

BE HAPPIER IN ONE HOUR

**Enjoy Better Relationships, Better Health,
More Success and a Longer Life**

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www.irrationalhappiness.com/dehardesty/

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This book is dedicated to everyone who wants to be happy.

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Introduction

Human beings are really kind of dumb. We have the natural ability to be happy any time we want. Yet, we don't learn to use it. Instead, we spend our time trying to acquire things and do things to make ourselves happy. We try to gather people around us who will make us happy. "Things" do not have the power to make us happy. Other people do not have the power to make us happy. To be happier, you have to learn to find happiness inside of yourself and bring it into your life.

People try to do things to accumulate lots of stuff, find better relationships, feel better, become more successful and live longer. A lot of this effort is aimed at making themselves happier. But, much of the time this effort is not effective. In reality, there is nothing we have to do to be happy. We make ourselves happy naturally. All of this running around trying to be happy just gets in the way.

You are probably saying to yourself that I'm crazy and that all of these things do make us happy. People who are not happy just don't try hard enough, or are not lucky enough to get what they want to make themselves happy.

I don't believe it. I look around and see people working like demons, acquiring things, gathering lots of people around them, and being successful. But, they are not happy. They are not healthy. Their relationships are toxic. Still, they keep working hard to get more of whatever they have.

The simple fact is, human beings evolved to survive and have babies who survive. That's it! To thrive as a species on a hostile planet, where everything was trying to kill us and eat us, our mind-bodies* evolved to do what it takes to survive. We did not evolve to be happy.

Because of the way we evolved, we approach everything we do as if it were a survival course. We sweat and strain, and pursue all kinds of things in order to be happy – money, looks, relationships, health, knowledge, entertainment. This activity is more of what we did 100,000 years ago, stumbling through jungles or across plains, looking for something to eat. We still refer to our environment as a jungle -- urban jungle, business jungle, dating jungle.

We are willing to spend a lot of time, and we are willing to suffer to get what we want – hoping that in the end what we get will bring happiness. People who are unwilling to make the effort are called lazy or losers.

What do we want though? In the end, don't we all just want to be happy? Isn't happiness the purpose of all of this hard work? Of course it is. We want to do more than just survive. We want to be happy. We want to be fulfilled. We want to live with purpose. Working hard, acquiring a lot of stuff, and being "successful" does not guarantee happiness.

The truth is, we all have the natural ability to be happy right now. At this moment, as you are reading this book, you can be happy. Nothing needs to change in your life. You can be happy just the way you are. And here is a bonus. Psychologists tell us that happy people have better relationships, better health, are more successful and live longer lives. They are not happier because of these things; instead they have these things because they are already happy. It is not success that makes you happy. It is happiness that makes you successful.

The way to approach life is to learn to be happy first. That's right. Just learn to be happy. By doing so, chances are all of the good things in life that you want will come to you. And, all of the time you are waiting for them you will be happy. If they never come, you will still be happy.

It seems obvious that happy people would have better relationships. It is much easier to have healthy long-term relationships if you are already happy, and you are not looking for someone who can accomplish the impossible task of making you happy.

It may come as a surprise that happy people are often more successful. One reason is that better relationships mean better connections with others and more chances of success. In addition, people who are happier are more apt to like what they do, and stick with a career longer. Staying with a job that you like usually leads to greater success than jumping from job to job, looking for the one that will make you happy (another impossible task).

Happy people are healthier and live longer. Nobody is quite sure why, but one reason is that it is easier to adopt a healthy lifestyle when you are happy. Unhappy people are more likely to sit on the couch, in front of the tube, hoping that the next joint, the next drink or the next pint of ice-cream will get them through another day.

So, this book is about being happier. It is about changing your approach to life so that the natural happiness that is already inside of you can come into your life.

It takes about an hour to read this book. During this hour, you will read about different ways of being happier, and each one includes something you can do right now to make yourself immediately

happier. Anyone who reads this book and tries the exercises can be happier in one hour.

Going forward, if you can devote an hour a day to these practices you will be happier and happier over time.

Is it worthwhile to devote an hour of your time to learning to be happier? Obviously I think so. If being happier will give you better relationships, better health, more success and a longer life, what better way could you spend your time?

The basic message of this book is, happiness is already inside of you, waiting to be released. It is not something you can buy and it is not something anyone can give you. Nobody can do anything to make you happier.

