Praise for *Happiness*

"This is the most authoritative and informative book about happiness ever written. That's not surprising, given that its authors are the world's leading happiness researcher and his psychologist son, whose vocation is coaching people toward happier lives."

David G. Myers, Hope College, author, The Pursuit of Happiness: Who is Happy, and Why

"A great gift from the leading professional scientist of happiness in the world and his son, the 'Indiana Jones' of positive psychology."

Martin E. P. Seligman, Fox Leadership Professor of Psychology, University of Pennsylvania and author, Authentic Happiness

"This book is a must read! If you want science-based advice on what can make you truly happy, Dr. Diener, with his son Robert-Biswas Diener, bring to life over thirty years of cutting-edge research on how to achieve real psychological wealth. The Dieners are the real deal. No one has studied happiness more than Ed Diener, and few people have conducted field research in more exciting places than Robert. You'll quickly see why Ed Diener is called Dr. Happy and why Robert is called the 'Indiana Jones' of Positive Psychology."

David J. Pollay, B.A. Yale, M.A.P.P. University of Pennsylvania, President of The Momentum Project, *syndicated columnist, and author*, The Law of the Garbage Truck™

"The collaboration between the foremost authority on happiness research and the 'Indiana Jones' of psychology makes for a great mix of interesting examples and solid research. I have never seen a book that does such a good job offering useful practical advice while basing this advice on completely sound empirical research."

Richard E. Lucas, Professor of Psychology, Michigan State University

"This is a happiness book by the world authority, the pre-eminent scholar in the field along with an in-the-trenches coach who teaches and adapts this material every day for practical use with coaching clients. Robert is also an international researcher and coaching scholar in his own right. This is to say that these are scholars who do the research and not just journalists or pop psychologists reporting it second hand. These folks know happiness from the inside out."

Michael B. Frisch, Psychologist and Neuroscientist, Baylor University; Positive Psychologist/Coach and Clinical Psychologist

"In the huge happiness industry that has grown up over the past few years, this book is the very best overview of research and self-help manual available. It is written by the most productive, respected psychologist in the field of happiness studies and his son. It is the most readable, comprehensive overview and self-help manual available on happiness. If an ordinary citizen wanted to know about the contemporary science of happiness, it would be the place to begin.

Alex C. Michalos, Ph.D., F.R.S.C., Chancellor Director, Institute for Social Research and Evaluation

Happiness

Unlocking the Mysteries of
Psychological Wealth

Ed Diener and
Robert Biswas-Diener

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To our wives, Carol and Keya, who have been so helpful to us in our writing of the book, and to the Gallup Organization, for their encouragement and support.

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Foreword

With so many books about happiness on the market, why should you read this particular one? David Myers, psychologist and author of many books, including *The Pursuit of Happiness*, calls Ed Diener the "Jedi Master of Happiness Studies." He is referring to the fact that – over the course of a thirty-year career in psychology – Ed has pioneered the field of happiness studies, publishing more than two hundred scholarly papers and chapters on the topic. And Robert, labeled the Indiana Jones of Positive Psychology by one of the field's leaders, has pursued the secrets of psychological wealth in places such as India, Greenland, Kenya and in remote areas around the globe. Intrigued? Let me tell you a bit more about the authors, who happen to be my husband, Ed, and our son, Robert.

The road to being a world authority on happiness began for Ed on a farm in California. Ed grew up in the years after World War II, the youngest of six children. As his older siblings grew up and moved away, and his parents were busy with farming, Ed was often left to entertain himself. Of course, like many an unsupervised boy, he got into trouble. His curiosity led him to make a flame thrower, to throw bullets into an open fire, and to drive a car at age ten. By the time Ed was twelve, he drew up plans for a genetically modified monkey-dog (smart like a monkey but loyal like a dog!). Ed was intrigued by numbers and science. He filled his afternoons reading biographies of scientific luminaries such as Isaac Newton and the astronomer, Tycho Brahe, and attempted to recreate some of their classic studies at home. He discovered how to calculate the amount of water displacement of a brick and other objects by immersing them in the bathtub to determine their volume.

