

Being

◇—————◇
Your Happiness, Pleasure, and Contentment

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CHAPTER ONE

What Are You Going to Get Out of Reading This Book?

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This book is about you. It is about something you may have forgotten. It is about being happy. It is about *you* being happy. This book is about answering a question: How do you distinguish the positive emotions of happiness, pleasure, and contentment from one another? And for that matter, how do you go about defining, gaining, and maintaining these emotions? Do you know the answers? If you do, then there is no need to read any further, oh Dalai Lama of Positive Emotions. Instead, go on with your idyllic life and spread the good news.

If you do not know the answers and are interested in learning *the answers*, then read on, my friend; for you are in the right place. The answers we come up with promise to allow you happiness, pleasure, and contentment, over your *lifetime*.

This book is interactive. In addition to answers, it has lots of questions. And *you'll* be expected to come up with answers to these questions. These questions will come through philosophical, scientific, and artful inquiry; thought-experiments; demonstrations; interactive psychological instruments; and yes—even my own personal anecdotes. But don't worry, the anecdotes don't come with any summer vacation slide shows. By reading this book and answering these questions, I expect you'll become aware of and understand true happiness—or **eudaimonia** (U-DAY-MOAN-YAH), as Aristotle put it. C'mon, don't be afraid—you can pronounce it. Say... U-DAY-MOAN-YAH. True happiness is something you've likely not had since childhood. It is a natural state of happiness—it hasn't been tainted by *learning* yet. Damn learning! True happiness occurs *only* in concert with particular levels of pleasure and contentment. All of us are born with true happiness; however, over time, as we grow from childhood to adulthood, most of us lose it. Now don't get me wrong. Adults have some form of positive emotions and happiness—but they are not likely to have the authentic form they had as children. I bet, if you think about it for a moment, the happiest people you know...happen to be children.

Additionally, this book provides:

1. A review of the current scientific research literature on happiness, so you'll know exactly what *is* and *is not* associated with happiness.
2. A recipe for your own *happiness*—with recipe card to boot (see the inside front cover).

3. A personal method to distinguish among your **happiness**, **pleasure**, and **contentment** life experiences, so that you can focus on which ones matter to you the most.
4. A measure of your own happiness, pleasure, and contentment within eleven different parts of your life:

With your partner/spouse	Relative to your finances
Within your family	Within your friendships
When you are alone	Relative to your possessions
When you are at work	Relative to your leisure time
Relative to your personal health	When you are at home
When you are learning	
5. Tools to overcome **happiness confusion** and replace **happy-ignorance** with **contentment-recognition**—this replacement often leads to true happiness, an increase in *longevity* and better *health* (through facilitating contentment activities), and a decrease in sicknesses and ill health (through negating pleasure activities). Don't worry, all these concepts will be defined within this book soon enough...
6. Scientifically based personal activities that you can do to make yourself happy in a moment's notice, and a method for you to transform negative emotions of sadness, pain, and depression into positive emotions of happiness, pleasure, and contentment.

“What I really want is to be happy.” “I control my happiness.” “I’d be happier with more money.” “I never want to become content!” Wrong, wrong, wrong, and wrong! These are four of the most common misconceptions people—change that, *adults*—have about happiness and contentment. Change that again, adults have about *life*. If *you* believe any of these, then you are likely cultivating the opposite of true happiness. And that would make you a sadness farmer! And certainly you don't want to be a sadness farmer...right?!

The questions now are: Do *you* want to stop cultivating faux-happiness (like a faux-diamond, aka, diamonelle, on a 3 a.m. infomercial) and start cultivating true happiness—be a happiness farmer, instead of a sadness farmer? And do you want to decrease negative—energy-draining, motivation-sucking, success-robbing emotions like meanness, jealousy, anger, greed, envy, and hatred (Begley, 2007)? If you are *not* interested in learning about true happiness, and ending unnecessary negative emotions, then give this book to someone else. I'm serious—do it! There are plenty of other people hungry for knowledge about *real*

human behavior and positive emotions. You can get back to reading your paperback romance novels; hardbound self-help books; or *Prozac Nation* drug pamphlets. (*Not* that there is anything wrong with this reading list—just don't expect to gain long-lasting positive emotions from it.)

