

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever seen one of those memes where someone has attempted to bake a cake, intending it to look as good as the one in the recipe, only to have it turn out absolutely terrible, with the tagline: ‘Nailed it’? That’s life. Society sells us the beautiful cake – the dream of wealth and fortune, health and vitality, an amazing life of happiness and wellbeing – only to end up with a spongy mess that’s never as good, or even close to what we expected. Yet, and here’s the stinger, we continue to do the same things, use the same ingredients, follow the same recipe, process, and routines. We still hope to get that perfect cake and wonder why we keep getting a monstrosity instead. We’re achieving the same temporal, ultimately unsatisfying, results. What is going wrong?

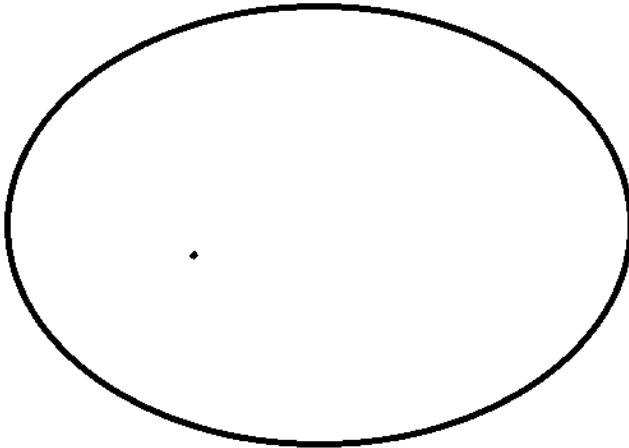
Many people are unhappy (read: miserable, anxious, depressed) and it stems from, amongst other things, the fact that they don’t have any real purpose or meaning in their lives. I use the word “real” because many believe that they do have purpose and meaning in their lives, but our society has created these artificial reasons in the pursuit of prosperity at the expense of our mental health.

We live in an age of leisure and pleasure, where everything we want is a click away except that what we really want (and need) isn’t a quick fix. What we really need is a purpose, a reason to get up every morning beyond going to work to pay bills and buying stuff that doesn’t bring us any long-term joy. In many cases, the stuff simply makes us feel even more unhappy as we compare and despair with those around us who seem, unlike us, to have it all together.

It really sucks.

Two things to note here. One, yes, it really sucks, but two, you are not alone. Not many, if any, people have it truly all together. Think of someone you know. How well do you really know them? Truthfully,

How well do people really know you? In fact, how well do you really know yourself?



This circle is someone's life, and that dot is what you know really about them. It's not much, so just realise that as much as you may be struggling in certain areas of your life, so too is everyone else.

We live in a world of information overload where we are more aware than ever before of what is happening around us. Yes, as a consequence we can compare and despair, but we also have greater awareness of the environment, of our collective past, and our inclusiveness (or lack thereof). It can make us want to be better people but the media, television, and internet overload us with things we do and don't need to know. It can become overwhelming for our primitive brains, which want to provide a sanctuary of safety for us. We can become anxious and stressed, far from the happiness and wellbeing we all crave.

This book will not change your life. Only you can do that. This book looks at the happiness and wellbeing we all strive for and provides a reality check on why, like most things in life, it is fleeting and unfulfilling. It will then look at some of the many ways you can feel happiness and wellbeing, dissecting them to understand what they are. We'll look at what is involved, what lasts (and what doesn't), and the

things you need to do if you want to incorporate them into your life in order to have a better sense of overall positive wellbeing.

Why is this important? Because too many of us keep doing the same thing, hoping for a different result. Others simply give up and think the problem lies with them, or worse, everything and everyone else.

In order to make the journey easier, I have split the book into three distinct parts.

