

The

HAPPINESS

REVOLUTION

A MANIFESTO *For* LIVING
Your **BEST LIFE**

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Bestselling Authors of
The Art of Being Brilliant and *S.U.M.O.*

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THE HAPPINESS REVOLUTION

**A MANIFESTO for LIVING Your BEST
LIFE**

DR ANDY COPE & PROF PAUL MCGEE

Illustrations by Fiona Osborne



CAPSTONE
A Wiley Brand

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Part 1

**HAPPINESS,
MISSING IN
ACTION**



REVOLUTION

[rev-o-lu-tion]

- i. Activity or movement designed to effect fundamental changes in the socioeconomic situation
- ii. A fundamental change in the way of thinking about or visualising something: a change of paradigm
- iii. The overthrow or repudiation of a regime or political system by the governed

It's almost as if civilisation has become less ... civil.

In this section of the book we look at why happiness has become harder to come by. You'll get a personal invite to the revolution, learn a fabulous Latin phrase, chat to some runner beans and meet some unhappy bunnies.

There's some academic dirty talk and we invite you to choose between two made up diseases: gray brittle death or Hawaiian cat flu.

We also introduce 'change-quakes', and balance out some silly stuff (we take a trip to 2007 in a DeLorean) with serious material (cognitive load theory and the fundamental organising principle of the brain).

All in all, Part 1 goes some way to introducing you to the notion that change in the external world has not been matched by change between your ears. Plot spoiler - basically, the world has outpaced us and we're struggling to keep up.

The first section is concluded with a quick overview of Andy's research. Again, a deliberate light touch to 12 years of hard graft because we figure that you just need the basics, followed by some how-tos.

But first, we're going to ask you to do less and stop trying.

Buckle up. It's gonna get bumpy.



**We hear a lot about the far left and the far right,
but never the far middle.**

The problem with most revolutions is that they can get messy. They're associated with rabble rousing, bloodletting,

overthrows and mass demonstrations. People can lose their heads.

This isn't that.

Welcome to our *alternative* revolution.

THE HAPPINESS REVOLUTION is centred on the most sought after 'thing' on the planet. We had to put 'thing' in inverted commas because, technically, happiness isn't a 'thing'. It's not got a shape, form or mass. Happiness is an emotion. A feeling. It's something we want more of for ourselves and if we asked you what you want for your children and grandchildren - and you could only have *ONE* thing - that'd be happiness too. Like us, you're not too bothered about what jobs they end up doing or who they end up marrying (or not), so long as your offspring are happy.

Happiness, so sought after, so in demand. *Yet so scarce and fleeting.*

We need to come clean at the outset. There are no guarantees. There is no single happiness silver bullet. But we promise you that there are ways and means of improving your chances of having more good days and fewer stinkers.

Rather than waiting (*and waiting and waiting and waiting...*) for evolution to equip us with the necessary skills to thrive, we're inviting you to join a revolution. Don't fret - Paul and myself have no goons or henchmen and we're absolutely NOT asking you to grab a pitchfork and march to Parliament. To avoid any misunderstanding, we're calling it a 'quiet revolution'. An uprising of wellbeing and a raising of the bar from mental health to mental *wealth* because, bottom line, there's a world shortage of happiness

right now. In fact, there's a glut of the total opposite, hence our call to action to every person on the planet.

We're pitching in at whatever's the opposite of doomsday and herein lies the nub of the problem. I've just Googled 'doomsday' and there is no opposite. The dictionary gives me 26 disaster synonyms (meltdown, apocalypse, bloodbath, catastrophe and suchlike) but no equivalent good day. It seems the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse can ride into town unopposed. And that's pretty much what's happened. Negativity has had the upper hand for way too long. We're well versed in phobias and disorders. We have entire systems in place to catch the anxious and unwell. Psychologists have spent 150 years perfecting pills, potions and therapies and yet mental ill health has got staggeringly worse.

'Thousands of people are living lives of screaming desperation where they work long hours at jobs they hate to enable them to buy things they don't need to impress people they don't like.'

[Nigel Marsh]

We understand that when you buy a personal development book, you want some answers. Give me some strategies, ideas and techniques. I need to learn how to wrestle back some control of my life. I want to regain my sanity, clarity and wellbeing. I want to learn how to feel amazing in a world that seems hell bent on knocking me sideways.

