



How To Be Happy

How developing your confidence, resilience, appreciation and communication can lead to a happier, healthier you

Liggy Webb

"This is a life enhancing book that will undoubtedly bring greater and longer lasting happiness to every reader."

Richard Denny, international business growth specialist, speaker and author

"Yet again Liggy provides a simple and constructive approach to understanding the issues and providing a path to achieving personal happiness and success. The clear message and focus is – if you cannot change your circumstances, change your focus and your attitude."

Dr David C Batman, Director of Research, Foundation for Chronic Disease Prevention in the workplace and former Head of Employee Wellness at Nestle

"Raising young children is full of joy but it can also be one of the most stressful times of life. It's very easy for parents to get caught up in the whirlwind of everyday life looking after kids – leaving little time to look after themselves. We know that happy parents raise happy children so many mums will find this new book of interest."

Sally Russell, Founder of Netmums.com

"Liggy Webb explains how we can achieve a happier and more positive life and backs up her theory with some great evidence and advice. This is a well-researched and efficient guide to one of life's most enduring challenges."

Paul O'Neill, Vice President, Guinness World Records Commercial

"A timely reminder that our attitudes and actions can have a big influence on our happiness."

Mark Williamson, Director of Action for Happiness

HOW TO BE HAPPY

**Simple ways to build your
confidence and resilience
to become a happier,
healthier you**

Liggy Webb



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This book is dedicated to my Mum and Dad, Robin and Ann.

You are my inspiration x

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PREFACE

I am a happiness explorer. I am captivated by the concept of happiness.

Having spent so much of my life researching, writing, presenting and speaking about this somewhat nebulous subject, I have deduced the following:

- Happiness is not out there!
- Happiness is a journey not a destination.
- Happiness is about taking personal responsibility.

Let me explain in a little more depth.

First of all I would like to address the plethora of consumerist activity that professes to deliver the silver bullet solution with regards to an individual's pursuit of happiness. It is frequently suggested that some purchase or material gain will make you happy, thereby reinforcing a belief that happiness is 'out there' somewhere. Many people waste valuable time looking in all the wrong places for something that they have been in possession of all along. The ability to be happy is inside everyone, we all have the capacity and it is completely free, no cost attached. You can make the decision to be happier right now if you really want to be.



Secondly, I don't believe that we have the ability to exist in a permanent state of happiness. To have a real zest for life – and feel passion and compassion – it is important to experience the full range of emotions that make up the rich tapestry of our lives. Life is a journey and so is happiness; as with many journeys, you may hit a few potholes along the way. Sometimes you may get hurt and feel pain. However, without experiencing any pain in your life you will be less likely to fully understand and appreciate happiness.

Finally, you need to take some personal responsibility for your own happiness. Often, people choose to play the victim and look to blame others for the way that they feel. They wallow and indulge themselves in constant pity parties, dragging others down at the same time by spreading their negative attitude germs.

The expectation that someone or something else will come along and make you happy is unrealistic. A key consideration with regards to happiness is the distance between reality and expectation. If you are constantly in a state of expectation, then you will constantly set yourself up for disappointment. If you are dependent on others to make you happy you may leave yourself vulnerable. It is essential to take personal responsibility.

Every person is unique and, by definition, what happiness means to one person will mean something different to another. You need to listen to yourself, define your own agenda and not allow anyone else to superimpose their version of happiness, otherwise you may lose control of what works for you. You need to be your own puppeteer and pull your own strings! So, the relationship you have with yourself is key. Being happy with who you are, what you do and what you have is not only advisable – I would say it is essential.



Happiness also takes practice. There may well be times in your life where there is simply too much darkness, times when the concept of happiness seems as far away as the moon. These are the times that you need to remind yourself about the things that make you feel happy and count your blessings one by one, over and over.

Creating a personal happiness toolkit will help you to feel more self-empowered and more in control. It will protect you from the inevitable media invasion of misery, and the negative 'doom goblins' that you sometimes meet along the way. It will also enable you to be more resilient and bounce back, quicker, better and stronger.

There are certainly a few things in my life that have given me a great education with regards to understanding happiness and what works in terms of developing a personal toolkit.