WHAT DO I EXPECT OF YOU?

If you *are* interested in understanding true happiness and negating the harmful effects of avoidable negative emotions, then I expect you to be doing at least three different activities *throughout* this book. Yes, reading this book is going to require your *active* involvement. First, assuming you are an adult (with the word *adult* being defined relative to the number of years that have passed since your birth, and *not* what your best friend or spouse may say about how you act), I expect you to prepare for reading this book by forgetting everything you have learned about happiness since early childhood—I told you, learning (okay, certain types at least) was bad. You read that right—I want you to forget about everything you ever learned about happiness since your childhood (except, of course, for what you've learned in this book so far). Your adult-conditioned ideas and thoughts about happiness will only get in the way of your learning about and experiencing real positive emotions.

More on this later.

Okay—have you forgotten everything you have learned about happiness since early childhood? Well... It has only been a moment or two; maybe I am expecting too much. Just continue forgetting... While you are doing that, let's talk about the second thing I expect of you. I expect you to be thinking—yes, you will be thinking throughout this book. To start this, I want you to think about what the following things have in common:

Sex	Prayer	Vacations
Drugs	Youth	Work
Rock & Roll	Learning	Divorce
Marriage	Education	Careers
Family	Diplomas	Houses
Children	Friends	Boats
Religion	Leisure	Automobiles
God	Fame	Beauty

Well—what do you think? What do all the things on this list have in common?

The answer is happiness. Well, kinda... In our *pursuit* of happiness, we spend the vast majority of our adult years trying to obtain any one or more of the things

on this list. And as Amy Lowell so eloquently describes in her poem “Happiness,” we are likely to give just about anything in this pursuit.

We rarely feel it.
I would buy it,
beg it, steal it,
Pay in coins of
dripping blood
For this one
transcendent good.

Here’s the really tough part: All of the things on the list—and probably even the “dripping blood coins”—are for naught; for the “happiness” that results from these things is temporary, and may be best described by other positive emotions; in particular: pleasure. Further, enduring, long-lasting positive emotions are likely not emotional effects or results, but instead are likely emotional causes. Specifically, enduring positive emotions lead us to have any one or more of the things on this list; the things on this list, likely, do not lead to enduring positive emotions. Sonja Lyubomirsky, Laura King, and Ed Diener (2005) describe this bi-directional relationship between happiness and the things that are associated with happiness as the happiness-success link: Being successful *may* lead to happiness; being happy *will* lead to success. For example, successful relationships lead to marriage and we know marriage is associated with happiness. However, it is not the case that marriage causes happiness; rather, happy people get married (Stutzer & Frey, 2006). Let me repeat—because if you stay with me, this is going to be of utmost importance—enduring positive emotions are much more likely to be *causes* than effects. So, if you want to be rich, guess what you need to be first?

My third and last expectation of you is to be questioning, answering, and theorizing about your *own* happiness and pleasure and contentment throughout this book. Don’t just be blindly following along with what I think happiness is. With that said, let me briefly introduce you to the main theory I will be using in this book. The theory is called **Being Theory**. (Chapter Four is a complete explanation of the theory.) Being Theory explains the relationship among happiness, pleasure, and contentment by using our—that is, a *human’s*—perception of time (which I will call **psychophysical time**) and a human’s judgment of who/what is in control of situations within his/her life (which I will call **observer perspective**). Further, Being Theory shows how to wipe out unnecessary negative emotions and serves as a guide for true happiness. So what do you really want: happiness, pleasure, or contentment? Or maybe you want some combination of these emotions? Heck, maybe you want all three? But what do you already have—do you even know? Do you want to find out?

