



Dr Bruce Wells

the happiness expert

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HAPPINESS NOW

What the Book is about in a Nutshell

Robert Holden, Ph.D., is the Director of the Happiness Project in Britain. In this book he presents a personal, warm, and entertaining account of how he developed his pioneering work with The Happiness Project. Using a highly creative mix of stories, exercises, meditations, poetry, and prayer, Robert shares his distinctive philosophy and practice of “the how of happiness.” The book consists of 8 chapters.

CHAPTER 1: HAPPY ALREADY

Kids are completely unimpressed by the idea of ‘future happiness’ – above all, they want happiness now! Those who are yet to be indoctrinated or conditioned fully by meaningless ‘laws of time’ don’t know how to wait for happiness.

The world has changed greatly in recent times in an effort to accommodate our desire for happiness now. Everything has sped up. We live life fast – faster than ever. Fast technology, fast travel, fast careers, fast relationships, and fast results are all the rage in our ‘I want it now’ world.

The real secret to being in the now is to place your attention not out in the world about you, but within yourself – your inner, unconditioned Self. In truth, the sacred now is an inner potential. It is eternal and abundant; and its geography is spiritual, not physical. In other words, the sacred now represents a permanent potential within you to experience love, freedom and joy regardless of time, place, or circumstance.

Think of the conditioned self and the unconditioned self: the conditioned self, is your ego. It “desires” happiness, and it tells you that you must search the world to find it. In contrast, the unconditioned Self is the original you, untouched by the world, completely safe and whole. It is who you really are, and not who you have been taught you are by parents, teachers, friends, lovers, anybody else, and most of all, yourself.

CHAPTER 2: GIVING UP THE SEARCH

Happiness will always bring out the best in you. You were born to be happy. Happiness is natural. It suits you completely. You look good and you feel good when you let happiness ooze from within you. Your step is light, your mind is free, and your spirit soars when you let happiness happen. The whole world responds well to you. When you’re truly happy, you’re radiant and you function fully. Above all, you are loving, for the essence of happiness is love. You’re also naturally kind, generous, open, warm, and friendly. This is because where there’s true happiness, there is no fear, no doubt and no anxiety. You’re unrestrained and uninhibited. You are fully present, here and now, and not lost in some past or future. When you’re truly happy, you’re on point and on purpose. When you’re truly happy, you are being your Self – your unconditioned, original Self.

True happiness is also very attractive in that it literally attracts great things. Happiness, by its very nature, encourages trust, spontaneity, optimism and enthusiasm – all of which bring great gifts. In particular, when you dare to be happy, you find that people instinctively gravitate to you and like you, although they may not know why.

Since the beginning of time, we've searched the world for our happiness. All of these stories testify to a belief in a happiness 'out there' and to a distinct absence of happiness within. This is where fear enters. Indeed, the source of all our fears is the erroneous belief that happiness is somewhere else. Soon the pursuit of happiness becomes the goal rather than happiness itself. A further irony is that we're too busy to be happy now. We're in too much of a hurry to be happy now. We're too focused on our bright futures to be happy now. We haven't enough time to be happy now.

Also, we live our lives in the hopes that just one more thing will complete our happiness. The ego's conditioned thought is that something is missing. And so we look for the missing piece to bring us salvation. And yet, no matter how many things we purchase, gather and collect, we still feel as if something's missing. Indeed, there is – the unconditional awareness that nothing is missing. We are, in truth, complete and whole already.

Society parades three broad ideas about happiness: (1) happiness is luck, (2) happiness is circumstance, and (3) happiness is a decision. The first two definitions suggest that the attainment of happiness is ultimately out of your hands. The final definition says that, whatever the picture, it is your frame of mind that ultimately counts.

CHAPTER 3: BEING GOOD ENOUGH

No dis-ease happens by itself. Alcoholism doesn't happen by itself. Alcoholism is an effect, not a cause. It is a symptom, not an illness. Alcoholism is not the primary disease; the primary dis-ease is the excessive self-judgment and constant self-criticism that pressures someone into taking a drink in the first place. The same is true, in one degree or another, for depression, stress, burnout, and every other dis-ease ever 'named' by the medical and psychology professions. Self-judgment is the dis-ease. Your conditioned self, or ego, judges, pushes, drives and punishes you so incessantly to compensate for its fear that deep down you're inadequate and incomplete – that is, your happiness is somewhere else. This is not the truth, but you've learned to believe that it might be. Your ego is an addict.