When he arrived at college, Ed focused his curiosity on human behavior. Why do people laugh and cry, why do people seek social situations, why do people do things that are bad for their health, and most importantly, what is happiness and how is it achieved? Ed suggested this last question as the topic of his research in college. Specifically, he proposed to study the happiness of farm workers. However, his professor would not approve the study, informing Ed that "it is impossible to study happiness . . . it can never be measured." Besides, the professor opined, "I already know the answer. Farm workers cannot be happy." Discouraged, Ed wrote a paper on conformity instead.

After pursuing other research studies, Ed landed a faculty position at the highly ranked University of Illinois. When Ed earned tenure, we took a sabbatical to the Virgin Islands. There the idea of making a serious study of happiness returned. Ed spent much of his time reading the works of Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, Maslow, and other great thinkers. He mapped out an ambitious plan for the serious study of happiness which he termed "subjective well-being" to lend it an air of scientific legitimacy to a skeptical academic world. During this same year, we took our three children out of school for trips to Haiti and South America. We motored up remote tributaries of the Amazon and were virtually alone in the deep jungle, surrounded by river porpoises, wooly monkeys, macaws, and piranha. After hours of travel we arrived at a settlement of Yagua people. The Yagua, who lived in stick houses and wore almost no clothing, were as fascinated by us as we were with them. But no one was more intrigued by the interactions than Robert. The tribal children crowded around him to look at his Mickey Mouse watch, and they let him shoot their blow darts at tree trunks. A village elder tried to give Robert curare poison for use with his blow gun, which we sensibly declined. However, the impact of this trip on Robert was immense. The realization that there were people who lived so differently from our neighbors in the American Midwest was a revelation that had a great influence on his adult career.

Following that sabbatical, Ed published his first article on subjective well-being. Over the years, he has studied how to effectively define and measure happiness, the relation between income and happiness, how cultures differ in happiness, how memory affects happiness, the benefits of happiness, and mental processes that affect people's happiness. He has turned a scientific eye to the role that people's values, relationships, resources, genetics, and economics play in the happiness equation. He has measured the happiness of people from the Forbes

list of richest Americans, of identical twins, of cloistered nuns, and of sex workers. He has collected and analyzed data on happiness from hundreds of thousands of people from representative samples of more than a hundred countries. Because he has done more research on human happiness than any other individual in the world, Ed is frequently quoted and relied upon by other happiness scholars and popular writers. He has dialogued with the Dalai Lama on the subject of happiness and talked with world leaders about measuring societal happiness.

And most recently, his idea of using a gross national happiness index, in conjunction with the commonly used gross domestic product, to measure the wealth of cities, states, and countries is gaining momentum and interest throughout the world. This is a man who in the evening says, "I am tired so I think I will go analyze some data." The study of happiness has energized him for the past thirty years.

Not only is Ed a psychologist, but so am I, our twin daughters, Marissa and Mary Beth, and our son, Robert. An unusual atmosphere of psychological inquiry and experimentation filled our household from the time there was the patter of little feet. On the weekend and evenings, we sometimes carried out psychology projects with our children. For example, Robert did his first science project on the relation of mood and weather. As the children grew into teenagers, dinner table discussions frequently centered around topics such as "how people differ and how they are the same" and "how emotion affects memory." In this atmosphere of intellectual curiosity, Ed and Robert forged a partnership that combined scientific inquiry with real world application.

Building on his childhood experiences and his curiosity about foreign cultures that began in the Amazon, Robert pursued research on happiness in atypical places such as Greenland, the African savannah, and the slums of Calcutta. To give you a taste of just how adventurous his field research has been, Robert had a small grant to conduct research among the Maasai in Kenya. In order to garner the trust of the Maasai and to obtain accurate data, Robert allowed himself to be branded by the Maasai, not once but three times, to prove his worthiness to work with them. He also billed the granting agency for a goat which he bought as a sacrifice for a good hunt. Certainly not your typical laboratory research!

Robert has continued to travel and study happiness throughout the world. He visited the gold souks of Dubai, the markets of Istanbul, the

gardens of the Vatican, the mountain villages of Morocco, the Inuit of Greenland, seaside towns in Nicaragua, cultural festivals in Taiwan, markets in Cambodia, the Australian outback, and countless other places. Everywhere he went he was more captivated by conversations with local inhabitants than he was by the famous tourist sites. Like his father, Robert is intensely interested in the quality of life of everyday people such as postal employees, bus drivers, and hairdressers around the globe.