YOU'RE NOT IMPATIENT, YOU'RE EFFICIENT

For those of you who want to get a quick sense of where this book will end up—or maybe this book was assigned reading in a class you're taking, and you don't want to read the whole thing—I dedicate this next section to you.

Here are the truths (that I'll be expanding upon in this whole book) to the four misconceptions about happiness and contentment above:

Misconceptions number one and number four: *What I really want is to be happy; I never want to be content!* People think they want to be happy, but what they really want is to be content. People confuse happiness with contentment (Evans, Guerra, Romero, & Lucas, 2008). By reading this book, you will learn how to define and decipher between happiness and contentment; and with this distinction, find out what you *really* want in life. Simply put, happiness is associated with *short-term* positive emotions, whereas contentment is associated with *everlasting* positive emotions. Contentment is *not* associated with being idle, lazy, or giving up; instead it is associated with the opposite: contentment is the greatest motivator of our behavior; being content is being able to do *anything*. (Misconceptions number one and number four are elaborated upon in **Chapter Two**.)

Misconception number two: *I control my happiness.* People believe they are in complete control of their own happiness, but in reality, people are in control of only about 45% of the variance or metabolic energy associated with happiness in particular and positive emotions in general; activities done for their own sake and things outside of a person's control—such as other people—account for the remaining 55%. True happiness is not an antisocial thing—it is a social thing. Repeat: True happiness is a social phenomenon. If the people that are close to you—family, friends, colleagues—aren't happy, or they are not happy with you, then you are going to have a tough time being happy. Through Being Theory, you will learn in detail about *three* observer perspectives that guide true happiness. For now, so you'll feel that you got your money's worth in purchasing this book, I will refer to these observer perspectives with the 13-cent words **endotelic** (which means *self*), **exotelic** (which means *environment*), and **autotelic** (which means *action*); Jung, 1978. Together with time and the particular life situation, these observer perspectives control true happiness as well as other emotions. (Misconception number two is elaborated upon in **Chapter Four**.)

Misconception number three: *I'd be happier with more money.* Money *is* associated with happiness. Money does not *cause* happiness. Thus, money does *not* lead to happiness. The relationship that exists between money and happiness is not about money per se, but instead appears to be solely due to the basic human necessities (e.g., food, shelter, “security”) that money *may* bring. Further, as mentioned above, the direction of the relationship between money and happiness is

usually in this direction: happiness → money, and *not* in this direction: money → happiness. (By the by, for those of you following along at home, “e.g.” is an abbreviation for the Latin term *exempli gratia*, which means *for example*; also, I will be using the abbreviation “i.e.,” which stands for the Latin term *id est*, meaning *that is*. If for no other reason, I use these Latin abbreviations in an attempt to re-confirm I deserve having a Ph.D., *Philosophiae Doctor*.) (Misconception number three is elaborated upon in **Chapter Three**.)

Okay, that’s the impatient—I mean, efficient—version. Do you feel better for knowing the truths behind these misconceptions? Did you get a taste of potential true happiness? If you want to see how to apply these truths to your own life, then you’re going to have to read a bit more than just a few paragraphs!

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO GET OUT OF READING THIS BOOK?

If you haven’t done so already, at some point early in your reading of this book, you’ll likely ask yourself, What am I going to get out of this book? And if I heard you ask yourself this, I would likely reply: Do you need to get *anything*? When you finish reading this book, you’ll likely know then that this simple question is one of the most powerful questions associated with getting *something* better than happiness, and that is your own life satisfaction, your own peace—your own *contentment*.

