



Dr Bruce Wells
the happiness expert

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Happiness Challenge

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THE HAPPINESS HANDBOOK

What the Book is about in a Nutshell

Grounded in the principles of positive psychology, clinical psychologist and founder of the Happiness Institute in Sydney, Dr Timothy Sharp details various 6 key strategies for being happier based on his CHOOSE model including clarity of life goals and purpose, healthy living, optimism, others and all the important relationships in one's life, using one's strengths, and enjoying and appreciating the moment.

C = CLARITY OF LIFE GOALS, DIRECTION, AND OF PURPOSE

1. What do you want out of life?

More people spend more time planning their annual holiday than they spend planning their life. Unless you want someone else to determine your goals, it's up to each of us. The clearer you are, the more specific your goals, the more specific you determine your life direction and know what you want to get out of life, then the more successful and happy you will be.

2. What does a happy life mean to you?

Many people focus on ending their misery but not to creating or achieving happiness. Importantly, an absence of misery, depression, or distress, is not the same as authentic happiness. To be truly happy the first thing you need to do is to decide what happiness means for you.

3. Setting happiness goals for yourself

Really happy and successful people don't settle for whatever happens to land in their laps. They choose happiness and then they create a life to make it happen. Unhappy people, on the other hand, often refer to what others *could* or *should* do to make them happy. But the only people who can make us happy are ourselves. When setting goals remember to set SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timed).

4. Work out why you want what you want

Often referred to as the purpose of your goals it provides the motivation to achieve your goals and to persevere when faced with obstacles and adversity. Make sure you regularly remind yourself of your true purpose to keep you on track. And the final step is to actually *live* your purpose each and every day.

H = HEALTHY LIVING

It's hard to be happy if you don't have the energy to do the things you want to do daily. Three of the most powerful ways to have the energy for happiness activities are exercise, healthy eating, and sleep. People will typically say that they don't have the time to do these

things but later they will have to find the time for illness – so make the time to take care of yourself.

O = OPTIMISM

Perhaps the most important happiness-causing variable is optimism. The key is to train your mind in a daily practice that weakens negative attitudes and strengthens positive attitudes. Optimistic thinkers are not just happier; they are healthier, get sick less often, recover faster, are more successful, have better quality relationships, are more likely to get promoted at work, and they live longer. To control your thoughts do the following: become aware of your automatic negative thoughts, write down your thoughts, challenge your negative unhelpful thoughts (such as overgeneralisation, all or nothing thinking, catastrophizing, mind reading, and 'should' statements), and then develop more helpful thoughts.

O = OTHERS

Happy people have more and better quality relationships. Good quality relationships act as a buffer against stress and depression, and they promote a sense of wellbeing. Happy relationships are characterised as having 3 key ingredients: each partner has a happy, loving relationship with themselves; they have good communication skills; and they have similar and realistic relationship goals.

Happy and satisfied couples do have disagreements, just like unhappy couples, but the difference is often in the way they respond to them and deal with them. Happy couples discuss problems and then take appropriate remedial action, while unhappy couples don't and so experience the same problems over and over again.

S = STRENGTHS

Happy people spend more time working with their positive qualities and attributes, or strengths. They are more aware of their strengths and they utilise them more effectively in their daily lives, both at work and at home. In contrast, many people have no idea what their strengths are having spent all their time focused on trying to fix their faults.

Several strengths have been identified which make more of a contribution to happiness than others. These include: gratitude, optimism, zest and energy, curiosity, and the ability to love and to be loved. One of the most powerful ways to increase the strength of gratitude is to keep a daily gratitude journal where you record 3-5 things for which you are grateful.

E = ENJOY THE MOMENT

While people who are depressed spend a lot of time dwelling on the past and those who are stressed and anxious worry a lot about the future, happy people live in the here and now – it is the only moment that we can control. Put simply the present moment is the moment when we can use our future goals and purpose to most effectively and appropriately respond to what is happening and learn from what has just happened in our lives. Two ways to achieve living in the present include practising meditation and applying the thought-challenging techniques mentioned earlier under Optimism.



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

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