Instead, you have to find it within yourself and then choose to allow it into your life. Being happy is like flicking a light switch. When the light is on you are happy, and when the light is off you are not. The conditions of your life usually do not matter. What matters is whether the light is on or off. In this book, I show you how to turn on that light.

* In this book I will use the term mind-body, which refers to the way the human body and the human mind are inextricably linked, and interact with the world as a single unit.

Chapter 1

Look Inside for Happiness



The most important thing you can do to be happier right now is to learn that happiness is natural to you and is already inside of you waiting to be released. You just have to allow yourself to experience it. Once you know this truth of happiness, and incorporate it into the way you look at life, your level of happiness will increase.

We have known for thousands of years that happiness is natural to us. Sure, it is difficult to believe this when you look at the people around you. In addition, Western philosophy and religion have not offered people much hope here. One philosopher claimed that life was “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” (Hobbes). Western religion has often not been much better. However, it is my experience that incredible happiness is there for you if you change the way you approach life.

Knowing that happiness is natural to you is important because ultimately you become what you think. If you believe that the world is a certain way, then that is often how it will be for you.

You see the world that you expect to see. Depending on how you look at it, the world can be heaven or hell for you.

We are used to thinking and believing that happiness comes from what we do and what we have. However, these circumstances (or conditions) of life only appear to create happiness. Authentic happiness does not depend on the conditions of your life. Real happiness is unconditional. You can experience it regardless of your life situation. You can be rich, beautiful and loved by all, and still be miserable. Alternatively, you can be sick and dying, and joyous.

Let's try a little thought experiment, which may illustrate what I have been saying.

Pretend that you look at the lottery ticket that you bought last night and discover that you have just won \$25 million. What is your reaction? Shock, amazement, disbelief and – happiness. Now ask yourself, where did this happiness come from? You might answer, “winning the lottery, of course.” However, you would be wrong. Winning the lottery may have triggered a feeling of happiness, but winning did not reach inside your mind-body and generate all of the chemical reactions that we know as the feelings of happiness. These feelings arose spontaneously, prompted by the idea of winning the lottery. The potential for happiness was already inside of you, waiting for your mind-body to give you permission to feel it.

Obviously, it does appear that winning the lottery caused the feelings of happiness to arise, but the idea of winning only gave you permission to feel sensations that your mind-body was already capable of producing. Winning appears to be the key criteria for being happy in this case. However, in reality it is important only if your mind-body's particular rules for happiness say that you can be happy only if you win the lottery and have lots of money.

What is really important is to know that the feeling of happiness was and is already available in your mind-body. It is waiting to be released. All it takes is an idea – a trigger – to experience it.

Now, authentic happiness (winning-the-lottery level happiness) is what we all want. It is already in the mind-body, and once you have taken care of your basic needs for food, clothing and shelter, you should be happy. In fact, you should be joyous. So, the first thing you can do to be happier is learn that happiness is already there, waiting to be released. This is the truth of happiness.

How does knowing this truth of happiness help you be happier? Once you know this – really know this – it changes your approach life.

For example, let's say you have a job that provides enough for you and your family to be comfortable. However, you believe another job will make you happier because it pays more. It is a high-stress job, but you believe that the additional money makes it worth the stress. The assumption, that making more money will make you happier (an assumption disproven by psychologists), sets you on a road to higher stress and less happiness. The job may prevent you from sleeping well or prevent you from being with your family. It may make you feel bad about yourself because you have to do things you do not feel right about. All of the things that come with the new job may obscure your ability to see the happiness that is inside of you. If, however, you know that the happiness you want is already inside, you might decide not to take the job.

Choosing a job is just one example of how knowing that happiness is natural helps you avoid doing things that will get in the way of being happy. Job choice is a big decision. However, every day you make hundreds of small decisions about what to do, or what not to do, based on what you believe about happiness. If you know that happiness is natural to you, then all of these little decisions will change. Knowing that happiness is natural to you, and acting on this knowledge changes the focus of your attention and intention. It puts everything in perspective and puts you on the path towards greater and greater happiness.

What to do

If you give yourself a chance, you may experience moments of real happiness that seem to come from out of nowhere. When this happens your mind-body may not believe this is happiness. It may tell you it's a fake, that it is irrational. Have faith in the irrational. If you change the way you approach being happy, you can begin to experience the depths of true happiness that are available to you as your birthright.

