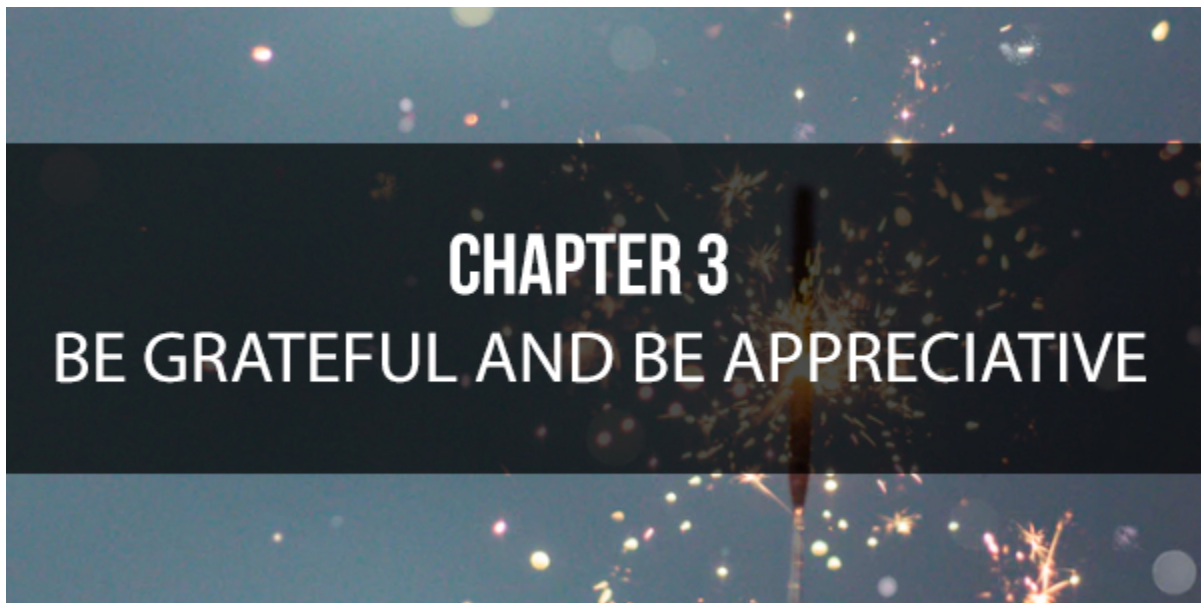
When you aim for excellence, however, you give yourself a fighting chance to succeed. You're not going to be scared to go

out there and make a fool of yourself because you know your chances of making it are good. You use your mistakes and your failures as learning experiences.

And the other benefit of aiming for excellence? You've always got some more room to grow! You can be the best performer at work, in school, or your sport, and still have the opportunity to do an even better job next time.

Once you've figured out why you're unhappy, you'll be able to move forward and finally be on the path to creating happiness in your life.

## Chapter 3: Be Grateful And Be Appreciative



*"Time and health are two precious assets that we don't recognize and appreciate until they have been depleted." - Denis Waitley*

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When your unhappiness is eating away at your soul, and you think everything you have is going to waste, think again. Look around you. What do you see? What do you smell? What do you hear? When was the last time you looked at the sky? Like, really looked at it? Can you appreciate the sound of leaves rustling in the wind? Or the feel of grass on your bare feet?

Now, imagine having all these taken away from you. Imagine losing your vision, your hearing, your sense of touch, your sense

of taste, and your sense of smell. Take a moment to reflect on what you're missing out on.

Imagine spending the rest of your life without all of your senses. It's extremely hard, isn't it? You'd probably be driven to end your life right then and there because life as you know it has ended. Your life will never be the same again.

Fortunately, the above is just an exercise. But a powerful one at that. I hope it made you see just how trivial all your problems are compared to having everything – literally everything – taken away from you.

Here are 10 things you should appreciate in life:

### **1. Life.**

Every day you wake up, you're given another lease in life. You have a new opportunity to start your life anew, to make amends, to make an impact in this world. Instead of trudging through your day as though you're carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders, try to live each day as though it were your last. Every single day you live like this is going to be your best day ever!

### **2. Family.**

No matter how busy life gets, always find the time to connect

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with your family. Your parents gave life to you, without them you'll be nothing. If you have siblings, learn to appreciate them as well. If you have extended family, spend quality time with them as well. Everyone in your family helped shaped you to become the person you are today.

