

* * * [4-page excerpt; *How I Created My Happiness*]

The power of good is so much stronger than the power of negativity. And while it may be a cliché, today really is the first day of the rest of your life. A large number of people are unhappy for no reason. It's not to say they don't have obstacles. But no matter how many obstacles you face, I know from my own experience that you can create happiness despite despair. I've had the lowest lows, I've been to the abyss, and I've come close to jumping into it.

But I just happen to believe that we have a choice about the way we view life. I started with a simple decision: to choose happiness over sadness. I choose to seek encouragement instead of tolerating discouragement. I choose to love as if I have never been hurt, and to utilize my past experiences to bring me to the right relationship, instead of manufacturing walls that hinder my ability to find love. I choose to create specific business goals that I really enjoy working toward.

I make every situation an opportunity for me to observe, learn and grow. I choose not to be a prisoner of any past experience that might not have been as enjoyable as I had hoped.

I choose to look at people for who they are—to look at their actions and the reasons they act the way they do. I choose not to look the other way or rationalize away what is actually true. I choose not to allow anyone to walk on my feelings or to dilute my worth.

I choose to look to the best ways to be happy in every personal or professional situation and to make the best decisions, regardless of the perception that I may have created about how painful that decision might be. I choose to realize that the right decision is the right decision, and when I choose that route, it ultimately and truly makes me stronger and happier inside.

I choose to be honest with myself and to empower myself with reason, even in situations where emotions may otherwise cloud my judgment. I choose to take action toward happiness, and to embark on healthy, direct communication and movement toward productively happy environments. I choose to live life for all it's worth.

I use my experiences as helpful guides, not as obstacles to feeling great. I am not discouraged by uncomfortable or painful experiences—I am enlightened by them. I draw from my past experiences, rather than considering them “fatal mistakes” or other similar nonsensical perceptions that I am somehow less worthy or otherwise less of a person because something didn't go the way I planned or expected.

I don't allow any negative experiences to change who I am and what I believe I represent as a good person. I embrace advice, but never tolerate negativity in its giving. I remain a person who always seeks to exhibit character and kindness.

I believe that happiness is more easily derived from people who believe in encouragement and other productive reinforcement. I remain a believer that people can constructively help others when they need such guidance, and that I can positively affect those around me by living in a way that exemplifies character.

I say that every person is capable of positive feeling and happiness. I say that happiness can be immediately realized, no matter how long a previous bad thinking pattern existed. The length of a particular bad habit or the environment in which they find themselves does not define the person or whether they can change. It merely takes a choice to start living in a happy way now. It requires letting go of the past and realizing you're entitled to be happy.

Realizing happiness takes the courage to understand what caused your previous feelings instead of becoming a prisoner of them. It requires simply believing that you are capable of living happiness even more easily than you are capable of living unhappiness. It is forgetting or eliminating what causes your pain now, and reaching for that which will produce positive, lasting happiness.

Instead of preaching about how people should be, I instead try to be a role model of elegance and warmth, and always show a generosity of heart that allows others to feel the strength of my concern for their well-being. I say “I love you” to the people that mean so much.

I always express genuine gratitude for anything that is provided to me—whether it is the simple act of someone holding a door open, or winning a great award, or just having the honor of yet another wonderful person in some part of my life.

While I value my success, I do not believe in bragging or conceit. I leave that kind of unfortunate behavior to those that insecurely believe that their entire self-worth and happiness is dependent upon how others view them, rather than by how they view or feel about themselves.

I choose not to associate with those that are always negative or feel that they have to bring people down in order for them to somehow feel “better.” I encourage those that engage in that behavior to consider a more productive course of conduct that actually will make them feel better.

I say that if they complain, I will listen with the condition that they show me why they cannot fix what they complain about. If they have attempted to resolve their situation to no avail, I will value their attempts and surely support and advise them in whatever way I can help.

I say that they will have all of the happiness and joy they wish if they act as if they want those feelings. I encourage them to spend less time in critical evaluation and unproductive self-analysis or outward criticism—and instead to shake the “Etch-A-Sketch” of whatever past experience has negatively ruled them.

I don’t enable their behavior by tolerating it, or by rationalizing that’s just the way they are, or by summarily concluding that they will never change. I will ask them to tell me how their life is bettered by that action, and how they think they better the lives of those to whom they direct their negative comments or complaints. I ask them about their happiness plan.

If the situation involves reactive anger of someone screaming toward another, I inquire as to how the anger helps the situation. I remain open-minded to hear the evidence of why screaming anger works, and know that those with character will immediately recognize the error in this form of communication. Feelings can be expressed and consequences imposed without the need to scream or demean.

