

HAPPINESS FIRST

DO IT YOURSELF ACTIVITY GUIDE

*Guaranteed to
increase your
happiness more
than doubling
your income*

LONNY NORTHRUP

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PREFACE

"Sometimes less is more"

Why another book on happiness? Simple.

Doing the activities in this book will bring you increased happiness and life satisfaction.

This book is unusually short because it simply provides activities you can do today, proven by scientific research to increase your happiness. Inspirational videos are included to give you added motivation. References are included if you want to verify the proven research. However, the best way to verify the research is to try the activities and see if they work for you. Not every activity will work for every person.

Each section provides a variety of:

Information. Concise. Only the very best, proven, science based research.

Inspiration. Motivational videos illustrating the research, including examples of people achieving the benefits of following these principles and practices.

Action. Simple things you can do NOW to become happier.

Results. Your happiness and life satisfaction will increase or you can have your small investment of \$10 back.

No Action = No Results

While it should be obvious, we are going to say it anyway. If you don't do any of the exercises in this book you will not benefit from the scientifically proven methods to increase your happiness. This video from comedian Brian Regan is a humorous reminder of this behavior most of us have from time to time.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-brian

Guarantee

If you consistently follow the activities recommended in this book your happiness will increase more than if you were to double your income. This will be explained in more detail near the end of the book.

About the Author: Just someone trying to help you live a better life.

Feedback: We would love to hear what you think of this book and even better, would like to hear your experiences from trying the activities. Please email us at feedback@happinessfirst.me or leaving a comment at happinessfirst.me.

INTRODUCTION

"When I was 5 years old, my mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down 'happy'. They told me I didn't understand the assignment, and I told them they didn't understand life."

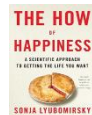
- John Lennon

Happiness FIRST

Contrary to what most of us have been conditioned to believe (and what a majority still believe), we will not be happy when . . . we achieve some future accomplishment such as graduating, getting married, buying a house, having children, getting a great job, making a certain amount of money, etc. Research has proven that the opposite is true. People who are happy “first” are better at achieving things in life. For this reason, we should seek to be happy first and most other things we pursue in life will improve. Additionally, we will be more resilient to the problems we encounter.

It's YOUR Choice!

Surprisingly, your life circumstances (family, health, wealth, achievements, where you live, etc.) only account for 10% of your happiness. Almost 50% of our happiness is determined at birth. However, the great news is that over 40% of our happiness is completely in our control. In her book, *The How of Happiness*, Sonja Lyubomirski substantiates this compelling fact.



What is PERMA?

Marty Seligman is widely recognized as the father of positive psychology (also known as the science of happiness). In his landmark book, *Flourish*, Seligman has condensed what are arguably the most concise principles of living a fulfilled life. This culminating work is based on decades of research and aggregates hundreds of validated studies. This will provide the basis of the 5 principles for helping you live a happier life.



- Positive Emotion
- Engagement
- Meaning
- Relationships
- Accomplishment

Each section of the book will highlight some of the most compelling aspects of each of these 5 dimensions of flourishing in life, which will also lead to your dramatically improved happiness.

EXTRA: Mobile app



Day One mobile app. A simple, easy to use app to capture photos and thoughts on your happiness first journey.

INSPIRATION:

The most popular class ever taught at Harvard University was a course by Tal Ben Shahar and the subject? Happiness. Most of us will never be a student in a Harvard classroom. However, Shawn Achor was part of this happiness movement at Harvard and this video will give you a flavor of happy Harvard.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-shawn

ACTION:

1

Happiness First Journal. Your first assignment will be to start a Happiness First Journal. This step is very simple. Either purchase a physical journal to write in, download a journaling app or open an electronic document and write the title on the first page, "My Happiness First Journal". Done (at least for now).

Writing has been proven to have numerous benefits including enhancing creativity, reducing stress, improving problem solving and increasing goal achievement.