## **3. Friendship.**

Having friends you can count on is important. You have someone to share your thoughts and your feelings with. They can improve your life, and likewise, you can help enrich theirs as well. Have meaningful conversations with your friends.

## **4. Health.**

Good health often goes unacknowledged. Learn to take good care of your body. We're only reminded to be grateful for our health when illness befalls us. Even the tiniest pain can inconvenience us greatly, more so serious and critical illnesses.

## **5. Love.**

Whether it's romantic or platonic love, self or selfless love, the saying "love makes the world go round" holds plenty of wisdom. Love makes you come alive. It motivates you to get out of bed early, to walk with a spring in your step, to smile and laugh more often, and many other positive changes.

## **6. Laughter.**

There's a lot of things to laugh about in this life, no matter how bad you think it's become. Laughter has plenty of benefits, including making you healthier. When you laugh, you reduce your stress levels. When you share a laugh with another person, you immediately feel a bond with that person.

## **7. Tears.**

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Tears may be seen negatively, but it's not all that bad. Sometimes, tears are necessary. It helps put things in perspective. It helps you appreciate life and laughter even more.

### **8. Nature.**

While there's less of nature now than there was a few millennia ago, there's still plenty left to appreciate. Even if you live in an urban jungle, you can still take some time to admire mother nature. Appreciate the greenness that plants and trees bring. Look at the animals grazing on grass. Observe and be amazed at how nature takes back what's hers in abandoned places.

### **9. Time.**

We don't have an infinite supply of time. The truth is, the moment we're born, our bodies start counting down how much time we have left. We don't know exactly when it's going to end, which is why we can't let trivial problems in life bring us down. Let's enjoy the limited amount of time we have here on this planet.

### **10. Yourself.**

Yes, you. Learn to appreciate yourself. You're not perfect, nobody is. But you've come a long way since your mother gave birth to you. Think about all your successes and your failures, your hopes, and your dreams. Then think about the people you've met along the way, how you've helped them in one way or another. Think about the legacy you're going to leave behind.

Learn to appreciate everything you have in your life – both good and bad. In the end, they all come together to provide a unique life experience that's meant to challenge you and bring out the best in you. When you stop worrying about everything and start appreciating every little thing in life, your happiness will become apparent, not just to yourself, but to everyone around you, too.

## Chapter 4: Your Comfort Zone Isn't Making You Happy



*"Life begins at the end of your comfort zone." - Neale Donald Walsch*

Staying in your comfort zone is just as important as leaving it from time to time. Contrary to popular belief, your comfort zone isn't fixed to a single location. It's not bounded by physical walls. The truth is that our comfort zone exists in our mind. With that said, it should be easy to get out of it right? Unfortunately, the answer is "no." It's far more complicated than that.

Comfort zones are called 'comfort' for a reason. It's because everything that falls inside this zone makes us comfortable, we know everything like the back of our hands. It doesn't give us any headaches. It doesn't cause us any stress. It's where we usually head to the moment life becomes too much for us to bear. It's your 'usual' environment where you control everything, and you know nothing's going to come out at you and scare you to death.

Comfort zones are all good. But it becomes a negative thing when it holds you back from living life the way it's meant to be lived.

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Think of a turtle hiding in its shell. You're the turtle, and the shell is your comfort zone. You want to try out something new, but you're too afraid. Your friends are asking you to check out something new and fun, but you refuse. You spend your entire life in your shell. That's all you know. And because of that, you don't get to live life at all. You're simply living inside your shell.

It's true that you can be happy inside your comfort zone. But like most things in life, you need to work on maintaining that level of happiness. And in order to do that, you'd need to step out of your comfort zone.

Let's take, for example, a married couple. When you're newlywed, everything seems so exciting, so perfect. But a few months or a few years down the road, you realize that both of you have become far too comfortable with the life you've made, and you're no longer happy. You're no longer growing in your relationship.

You do the same things over and over, day in and day out. There's no variety in your daily routine or your marriage. Unhappiness starts to build up.

To combat this, you'd need to do something out of the ordinary. Both you and your spouse are taking each for granted, and you will need to work hard on making the marriage happy once again. Perhaps you can both take up dancing lessons, or you schedule something adventurous on your days off. Rediscover each other by leaving your comfort zones behind.

Here are other ways you can break out of your comfort zone:

- **Remind yourself of your dreams**

Don't let your comfort zone drag you down. You know what you want deep down inside, but you're too afraid of all the risks and the unknowns along the way. A realistic method of going after your dreams, and minimizing the risks, is by planning.