First of all, and perhaps the most insightful experience for me, has been a lifetime of managing bouts of depression. What I have learnt firsthand has been immense and drives me to want to explore how depression can be positively managed and how the stigma that is still attached to mental health issues can be addressed and dealt with. I have a great deal of empathy for people who don't experience depression and live or work with someone who does get depressed. The very nature of this insidious and seemingly invisible illness has far-reaching consequences for everyone.

Another great learning opportunity for me has been the work that I do with the United Nations – as an international consultant, travelling to various peace missions and duty stations around the world. Two of the most poignant experiences have been my trips to Afghanistan and Ethiopia, which I will tell you more about later in the book. It has most certainly brought a wider perspective to



my world and a deeper understanding of what makes different people happy.

Certainly it challenges the Western approach to life. My belief is that if we spend as much time feeding our souls as we do attempting to feed our bank accounts we will be rewarded by a much healthier and more balanced perspective. We are likely to value things far more than we do and, in fact, derive more pleasure from what we have already, rather than constantly focusing on what we are missing or what other people have!

There are now an increasing number of organizations and movements that are championing the way forward for helping people to feel better about themselves and their lives. The aim of many of these is to understand happiness on a more wholesome level.

So, the aim of this book is to help you to feel better about yourself and your life. I certainly would not profess to say that by reading this book you will become instantly happy! It is up to you to use the information to work out your own happiness agenda. Life is what you make it.

I have endeavoured to keep the messages simple, and to demystify some of the complexities of modern living. I have started each chapter with an amusing story which I hope will bring a smile to your face. I have shared personal experiences, the wisdom of others and lots of useful tips and advice. You may already know something about most of the content that I have covered. But remember, it is not what you know, it is what you do with it that really counts.

Happy reading!

Liggy Webb

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**AN
INTRODUCTION
TO HAPPINESS**



One day a man was sitting alone on a beach feeling reflective and melancholic. He looked out towards the sea as if searching for something. Suddenly he had an overwhelming urge to dive into the ocean to see if he could find whatever it was that was missing from his life.

Just as he was about to run into the sea he was astonished to see a tiny mermaid, no larger than his hand, perched on a rock looking at him curiously.

Mesmerized, he moved closer towards her and, as he approached, she spoke to him saying, 'I have been watching you for quite some time. You seem to be looking for something. Can I help you?'

The man replied 'I have so many things in my life, but I feel as if there is something missing. Can you give it to me?'

To which the mermaid replied happily, 'Yes I have unlimited magical powers so I can give you anything you want.'

The man stared hopefully into the tiny mermaid's eyes and said, 'I want to feel happy.'

'All right', nodded the mermaid, and proceeded to take away everything the man possessed. She took away every talent he had, she damaged his health, she burnt down his home, she emptied his bank account and turned his family and friends into statues. Then, she threw herself back into the ocean and swam happily away.

A month later, as the man lay on the beach – bereft, lonely, hungry and struggling for survival – the mermaid returned and gave back to him everything that he had once possessed.

Two weeks later, the mermaid was swimming close to the shore. She saw the man on the beach enjoying a BBQ with his family and friends.



He looked so happy and, as she watched him, she noticed a smile of pure contentment on his face.

At last he had found what he was looking for.

This story highlights the importance of appreciating what you have, and how a constant undefined search can divert us from living with and loving what we have.

There are many things in life that influence happiness. In recent years there have been substantial developments in the science of well-being, with new evidence of the factors that affect happiness and how it can be measured. There is now the opportunity to use this evidence to make better choices about the way we live our lives, both at home and at work.

Health is an important consideration. In 1948, the World Health Organization defined the word 'health' as meaning 'physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.'

In the light of this, we have the opportunity to embrace these key elements, to cultivate them and weave them into the rich tapestry of our lives.

SO WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

Happiness is currently front-page news. Recently, two Nobel Prize-winning economists, Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen, called on world leaders to move away from a purely economic measure of



value towards a broader vision that includes well-being and its sustainability.

Cash-strapped governments are investigating 'emotional well-being' (EWB) with the idea that an improvement in each nation's EWB could be a valuable asset, with a solid return on investment. Indeed, there is persuasive evidence that happier people make a greater contribution to society while making fewer demands on it.