Until you're willing to accept your Self – your unconditioned Self – you won't be able to accept all that you long for. The happiness, the peace and the love you crave cannot happen without Self-acceptance.

In this vein, unless you're happy with yourself, you will not be happy. More specifically, unless you're happy with yourself: you won't be happy with what you do, you won't be happy with where you are, you won't be happy with who you're with, and you won't be happy with what you have.

CHAPTER 4: PRACTICING ACCEPTANCE

Happiness and Self-acceptance go hand in hand. In fact, your level of Self-acceptance determines your level of happiness. The more Self-acceptance you have, the more happiness you'll allow yourself to accept, receive and enjoy. In other words ... you enjoy as much happiness as you believe you're worthy of. To withhold Self-acceptance is to judge that you're not worthy of happiness.

We long for happiness, but we also judge that we're far too guilty to accept it. We like the idea of happiness; it feels good. But we also fear that maybe it's selfish, wrong, and inappropriate and that it comes with a hidden cost. We've learned to believe that happiness demands a payback – some suffering, labour or sacrifice, perhaps. From an early age, we are all spoon-fed beliefs about how important it is to work for happiness, suffer for happiness and sacrifice for happiness.

The belief that happiness has to be deserved has led to centuries of pain, guilt and deception. So firmly have we clung to this single, illusory belief that we've almost forgotten the real truth about happiness. So busy are we trying to deserve happiness that we no longer have much time for ideas such as: Happiness is natural, happiness is a birthright, happiness is free, happiness is a choice, happiness is within and happiness is being. The moment you believe that happiness has to be deserved, you must toil for evermore. The point is that you do not deserve happiness, you choose happiness. Happiness is natural. It is freely available to all. It is unconditional. And when you're unconditional about happiness, then happiness merely happens! Happiness happens, if you let it.

CHAPTER 5: LIVING UNCONDITIONALLY

When Self-acceptance gives way to self-improvement, you often end up denying yourself happiness now because you believe there are certain conditions that first 'must', 'ought', and 'should' be met. In this way ... you make yourself miserable by your constant demands of 'must', 'ought' and 'should'.

Over and over you promise yourself that after this last 'must', 'ought' or 'should', you will be completely happy forever. The trouble is, without Self-acceptance, there is no end to self-improvement and to 'oughtism'. The ego is addicted to 'oughtism' because it's also addicted to the idea that happiness requires perfect conditions. Furthermore, the ego, by its very nature, is never, ever satisfied. You cannot appease the ego; you can only let go of it. The choice is, therefore, either that you try in vain to first take care of all your 'oughtism' and then be happy, or you just decide to be happy anyway! You can do this with Self-acceptance, the acceptance that happiness is free to you always.

Until you can accept that true happiness exists within you, you'll be forced to bounce around from place to place, searching the world in vain for some external replica. The ego pins all its hopes for happiness on three very vague goals: that of 'more', 'there', and 'next'. Happiness is possible, according to the ego, with 'a little bit more', when we 'get to there', and when we 'take the next step.' The point is, however, that ... happiness requires no next step; it is already here!

CHAPTER 6: HEALING UNHAPPINESS

Unhappiness can be frightening, not the least because it feels so permanent. How ironic it is that when we're happy we immediately fear that it can't last, but when we're unhappy, we instantly 'know' it will last forever. When we're depressed, we rarely think, "This will be over by lunchtime!" Instead, our perception collapses, our thoughts freeze and our focus stays fixed on the pain. Thus, the illusion of unhappiness is that it feels so final and so forever, when, in truth ... although unhappiness feels so permanent, it is always transient.