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Have a solid plan on how you're going to get from point A (where you are now) to point B (your big dream). If you can break it down into milestones and mini-goals, it will be even better. This way, you're not going to feel like David going after Goliath.

Every time you achieve a milestone, it brings you one step closer to your goals. Just take it easy. Have a daily, weekly or monthly goal, and you won't even realize how far you've left your comfort zone behind!

- **Be brave and face your fears**

Just because you're leaving your comfort zone behind doesn't mean you're going to be entering the lion's den. The outside world may be chaotic, but if you spend enough time in it, you'll learn it's not so bad. There's a semblance of order there. You just need to open your eyes and recognize the signs and the patterns.

When planning your great escape, ask yourself what your greatest fears are and then figure out how you can combat these fears. If you're afraid of public speaking, perhaps it's because you hate the thought of people laughing at you.

To face your fear, try thinking of it this way: you have a very important message to share, and the only way people are going to learn about it is if you go out there and tell them. Otherwise, they're going to live their lives in blissful ignorance. Also, you can say to yourself that maybe half of your audience is in the same boat as you. They're just as afraid of public speaking as you are.

So, you see, your problems aren't all that bad. Whatever your fear is, break it down until you can see just how foolish and insignificant it all is in the grand scheme of things!

- **Learn a new skill**



Learning a new skill in this day and age is a must. Employers value it, colleagues appreciate it, and best of all, you're not limiting yourself to a single skill. New skills will open up a whole new world for you. Sure, it's most probably going to take some time, but if you keep on doing the same things over and over, you're eventually going to get left behind. If you want to succeed in life, you need to pick up as many relevant skills as possible. In short, you can never have too much skill.

- **Strike up a conversation**

When we were kids, our parents told us to never talk to strangers. But it doesn't have to carry on to our adult lives. We're better informed, and we're savvy enough to identify who we should be avoiding and who we should be socializing with. Perhaps you've got a new colleague at work. He or she seems to be the shy type. Instead of hiding in your cubicle, go say "Hi!" and introduce yourself. That person will appreciate your kindness and you'll end up feeling happy about yourself.

## Chapter 5: Embrace And Welcome Change



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*“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”*

- Barack Obama

You want to be happy, right? Then do whatever it takes so you can experience true happiness! It's as simple as that. But, of course, nothing ever plays out that easily in life. It's so much easier to say you'll change than to actually do it.

There are two kinds of change: positive and negative. It may not always be evident at first, that is, you're not sure if the change you are embracing will lead to good results or bad results. Sometimes, you need to take a leap of faith and just do it.

When dealing with change, you can initiate it or you can wait for it to happen. The good thing is if you initiate it, you're in a much better position to control it rather than just reacting to it. It's also easier for you to adapt to the change because you're expecting it. As such, you're not going to feel like it came from out of nowhere and blindsided you.

Though change is often painted negatively by naysayers, there are actually plenty of benefits to embracing change. Here are some of them:

- **You can discover new opportunities**

It's true that there are opportunities everywhere. When you've braced yourself to embrace change, it's easier for you to uncover hidden opportunities. Some people may even say, the opportunity will reveal itself to you. This is because when you embrace change, you open your eyes as well. Where everybody else is running away from the change, you're walking towards it with eyes wide open. This makes it easier for you to spot new opportunities.

- **You'll grow as a person**

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Failure to embrace change means you're going to get stuck doing the same things over and over again. There's literally no room for you to grow and improve as a person. You can change your bad habits and replace them with new ones. When you move from one place to another, you broaden your horizon. You adapt to your new surroundings, and you learn new things. Often, the only way to progress is by welcoming change with open arms.

### · **You'll discover your strengths (and weaknesses)**

Accepting and embracing change will allow you to discover your strengths and even your weaknesses. For instance, if you get assigned into a new role at your job, you may realize that you're better suited to the new role than your old one, and your productivity is going to be at an all-time high. Likewise, if you dive head-first into a new business, you'll discover the areas you're good at and where you're better off delegating to someone more qualified and more skilled than you are.

### · **You'll learn new ways to solve problems**

When you don't resist change, you'll eventually figure out new ways to solve problems. Getting exposed to new environments help you think outside the box. In short, change can bring out your creativity. It enables you to seek new solutions more efficiently and effectively. But, if you refused to accept change in the first place, you'd be stuck troubleshooting the same old problems.

Creating a life of happiness means embracing change. It means stepping out of your comfort zone. Ask yourself, what can you change in your life right now that will lead to your ultimate happiness?

