

A HAPPINESS Reading List

Recommended for you by Jim Smith, PCC, The Executive Happiness Coach®

Easy Reads

How Full Is Your Bucket? Positive Strategies for Work and Life, Tom Rath & Don Clifton (about a 1-hour read). About how we affect others and how our treatment of other people affects us right back.

The 100 Simple Secrets of Happy People: What scientists have learned and how you can use it, David Niven. Each "chapter" is 1-2 pp, very easy read, full of ideas, tips, facts, etc about happiness and what really affects it and creates it in our lives.

Happiness: Formulas, Stories, and Insights, Rabbi Zelig Pliskin. Contains 92 short chapters and many exercises-- Easy to digest in small bites. A wonderful book to spur conversation and thinking.

Choosing Civility: The Twenty-Five Rules of Considerate Conduct, P.M. Forni, Cofounder of the Johns Hopkins Civility Project. I LOVE this book. It is, in the author's words, the 25 rules "that are most essential in connecting effectively and happily with others."

Happiness At The Speed of Life: 13 Powerful Strategies for Finding Happiness at Home and On The Job, Jim Smith, PCC (**my own book!**). Part personal reflection, part self-help book, and part leadership guide, this book offers a wealth of ideas to support you in your own journey of happiness. Inside you will find over 110 different tools, actions, or practices to help you strengthen your Happiness "muscles." You will also find dozens of practices you can take to work to help create a more positive workplace. This book available from the author or at www.HappinessAtTheSpeedofLife.com

More complex reads

Authentic Happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment, Martin Seligman. Seligman, the "father" of positive psychology, examines the many factors that can affect happiness, and helps readers understand how and where they can take intentional action to improve their experience of happiness - past, present, and future. The book includes a wealth of assessments, most of which can instead be taken and stored online at the website listed next.

www.authentichappiness.org is a companion website that goes with the above book, hosted by the University of Pennsylvania. People can discover their top five character strengths, take the Optimism test, the General Happiness Index, etc – pretty much all the assessments included in *Authentic Happiness*. Once you set up an account, the system stores your results -- and you can return again and again and compare your ratings at different times.

Happier: Learn the secrets to daily joy and lasting fulfillment, Tal Ben-Shahar, PhD. Tal is the Harvard professor who at one point taught THE single most popular course on the Harvard campus -- nearly 20% of the student body took his course each year. The book

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includes many exercises that he uses in his coursework. I highly recommend this book, probably my top pick in this section.

The How of Happiness: A Scientific approach to getting the life you want, Sonja Lyubormirsky, PhD. Sonja is a longtime researcher studying the impact of intentional action on Happiness. She teaches that we can't change the 50% of who we are (our emotional "set point"), and only 10% of happiness comes from our life circumstances. Ah, but the other 40% we CAN change, if we pay attention to what we do and how we do it. She presents a dozen specific strategies for increasing one's capacity for happiness by impacting that 40%.

Stumbling on Happiness, Daniel Gilbert. Described as a cross of psychology, cognitive neuroscience, philosophy, and behavioral economics, it looks at the oddness of human nature and how we often pursue the wrong path to what really makes us happy.

The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less, by Barry Schwartz. Barry Schwartz created the concept of the Paradox of Choice – that as we experience more options in all aspects of our life (which is what we SAY we want), many of us find ourselves increasing stressed by choice-making. He posits there are two types of people in the world: satisfiers and maximizers. Satisfiers survive in an environment of limitless choices by doing 'just enough' research to make a good decision, and then let it go. Maximizers can become paralyzed by analysis; even worse, once they execute, they can agonize for months by second-guessing their decisions. Schwartz lays out options for both types for living and making decisions in this world, mostly by finding ways to limit our choices. Interesting!

Positivity: Groundbreaking Research Reveals How to Embrace the Hidden Strength of Positive Emotions, Overcome Negativity, and Thrive, by Barbara Fredrickson, PhD I first "met" Barbara Fredrickson in 2003 when she was a faculty member of my Authentic Happiness Coaching program. Dr Fredrickson is behind some of the most powerful research in positive psychology, including the power of simple exercises practiced daily. Funnily enough, she eschews use of the words Happy or Happiness, as she claims they are too generic. Positivity, she says, has ten forms: Joy, Gratitude, Serenity, Interest, Hope, Pride, Amusement, Inspiration, Awe, and Love. Her research supports the importance of the Gallup Organization's oft-cited 3:1 ratio – to thrive in life, you must experience at least 3 moments/acts of Positivity to every 1 of Negativity. The second half of the book spells out a very basic strategy: to live a better life, you should Reduce Negativity and Increase Positivity (well, duh!). She lays out 12 practices you can use to increase Positivity. Be warned – she's a PhD, so there's lot of research cited, along with 32 pages of End Notes!

Thanks! How the new science of gratitude can make you happier, Robert Emmons, PhD. Emmons spends much time detailing his research, which may or may not interest you. I encourage you, however, to pay special attention to Chapters 1 (The new science of gratitude) and 2 (Gratitude and the psyche) and the final Chapter, 7, in which Emmons details nine practices that have proven effective in building a feeling of gratitude -- leading to increased happiness!

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Why Good Things Happen to Good People: The exciting new research that proves the link between doing good and living a longer, healthier, happier life, Stephen Post, PhD, and Jill Neimark. These authors approach positive emotion from a totally different angle – they make it about GIVING TO OTHERS. Not money, but time, consideration, and respect. This book shows us that a happy and fulfilling life is within our grasp – but we have to get outside of ourselves – and express love to others -- in order to experience the joy that comes from making a difference to others. The authors outline ten ways of Giving: Celebration, Generativity, Forgiveness, Courage, Humor, Respect, Compassion, Loyalty, Listening, and Creativity.

Happy for No Reason: 7 Steps to being happy from the inside out, Marci Shimoff. Offers a holistic seven-step program that is in great part based on much of the research found in many of the above titles by Seligman, Emmons, Lybormirsky, Fredrickson, and Ben-Shahar. Very accessible, many action plans.

Really Deep reads

The Art of Happiness: a Handbook for Living, His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Very rich in philosophy and spirituality, and contains a very worldly view of happiness and society. I love the audio version of the book, myself. It is read by the co-author, Howard Cutler

Happiness: A guide to developing life's most important skill, Matthieu Ricard. Another philosophical work, written by a former monk

Language and the Pursuit of Happiness: A new foundation for designing your life, your relationships, and your results, Chalmers Brothers. This is a deeper, philosophical read. Not for the light reader, but wonderful for people who like to think deeply about language, meaning, and the connection of mind, body, heart, and soul.