PART ONE

Most of what you are about to read is the result of exhaustive research done by countless professionals in their respective fields of expertise. I have compiled this research into easily digestible chunks so that you can get a better understanding of the subjects presented and make informed decisions based on that information. I don't pretend to be an expert in the subject matter of wellness, however, through many hours, days, months and even years of interest and research in this field of study, I have concluded that there are certain themes that recur and are key to ensuring long-term, positive wellbeing in your life.

It should also be noted that I am not a specialist or professional in the field of psychology or psychiatry. The information gathered is presented to you so that you are informed. When dealing with such topics as anxiety and depression, the information is not advice and you should seek professional help.

If you were hoping the WEALTH in the title of this book referred to financial wealth then, sorry, not on this occasion. WEALTH is an acronym that stands for: Will, Experience, Action, Learning, Time, and Habits. These are the foundation of happiness and wellbeing, underpinning all of the 'ingredients' necessary for a life of wellbeing. I will explain how each of these are at the root of everything you need for a life of wellbeing.

The reason people find it so hard to be happy is that they always see the past better than it was, the present

*worse than it is, and the future less resolved than it
will be.*

– Marcel Pagnol

My aim with this book is to show you simple ingredients, things that you can mix together to find a recipe that works for you, that will guide you to a happier, more fulfilled, and meaningful life instead of one spent in idleness and wanton pursuit of billboard happiness.

Together we will explore wellbeing for the modern world, offering a realistic and attainable grasp of what brings positive wellbeing and happiness, why it is hard to keep, and what you can do to build it into your everyday life and make it a part of your lifestyle. We will acknowledge the realities of the world we live in and the difficulties of being happy and doing what is good for you.

Ultimately, I want you to unlock a better version of yourself for the rest of your life.

That is a tall ask and certainly not easy! Maybe you feel lost, unable to find a sense of true wellbeing and feel you're alone in feeling this way. The fact is, there are literally millions of people who feel lost in this world. We have created a world where everyone feels everyone else is happier, better, and more together than they are. It is a place where the midlife crisis has just become a life crisis, moving from one crisis of thought to another, hidden behind a façade of smiling faces and fancy cars.

Many of us live lives of inaction and only exist, caught in the expectation trap, the hole that is consumerism, money, cars, big houses, toys, and gadgets, all the throw-away things. We have chosen, for the majority of our lives, to go through the motions and to live without actually achieving anything real, anything that has any meaning to us as individuals. This leaves us feeling hollow and down, and we wonder if something is wrong with us – if we are the problem.

We will look at why we are like this, why our primitive brain seems so determined to make us anything but happy, and its complicity in determining why we are the way we are. We explore the multitude of emotions and biases that influence the way we think and act, look at our mental health, and the chemical brothers (not the music act), the

chemicals that make our brain work, and okay, not all are chemicals (some are hormones), but they explain a lot about human nature and our propensity to let fear and failure get the better of what we know is good for us. All of this needs some context, as what good is wellbeing if we don't have a clear definition of what it is? Don't worry, you will, and we will also differentiate happiness and wellbeing, why this is important, and why, sometimes, you have to let go of the picture of what you thought your life would be like and find the wow in the story that you are living.

PART TWO

Decades of research by professionals and specialists in the field of psychology have determined the nineteen ingredients I have selected that you can incorporate into your life to provide you with an overall sense of positive wellbeing. I call these nineteen things ingredients because like the 'Nailed it' cake analogy, by putting them together, whichever work for you, you are creating for yourself a unique recipe for wellbeing in your life. Not all ingredients will work for you, but many will, whether it is setting goals, changing your perspective, exercising, having a growth mindset, or simply acting like a happy person, you can work to become the person you always wanted to be.

PART THREE

This part is the glue that binds everything before it together. If we are continuing the cake analogy, it is the flour providing the basic structure and solidity, binding everything together and stopping it falling into a blobby mess.