Do you need to change jobs? Do you need to take up a new hobby? Do you think moving to another city or even another country is necessary for you to achieve happiness? Only you know the answer to this question.

The important thing to remember is that seeking and embracing change should be on top of your list if you really want to achieve true happiness.

## Chapter 6: Say Goodbye To Your Bad Habits



*"The only proper way to eliminate bad habits is to replace them with good ones." - Jerome Hines*

If you want to create a life of happiness, then it's imperative that you start working on getting rid of your bad habits, and replacing them with positive ones. However, doing this isn't as simple as it sounds. It's because bad habits take time to build. It doesn't happen overnight. Instead, it occurs over a period of time until it gets to a certain point where you do the habit out of rote. You don't need to think about it; you just do it. That's when you know you've formed a habit.

Bad habits have the undesirable effect of making you unhappy in the long run. Sure, it may bring you some form of satisfaction while you're doing the routine or habit, but it's not going to be good for you or your health as time goes by.

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For example, smoking. You feel good when you're smoking. The act of inhaling and exhaling cigarette smoke helps you diffuse your stress levels to manageable levels. But on the flip side, smoking has a lot of negative side effects, especially on your health. Long-term effects of smoking include cancer, brain damage, emphysema, tooth decay, and so much more. Even the people inhaling your second-hand smoke are at risk of these diseases, too. So, you see, smoking is only going to bring you temporary satisfaction. In the long run, it's going to kill you.

Now, breaking bad habits will likewise take some time. You'd need to really work on it and have the self-awareness to know when you're doing the habit. Then you need self-control and self-discipline to be able to put a stop to it.

Here are a few strategies you can use to help you say goodbye to your bad habits:

### **Know your cues or triggers**

Experts say habits have three parts: a trigger or cue, a routine, and finally, a reward. For example, in a smoker's case, one possible trigger could be eating. After you've eaten, you feel a strong urge to smoke. Or, it could be that stress is your trigger. When you're stressed, the need to smoke becomes stronger.

Knowing what your cues or triggers are is the first step to overcoming a bad habit. Study your bad habits, analyze when you feel the need to carry it out. If you're trying to quit drinking alcohol, then stop buying alcohol. When you're socializing with friends,

feel free to tell them you're trying to quit. If you've got good friends, they'll support you and help you achieve your goals, so they're not going to offer any alcohol to you. If your friends still pressure you to drink, then perhaps you should start spending less time with them and find others who'll be more supportive.

## **Reduce your stress**

Sometimes bad habits form in response to various stressors in our life. You pick up the habit of smoking when you're stressed. You pick up drinking when you're overworked or when you have problems at home. You pick up procrastination when faced with a mountain of work. When you're trying to beat deadlines, you drink tons of coffee to give yourself a mental boost.

These are but a few examples of bad habits that people pick up when they become stressed. If you find yourself responding negatively to stress, then it's time to do something about it. How? By trying your best to reduce your stress levels.

Figure out what makes you stressed, and try to find a way to avoid these situations to make your stress levels go down. In most cases, living a stress-free life isn't going to be possible, so you need to face it head on and learn to control or manage your stress.

With that said, it's important to note that stress isn't really such a bad thing. In fact, many experts say some stress is necessary in our lives. It releases hormones which trigger our survival instincts. It helps us perform our tasks more efficiently and more effectively. It only becomes a bad thing when you let it take over your life, that is, when you allow yourself to get stressed constantly.

## **Anchor your bad habits to new and positive ones**

One of the easiest ways to break a bad habit and replace it with a positive one is to use an 'anchor' system. This is how it works: every time you catch yourself starting to do the bad habit, you do the new one instead.

For instance, you're trying to break the bad habit of, say, biting your nails. Let's say this bad habit is triggered by stress. Now, you also want to build a more positive habit of reading or listening to inspirational content to help you grow as a person.

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Every time you catch yourself biting your nails, you stop and then you pick up a good book nearby and read a few pages. Or you can go on YouTube and listen to your favorite motivational speakers. After a few weeks of doing this routine, you'll be able to remove nail-biting from your list of bad habits, and end up more inspired and less stressed in the process.

### **List all the reasons why you should quit the habit**

There's a reason why bad habits are called 'bad.' They have undesired effects that may or may not manifest immediately. For example, drinking. You know that when you drink in excess, you end up with a terrible hangover in the morning. You've probably puked a few times in public. Perhaps you notice your friends are no longer inviting you to social events and parties because they're afraid you'll have too much to drink and cause a scene.