For most of us, happiness is that pleasant feeling we get when life is good. It encompasses a wide range of feelings – from contentment to immense joy and elation – depending on how far up and down the emotional palette we each have the capacity to extend. But we all know it when we see it, and we like it. It is the ultimate feel-good factor.

We are taught from a very early age to seek happiness. As children our concept of happiness is quite simple but, as the years pass, this becomes greatly expanded. We come to believe that if we succeed at something, whether it is a career or a relationship, we will be happy. Some people seek out happiness through religion or a spiritual leader and, it seems, everyone has their own idea as to what makes them happy. The searching often becomes the very point of our existence. If someone asks us what we want, for ourselves or our loved ones, the likely response is 'happiness'.

What constitutes happiness or, perhaps more pertinently, where happiness exists are questions that have troubled many a great thinker.

The philosopher, Aristotle, believed that happiness was the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and object of



human existence. He believed that we choose happiness always for itself, and never for the sake of something else. It is the end to which all virtuous actions are directed. It must be some good or set of goods that, in themselves, make life worth living.

SOME OF THE SCIENCE BEHIND HAPPINESS

Many people chase happiness by acquiring material goods. However, scientific studies support the age-old saying that ‘money doesn’t buy happiness’.

Psychologist Tal Ben-Shahar defines happiness as ‘the overall experience of pleasure and meaning’. He describes it as the ultimate currency, the end to which all other ends lead, and the indicator by which we measure our lives.

Psychologist Martin Seligman, Director of the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania and founder of positive psychology (a branch of psychology which focuses on the empirical study of such things as positive emotions, strengths-based character, and healthy institutions), defines a formula for happiness:

$$H = S + C + V$$

- S is your happiness set point
- C constitutes your life circumstances
- V represents your voluntary activities.

S, a combination of genetic disposition and cultural upbringing, is largely out of your control. C, your life circumstances, may also



be difficult to change. But V is where you have total control and opportunity. The activities in which you engage and the way you choose to think about your life offer you the opportunity for greater happiness. Positive psychology is essentially about what makes life worth living.

Other psychologists also suggest that happiness is not a destination, but a process. Rather than viewing life as a period of necessary hardship and struggle with the promise of happiness at retirement or beyond, you can reasonably strive to find happiness every day.

Tal Ben-Shahar suggests that rather than ask yourself if you're happy, a better question might be: 'How can I become happier?' This suggests that there is always the possibility for greater positive feelings, and urges you to reach continually for a sense of well-being in order to attract the good things in life.

WHOLESOME HAPPINESS

I love the word 'wholesome', especially when it is attributed to happiness. It focuses on a more balanced and sustainable approach rather than the quick-fix hedonism that modern society seems not only to condone but to encourage and celebrate.

The consideration of the mind, body and soul working in harmony seems a very sensible approach, especially when the term 'work-life balance' is used so frequently in business as a solution to the ever-increasing stress-related illnesses that have such a negative impact on the economy.



Balance is key, as is understanding our core values.

I was exploring the concept of wholesome happiness and personal values a while ago whilst I was in Afghanistan doing some work with the UN.

I was especially curious and excited about visiting Kabul. Watching the news and hearing so many stories had filled me with some trepidation. What I found, however, despite the underlying tension, the obvious poverty, the guns, the guards and the grime, was the raw beauty of the country and, most of all, the people.

One conversation that resonated with me most of all was when I was speaking with one of the delegates in my group. He was a mullah – a Muslim man educated in Islamic theology and sacred law. He had been working with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for some years. I shared with him some of my research and we discussed at length the concept of happiness and the appreciation of life.

As you can imagine, the situation and circumstances in Afghanistan are incredibly challenging and, from a Western perspective, it can be difficult to comprehend what people would have to be grateful for, or happy about.

However, as I shared this somewhat narrow view, I was immediately challenged by the mullah, who looked at me with calm and gentle eyes and said: 'Being happy in life isn't so complicated. I have come to appreciate that as long as you have something to love, something to do that gives you a purpose and something to hope for and believe in, then you will always have something to be happy about and grateful for.'