The father-son collaboration is a natural fit. Robert extended Ed's work from the research laboratory to the field. Robert contacted remote and hard-to-access groups such as tribal Kenyans, the Greenland Inuits, and the Amish, and conducted subjective well-being research in these communities. Although Robert has published nearly two dozen professional articles on happiness, he is also interested in how this research can be applied to help people live better lives. He opened a coaching practice as a way to put innovations in the science of happiness into practice, and works with dozens of clients across the English-speaking world. He co-authored a book on using positive psychology in practice and regularly consults with organizations interested in applications of positive psychology.

So what does all this life history of the Diener clan have to do with this book? Why should you listen to Ed's and Robert's views on the topic of happiness? After all, it seems that everyone has a theory of happiness and "knows" what is important for happiness. I believe that the answer lies in the fact that not all opinions are created equal. Most of us would prefer to get investment tips from the BBC's financial analyst and car maintenance advice from an experienced mechanic, and not the other way around. We seek expert advice on everything from health care to hair coloring. Ed and Robert are the experts – in the modern scientific sense of the word – on the topic of happiness. They spend many, if not most, of their waking hours considering the fine points of emotional well-being, and have conducted a rigorous investigation of this topic for decades by collecting data from tens of thousands of people from all walks of life and every corner of the globe. They have examined the happiness of billionaires and homeless people and have looked at potential influences of happiness ranging from old age to the spring break trips of college students.

Happiness is Ed's and Robert's job and their passion. In this book they combine their scientific knowledge with personal wisdom and

diverse experiences. There are many myths, half-truths, fact and fiction in the popular media on happiness. Here is the opportunity to let the Jedi Master and Indiana Jones of Happiness unlock the mysteries of psychological wealth for you and to find out the true secrets of happiness.

Carol Diener, PhD, JD

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Part I
Understanding True Wealth

1

Psychological Wealth: The Balanced Portfolio

Recently, the world held its breath for the final *Harry Potter* installment. The boy wizard is an international phenomenon, and the author, J. K. Rowling, a surprise literary sensation. As captivating as the stories of magic wands and Muggles are, Rowling's personal story is equally compelling. A single mother writing on cocktail napkins in Edinburgh pubs to save money on heat at home, Rowling spun a hobby into a multibillion-dollar franchise. Currently, Rowling is among the richest women in the world, and reportedly is worth more than the Queen of England. As such, she has entered into the public discourse about the fabulously wealthy.

Most of us are fascinated by financial stardom, and television shows, magazines, and exposés offer tantalizing peeks into the lives of the superrich. For example, we ask, who is the richest person in the world? Is it the computer billionaire Bill Gates? Maybe it is the oil-rich sultan of Brunei, or the business-savvy sheik of Dubai? Why not consider the highly influential Oprah Winfrey? Perhaps a dictator who has squirreled away billions in a Swiss bank? You would be wrong if you thought of any of these folks. Although they are extremely wealthy when it comes to money, these well-heeled people with private jets and homes around the world may not be at the top when it comes to true riches, psychological wealth.

In this book, we will describe the new concept of psychological wealth, which extends beyond material riches and beyond popular concepts like emotional intelligence and social capital. Psychological wealth is your true total net worth, and includes your attitudes toward life, social support, spiritual development, material resources, health, and the activities in which you engage. In this book, we show how psychological wealth depends on happiness and life satisfaction,

and the factors that lead to them. We will explain why monetary wealth is only one component of true wealth, and why other aspects are usually more important. In our final chapter, you can measure your own psychological wealth and see if you qualify for our Richest 400 list.

We have devoted our professional lives as psychologists to the careful study of happiness. We have worked from the ground up to re-examine long-held conclusions about well-being, and ask new questions about the subject. We have investigated the emotional lives of the very wealthy, and of the destitute. We have looked at the role that relationships, religion, culture, and positive attitudes play in happiness. We have collected data from tens of thousands of people in dozens of nations, including postal workers in India, tribal people in Kenya, Inuits above the Arctic Circle, and Hispanic students in California. The results of our studies of happiness have shown us that there are many important, and often counterintuitive, aspects of this emotional Holy Grail. After decades of research, we have findings that will re-confirm some of your beliefs about happiness, and turn others on their head. Our book is intended to help laypeople and psychologists alike to rethink their beliefs about happiness, the core of psychological wealth.