As I said, the primary purpose of this book is to provide you with the tools that distinguish among, and define, gain, and maintain happiness, pleasure, and contentment. And with the recent advent of Positive Psychology (Peterson & Seligman, 2005), there has been a focus on studying the strengths and virtues of human behavior within psychology, and a flourish in the number of books published for the general population on the science of happiness. For example, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s *Flow* (1990); David Myers’ *The Pursuit of Happiness* (1992); The Dalai Lama’s *The Art of Happiness* (1998); David Lykken’s *Happiness* (2000); Michael Argyle’s *The Psychology of Happiness* (2001); Martin Seligman’s *Authentic Happiness* (2002); Martin Bolt’s *Pursuing Human Strengths: A Positive Psychology Guide* (2004); Alan Carr’s *Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness and Human Strengths* (2004); William Compton’s *Introduction to Positive Psychology* (2004); Stefan Klein’s *The Science of Happiness: How Our Brains Make Us Happy and What We Can Do to Get Happier* (2005); Daniel Nettle’s *Happiness: The Science Behind Your Smile* (2005); Gregory Berns’ *Satisfaction: The Science of Finding True Fulfillment* (2005); Richard Layard’s *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science* (2005); Richard Haidt’s *Happiness Hypothesis* (2006); Daniel Gilbert’s *Stumbling on Happiness* (2006); C.R. Snyder and Shane Lopez’s *Positive Psychology: The Scientific and Practical Explorations of Human Strengths* (2006); Matthieu Ricard’s *Happiness: A Guide to Developing Life’s Most Important Skill* (2007); Tal Ben-

Shahar's *Happier: Learn the Secrets to Daily Joy and Lasting Fulfillment* (2007); Sonja Lyubomirsky's *The How of Happiness: A Scientific Approach to Getting the Life You Want* (2008); Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener's *Happiness: Unlocking the Mysteries of Psychological Wealth* (2008); and Eric Wilson's *Against Happiness: In Praise of Melancholy* (2008). Many of these books are excellent for introductions to the scientific bases of happiness. However, none of these books systematically distinguishes happiness from the associated emotions of pleasure and contentment. Further, none of these books distinguishes and measures these positive emotions relative to different parts of your life. This book does both of these things—and stands upon the shoulders of these previous books to take our understanding of happiness to a higher level.

Three aspiring psychologists from three different colleges were attending their first graduate school class on emotional extremes.

“Just to establish some parameters,” said the professor to the student from the University of Illinois, “What is the opposite of happiness?”

“Sadness,” said the University of Illinois student.

“And the opposite of depression?” he asked the young lady from the University of California.

“Contentment,” said she.

“And you, sir,” the professor said to the young man from University of Texas. “How about the opposite of woe?”

The University of Texas student replied, “Sir, I believe that would be giddy-up.”

(Emailed to me from sources unknown)