In his book, *Redirect*, Tim Wilson shares the research and the science behind using writing to improve your life. Throughout this book, you will go through several of these scientifically proven writing exercises.

Getting Started

Sometimes we just need to get started. Even though this book is extremely short, it would be almost impossible for you to do everything in this book. This getting started list is a shortcut to try the best of the best first. Clicking on a numbered orange dot in this getting started list will take you to that location in the book. Clicking on a numbered orange dot anywhere else in this book will bring you back to this list.

1 *Happiness First Journal*

Having one place where you can go to record important information from these exercises will be a key to your overall journey. You will get benefit from writing and equally important you will benefit from reading the journal at later times.

2 *Gratitude*

The single most highly correlated trait to happiness is gratitude. Actually “becoming” a grateful person is the most important thing you can do to become a happy person. Try the gratitude exercise of regularly recording three things you are grateful for in your journal to build this emotional muscle. Watch the video to see how daily gratitude changed Hailey’s life.

3 *Meaning*

We need to have something to wake up for every single day. If you have that something, record it in your journal. If you aren’t so sure, do some of the exercises to find at least one thing that gives you meaning now and write it in your journal. At a minimum watch the video about how Hannah found meaning in her life.

4 *Positive Emotion*

Achieving a state of “mostly positive” in your life is one of the most important things you can do to increase your happiness and life satisfaction. Try the pleasure and pain list to see if you can direct your energy to more positive things in your life.

5 *Live in the Present*

Letting go of the negative past and avoiding the worry of the future can be dramatically improved by focusing our efforts on the present. Doing productive and rewarding things now improves our future and brings us greater fulfillment. The best proven method for helping us live in the present is the practice of mindfulness.

6 *Strengthen Relationships*

Strong positive relationships are the top of the list for happiness. They are also highly correlated with longevity. For a potentially life changing experience, try the gratitude visit.

The intent of this getting started list is simply to “get off stuck” and do something new and different. While all of the activities in this book will be beneficial for your happiness, these are some of the most significant.

POSITIVE EMOTION

"Where your attention (or intention) goes, your energy flows"

3:1 to 5:1

World renowned researcher, Barbara Fredrickson has conducted over twenty years of research on positive emotions. She is one of the leading authorities on the fascinating discovery that rich lives are characterized by a ratio of three positive experiences to one negative. In the most successful marriages, this ratio is five positive to one negative experience. It is extremely important to note that the ratios are not 3:0 or 5:0. In the absence of negative experiences, we fail to fully appreciate the positive in life and if we are overwhelmed with negative in life we do not thrive.

Gratitude

Consistently, the most successful approach to improving our happiness is to achieve a state of gratitude. Think of the happiest people you know, they will invariably be grateful people. Conversely, think of the most unhappy people you know and they will rarely be grateful people. If you are a pessimist by nature (50% of our happiness is in our genes) you may need

INSPIRATION:

Watch this inspiring video by Nataly Kogan, the founder of the company Happier. She is helping millions of people share small things they are grateful for every day.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-nataly



Hailey Bartholomew conducted an experiment to photograph something she was grateful for every day for one year. It completely changed her life. Watch her story.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-hailey

Marc and Angel Chernoff started a blog that has received over 100 million page views. The blog is based on the simple premise of sharing motivating and uplifting information. Subscribe to their blog to receive regular boosts of positive perspective and inspiration.



[bit.ly/happinessfirst-](http://bit.ly/happinessfirst-marcandangel)

marcandangel

ACTION:

Write three things you are grateful for in your journal two or more times each week for 3 months. In addition to writing what you are grateful for, write why you are grateful and how this thing impacts your life for the better.

to work harder to achieve a state of gratitude, but here is an approach that has been repeatedly proven in hundreds of studies to improve happiness.