Write all these negative consequences down and use it as your "why" for why you should stop drinking. Make your descriptions as detailed and as graphic as possible. Every time you make a mistake and you go back to your old ways, look up this list and make a promise to do better next time.

Re-examine your life from time and time and assess if you have any bad habits left that need to be stopped. Of course, it's entirely possible you'll pick up some other bad habits in the future, even if you end up turning your life around and live a happy existence. That's okay. No one's perfect. Just pick up where you left off and never stop working on making yourself a better person each and every day.

# Chapter 7: Learn To Love Yourself First



*"You can't let someone else lower your self-esteem, because that's what it is - self-esteem. You need to first love yourself before you have anybody else love you." - Winnie Harlow*

Loving yourself is a prerequisite to creating a life of happiness. This is because you can only be truly happy and at peace with the world if you love yourself. Likewise, you can't fully love another person if you don't even appreciate yourself to begin with.

With that said, how do you know if you love yourself enough? Here are a few tips:



### **You love what you see in the mirror**

You don't need to have the most beautiful or the most handsome face in the universe to appreciate your looks. You also don't need to have a supermodel's body to say you look sexy. We can't all be so fortunate to win the genetic lottery. But, the truth is, even those we think look 'perfect' have insecurities as well.

We think that making ourselves look perfect is the only way to appreciate what we see in the mirror. But when we're constantly comparing ourselves to somebody else, and we're always spotting imperfections even when there are none, then it's never going to stop, is it? You'll never be satisfied with your looks and yourself. You'll always find something to criticize.

Sure, cosmetic technology may have come a long way, and you can now transform your physical appearance to your ideal one, but at what cost? Cosmetic surgeons don't exactly do pro bono work, so expect to spend a lot of money. Unfortunately, not everyone has that kind of cash lying around, so they're left with no choice but to totally avoid the mirror. But do you really need to do that? The good news is you absolutely don't have to.

You just need to work on accepting yourself for who you are, that includes your looks. Whether you like it or not, it's the face you were born with. Learn to look beyond the physical. Sooner or later, you'll be comfortable in your own skin, and the mirror will finally become your friend.

### **You prioritize yourself above everyone else**

Prioritizing yourself over others is not a sign of selfishness, it just means you love yourself more than others. However, if you take to an extreme, that is, if you step over others to get what you want, then it's a different story. But, if you're not hurting anyone, then it's okay.

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The problem with most people is that they're too afraid to hurt others' feelings. They follow their parents' wishes, their spouse's demands. They easily bow down to peer pressure even though they know what they're being asked to do goes against their values.

Giving in to people you like and love is okay, but don't make it a habit. Your so-called friends can easily exploit your trust. If you don't learn to stand up for yourself and fight for what you believe in, they can easily manipulate you to do their bidding.

Letting others walk all over you is not a sign of selflessness. It's a sign of stupidity, for lack of a better word. You're a breathing human being. You have your dreams, your goals, your own life to live. Don't waste your time making others happy if you yourself aren't happy to begin with. If you want to devote your life to making others happy, you need to be in a position of loving yourself fully first.

### **You take care of your body and your health**

Nothing says self-loathing louder than letting your health go to waste. The old cliché is true: your body is your temple. If you don't take care of your body, then it means you're not taking care of your temple.

You don't need to sign up for a gym membership right now. Neither do you need to buy all organic food from this point