If you are like most people, one of the first things you will want to ask us is to define happiness. We refer to "happiness" as "subjective well-being" in scientific parlance, because it is about how people evaluate their lives and what is important to them. An individual's subjective well-being is often related to some degree to their objective circumstances, but it also depends on how people think and feel about these conditions. Subjective well-being encompasses people's life satisfaction and their evaluation of important domains of life such as work, health, and relationships. It also includes their emotions such as joy and engagement, and the relatively rare experience of unpleasant emotions such as anger, sadness, and fear. In other words, happiness is the name we put on thinking and feeling positively about one's life.

If you are anything like us, when you tried to think of the richest person in the world, you did not consider your parish priest, your neighbor, or your aunt, even though these people might be very wealthy in friends, spirituality, and energy. Most folks think of wealth in monetary terms, although few people would disagree with the idea that psychological wealth – experiencing happiness and satisfaction due

to positive attitudes, intimate relationships, spirituality, and engagement with meaningful goals – represents a much deeper form of riches. Despite this fact, money and its pursuit occupy most of people's attention. We allot time to other concerns, such as health and friendships. We go to the gym, to church, or on dates – perhaps even regularly – to cultivate health, spirituality, and positive relationships. But think how much time is spent on the acquisition and management of money: creating budgets, paying taxes, going to the bank, writing checks, saving for a vacation, celebrating a pay raise, reading about the salaries of famous people, arguing with a spouse over finances, paying bills, and using credit cards. And of course there is earning money, which takes more time than any other waking activity.

Despite how useful money is, many people have a love-hate relationship with it. Consider for a moment the ambivalence we have had throughout human history about the wealthy among us. They are both admired and envied. They are the focus of endless attention, as exemplified by the immense popularity of lists of the richest people. At the same time, people with piles of money are also often the source of derision and hostility. When we think of rich people, works of great philanthropy might come to mind, but we might think just as easily of instances of injustice and downright stealing by wealthy people through history. Ill-treatment of workers, callous attitudes toward the poor, and crass materialism are associated in our minds with wealth, just as much as the great public works that rich folks have sometimes donated to society.

In the eighth century BC there was a legendary king of Phrygia named Midas, and we all know his name. According to myth, Midas won the favor of the god Dionysus. Midas was offered a wish and chose the power to turn everything he touched into gold. He was delighted by his new talent and tried it out on the world around him, transforming stones to precious metal. When he returned home to his castle, Midas ordered a feast laid out to celebrate his good fortune. Unfortunately, the wine and food turned to gold and Midas went hungry. He soon realized that his new power had a hidden cost, and this point was driven home when he touched his daughter, and she changed into a golden statue. Heartbroken, King Midas prayed to Dionysus to remove the power, and his wish was granted. The story of Midas captures our ambivalence about money and wealth, and it provides an important cautionary tale about avarice. The pursuit of material riches is not worthwhile if it means giving up relationships,

suffering ill health, or being spiritually bankrupt. Psychological wealth is much broader than monetary wealth because when we have it, we truly do "have it all." If we give up too many other aspects of true wealth to obtain money, our materialism decreases our net worth.

A Psychological Wealth Primer

Psychological wealth is the experience of well-being and a high quality of life. It is more than simple fleeting joy, and more than an absence of depression and anxiety. Psychological wealth is the experience that our life is excellent – that we are living in a rewarding, engaged, meaningful, and enjoyable way. Psychological wealth includes life satisfaction, the feeling that life is full of meaning, a sense of engagement in interesting activities, the pursuit of important goals, the experience of positive emotional feelings, and a sense of spirituality that connects people to things larger than themselves. Taken together, these fundamental psychological experiences constitute true wealth. After all, if you have them, you have all one would want from life, whereas when you are rich with money, you have only one desirable resource from the list. In addition to the internal aspects of psychological wealth, there are universals such as health and positive social relationships that are so intricately interwoven with the experience of well-being that they too are part of psychological wealth. What then are the ingredients of psychological wealth? Here are some essential components of true wealth:

- Life satisfaction and happiness
- Spirituality and meaning in life
- Positive attitudes and emotions
- Loving social relationships
- Engaging activities and work
- Values and life goals to achieve them
- Physical and mental health
- Material sufficiency to meet our needs

Ultimately, the quality of your life will suffer if you do not develop each aspect of true wealth. However, when you have all the elements, you truly are rich! You need not be a monetary millionaire to be wealthy. After all, if you experience your life as wonderful, what more would

you want? Even if you don't have billions of dollars, if you love your life, you have everything you need and want. If you have psychological wealth, it will be of little concern if you have only a moderate amount of money.