Simply writing something will not do the trick. You need to sincerely and deeply “feel” the gratitude for what you write. For instance, you could simply write “I am grateful I can see”. However, if you were to wear a blindfold for an entire day and then write “I am grateful I can see these things . . . and I am grateful I can see because . . .”, the impact to your gratitude would be dramatically improved. You can write every day if you would like, but do not let it become an obligatory task or you will not reap the benefit.

Music

Listening to music that motivates us or reminds us of positive memories has been proven to increase the positive emotions that we experience in life.

EXTRA: Mobile apps and website



Happier and



Happify. These two mobile apps and their associated web sites are a continuous source of ideas and exercises for increasing your happiness. Both are solidly based on scientifically proven principles.



“Action for Happiness” is another extremely rich source of research based content and a wonderful community promoting happiness.

ACTION:

Create a playlist of your favorite, motivating songs. Whenever you need a boost of positive emotion, just listen to one or more of these songs. Watch this motivating music video by Maroon 5. The famous band spends a day crashing weddings all over Los Angeles. It is now one of the top 30 most watched YouTube videos of all time.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-sugar

ACTION:

4

Pleasure and pain list. In your journal, write ten things you love to do and ten things you hate to do. Spend a week focusing on doing things on your pleasure list and creating strategies to avoid the things on your pain list. This will move you in the direction of increasing the ratio of positive to negative closer to 3:1 or 5:1.

ENGAGEMENT

"In Life, You Must Be Present to Win!"

Living a fully engaged life is fundamental to your happiness and well being. Here we will discuss some of the downfalls of a disengaged life. This will provide substantial contrast to living an engaged life.

Boredom Depresses and Kills

Recent studies of social media posts found one single word most frequently correlated with people who are depressed . . . Bored! Other studies have shown that people who are bored in life are 2.5 times more likely to die of heart disease than people who are substantially engaged in their lives. Curiosity is the antidote for boredom.

How to be Unhappy

Matthew Whoolery provides a very entertaining and engaging TED talk on "How to be Unhappy"



bit.ly/happinessfirst-matthew

His most significant point is that two simple things can bring a high degree of unhappiness into your life:

- Think about your past and ask yourself "If only . . ."
- Consider your future and think "I'll be happy when . . ."

ACTION:

5

Practice simple mindfulness. Sit in a quiet place. Focus your attention on your breath, slowly coming in and going out. Every time you become aware of your mind wandering, simply notice that your mind has wandered and return your focus to your breath. You may also think of a word or phrase, like "peace" "tranquillity" "life is good". Practice sitting mindfulness for 5-10 minutes every day for one month. Additionally, select something that happens at random times throughout your day and practice "3 Breaths". For instance, if you drive places during the day, every time you stop at a stop sign, traffic light or encounter slow traffic, take 3 deep breaths and repeat your word or phrase.

A Harvard study revealed that 47% of the time we are thinking about something other than what we are doing. The conclusion: If we focus on the negatives of the past, the things we haven't achieved and live disconnected from the present, we will not experience engagement and fulfillment. Now, let's shift gears and get to the good stuff.

The Happiest Man in the World

Scientists now have ways to measure your happiness by monitoring activities in the regions of the brain correlated with happiness. The absolute highest level of happiness ever measured by this method was the brain of Matthieu Ricard. When Matthieu made this remarkable achievement, he was doing two things. First, he was meditating and second he was concentrating his thoughts on compassion for others.

Mindfulness and Flow

The most effective way you can increase life satisfaction is to live in the present. This involves increasing your focus on what you are doing when you are alone and strengthening your positive interactions with other people. In his book *Flow*, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi provides the science behind achieving these states of optimal experience. Here, we share the best activity discovered to train ourselves to focus and live in the present.



Connecting to the Infinite

Many of the greatest accomplishments, creations and inventions in the history of the world have been achieved by the ability of individuals to connect to a source of knowledge, wisdom and creativity that has not been adequately explained by science. When a rich state of flow is achieved, sometimes breakthrough thoughts, ideas and creations are brought to life.