I suggest to those who are cynical or negative that they are likely to have immediate happiness and less sadness if they adopt an approach of “solution-based thinking” (feeling good and taking action they believe is necessary to eliminate their negativity).

I suggest that it takes less energy to be positive, and they should try it. I suggest that happiness can be lived immediately, and that they need not feel bad for any reason. I empower them with a new perspective, perhaps through an anecdote or some other way that is disarming and encouraging.

In my world, there are no “problems.” There are only good things, combined with present “situations” that can be resolved by getting clear about the actual facts and having an open mind about happiness-directed solutions.

In this way, I either learn that there is no real concern or see how it can be resolved with productive action. I don’t allow any situation to impose fear, doubt, worry, or any other similar negative feeling that will inhibit good decision-making.

I choose to be sensitive to the feelings of others, and not to intentionally try to attack or dilute the importance of their feelings. If, for example, you are down for whatever reason, I offer support, not criticism. I don’t say “just get over it,” nor would I dismiss your being upset as not worthy of attention. I simply offer my heart in words.

I also choose to help you understand what caused that feeling, so that you can understand how to overcome it. I look to empower you with something that allows you to more productively process the feelings yourself, in a way that makes you feel stronger and capable of producing whatever great result you want. If I am successful, I have provided a gift that keeps on giving. I feel great when I make people feel better.

In my world, there is no need to resurrect or re-live any negative experiences. Instead, I choose to focus on good things that have happened to me. I don’t rationalize away or deny the existence of any unfortunate experiences, but I do recognize that they have already happened and that they are now “history.” They are behind me and do not define me. I define them and myself with what I take from those experiences. I choose to let them help me become stronger.

I choose to always look to what my experiences can show me. I choose to squeeze out every ounce of benefit from the experiences in an educational way that arms me with weapons I can utilize to ensure my present and future happiness. I choose to view myself as fortunate and empowered by my past experiences—not a prisoner of them.

I have grown sick of those that lack the courage to encourage. I choose not to tolerate those that think negativity is somehow the way to success. They complain or criticize all the time. They find little joy in anything, and they let everyone know about it. This ludicrous dysfunction is not tolerated in my world. Nor should it be tolerated in yours. I choose to take action and to create environments that bring me success and happiness.

I believe that we all want to have happiness, as well as personal and professional relationships that matter, ones that positively affect our lives. We want the tools to overcome difficult situations, with the least amount of stress and tribulation. We want the weaponry to guard against potential negative thinking patterns.

To have that happiness, simply resolve to investigate what and why certain past experiences affect how you presently act. You need to believe that there is no need for or benefit from allowing those experiences to impact your ability to live ultimate happiness in any way.

Your history is a function of circumstance. Most who view the past as a negative experience have merely misunderstood the experience. You can learn from your past, but it does not determine who you are. As you examine that which you think holds you back, you may find that letting some negative experience stop you from taking action is neither helpful nor worth the energy. You may even discover that, in reality, it wasn’t negative. You’ll find that a better way to define yourself is by what you do today with what you learned yesterday.

You will have it all. You will have what you desire. You will have that which you choose to act upon. Using the principles in this book will activate your inner power—and it awaits your command.

By recognizing your positive achievements and getting a different perspective on your environment and how your experiences can help you, you'll develop a new thinking pattern that reinforces positive, constructive decision-making. You'll be empowered to develop great vehicles that will drive you to a destination of enrichment and great satisfaction.

You'll see possibilities—instead of obstacles. You'll cleanse yourself of any so-called bad experiences that may remain resident (even unknowingly) or any unproductive processing of feelings or experiences that cloud your path to success.

The courage already within you has now been reinvigorated, providing more clarity to focus on your future and more weapons to eradicate any feelings you believe inhibit your happiness or success in any way. You will no longer underestimate your immense value and worthiness, or allow it to be clouded by circumstance or the perceived stresses of life.

I know that the reawakening of your positive belief system will also helpfully affect the way others view you. The very nature of you will be enhanced as you empower yourself at an even greater level. This energy will be felt by those around you, and they will be attracted to your radiance.

It is no one's fault that we have natural insecurities at points in our professional or personal lives, or that situations are foisted upon us that we don't like or would prefer not to have. What matters is not whom to blame, but rather, how you act now and how soon you want to be happier or more successful.

Whether you are the CEO of the richest company or you don't even have a job, whether you are a super athlete or aspiring to be one, whether you are in ninth grade or in your retirement years, whether you have already had success or experienced failure, we all must appreciate how important it is to understand how we feel, what makes us think the way we do, and how to effect positive, solution-based action that empowers us to greater happiness.

Be strong and courageous. Take those actions that will better your life. Know that you are entitled to happiness. Create environments that will encourage you and motivate you. Forget about yesterday and concentrate on today.

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