I've paid my money, *now tell me how to feel good!*

And because you care, you give said strategies a really good go. You meditate and journal. You're up at 4 am to create your 'miracle morning'. You become a kindness ninja and a grand master of gratitude. You yoga yourself silly.

Diet: *tick*. Sleep hygiene: *tick*. You breathe and smile and work super hard at being positive. You master the power of now. You define your purpose, discover your strengths and get into a flow state. You set goals. You visualise. If you've read *The Secret*, you chant mantras in an effort to 'manifest' things into your life.

And yet...

... the Ferrari never arrives. The nagging doubts remain. Whatever was missing is *still* missing.

David Hare describes it as painting over the rust.

We're really good at applying glossy new wellbeing techniques upon the rustiest girder of discontentment and exhaustion.

We can have the very best intentions, but it doesn't take long for the rust to bubble through. Rather than glossing over bad habits, true personal development needs to take some sandpaper to the rustiness.

So here's our deal; it's time to try *less* hard.

I know! It doesn't seem right to die and leave the world in a mess - but everybody does it, so chill. You can't cure the world. Caring with a passion is noble and well intentioned, but it will also make your knees buckle. Instead, why not treat yourself to some 'subtractive psychology'. Jettison some responsibility. Shed some thinking. Let go of tired old habits. Park your negativity. Drop the guilt. Offload that nagging self-doubt. With that excess baggage gone, the spring returns to your step, a smile to your face and, bizarrely, the world becomes much more doable.

Our book has a touch of the counter-intuitives about it. Our advice is to look around at what everyone else is doing and NOT do that! In a world where we've already got enough to do, it's our belief that the solution is not only to try less hard, but also to do less.

Do less, but *be* more.

Humanity has somehow managed to worry itself sick. In which case we think it must be perfectly possible to *un-worry yourself well*. Let the good times roll. Quite simply, we want you to sign up to being your best self. *Consistently*. And while that might not change THE world, it'll certainly shape yours.

So what does an uprising of wellbeing look like?

The truth is that nobody really knows.

Nobody is ever described as 'stark raving happy'.

The news never reports on a bunch of smilers who are so overjoyed with life that they've made placards and have organised a demonstration and a march to parliament to proclaim their satisfaction with life. There's never an announcement that 'This hospital is working so brilliantly that we've instigated an independent review to look at the evidence to find out why it's so epic'.

The mass celebration of wellbeing has to start somewhere, and we're suggesting the best place is with you. No petitions, pitchforks, placards, protest marches or toppling of statues required. This revolution is so quiet that nobody will hear it because it takes place in your head. But, my goodness, they'll see it alright.

Because once you sort things out between your ears, it shows in your behaviours, which ripple out into your loved ones and beyond.

You become an example of what an awesome human being looks, sounds and feels like. Yes, dearest reader, we're asking you to join a revolution that feeds into a worldwide movement. It's our cunning plot to take over the world. In an era of rising anxiety, panic and tumult, it's time to make a stand - to become one of the few rather than one of the many. ~~Let's fight them on the beaches, let's fight on the landing grounds, let's fight in the fields and in the streets...~~

Sorry, wrong speech.

Let the fight back to mental wealth start right here.
Welcome to global domination of the *happiness* kind.

Mwah ha ha ha haaaaaa!

A brand new beginning. That's where the revolution starts. We'd therefore like to raise a glass and propose a simple toast:

To you. Welcome home. Welcome back to your best self.

You Are Cordially Invited
To Join

The
**HAPPINESS
REVOLUTION**

When: Right Now **Where:** Right Here

What to bring: Come as you are
(dancing shoes will be required)
Bring a like-minded friend

Directions: Read the book. Apply the learning

RSVP to: *HappinessRevolution



It feels lovely to bag a bargain. Consumers are drawn in by '25% off', tempted by '30% extra free' and we don't half love a meal deal. My cupboards are filled with tins of red kidney beans, plundered in last month's 3 for 2 supermarket sweep. When the apocalypse comes, our household is ready.