The first thing you need to do to begin experiencing this happiness is know that it exists. By the time you finish reading this book, you will hopefully be convinced. The first exercise we are going to do may show you that happiness actually does exist inside of you.

Here is the exercise:

Let's go back to the lottery winner. \$25 million! Unbelievable but true. You wake up poor, you go to sleep rich. Now, pretend that you are going to be in a play and that your role is that of the happy lottery winner. As a good method actor, you know that you have to pull from within yourself all of the feelings of happiness that you can. Your emotions have to be real because

you need to convince the audience that you really are an ecstatically happy lottery winner. Spend a minute or so doing this. Feel those emotions. Make them real for yourself. Be ready to convince the audience that you won the lottery.

Now that you have prepared yourself, examine your feelings of happiness. Are they real? Can you make them more real? Can you make them authentic? Try. See if you can make your feelings of happiness complete.

Once the feelings of happiness are as real as you can make them, ask yourself, where did they come from? What is their source? You should be able to see that the feelings are real and that they come from inside of you.

What you want from this exercise is the knowledge that true happiness -- real and authentic happiness -- is inside of you. It has no other source. If you can begin to see this truth of happiness, you have made an important start on your journey to being happier.

Chapter 2

Let Go of Your Rules for Happiness



If a person wins the lottery that person will be happy. The mere idea of winning is enough to make someone happy. The lottery itself does not create this happiness. Instead, the idea of it triggers the chemical reactions in the mind-body that we know as the feelings of happiness. We humans have the power to experience spontaneous happiness -- all we need is a trigger. But, why do we

need a trigger? Why can't we just be happy all of the time? The answer is, the mind-body seems to be set up so that you can only be happy when its rules for happiness are met. However, it is possible to ignore these rules. You can let them go, and just be happy.

From the day we enter the world, we see everyone striving for happiness by doing things. So, we try to do things to make ourselves happy. As we do this, our experience appears to show us that happiness does indeed come from what we do and what we have – from the circumstances of our lives.

Nobody seems to question the assumption that, in order to feel happy, something good must happen. But, why does it have to be this way? Happiness comes from inside of us and is natural to us, so why can't we just be happy?

The mind-body seems to be stuffed with rules for when you can and cannot experience happiness. In other words, we all have internal rules for what it takes for us to permit ourselves to be happy.

For example, your internal rules may say that you can be happy if A, B, and C happen. However, if A, B and D happen you cannot be happy.

If you believe that getting a certain job will make you happy, and you get that job, you will be happy when you get the news. The new job does not make you happy since you have not yet started it. The idea of it makes you happy. Happiness spontaneously arises within you when something good happens. The thing itself has no power to affect how you feel. All it can do is trigger happiness in you if your personal rules for happiness are satisfied.

YOU permit yourself to be happy. You have your internal requirements for happiness, as we all do, which seem to function automatically. However, it is still YOU who permits yourself to be happy. You permit yourself to be happy when the conditions of your life are right, and when those conditions no longer meet your personal requirements, your happiness goes away.

It may seem silly that, even though the potential for happiness is always inside of you, your mind-body permits you to experience it only when its rules are met. However, that is how we all operate.

Why would you permit yourself to be happy only when your rules are met? One explanation may come from our evolutionary past. Psychologists tell us that happy people are not as careful as those who are not happy. [1] 100,000 years ago, if you were a happy-go-lucky sort you did not last long in the jungles and plains. You were not as alert as you needed to be. So, to keep us safe our mind-

bodies evolved to see the world as a dark and dangerous place. This kept you unhappy, alert and alive.

The mind-body has not evolved far since then. The mind still tends to see more bad in the world than good. We still perceive bad as stronger than good. [2] In some places of the world this makes sense. But, a lot of the time seeing the people and the world around you as dark and dangerous only creates a self-fulfilling prophecy. This makes for bad relationships and a lot of unhappiness. In addition, it keeps you in a constant state of “fight or flight,” which is not good for your long-term health.

So, if you are looking for happiness to come from what your mind-body tells you to do, you may not see a lot of it in your life. The mind-body would rather keep you unhappy, but alive.

The kind of rules-based happiness I have been talking about is what I call “conditional happiness.” It is conditional because it exists only if the conditions of your life are just right – not too hot, not too cold. This kind of happiness is inherently temporary because the conditions of life always change.