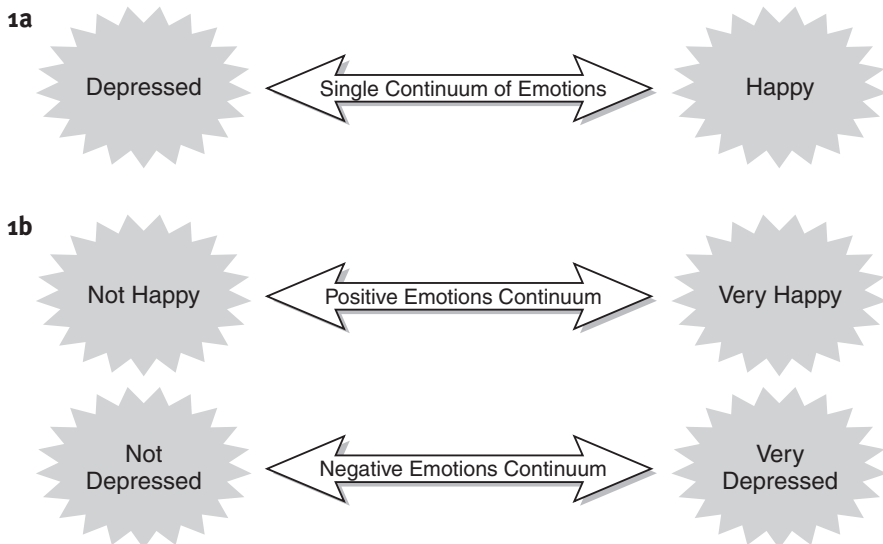
AVOIDING THE SELF-HELP BOOK TRAP

Although there is a good chance that you purchased this book from the “self-help” section of the bookstore, I personally don’t consider *this* book a self-help book because it does *not* fall into the “self-help book trap.” The self-help book trap is composed of two fundamental flaws. The first flaw of most self-help books is the assumption they make about most people being *unhappy* (e.g., Dick Meyer’s recently published book, *Why We Hate Us: American Discontent in the New Millennium*). However, the opposite is actually true: Most people are relatively happy and not depressed. This book is less about helping you to be *not* depressed and more about helping you to be happier and more content. Depression and happiness are *not* on the same emotional spectrum—they are qualitatively different from one another (see **Figure 1**). A person overcoming depression is not necessarily getting happier—they’re more likely to be gaining anxieties; and a person who is depressed, but getting happier, is not necessarily overcoming his/her depression (Bradburn, 1969).

Which leaves me with a question for you. What would you rather be: Happier or less depressed? (Yes, you can now say “both” and make perfect sense!)

The second flaw of most self-help books is the method they use to overcome unhappiness or make people happier: Take *more* control of your life. Rhonda Byrne’s overwhelmingly popular book, *The Secret*, is a prime example of this flaw. Byrne takes this flaw to such an extreme that she would have us believe that solipsism is the key to happiness. (Bishop Berkeley would be so proud.) If you’re a fan of Byrne, I’m sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but I have to tell you that being egocentric is associated with being a horse’s ass, it isn’t associated with being happy. Further, throughout *The Secret* (which is entirely based on a book titled *The Science of Getting Rich*) money is the most recurring theme—if you want money, then you’ll likely get money. Well, here’s the secret, my friend, and it ain’t, “ask, believe, receive,” instead, the secret is that Byrne is a television producer, she wants money, and she’s getting it—with 1.7 million books sold, and counting. Taking more control of your life may increase your *self-concept* (i.e., how you *think* about yourself based upon feedback from others), but it certainly is *not* going to decrease your unhappiness or make you happier. Depressed people have as strong of a self-concept as non-depressed people (Lucas, 2004).

Figure 1. Depression is on the same continuum with happiness (1a), and depression is on a continuum that is different from happiness (1b). Science now believes depression and happiness are not on opposite ends of the same pole (1a); depression and happiness are two different entities, existing independently of one another (1b).



The depressed person *is* likely to have a lower self-esteem (i.e., how a person *feels* about him/herself based upon feedback from others), *not* a different self-concept. The depressed person (like the happy person) knows who he/she is (self-concept); he/she just doesn't like who that is (self-esteem). Taking more control of your life may actually lead to emotions opposite of happiness, pleasure, and contentment: depression, lethargy, anxiety, distress, sadness, dysthymia, and even pain and hatred, because you are expending more of your finite metabolic energy to be responsible for *more* persons, places, and/or things within your own life. This book will show what needs to change for you to be happier and more content; and this change has *nothing* to do with gaining more control of self; instead, it has to do with *releasing* control of self while at the same time not allowing other people, places, and things control, either.

DEFINITIONS?

It seems a book about happiness, pleasure, and contentment should actually define these terms. Don't worry—this book will. But not yet. I'm not ready to fully define happiness, pleasure, and contentment because *you* are not ready—you haven't forgotten enough of your adult-conditioned ideas about happiness yet. So please continue reading a book about happiness, pleasure, and contentment—all the while *not* knowing exactly what these terms mean.

If you want to be happy for an hour, take a nap;
 if you want to be happy for a day, go fishing;
 if you want to be happy for a week, take a vacation;
 if you want to be happy for a month, get married;
 if you want to be happy for a year, inherit a fortune;
 if you want to be happy for the rest of your life...

(Chinese Proverb)

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