As you connect to these flow states in your own experience, write down the thoughts and impressions you receive in your journal.

Watch this video that illustrates phenomenal accomplishments that haven't been explained by science.

Sleep

A growing body of research continues to confirm the ability of sleep to improve our immune system, metabolism, memory, learning, performance and overall health. A key component of staying engaged in life is getting 7-8 hours of sleep each night.

EXTRA: Mobile APP



Headspace. To gain the maximum benefit of mindfulness, this app will lead you through daily exercises that teach and train you to live fully present at all times.

INSPIRATION:

At age 10, Jay Greenberg became a student at the world renowned Juilliard School of Music and composed music for an entire symphony by age 12.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-jay

ACTION:

Improve the consistency and quality of your sleep. Read this Huffington Post article, "37 Science-Backed Tips for Better Sleep Tonight" for ideas to achieve improved quality and consistency in your sleep.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-sleep

RELATIONSHIPS

"If you have 3 or more close friends at work, you are 96% more likely to be satisfied with your life"

Deep, meaningful and positive relationships is the single most prevalent trait observed in both happy and long living people. This isn't having hundreds or even thousands of Facebook friends, but having rich, authentic and lasting relationships.

Giving

One of the most correlated activities to happiness in life is altruism or giving in meaningful ways to benefit other people. This has a compounding effect since giving to others has a significant tendency to strengthen our relationships with those we help. People who give have been proven to be happier, healthier and wealthier than their counterparts that do not give. For some great examples of people giving to others in all circumstances in life and all around the world, read the book, Giving, by Bill Clinton.

This brings us to **THE MOST** important exercise of this book. Research has shown that this **ONE** singular activity can have an impact on your happiness for up to three and even six months. (see sidebar: The gratitude visit).



ACTION:

6

The Gratitude Visit.

Get out your journal again. Think of someone who has had a very significant positive influence in your life. Write about this person. What do you admire about this person? What have they done that matters to you? Why is this important to you and how did it change your life? Now arrange to visit this person. Just tell them that you have something important to discuss with them. When you are together, read what you have written to them.

INSPIRATION:

Just to get a flavor of what this experience may be like, check out these two videos where this exercise was performed by many people with a phone call instead of a personal visit.

Josh Coyne thesis research.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-josh

Julian Huguet and the Science of Happiness.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-julian

This is especially true if you occasionally open your journal, read what you have written and relive this experience in your mind. Very few things in life could be a more sincere and impactful form of giving.

Acts of Kindness

Performing acts of kindness for others has the dual benefit of strengthening our relationships with those people and at the same time increasing our own happiness. This phenomenon has often been referred to as the “helpers high”. Research has shown that the more variety we build into these acts, the greater the benefit to our happiness. Additionally, the more tailored and unexpected the act, the greater the impact for good on our relationships.

Interesting Fact: Performing 5 act of kindness in one day will give you a bigger happiness boost than spreading them out during an entire week.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a very difficult but profound way to increase your happiness. When this burden is lifted, you have an increased capacity to live in the present and enjoy your life more fully. The benefits of forgiving can have life changing impacts on our most important family relationships.

INSPIRATION:

The ripple effect of performing acts of kindness.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-kind

Even animals know how to be kind to others.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-tortoise

ACTION:

Reinforcing the Boy Scout motto of “Do a good turn daily”, experiment with performing one random act of kindness each day. Record this in your journal. Once again, scientifically proven to increase your happiness.

Surprisingly, the happiness we derive from forgiving someone is not dependent on them accepting our forgiveness or even being aware of that forgiveness. However, forgiving does not mean condoning abusive behaviors or removing consequences from illegal behaviors. Our forgiveness is an act of releasing bitterness from our lives. In a similar fashion, be very careful with the pursuit of revenge and even law suits when they can be avoided. These have both been proven to diminish our happiness.