The first step, then, to healing your unhappiness is a radical one. It is to trust that unhappiness is not real. When I say unhappiness is not real, what I mean is unhappiness is not the truth about you. The truth is that no matter how much you've learned to identify with your pain, you are not your illness, and you are not your emotions. You may be

experiencing depression, but you are not depression; you may be experiencing anger, but you are not anger; you may be experiencing grief, but you are not grief; you may be experiencing fear, but you are not fear. Emotions are experiences; they are not who you are. As long as you believe that something is 'negative' – such as anger, jealousy, unhappiness, depression, and other 'negative emotions' – you will not gain anything positive or helpful from these experiences. Everything, handled in a healthy way, can contribute to the value and enrichment of your own life.

CHAPTER 7: LOTS OF LOVE

If your current plan for happiness doesn't put love first, don't think for a second that you'll be truly happy. To be happy you can't get around love; you can only go through it. If you're waiting to be happy before you start being loving, then you'll find that you're in for a very long wait. Similarly, if you're waiting to be successful before you're truly loving and generous, then you'll be greatly disappointed and frustrated. There's no such thing as happiness without love first, success without love first, health without love first, peace of mind without love first, or freedom without love first. First, love!

Relationships are the experience of personal beliefs projected. In other words, you get the relationship you think you deserve. Therefore, if you judge yourself to be 'not good enough', you'll always find, eventually, that your partner and your friends are 'not as good as you first hoped'. Also, as long as you believe that something is missing in you, you'll experience something missing in your relationships. Similarly, if you judge yourself as 'bad', 'wrong', or 'nothing', then your relationships will turn sour, go wrong and amount to nothing, unless, that is, you're prepared to change your mind about yourself.

If you're experiencing any pain in your relationships, the key to healing and happiness is to realise that ... the source of the problem isn't the relationship; it is projection. Your relationships mirror your judgments. It's always tempting to lay blame for all your relationship problems on 'the other person'. If healing, and not revenge, is your true intention, then you'll want to ask yourself: (1) What have I projected onto this situation? (2) What is my part in this conflict? (3) Why have I attracted this person into my life? and (4) What can I do to be loving here and now?

CHAPTER 8: TRAVELING LIGHT

Decision, above circumstance, is the key to happiness now. Your mind is like a TV set with a hundred different channels, and it is you who decides which channel you tune in to. You can choose, for instance, the Victim Channel or the Freedom Channel; the Resentment Channel or the Forgiveness Channel; the X-rated Guilt Channel or the Happiness Channel; the Yesterday Repeat Channel or the Now Channel.

In life there are, broadly speaking, three routes marked 'Happiness', but only one of these routes can take you all the way. The three routes are: (1) the 'Doing Route', (2) the 'Having Route', and (3) the 'Being Route'. The 'Doing Route' is based on the great hope that enough accomplishment, production and good deeds will make you happy. The key word is achievement. The 'Having Route' is based on the great hope that what you buy, collect and own will make you happy. The key word is accumulation. Being is the key to lasting happiness. The 'Being Route' is all about the courage to be what you want. The key word is acceptance. It is literally being what you want. It is also about being first. For example, if you want honesty, be honest first; if you want loyalty, be loyal first; if you want trust, be trusting

first; if you want enthusiasm, be enthusiastic first; if you want courage, be courageous first; if you want inspiration, be a Light first! Be what you want and stick to it! Your courage will be rewarded.

People get ill and unhappy because (1) they forget what's important; or (2) they know what's important, but they put their time, energy and attention elsewhere. We mean to take care of the important business of our life, but all too often the small details crowd in and cover the big picture. We get busy, preoccupied, waylaid and forgetful. Like a traveller without stars or compass, we eventually lose our way. The key is to focus a lot on goal-setting with a difference - your most powerful goals aren't about future happiness, they're about happiness now!



Dr Bruce Wells is a happiness expert and professional speaker with a PhD in psychology and degrees in health promotion and physical education.

He has over 20 years' experience in the health and wellness industry in Australia, Asia, and the Middle East. He is a former school teacher, university professor, international tour guide, personal fitness trainer, and is the author of *Happiness Anywhere Anytime*.

Bruce regularly appears on Channel 9's Today show, various radio programs and regularly contributes articles to syndicated papers across the country. He is also a professional speaker delivering presentations to corporate and community health groups. For further details of his programs go to www.brucewells.com.au