There are lots of books on *what* makes you happy and barely any on *how* you can be happy, aside from glib statements, such as 'practise this daily' or with little guidance beyond 'get into the habit of doing this every day using our free chart, which you can download from givemeyouemailaddress.com'. In this part, we look at overcoming procrastination, enacting self-discipline, and finding what motivates

you so you can both break bad habits and build good habits. Habit is therefore the flour to our cake, the final of the WEALTH foundations and the thing that ensures wellbeing is long-lasting and forever present within your life, and hopefully turning this book from a simple self-help book you read once into one you refer back to many times in order to build a sustainable sense of positive wellbeing in your life.

At the end of it all, happiness and wellbeing can be achieved by only about five and a half inches.

Before you start considering other things, that is the width of your brain. In the end, that is all that matters. Ultimately, it is through your brain, the little grey cells, that your wellbeing is determined.

This book pulls together in an easy to read and follow format, what you need to know on the topics of happiness and wellbeing and what can be done to make you feel happier, what you can do to live a better life, and how you can maintain it through the building of good habits. It is my aim for you to be able to pick and choose what you works for you and end this book equipped to enjoy a positive sense of wellbeing.

‘Brace yourself. This could be fun.’

– MacGyver

PART I

BEYOND BILLBOARD HAPPINESS

Happy. It is the first word many of us say at the start of each year: Happy New Year!

We wish each other a happy year ahead and enter each year with hope and renewed positivity, armed with resolutions to do things we think will make us happier. But what does that mean, and why do we tend to fail to accomplish what we have resolved to do? Why do we end up feeling like we are on a treadmill moving ever faster but going nowhere?

The start of the 21st century has seen an explosion of interest and research into the fields of happiness and wellbeing as our society continues to evolve. This change has been incredibly fast with advancements in nearly every sphere of life. Yet as much as our lives have become easier, they don't appear to have made us feel happier or more fulfilled. Social media has made many of us feel socially isolated and inadequate, while the pursuit of billboard happiness and to be everything to everyone has left us wanting.

We are led to believe that happiness comes with a price tag but find it is always temporary and elusive. Despite massive economic growth and technological advancements over the past century, people, especially those living in Western countries, are unhappy, unfulfilled, and unsatisfied. If you take nearly any measure, you will see that we should be happier than ever, but we are not. The prevalence of mental illness, particularly depression and anxiety, alongside increased loneliness and social isolation, and the breakdown of communities, has led to a disillusionment with society. Stress, meaningless jobs, and debt compound the problem.

What is to be done? The obvious thing is to consider what makes us feel happy, safe, comfortable, and healthy. This is, in essence, what

wellbeing is. If we have a sense of wellbeing, then we aren't limited to survival but will instead thrive in the world. Wellbeing is the elixir to modern living, but at the same time it is also the antithesis. As such, this causes conflict as the two continually vie for domination. The key is to find a happy medium or balance. This is difficult to achieve because of their contradictory natures. It is hard to make positive wellbeing a natural part of your life because quite simply our brain does not do what is good for us or even what we want it to do, but what makes us comfortable. And what makes us comfortable is not always what is good for us.

Our brain has a lot to answer for and essentially what we need to do is reprogram it. That is no simple task, however, knowledge is power, and to use the ingredients in Part Two to their full potential, it is good to understand why you find yourself stuck in a loop of starting and stopping, taking two steps forward and, if you're lucky, only one step back. Knowing how your brain works will help you to overcome its incessant desire to stay in its happy place, the comfort zone that prevents you from moving forward, and push out of it, building new neural pathways that open you up to new experiences and long-lasting happiness and wellbeing.

When I was five years old, my mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down 'happy'. They told me I didn't understand the assignment, and I told them they didn't understand life.

The above quote, often attributed to John Lennon, needs to be updated for this book, because as much as I want you to be happy, I also want you to know that even when you are not, you are still okay. Happiness, like the tide, comes and goes and then comes again. I want to encourage you through it all, with the help of this book, to seek a life of overall positive wellbeing and to be the best version of yourself, no matter the circumstances.