While 'buy one get one free' is common in the kidney bean and biscuit aisle, it's less common with writing. And yet here we are. Congratulations, you bagged yourself a *two authors for the price of one* mega deal.

We're hugely excited to have you aboard. Truthfully, we're beyond excited. We're honoured. So as a big fat 'THANK YOU' we thought we'd be the bearers of good news. If you're reading this book, there are two immediate stand-out plus points: first, congratulations, *you're alive*. And second, *you can read*. That's two huge reasons to smile, and we haven't even started yet!

We've written **THE HAPPINESS REVOLUTION** to give you a breather from the human race, a deliberate time out to help you catch your breath. Our third piece of superb news is that you can chill.

The chase for happiness is over. We've called off the dogs. It's time to build a life that you don't need to escape from.

Before the revolution swings into action, a quick note about content, style and what to expect. Your two for one author deal is good value for the readers but presents a challenge for the writers. A 'whose line is it anyway?' identity challenge. We've thought long and hard about the best way to overcome this writing conundrum. Then longer and harder before coming to the conclusion that it doesn't matter. Not a jot.

The world has shifted, shaping the English language with it. With fluidity comes a choice of preferred personal pronouns - she, he, they, their, ze, zie (there are plenty more in the modern lexicon) - so we're choosing to ask you to *not care*.

Please think of us as one voice. Even when we say 'I', we're actually a 'we'.

As for who 'we' are, that doesn't matter a great deal either. Sure, Paul's a professor of something or other and Andy's a doctor of the counterintuitive. There's a solid academic background. Basically, we've ploughed through the academic papers so you don't have to.

But **THE HAPPINESS REVOLUTION** isn't really about that.

Your *buy one get one free* author tag team, we've been there done that, made mistakes and learned heaps along the way. We've got a combined 100+ years of being alive, 60 years of marriage, 50 years of parenting, 30 years of running our businesses and a back catalogue of 20 or so books. We have grey hairs to prove it. We've had gritty life experience, some success, some serious screw-ups and we're both riddled with character flaws. We're far from perfect.

THE HAPPINESS REVOLUTION absolutely *is* about that.

The reason we're still here, still standing, is based on much of what you're about to read.

It's taken us years to learn this stuff, and more importantly to apply it to our own lives. So, by all means check out the science and the theories behind what we write, but read with your heart, not just your head. Read to be inspired and entertained, rather than simply informed. I don't think either of us just want to titillate your mind. We'd rather cleanse your palate, refresh your thinking, and reenergise your spirit in preparation for whatever life throws at you.

It won't have escaped your notice that life is capable of throwing a lot! The Latin phrase *Semper in faecibus*

sumum, sole profundum variat sums up the current state of play...*we're always in the shit, it's just the depth that varies.*

Right now, we're up to our necks.

Generally speaking, our back catalogue of personal development books has focused on how to maximise possibilities and fulfil our potential. This book also seeks to do exactly that. The difference is we're starting with an acknowledgement that the world has been doing its worst lately.

Life has always been a contact sport but recently it's gotten brutal.

It's become like the best World Wrestling Federation bout ever; with the referee distracted, life is able to smash a chair across your head, leaving you staggering around in your pants.

How did we end up so bewildered? We've more money than ever before and more access to life-enhancing stuff to make our lives easier and more comfortable. And yet we're popping more pills, and tragically cutting our lives short in record numbers.

It's heartbreaking.

We want to make sure those pains and problems don't become permanent and pervasive.

The hand-me-down beliefs and behaviours we received from our parents haven't equipped us to compete well in the game of life. The game used to be so simple and now, more likely, your life has some amazing characters but you're struggling to work out the plot?

Call it a lucky guess!

Both of your authors are keynote speakers, which means we get the same questions asked of us. We thought it'd be worth ticking off two biggies upfront.

First, can you deliver something that's 'evidence based'?

Understandably, what people are asking for is something that's provable. Whoever's organising the conference wants a speaker with credibility so something grounded in science would go down well. Sure thing. Both the Prof and Doc can give you some content that's got science behind it. We'll provide academic references where necessary.