EXTRA: Giving Websites



charity: water



Kiva.org, Charitywater.org, Heifer.org. Check out these amazing websites that help people to help themselves. The money you contribute is a gift that keeps on giving and may literally change the life of someone you didn't even know.

MEANING

"For the meaning of life differs from man to man, from day to day and from hour to hour. What matters, therefore, is not the meaning of life in general, but rather the specific meaning of a person's life at that given moment"

- Viktor Frankl

Everyone of us is different from each other, including our heritage, fingerprints, genetics and our individual experiences in life. Finding meaning and having meaning each morning we wake up, has been proven to be another major dimension of our happiness in life. While some people may feel they do not have much meaning in their lives, with the right perspective, everyone can find significant meaning in life.

EVERYONE has a story, start improving yours today

Todd Hansen is a master story teller. Todd had a vision of proving to the world that EVERYONE has a story. Through great determination, he was able to convince a broadcast studio to produce a show called the Story Trek. Todd randomly travels the country with film crew in tow, knocking on doors until they find someone willing to share their story. After eight seasons, the reality of this vision

INSPIRATION:

Watch these three inspirational videos to get a feeling of how one person can positively impact the lives of many people.

3

Hannah Brencher, more love letters.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-hannah

Susan Boyle gets a chance to sing.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-susan

Jason McElwain is in the game.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-jason

ACTION:

VIA strength assessment.

One of the best proven ways to find meaning in life is to begin with our strengths. The VIA strength assessment helps identify your top character strengths. Take this assessment to discover your most prominent strengths. Write these strengths in order in your journal.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-mystrengths

continues. Frequently, Todd is asked “How do you decide which stories to air?” His simple answer “EVERYONE has a story”. Every story that is shared and filmed is put on air. Watch the start of the Story Trek season one finale to get a feel for this amazing reality.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-storytrek

Meaning for the rest of your life

It is likely that these last three exercises hold the seeds of meaning for the remainder of your life. Live your life with greater purpose every day, in every moment. If a clear purpose has emerged for you, write it down. If a strong purpose has not emerged, begin a quest to find greater purpose. One helpful hint, make sure your purpose includes helping others in some way. Giving continues to be a proven path to greater meaning in life.

EXTRA: Book.



Man’s Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl. This is a classic work showing that we can find meaning and even a degree of happiness in the most extreme circumstances imaginable in human existence.

ACTION: My Best Self

Get your journal out again. Think of a time when you were at your very best in life. Something that you are most proud of doing. Now, to the best of your memory, write about this event and identify how your top 5 character strengths played a part of your experience at the top of your game. This exercise is a favorite of author, performance coach, athlete and Harvard graduate Caroline Miller. She is one of the original graduates of the Masters in Applied Positive Psychology program at the University of Pennsylvania. This exercise and many others are featured in her goal focused book, “Creating Your Best Life”.



ACTION: Portrait of Life

Back to the journal again. This time, imagine you are writing your life sketch to be read at your funeral. Your life up to this point is what it is, however, today is the first day of the rest of your life. Describe the rest of the story from an ideal perspective of how you want to be remembered. Describe things you have accomplished and how others view the way you have treated them.

ACHIEVEMENT

"The man who does not read has no advantage over the man who cannot read."

- Mark Twain

Joy in the Journey

The 5th and final dimension from PERMA is Achievement. This dimension is somewhat controversial in research, since our circumstances (including our accomplishments) only account for 10% of our happiness. However, achievement is not an end state, but a process that brings meaning to our lives. It is the small things we do each day that bring us happiness and lead to greater end state achievements as well. As we find joy in this journey, step by step, it is also important to focus on the direction we are headed rather than the speed of our outcomes. This will help us avoid the trap of discouragement and giving up. The magic of habit is a key to achievement

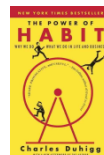
Start with a Tiny Habit

In his TED talk entitled “Forget big change, start with a tiny habit”, BJ Fogg explains how we can achieve significant things by starting with very tiny habits.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-bj

This approach follows “the habit loop” described in detail by Charles Duhigg in his New York Times best seller, “The Power of Habit”. This cycle includes three steps. Cue, Routine, Reward. See additional details on this in the action section.