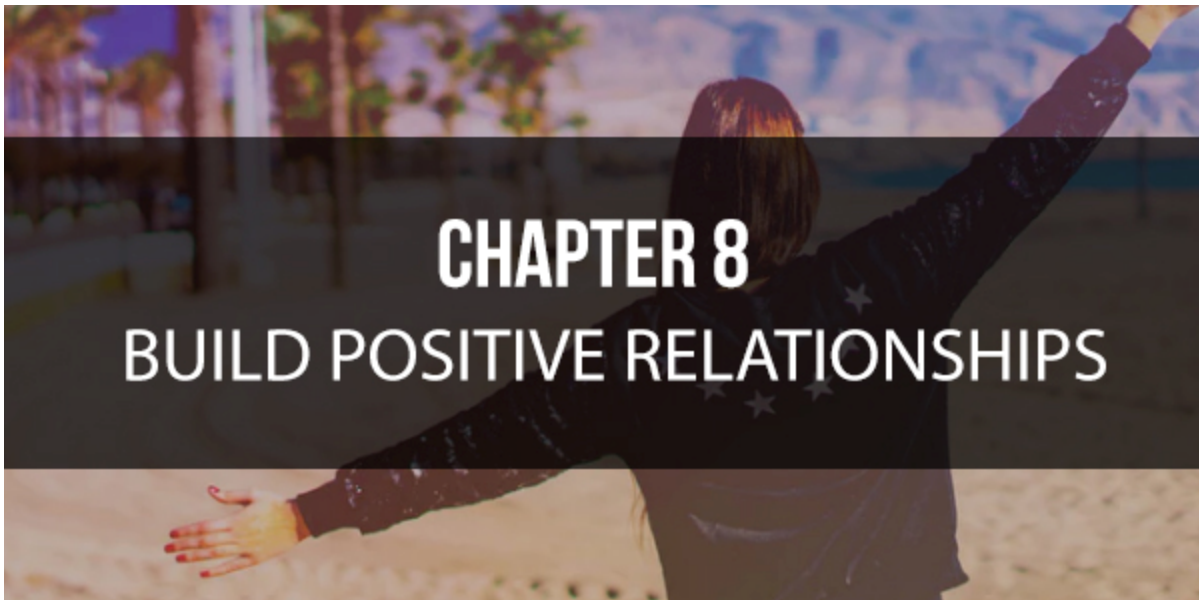
forward. Taking care of your health simply means paying attention to your body and its needs. Make a habit of eating healthy food and stop feeding yourself junk food. Stop doing anything that basically degenerates your body. Things like smoking and

drinking and taking drugs aren't cool. Sure, these may give you a short-term burst of happiness, but in the long run, you're going to suffer big time.

Learn to listen to your body. When you're stressed and tired, take a nap. Take a day off. Go away for the weekend. Sometimes, you may also want to do nothing at all for the whole day. Binge watching Netflix isn't ideal if you do it every day. But if it's just once a week or once a month, then it shouldn't be a problem, especially if it helps you take your mind off stressful things like work.

Give yourself some room to breathe. As the saying goes, all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. You not only get to have fun, but you also give your body a much-needed break from the hustle and bustle of your daily routine.

## Chapter 8: Build Positive Relationships



*"Treasure your relationships, not your possessions." - Anthony J. D'Angelo*

Material possessions can indeed make you happy, but not nearly as much if you share those possessions with people you love and respect. After all, we are hardwired to thrive in human contact and relationships.

## Happiness Starts With You

From the moment you were born, you had an instant relationship with your parents, siblings, and extended family members. When you went to school, you had classmates. When you went to work, you had colleagues and co-workers. And so on. You will go

through your entire life building and maintaining friendships with a lot of people.

Unfortunately, not all relationships are going to be happy and positive. In fact, you'll probably have your fair share of toxic relationships with people around you; this includes your closest family members and friends.

If you want to live a happy life, then you need to spend less and less time with these toxic individuals. If you can afford to cut them out of your life altogether, then do it. It may be hard, but if it's for the best, that is, living your life without them is going to make you happy, then go for it. Sometimes, a clean break is all you need to push your happiness meter from empty to full.

When you're with the right kind of people (the good kind), your happiness is going to be off the charts. You'll be happier, more inspired, and more likely to be content. Spending your time with good people is literally going to be the highlight of your day, or even your week or month if you don't spend nearly as much time with them as you'd like.

Here are a few ways to start building positive relationships with the people around you:

### **Get to know other people**

If you're the shy type, then it's time to start getting out of your shell. Take the initiative and start talking to people. Say something nice and try to build rapport, and see if you can get a conversation going. Some probably would want to be left alone. But for most people, having someone else initiate the conversation brings them out of their shell, too. Enjoy making a new friend!

### **Be more understanding**

## Happiness Starts With You

Whether you like it or not, one of the best ways you can build relationships with others is to be more understanding. Try being open-minded when meeting new people. After all, we all have our differences. We are unique individuals with our own attitudes, our own beliefs, our own cultures. When you're more understanding, you can easily imagine yourself in the other person's shoes to know where they're coming from.