Evidence based is good, but we're more interested in **THE HAPPINESS REVOLUTION** being *truth* based, the truth being that our version of science might not sound like science. The absolute truth is that after gaining a PhD in human flourishing, I haven't learned anything that I didn't already know before I started. Sure, I can wrap it up to make it sound sciencey, something I describe as academic porn – *'Gosh what a big brain you've got. Use those big words on me baby. Remind me of the T-Tests results for respondents on the 16 emotions measured by the IWP Multi-Affect Indicator that you discuss in your PhD thesis. Whisper those sweet findings into my ear. Let me have your Chi-squared stats and your p-values. Give them to me hard ...'*

Dearest reader, you'll not find that kind of academic filth in this book. Paul and I don't speak like that and, quite frankly, we prefer to write how we speak.

Life's got heavy, so we've *deliberately* decided to go light. The italics is important. Our lightness of touch opens us up to criticism from the sesquipedalians. [Those who prefer big words. I mean, who knew?]. It's easy to accuse us of

dumbing down when, in truth, the aim is to simplify. That sentence is bigger than it sounds.

We're seeking to communicate in a way that is relevant, to give knowledge that is do-able and to be entertaining enough to keep the pages turning.

However, please don't mistake our light touch for light content. **THE HAPPINESS REVOLUTION** is partly a book about surviving, because that's where some people are at present, but it is also a book about thriving. Thriving in our relationship with ourselves and with others whilst recognising that conflict, challenge, setbacks and disappointments are part of the journey. If you drill into its DNA you'll find **THE HAPPINESS REVOLUTION** is about resilience, responsibility, kindness and compassion.

The second very common question in the training world is, can you do a talk for a specific group of people? So, for example, can you run a workshop for maths teachers? Or, we've got some engineers who need peppering up. Or, we've got a cohort of 16 year olds who need to raise their aspirations. Or, we've got a nurses' conference, can you design a talk specifically for them? ...

My answer is that I can make it *sound* as though it's specifically for them, so if it's a talk for teachers, I can mention the word 'teacher' a lot. But it's not really about that. Teaching, nursing, engineering, these are part-time jobs.

Your full-time occupation is 'human being', so we're keen to make our message fit across all the domains of your life.

With that in mind, we've written **THE HAPPINESS REVOLUTION** with a very specific audience in mind: if you fall into the category of 'human being' we sincerely hope you enjoy this book. We've written it *especially* for you.

WATERING YOUR WEEDS



We call my wife 'the plant whisperer'. She's very handy with a trowel and a bag of manure and can literally coax lettuce from between the paving stones of our patio. I followed her around our vegetable patch one time, watching, learning and listening to her whisperings.

She was so encouraging of the courgettes; *'You guys are doing so well. I'm so proud of how far you've come.'* She slipped them a slug pellet, almost surreptitiously, as though it was a banned substance. *'And this'll help you grow even bigger.'*

She clapped her hands in glee at the runner beans. *'Oh my giddy aunt, just look at you little rascals, all tall and slender and handsome.'*

Is it right that I felt a twinge of jealousy? About runner beans?

But the plant whisperer is not all sweetness and light. The cabbages got a right telling off; *'You lazy things. You should be ashamed of yourselves. You've really let yourselves go this year.'*

Then we came across a rather sad and forlorn-looking rose bush, and the plant whisperer stopped in her tracks, sniffed one of the half-open buds and her face fell. *'Well you're not a happy bunny.'* I'm no expert but I'm assuming 'bunny' was the Latin term for that particular rose.

While I admit to not knowing my dahlias from my marigolds, I do know the ins and outs of personal development and *'not a happy bunny'* put me in mind of Carol Dweck's fixed and growth mindsets.¹ This is common language in schools but in case you're not familiar, let me remind you of the basics. Dweck conducted research on hundreds of 11 year olds in which she set a series of puzzles at the end of which she gave them scores and praise. Half were given praise which suggested they were gifted and talented, hence she used phrases along the lines of 'you are so smart at this'. The others were given praise that reflected the effort they'd put in, so for example; 'you must have worked really hard'.

Then, in what sounds like an experiment in child cruelty, she gave them another test - a much sterner test - in fact so tough it was impossible. Of course, none of the kids did very well but she discovered that those who'd been given praise for their intelligence soon capitulated. It's as though they'd decided, en masse, they weren't so clever after all, whereas those who were praised for effort did 'a Billy Ocean' (my words not Professor Dweck's). Basically, when the going got tough, these 'growth mindset kids' got going. Against the odds, they improved their scores by 30%.