We all know the traditional markers of a financially wealthy person. We know that such a person is likely to have luxury goods and status symbols: a large house, with a modern kitchen that includes granite counters and stainless-steel appliances; a regular vacation spot; a new car loaded with amenities; and perhaps some eye-catching jewelry or original artwork. Probably a Mercedes and a swimming pool. What are the indicators of psychological wealth? How might we recognize someone who is truly wealthy? You can't tell too much from looks – a psychologically wealthy person could be short or tall, old or young, a bus driver, a housewife, or a small-business owner. It is likely that they are not living in destitution. They probably have a close circle of family and friends. But after these few traits, you must look deeper to recognize them. The psychologically wealthy are characterized by the ability to see what is good in the world, but nevertheless to be grounded in reality. They are involved in activities that they believe are meaningful and important, and they have found activities in which they can use their strengths.

Take, for example, superdad Dick Hoyt, who lived every parent's nightmare when problems with delivery left his son, Rick, severely physically handicapped. Doctors initially recommended that Rick be institutionalized, but Dick raised money and worked with a team of engineers to design a computer that allowed his son to communicate by typing with head movements. When Rick was in high school, the father-son duo participated in a five-mile run – with an out-of-shape Dick pushing his son in a wheelchair – to benefit a local student who had become paralyzed. The experience of completing the race was transformative for both of them. For Rick, competing in a race, even though he was being pushed, made him feel as if he weren't handicapped. For Dick, the opportunity to help his son find meaning was invaluable. Dick had a new reason to take care of his health, and his fitness quickly improved.

Together, the Hoyt pair went on to compete in more than eighty marathons, triathlons, and Iron Man competitions. They redefined what "ability" means, and found a deep sense of purpose in their athletic feats. Dick and Rick appear to be psychologically wealthy: they have a great relationship, enjoy sports and find personal meaning

through competition, and have Olympic-class positive attitudes. Most of all, psychologically wealthy people like Dick and Rick Hoyt possess happiness and life satisfaction. The positive emotions they experience are not simply joy and other fleeting pleasant feelings, but also an abundance of feelings such as love, commitment, and gratitude that connect them to others. These are the type of people who are grounded in values we admire, and who are remarkably free of pettiness and negativity. They are not in a frenetic search for new spouses, billions of dollars, and new thrills because they already are so deeply embedded in meaningful relationships and activities.

In this book, we will examine each of the different facets of psychological wealth in detail. Each of the elements is needed for consummate wealth, and an exclusive emphasis on one can detract from the others. If we pursue only happiness, for example, to the exclusion of spirituality and meaning, we may become hedonists who do not find true well-being. And as we have said, if we pursue money to the extent that we ignore the other facets of psychological wealth, we will have failed. In the end, understanding psychological wealth is about having a "balanced portfolio." This book provides an overview of the elements of psychological wealth that research reveals are good investments.

Part I: Understanding True Wealth

Although on its surface psychological wealth sounds like age-old wisdom – a morality story that cautions us that there is more to happiness than just money – there is more to this concept than meets the eye. Of course, most folks intuitively know and agree with the idea that spirituality, health, and relationships are vital to the quality of our lives. Philosophers, religious scholars, and grandparents have been teaching this same lesson since the dawn of civilization. What is radical about the idea of psychological wealth is its basis in new and often counterintuitive research. The modern science of subjective well-being has turned many commonsense notions about happiness on their heads. For instance, we now know that there is an optimum level of happiness. That is, it appears that in certain domains of life it is possible to have too much happiness, a point beyond which people might perform less well rather than better.