Also, even if the conditions of your life do not change much, this happiness can disappear as you adapt to the circumstances of your life. Studies have shown that after the initial rush of happiness from winning a lottery, the winners return to being their same old selves. Having more money from winning the lottery did not make a lasting difference in happiness. In fact, some winners reported finding less enjoyment in life than non-winners. [3]

Adaptation works to limit happiness in other ways as well. One large study showed that getting married gives both the husband and wife a happiness boost for about two years. However, once the couple adapts to the situation, they both return to their previous levels of happiness. [4]

A new job can make you feel better for a while. However, after a brief honeymoon you may find that the new job does not bring you the kind of lasting happiness you sought. In fact, while the new job may look a lot different from the old job, it may feel the same.

Because our mind-bodies withhold happiness from us until conditions are right, we spend most of our time dissatisfied with life, waiting for the next great thing to come around the corner. Sure, when we satisfy some major desire there is a temporary mood boost. But soon new desires arise and new dissatisfaction. So the cycle repeats itself, over and over. Our basic pattern of existence seems to be:

- Dissatisfaction with life and desire for something new,
- Happiness on achieving that desire,

- Disappearance of what we wanted, or adaptation to the new circumstances, and
- Back to dissatisfaction with life and desiring something else.

So, our system of internal rules for happiness kind of sucks, but what else can you do? And, what is the problem in trying to do things to make ourselves at least temporarily happy?

Yes, you might find conditional happiness in the world if you look long enough. But if that is where you focus your attention real happiness will continue to elude you. When you seek happiness from what happens in the world, you keep reinforcing the wrong ideas about where to look for happiness.

Your mind is probably full of plans and strategies for future happiness. Unfortunately, focusing all of your attention on your plans, strategies, hopes, and desires may use up all of your time and energy. You may have little left to look inside, which is where real happiness comes from.

What to do

To be happier, you have to learn to allow yourself to be happy for no reason. This is something anyone can do. You can just be happy right now if you permit it, without anything changing in your life. Admittedly this is a radical idea. However, the practice of being happy for no reason has been around for thousands of years. It works for me, and I am nothing special. So, there is no reason that it cannot work for you.

To be happy right now, you need to ignore your personal rules for happiness. Just let them go, and be happy for the sole reason that you choose to be happy.

Here is an exercise:

Think of something that you want, and which you believe will make you really happy. Now that you have it in mind let us enter into a fantasy. In this fantasy, you now have what you want and having it makes you happy. As much as you are comfortable doing, allow yourself to believe that you have what you want. Experience the happiness that comes with it. Don't hold back. Allow the happiness to well up inside of you. Allow yourself to experience this happiness as completely as you can.

Now, while staying in touch with the happiness that you feel, let go of thoughts about what you wanted. Focus your attention only on the happiness you feel, and let go of your thoughts about what triggered that happiness.

If you can let go of thoughts of what caused your happiness, try to see that the happiness exists independently of what you wanted. Notice that you can continue to feel the happiness even when thoughts about what you wanted are no longer there.

In this exercise, I want you to see that happiness is inside of you, waiting for a trigger that releases it into your consciousness. You can experience it whenever you want. The only trigger you need to be happy is the thought that you want to be happy. The object of this exercise is to weaken the way that your internal rules for happiness block your experience of it. If you give this exercise a chance, you will feel just a little lighter, as the burden of carrying all of these rules lessens.

Now, say to yourself, "I choose to be happy, right now!" Say this to yourself a few times, and really mean it. Let these words be your trigger for happiness. You should be able to sense the feeling of real happiness in you. If you even sense a little of this happiness, you have taken an important step on the path to lasting happiness.

Chapter 3

Don't Let Pleasure Obscure Happiness



Everyone seems to be in a 24/7 rush for pleasure and distraction. What people really want is to be happy, but they seem to spend most of their time seeking sense pleasures. Perhaps they believe that pleasure leads to happiness. Or, maybe they have all given up on happiness and figure that they might at least find pleasure while they can. The problem is, the headlong race for pleasure can obscure real happiness. If you can just let go of your cravings for pleasurable experiences, you can be happier right now.

It's not strange that we fixate on sense pleasures as a means of being happy. We evolved to seek what tasted good and felt good, because 100,000 years ago these things usually kept us alive. While we may not remember what life was like back then, our genes do. For them, the passage of the intervening years is nothing. Our genetic heritage still impels us to survive by seeking what our mind-bodies consider pleasurable. Some schools of psychology

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