Exercise

Another one of the proven activities for improving happiness and well being is exercise. While this is not a new finding, it is an important one to incorporate into your life. Here we suggest an action that combines the power of habit with the power of exercise.

Grit

With an established meaning for our lives, we can now add an element recently proven to be the highest predictor of achievement in life, Grit. In her TED talk on grit, Angela Duckworth describes grit as the passion and perseverance for very long term goals.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-grit

She, along with many others has proven through their research how this hard earned characteristic leads us to great achievement.

Permanent Lifestyle Change Secrets of the Successful

As of this writing, Sparkpeople.com has tracked over 4 billion minutes of exercise and over 26 million pounds of weight loss by its members, which now exceeds 15 million. Chris Downey is the founder of this amazing movement and life passion. In his book, *The Spark*, he shares the secrets of the thousands

ACTION:

Create a Tiny Habit.

Find a Cue. Something you do on a regular basis and make it the trigger for your new tiny habit involving exercise. For instance, every time you finish reading a certain number of emails, get up and walk a short distance, maybe 100 steps. When you finish your tiny habit, perform a short celebration, like saying “that was awesome!” Repeat this for 30 days until this new tiny habit becomes a regular part of your life. Build on this tiny habit to develop more positive habits.

of people who have achieved permanent lifestyle changes, losing from 30 to several hundred pounds and maintaining these improvements from 3 to over 15 years. Here are some of the stunning secrets of their achievements.

- 97% changed their eating AND their exercise
- 96% had a compelling goal
- 90% focused on lifestyle change and not dieting
- 100% experienced setbacks, but quickly got back on track
- 80% started with small changes
- Walking was the number one exercise

EXTRA: Website

Sparkpeople.com is arguably the largest and most successful wellness community in the world, yet a majority of us have never heard of it. Subscribe to Sparkpeople emails, read success stories, join a group with people like you and achieve a new level of health in your life.



INSPIRATION:

Watch this video about the amazing mission and vision of Sparkpeople.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-sparkpeople

ACTION:

Select one goal that is highly aligned with your current meaning in life and achieve this goal in the next 90 days. Apply tiny habits and grit as you pursue this goal.

For added ideas to achieve this goal, read the book *Change Anything*, by New York Times best selling authors Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, David Maxfield, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler. This book provides a method to dramatically improve your probability of success by applying influences to your ability and motivation from personal, social and structural perspectives. This method has been proven to be 10 times more effective in achieving your goals than by just doing it on your own.



DOUBLING YOUR INCOME

Finally back to the subtitle of the book: “Guaranteed to increase your happiness more than doubling your income”

Hopefully at this point, if you have watched the videos and tried the activities, you will have improved some dimensions of life satisfaction and happiness that you had not previously experienced. And now for the sad and harsh reality.

If your income were to be doubled today and you didn’t change any of the kinds of things we described in the previous chapters, your level of happiness just one year later would be virtually the same as it was before your income was doubled. This is due to something called “hedonic adaptation”, which is a fancy way of saying we adjust to changes in our lives.

An amazing study was conducted on two groups of people. First, lottery winners and Second, people who became paraplegics. Unbelievably, the research showed that one year after these life changing events, lottery winners and paraplegics were equally happy with their lives.

ACTION:

Go back and repeat 1-2 of the exercises in this book (or select new activities from appendix A) every month for one year. After one year, you will be happier by doing these things than if your salary were doubled today.