In chapter 2, we turn to this body of research and present two of the most exciting and important principles underlying psychological

wealth. The first principle is that happiness is a process, not a place. For ages, people have assumed that happiness is an emotional end goal, a pleasant state that comes from obtaining favorable life circumstances such as health, a good marriage, and a large paycheck. The logic is that if a person can line up enough desirable circumstances, then happiness will necessarily follow. As commonsensical as this notion is, science shows that psychological wealth cannot be produced by circumstances alone. Although money, national origin, and marital status are correlated with subjective well-being, the relationship is sometimes small relative to other causes of happiness. Rather, happiness is an ongoing process that requires a way of experiencing life and the world that includes positive attitudes, meaning, and spirituality. Being truly rich is as much about the attitudes within us as the circumstances surrounding us.

The second major principle necessary in rethinking happiness and understanding psychological wealth is that it is beneficial to effective functioning. Historically, happiness has suffered from a bad reputation. Many people think of happiness as shallow, selfish, naïve, and complacent. Critics of the emotion claim that happiness cannot last, and cynics charge that joy is a fundamentally unrealistic feeling. The pursuit of happiness is seen as a waste of time. There is now a body of evidence from scientific studies that indicates precisely the opposite, that positive feelings are functional and beneficial. Research on the benefits of positive emotions show that they help people connect with friends, think more creatively, and become interested in new activities. Happiness, then, is itself a resource you can tap to achieve the things you want in life. In chapter 2, we explain why happiness is beneficial to effective functioning. Happiness is a cornerstone of psychological wealth in part because it is emotional currency that can be spent on other desirable goals, such as friendships and success at work. It is when we are feeling positive and energized that we often make the largest gains: we think of new ideas, take up new hobbies, tend to our relationships, maintain our health, and find meaning in life.

Part II: Happy People Function Better

In Part II, we focus on three aspects of psychological wealth – health, relationships, and meaningful work – that are directly related to happiness. It is here that we see that psychological wealth is closely

related to happiness because it cannot be attained without positive emotions. The links between happiness and health, relationships, and work are the foundation of a portfolio of psychological wealth. Success in these life domains tends to boost happiness, and positive emotions, in turn, tend to lead to success in these life domains. In this section, we make the case that happiness is the fundamental building block of psychological wealth, but that it is important not just because it feels good, but because it is so beneficial in so many areas of life. Rethinking happiness requires us to understand that it is not just a pleasant goal, but necessary to achieving success in many domains of life.

Part III: Causes of Happiness and Genuine Wealth

For as long as folks have been trying to figure out the best route to happiness, the lion's share of people's attention has centered on life circumstances. It makes sense that people would attempt to increase their happiness by improving their lot in life. Common sense tells us that getting a new job, making more money, being healthier, or finding just the right spouse will lead to feelings of well-being. But does it? Research on subjective well-being reveals that most life circumstances, such as whether you are a man or a woman, or young or old, have only a small effect on happiness. There are a few areas, however, that are significantly linked to emotional well-being. We now have a solid understanding of how income buys some happiness and whether being religious adds to or takes away from emotional bliss. In Part III, we discuss the life circumstances that have been shown to be influential to psychological wealth, including income, spirituality, and culture.

Later in Part III, we discuss the psychological factors that influence happiness and, in turn, psychological wealth. People have long used phrases like "Life is what you make it," "See the silver lining in every cloud," and "Look at the world through rose-colored glasses." These phrases hint that part of our quality of life and happiness is due to our personal approach to, and interpretation of, the world. Some folks seem to be perennially up-beat, while the smallest problems drag other people into anger or depression. A variety of everyday mental processes exert a powerful influence on your well-being, including adaptation, emotional forecasting, and positive attitudes. Taken together, these mental processes are an essential part of psychological wealth.

Part IV: Putting It All Together

In the last section, we offer advice for integrating the various aspects of psychological wealth in the service of living a truly rich life. Importantly, we caution you against seeking unbridled happiness. Many people pursue intense, permanent feelings of happiness, believing this most-desired of emotions is truly a cup that can never overflow. New evidence suggests that there may be an optimal level of happiness, and people who are "too happy" actually appear to perform less well at work and school and may even be less healthy than folks who are optimally happy. This new line of research shows us that psychological wealth, like all wealth, is best when it is balanced and used wisely. Thus, we hope our book serves as a counterpoint to the self-help works that counsel feeling intensely happy as the be-all of existence.