### **Be a good listener**

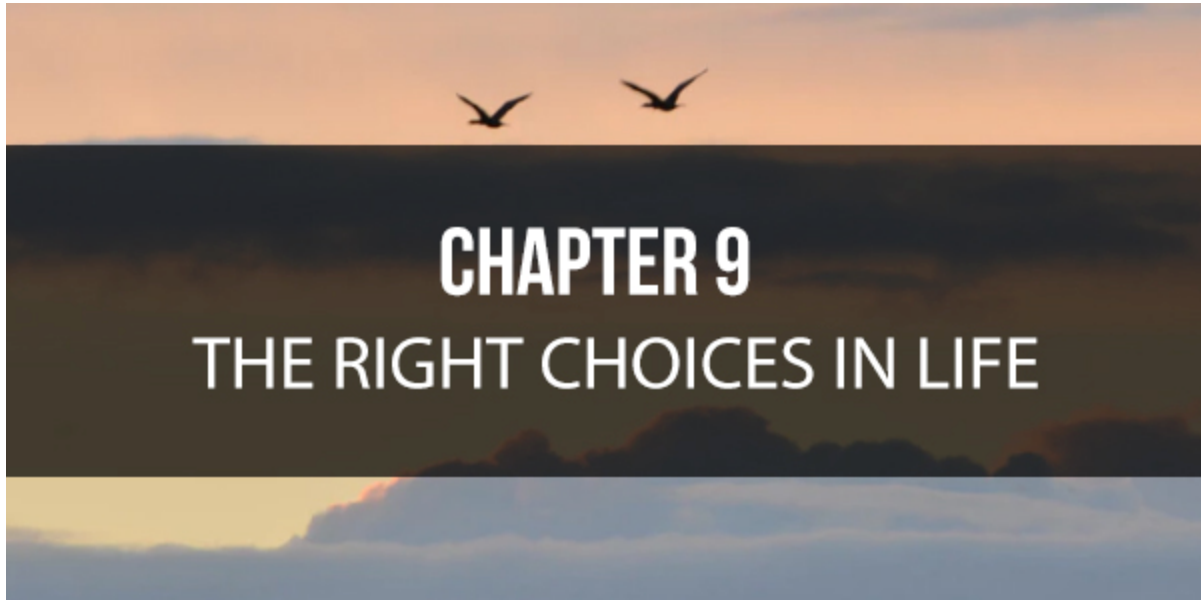
Listening is so much more than just being someone's sounding board. Listen to what the person is saying and try to understand what's actually being said, instead of just nodding absentmindedly. Good listeners make great friends; it shows you truly care about the other person.

### **Be a good communicator**

A lot of problems can arise when communication lines get crossed. This is why it's essential to develop your communication skills. It's so easy to assume everyone understands what you're saying, when in fact, they're taking it the wrong way. Relationships can quickly go sour because of this. You're saying one thing, but the other person is interpreting it in an entirely different manner.

Positive relationships do so much for us. The more positive relationships you have, the happier you will generally be. Happy relationships build our self-esteem and help us go through the motions of life in a more positive state. This, in turn, has a desirable effect of making you enjoy life more.

## Chapter 9: The Right Choices In Life



*"Our lives are a sum total of the choices we have made." - Wayne Dyer*

We make decisions throughout the day. Most don't require much thinking; you just know exactly what you're going to do. But in many cases, you need to stop and take some time to mull over your decision where you weigh the pros and cons of all the options available to you. When the stakes are higher, and you stand to lose something valuable, making the right choice is of utmost importance.

Losing is never fun, especially when it means sacrificing something important to you. For example, if you make the wrong decision, your job, your relationships, your happiness or even your life could be at stake.

In some decisions, you know what the outcome is going to be right away, it's clear-cut. For example, you're trying to decide if you're going to go to work today. If you choose to go, you're going to get paid. If not, then you're not going to get paid.

## Happiness Starts With You

However, for some decisions, the outcome won't be known until a certain period has passed. For example, you've invested in your friend's business. You know your friend has some business

savvy, but you won't find out until months or even years later if your investment was a wise decision.

So, how do you know you're making the right choice in life? Here are 3 signs you're making the correct call:

### **Your instincts say it's the right choice**

You've probably made decisions before where deep inside you absolutely know you're doing the right thing (even though your mind says you're making a mistake). And it turned out that you were right! In most cases, you probably didn't even know why you made that choice, you just know that deep in your heart it was the right call.

Some superstitious people may say it was your guardian angel or some higher, invisible power telling you what to do. But for those who believe in science, they say it's a combination of past experiences and knowledge. Our brains somehow connect the dots and interpret the data to tell us what to do.

There are countless stories of people who've listened to their intuition and lived to tell about it. They've somehow managed to avoid accidents, disasters, bankruptcies, and other equally life-changing (or life-ending) events. So, if you're faced with a difficult decision right now, try listening to what your gut says.