In his TED talk, *The Surprising Science of Happiness*, Dan Gilbert explains how poorly we predict what will make us happy.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-dan

The primary reason that we are so bad at predicting what will make us happy is that we have not been taught the scientifically proven methods of increasing our happiness and life satisfaction.

NOTE: Research has shown that our happiness has some correlation to our income as we rise from poverty to having our basic needs met, but after our basic needs are met, increased income alone has very little impact on our happiness and at very high levels of income, the increases in income actually decrease our happiness.

BONUS: You CAN buy happiness

Science has proven that when we spend money on other people rather than ourselves, it brings us happiness. In his TED talk, Michael Norton explains this in greater detail. [happy.](#)



bit.ly/happinessfirst-buyhappiness

ACTION:

Go to the bank and withdraw a single \$100 bill. Direct your attention to finding the best situation to give someone this \$100 bill. Carry the bill with you until you feel prompted to give someone this money. After giving away the money, record the experience in your journal.

CONCLUSION

We hope that watching the videos and following the activities in this book has given you a measurable start to increase happiness in your life based on these scientifically proven methods. If this has been the case, you may want to pass this book on to others that you think could benefit from increased happiness in their lives. Also, we have provided two additional sources as you move beyond this starter kit. Appendix A lists other proven activities for improving your happiness. Try these activities on a random basis and record in your journal the results of your new experiments. Appendix B lists some of the leaders in positive psychology. Do a Google search to find videos, books and articles by these amazing people.

Re-read this Book

It is impossible for you to absorb the vast amount of information contained in this very short book in a single reading. In fact, it is very unlikely that you could remember the majority of this information (including appendix A) if you were to literally read this book ten times. Keep coming back for new ideas you can try each time you need a boost to your happiness or resilience.

Finally, We hope that this has put you on a path of greater life satisfaction and achievement starting with Happiness First!

Note on Depression: *If you struggle with clinical depression you may need more than these self-help activities. Congratulations on finishing the book and hopefully you are finding an increase of happiness from these activities.*

Appendix A

Additional Activities Proven to Increase Happiness

Smile The physical act of smiling releases endorphins and stimulates the regions of the brain correlated with happiness.

Laughing Laughing has effects similar to smiling. Read amusing comics or watch YouTube videos of comedians that resonate with you.

Get married Research has shown that collectively, married people are happier than unmarried people. This has mostly to do with the activities typical of a strong and happy marriage relationship.

8 hugs a day The bonding with other people and the physical contact is proven to increase our happiness and well being.

Amazing movies Like your music playlist, movies can have the same impact. Create a list of your favorites and periodically watch them again. Ask friends for their favorite feel good movies and see if you like any of these as well. Asking strangers about their favorite movies is also a very engaging way to initiate new relationships in a meaningful way. Watch a really good movie made in 2011 simply titled “Happy”.



thehappymovie.com

Let it go 85% of the things we worry about never happen. Additionally, 79% of us handle the things that do happen in ways that surprise us with our ability to turn the situation around.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-worry

This is easier said than done, so here is a technique. Imagine the worst thing that can happen. Live this experience in your mind. Write in your journal what you would do if this happened. If there is anything you can do to prevent this thing from happening, write down a tiny habit and do it. If there is nothing you can do about this thing, let it go.

Power Moves Imagine you just completed a race to win an Olympic gold medal. Raise your hands in the air and walk in circles facing the stadium of your country members cheering for your success. Surprisingly, imagined successes can actually impact our happiness nearly as much as real accomplishments. Watch this amazing TED talk by Amy Cuddy on the power of body language.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-amy

The power of the unconscious mind Before going to bed at night. Feed your mind three things that you are grateful for and three things you will accomplish in the near future. Now, sleep on it. You will be amazed at the impact this will have in your life with just two to four weeks of repetition.

Relaxing bath or shower This is simply a feel good activity that can help to release tension and stress. Imagine all your cares and problems being released through the warmth and water around you.