In the end, the good life is really all about having psychological wealth. When we pursue a secure material existence, develop ourselves spiritually, and use our strengths in pursuit of valued goals, we are building our psychological wealth balance sheet. As physical beings, we are part of the material world and need to build our tangible resources to experience security and comfort. But we are also spiritual, needing a sense of meaning and purpose that is larger than ourselves, and that connects us to humanity and nature. Finally, we are psychological beings who interpret the world around us, and this means that our happiness depends in part on the mental habits we develop. True wealth requires material, spiritual, social, and psychological resources.

In the final chapter, we present measures of psychological wealth so that you can determine the net worth on your psychological wealth balance sheet. How rich are you? In the appendix, we describe how the Diener family is using science to understand happiness. With the virtues of the scientific method – controlled studies, large representative samples, and sophisticated statistical analyses – we are in a position to integrate and refine the historic wisdom about leading a good life drawn from philosophy, religion, and personal experience. But we hope that we are also more than science nerds. Ed Diener has been labeled the "Jedi Master of Happiness" not only because he has trained so many of the experts in the field, but also because, like Yoda, he did not conform to popular fads. And Robert has been called the "Indiana

Jones of psychology" because of his adventures in exotic places around the globe while collecting happiness data. We hope you enjoy seeing how our personalities and life histories have led to the conclusions we present in this book.

We believe that you will enjoy reading this book, and know that you will come away rethinking your views on happiness!

2

Two Principles of Psychological Wealth

There are two key components to understanding psychological wealth in general, and happiness in particular. Both are vitally important and frequently discussed, but often misunderstood. The first is that happiness is more than achieving desirable life circumstances, such as health, wealth, success at work, and a happy family. Although it is certainly logical to think that when all the pieces of life's puzzle fall neatly into place, you will feel happy, there is more to happiness than meets the eye. Happiness, as we will show you, is much more of a process than an emotional destination. People, probably through no fault of their own, frequently overlook the process side of happiness in their pursuit of the good life. You likely can think of examples of folks who focus on potential happiness down the road – a summer vacation or remodeled kitchen – but who also forget to stop and smell the roses along the way. We make the case that while goals that produce happiness are important, understanding that happiness itself is a process is even more important.

The second principle crucial to understanding psychological wealth is seeing happiness for its functions rather than for its pleasantries. Undoubtedly, happiness – by almost anyone's definition – feels good, and most folks like to savor the experience. But happiness doesn't just feel good; it is good for you in a number of surprising ways, helping people to function effectively in many areas of life. Understanding how happiness can be used beneficially is important to cultivating true psychological wealth.

Happiness is a Process, Not a Place

North America's tallest peak, Mount McKinley, is a challenging and dangerous mountain to climb. It sits in the rugged, remote interior of Alaska, and McKinley's summit has been a prized goal for mountaineers for the last century. A friend of ours, the University of Illinois psychologist Art Kramer, has been on the upper slopes of the mountain several times as part of his research on how oxygen – and the lack thereof – affects people's thinking. As humans become deprived of oxygen, whether because of circulatory problems or thin air, their thinking slows, they become confused, and good decisions are difficult. The rarefied air at twenty thousand feet offers a perfect laboratory for Art's research. But because research ethics do not allow scientists to place their research participants in mortal danger, Art cannot go the usual route of recruiting university students to study. Instead, he climbs and conducts research with the United States Navy, whose elite soldiers scale the mountain as part of their training.

On a recent climbing expedition, Kramer was ascending a steep snow bank when he came upon a team of less experienced Canadian mountaineers who were uncertain in which direction they ought to head. Art took the team to the ridge leading to the summit, and then did something remarkable. Instead of hiking the final few hundred meters himself, he turned his back on the summit and descended to camp. Because climbing to the top of Mount McKinley could cast doubt on the scientific integrity of the expedition – creating the impression that Professor Kramer was using government research funds to finance his private ambition – he turned around before reaching the summit. The hardest part of the climb was behind him; all that lay between him and the summit was a straightforward walk up a gentle slope. He could easily have ascended to the top, but chose instead to turn back. In an age where summit fever has led to highly publicized accounts of tragedy, Art's attitude toward the peak is refreshing.