### **You're proud of your decision**

If your decision is something you can live with, then it's a good sign you've made the right choice. But if you're going to be ashamed of it, then obviously it's the wrong one. Here's an example: you find yourself attracted to someone, but you know they're already married, and this person also confessed they feel the same way about you.

Should you pursue the relationship or not? If you can live with the idea of ruining someone's marriage, then that's your choice. But if your morals and your values tell you that doing so is wrong, then you need to do the right thing. In the end, you'll be proud of yourself. You can sleep soundly at night knowing you didn't cheat and destroy your marriage.

### **You've weighed the pros and cons**

Big decisions need analysis. In some cases, listening to your gut instinct probably isn't going to do you any favors. For example, moving to another country isn't a small thing. Leaving everything familiar behind can't be easy. But you know that there's a better opportunity waiting for you abroad.

Your gut instinct will probably tell you to stay, but your logic may tell you to go for it. Whatever the case may be, write down the pros and cons of each option. Then sit on it for a few days and come back to it when you've thought things through.

In the end, what's important is that you go after what's going to make you happy. You may ask other people for their input, but remember, it's your life, and your actions will impact you more than anybody else.

## **Chapter 10: Paying It Forward**





*“When you're in a position that you can comfortably give, you need to pay it forward.” - Nelsan Ellis*

Paying it forward simply means doing the same favor you've received from someone else to other people. For instance, someone did a small, kind favor for you today. Instead of paying back that person, you do the same kind favor to someone else.

Paying it forward is a very powerful concept. One random act of kindness has the power to change someone's day for the better. Imagine if everyone in the whole world practiced this concept. One good deed can touch billions of people!

While we can only dream about living in a much better world, paying it forward can truly make a lot of people's lives better. Your generosity and your kindness are going to make others happy.

But will it make you happy as well?

## Happiness Starts With You

Well, research says yes. Giving makes you feel good about yourself. You may have hurt a lot of people in the past, but when you do a good deed for a stranger, you think there may be hope for you yet. It gives you a rush that's unlike any other. It makes you feel fantastic you did something that helped somebody, and made them happy in the process!

Being kind has a lot of tangible benefits. Here are some of the top ones:

### **It makes us happy**

Some people say kindness is overrated because it sets you up as an easy target for abuse. This may be true, but then again, there's no rule book that says you have to be kind to everyone. Not everyone deserves your kindness. The moment you feel like you're being taken advantaged of, just move on from that person.

Don't let a few rotten eggs turn you off from helping others. There are plenty more people who will appreciate your help and will be

more than willing to pay your kindness forward. These are the people you should strive to help out.

With that said, when you help people who truly need your help, you'll feel a deep sense of happiness and accomplishment that you're not going to find anywhere else.

### **It improves relationships**

We naturally gravitate to people who exude positivity, that includes the people we view to be good and kind. While it's true you should only help someone because you want to help, not because you're expecting anything in return, the fact remains that being kind has a few side benefits.

These include making others feel 'close' to you. They'd feel like you're a kindred spirit, someone who understands their struggles and is willing to help them out in times of need.

## Happiness Starts With You

No matter how angry or upset you may be at someone, if they do a good deed that benefits you, it ultimately makes it easier for you to 'forgive' them. In short, kindness can mend and improve relationships.

### **It improves our lives**

Try doing a random act of kindness every day for a few weeks, and see if that doesn't turn into a good habit. When you've made kindness a habit, your self-satisfaction is going to be at an all-time high.

The people whose lives you've touched in one small way or another is going to be grateful to you. You'll make new friends. You'll be happier. You'll be a more positive person. You'll be a joy to be around with.

Don't expect anything in return though. If the people you've helped continue to pay it forward, you're making your community – and the world - a much better place.

No matter how small or insignificant you think your act of kindness is, continue doing it. You may not know it, but all these small things are going to add up, and your kindness will come back to you when you least expect it. It's how karma and the universe works.

## **Conclusion**



Your happiness begins with you. If you're in an unhappy state

right now, look deep within you for answers. Figure out why you're unhappy and from there, look into improving yourself and building more positive relationships with others.

Learn to love yourself and make yourself happy first. It's going to be hard making others happy if you can't even be happy yourself. Make the right choices and the right decisions. Start by replacing your bad habits with positive ones. Make an effort to be happy and learn how to maintain that happiness in the face of trials and tribulations – your road to 'happily ever after' has just begun.



Happiness Starts With You