Affirmations While the science on this one is still disputed, many people find an increase of positive emotions each day by repeating and discovering uplifting affirmations. If you are



lacking creativity on this front, try the APP “Affirmations!”. The app currently touts a solid five star rating.

Participate in a church group People who actively practice their religion are proven to be happier than those that do not. There are many reasons for this. First, it is typically associated with having greater meaning in life. Second, it increases our positive relationships. Third, giving of time or money to help others is usually part of active religious experience. Fourth, prayers are a form of mindfulness and meditation. And the list continues.

Silver Lining When you experience a major setback in life (or reflect on a major setback earlier in life) get out your journal and record as many things as possible that you learned from this experience and what you will do differently in the future because of what you learned. Again, studies have proven that this will increase our ability to thrive in the future by recognizing that we can have a good life even after bad things happen.

Mastermind Group Assemble a group of 4-5 friends or associates. Each person shares a difficult problem they are trying to solve at work or personally. The group brainstorms on possible solutions. This results in amazing creativity based on approaching problems from very diverse perspectives and can also be a major influence of getting “off stuck” in life.

Savoring Savoring is the act of slowing down and deeply experiencing something in life. In the present it can be looking broadly at everything around you, taking in the aroma of

nature or food, fully experiencing the taste and texture of what you are eating. Another dimension of savoring is remembering past positive experiences and reliving them (refer to your journal for reminders). Similarly, planning a future vacation and the experiences that you will have, can produce happiness similar to the actual vacation.

Walk for 30 minutes in nature An increasing body of research is showing the benefits of both green spaces and fresh air on both our health and our happiness. Give this quick pick me up a try.

5 questions to find purpose in your life Amazon lists over 150 thousand books that refer to how you can learn your life purpose. Over 3 million people have viewed the TED talk by Adam Leipzig titled “How to know your life purpose in 5 minutes”. While this is not a scientifically proven approach to find your life purpose, it is a great way to find clues leading to meaning in your current circumstances.



bit.ly/happinessfirst-adam

Here are the 5 questions. 1. Who are you? 2. What do you do? 3. Who do you do it for? 4. What do those people want and need? 5. How do they change as a result of what you do?

Buy experiences rather than things Try to think of a present you purchased for someone over a year ago. In contrast, think of a vacation you went on a year ago. We value experiences more than things in our life. While you can buy happiness by spending money on others, you can also buy happiness by purchasing experiences with others. Take pictures to remind you of those experiences later in life. Create a vacation journal for an even greater impact.

Avoid overthinking and social comparisons This is similar to worrying in general, but augmented by the mistake of comparing ourselves to others, which has one of two negative consequences. We think we are better than others or we feel inferior to others. The anecdote for this trap is to replace this behavior with other activities in this book or this appendix.

Open Mindset Removing the boundaries from our thinking, helps us to be happier and more creative. Stephen Covey referred to this as the abundance mentality (in contrast to the scarcity mentality). To experience this for yourself, get out your journal and write down what you would do with \$1 billion dollars. Write what you would do, why you would do it and how other people would be benefitted. Surprisingly, many people discover they can do many of these things even without having so much money.

Post traumatic growth In stark contrast to the plague of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) commonly associated with veterans of war, a new phenomenon is emerging in the study of individuals that actually grow in the wake of traumatic life events. In his newly released book *Upside*, Jim Rendon shares the hope and amazing research on post traumatic growth. Similarly, resilience training points the way to thriving on the other side of the major obstacles in life.

Appendix B

Science of Happiness Research

Happify.com has what is arguably the largest and best compilation of references on the science of Happiness. If you want to dig into the science behind the material in this book and much, much more, the Happify.com research page has over 900 references on over 500 topics.



happify.com/research

Leaders in Positive Psychology

Continue your learning by searching for books, videos and articles by these positive psychology leaders.

- Angela Duckworth
- Barbara Fredrickson
- Caroline Miller
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