Academia works on a whack-a-mole principle, so no matter how in vogue your theory, someone with a bigger forehead will eventually peer review your work, pick it to bits and propose their own 'new improved theory'. That's how knowledge inches forward. Hence Dweck's ideas have been kicked from pillar to post but sometimes it's best to ignore the noise and focus on the main point. You don't need a PhD in anything to see that Dweck's basic principle holds water. A top tip that arises directly from her work is simply to praise your children for effort rather than talent.

But what's this got to do with my wife's roses? The 'not a happy bunny' comment reflected that the plant was not growing. It was trying hard enough but for some reason the rose wasn't flourishing and its buds didn't look like they would blossom. We had no desire to bend down and smell its fragrance. It was taking up space in our borders, but even I could tell it wasn't growing in the way roses are meant to grow.

Dweck talks about dandelion and orchid characters. If you have a garden, you'll notice that dandelions are hardy and perennial. Basically, they crop up everywhere. They don't require watering or feeding. You can mow them and they're back in a day or two, shrugging off the recent beheading calamity, their yellowness tilting towards the sun. Orchids

on the other hand... if you've ever tried to get one to bloom you'll appreciate that it requires a lot of love, effort and a wheelbarrow full of luck. Orchids require perfect soil conditions, just the right amount of feeding, a Goldilocks amount of sunshine and, even then, they might only bloom for a day or two.

The point is that some humans are like dandelions. They just seem to flourish in whatever situation/job/environment you put them in. Knock 'em down and they spring back up. But most of us (and by 'us' we include the majority of readers and both your authors) are trying our best to bloom in an environment that's against us. And when we do bloom, it's a quick blast of wonderfulness, and then our petals drop.

You see, unlike when buying a plant, we don't come with a small plastic card highlighting when to prune and water us, and how much sunshine we prefer. Nope, we enter this world naked, screaming, and solely reliant on people who would have more background checks made on them if they were adopting a cat than bringing a human life into the world.

Whatever upbringing we have and whatever environment we find ourselves in, we do our best to flourish. We fight off being strangled by the weeds of negativity and we do our best to stand tall when the world does its worst. The shifting seasons are a reminder that nothing's designed to bloom all the time. It's a blessed relief to know that even Mother Nature has down time where she rests and replenishes.

We all understand the mantra: it's okay NOT to be okay. But there are times when 'not a happy bunny' doesn't do justice to the depth of our despair. If we're continually being pruned and mowed and flooded there may come a time when the unhappy bunny really starts to struggle. So

before we go any further, it's worth pausing to reflect on those times. The COVID-19 pandemic blighted the lives of millions but it's small fry in comparison to the *billions* who've been affected by the pandemic of mental illness.

The mental *ill*-health statistics are staggering. We'll spare you the details and just scare you with the headlines. The rise and rise of the problem is hard to plot exactly. It's a recent phenomenon that the medical profession has been tracking for a couple of decades, but go back any further than that and mental health wasn't deemed serious enough to warrant any gathering of data. A rough trawl of the research hints that pre-World War I about 1 in 10,000 people suffered from one of the various mental illnesses. PTSD or 'shell shock' took its toll and post-World War II, it was 1 in 100. In the 1980s, about 1 in 20 people suffered some form of diagnosable wellbeing disorder and by the early 21st century it was 1 in 4.²

Today? In any given year almost 30 per cent of the adult population will suffer from a recognised psychological disorder. The World Health Organization has recently stated that depression is now the biggest, costliest, and most debilitating disease in the world.³

From a standing start to a crippling mental health pandemic in the space of three generations. If you extrapolate the figures, by 2050 it will be unusual NOT to have some sort of diagnosable mental health disorder and by 2080 almost everyone will be suffering.

This book aims to help you find the pot of happiness gold at the end of the rainbow, but we can't ignore the fact that the emotional spectrum has a dark side. If you go to the depression end of the rainbow you'll find no sunshine and instead of a pot of gold, there's a black dog with no wag. There is a spectrum, with colours ranging from light grey, to darker grey to even darker grey and noir. The gloom