When we suggested to Art that *not* reaching the summit might haunt him for the rest of his life, he laughed. Rather than worrying about "the one that got away," Art views climbing Mount McKinley as far more about the activity than the end goal. He once said to us, "Climbing has never been about the summit for me. It's always been about the process of climbing." His sentiment is easy enough to say, but let's be honest: the summit of a mountain can be an important goal. But if we side-step this traditional goal, what does that leave us?

If climbing is not about getting to the top of the mountain, then what is to keep a person huffing and puffing uphill? The answer, according to Art, is that there are many enjoyable, rewarding moments along the way. The entire process of climbing can be an emotional payoff, from training at home, to the feeling of "flow" while climbing, to gorgeous views, to victory beers with friends after the climb. Art can easily point to many of his favorite aspects of spending time at high altitudes: "Climbing is about being out in the wilderness and enjoying the beauty. It's also about the challenge of route finding." When we spoke about his Mount McKinley expedition, he added, with a childlike twinkle in his eye, "And climbing is definitely about making snow caves; I've enjoyed that." Success, for Art, is more about how enjoyable the journey is than whether or not he achieves the summit.

While you may not be a climber, you can likely recognize the metaphorical implications of this story. In so many ways, and for so many people, the pursuit of goals is like a climb up the side of a mountain. There are better routes and worse routes; there are hazards and setbacks; effort is required; and there is the hope of ultimate success. Perhaps most important, the summit is only one small part of the climb. Just as climbers eagerly anticipate their expedition, enjoy the relief of an occasional rest, and savor the memory of their trips, happiness is often less about achieving goals than it is about enjoyment along the way, and fond recollections afterward. In this way, Art Kramer's story beautifully illustrates one of the main points of this book: happiness is not just a destination. That's right: despite the fact that many people seek out lasting fulfillment – and it is natural and understandable to do so – happiness is not an emotional finish line in the race of life. We should repeat that: happiness should *not* be looked at just as a destination we try to reach, but as a beneficial way we learn to travel. A key to psychological wealth is to understand the importance of the journey itself to happiness.

What does it mean to say that happiness is a process, not a place? There are several important lessons in the dictum. The Art Kramer story illustrates one meaning – that happiness often comes from doing rather than having. If we enjoy the activities needed in working for our goals, many hours and years of pleasure are provided, whereas reaching summits provides only the occasional short-term high. Another important meaning of the "process, not a place" maxim is that no matter what good life circumstances we obtain, things can still go

wrong. Furthermore, even in good circumstances we need to find new challenges and goals, or things will grow boring. We adapt to good things and need to move on to new goals to continue to enjoy life to the fullest.

Caveat Emptor: Bad Stuff Happens . . . Even to Princesses

Take a moment and recall the classic story of Cinderella. Remember how she was cruelly mistreated by her stepsisters and their wicked mother? Do you recall how they made her slave away at the daily household chores? Remember how the dress she labored so hard over was torn to shreds in a fit of jealousy, and her hopes of going to the royal ball lay in tatters? Of course, you probably best remember the happy ending of the fairy tale: Cinderella's magical godmother arrives in the nick of time, whisks her away to the dance, and engineers a quick infatuation, with the result that the beloved protagonist marries the charming prince. But is that the end of the story, or just the beginning?

It is interesting to consider what happened to Cinderella next, after she was betrothed and took up residence in Charming Castle. For people who believe that happiness is a matter of favorable circumstances, the story of Cinderella turns out to be a slam dunk. With a Hollywood-handsome husband, a royal title, all the riches she could want, and soldiers to guard her from the paparazzi, how could our belle of the ball not be happy? But for folks who are inclined to think of happiness as a process, the matter of Cinderella's emotional fate is far from clear. Did Cinderella's husband treat her well, or was he a philanderer in later life? Did she find some meaningful pastime to keep her occupied on the palace grounds? Were her children spoiled brats? Did she harbor resentment about her upbringing, or try to get revenge on her stepsisters? Did she grow bored with royal balls and court intrigue, or did she organize a dance program for the poor kids in her kingdom? Happiness, as we have said, is a process, not a destination. Just as Cinderella's life did not end with her royal wedding, your emotional bliss is not complete once you have obtained some important goal. Life goes on, and even those great circumstances you achieve will not ensure you lasting happiness. For one thing, bad things can happen even to beautiful young princesses. But even if Cinderella's life encountered few bumps on the fairyland road, she