6 Enemies of Happiness: Six Sneaky Daily Habits That Keep You Frustrated, Dissatisfied, and UNHAPPY

By Anita Marchesani, Ph.D.
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You have purchased this e-book because there is some part of you that might feel one (or more) of the following ways, and you are ready to break out of your doldrums and create TRUE life happiness:

- Are you dissatisfied with certain aspects of your life? For instance:
  - Your career or job is no longer as fulfilling as it was, if it ever even has been
  - Your level of self-care leaves a lot to be desired (maybe you are not exercising as much, or eating as many salads as you want to be, or you have precious little time to yourself)
  - You are not contributing to the community at the level you want to

- Do you lack the amount of joy and contentment that you THOUGHT you would have at this stage of your life?
- Do you know you have more potential, more to give and more to “do” in life, but you cannot seem to figure out what “it” actually is?
- Do you ever feel overwhelmed?
✓ Do you worry too much about the future, or about the way things are right now?
✓ Do you have baggage from your past that you KNOW still impacts you more than you want it to?
✓ Are you not as physically healthy as you want to be?
✓ Do you feel frustrated, discouraged, disappointed, and like maybe “this is as good as it gets?”
✓ Are your relationships less than satisfying, or do they seem to be “missing something?”

The list goes on and on of signs that you are unhappy.

Here is the bottom line: if you are reading this, there is some part of you that believes you can be happier, more content, more satisfied, and more fulfilled.

And you are RIGHT! No matter where we are in life, we can always reach for more. You can deepen and expand your level of life fulfillment, no question about it.

In fact, research shows us that 50% of our total life happiness comes from things we have direct control over! This is great news – even if life has handed you some really unfortunate situations (because let’s face it, life DOES include abuse, poverty, job layoffs, divorce, and all manner of disappointments), your PERSONAL level of happiness can be dramatically improved because of the things you DO have control over.

The kicker – you need to KNOW what those things are! And to know what they are, you need to first understand what you are doing WRONG. And you need to also understand WHY you are drawn to things that undermine your happiness.
**The enemies of happiness hide in plain sight.** These are things you do – your daily habits, behaviors, choices, and mindsets – that prevent you from optimizing your happiness.

I’m going to reveal to you the enemies of happiness: the six specific ways you unconsciously keep yourself irritable, frustrated, burdened, and unhappy. And this is not my personal opinion.

Not only has psychological science shown these to be true, but over the past 25 years, my clients learned from me how to identify these stealth, joy-sucking mental habits and how to attack and overcome each one of them.

This is not magic. It is not woo-woo, new-agey hocus pocus.

Like most people, you have probably developed these shifty, sly mental habits starting in childhood. Then you just automatically kept repeating these unhappy ways of looking at yourself and the world through the rest of your life. I mean, why wouldn’t you? Most likely, no one ever told you that these mental habits derail your God-given pursuit of happiness. I am certain that no one ever explained that there are POWERFUL, EASY, and RELIABLE strategies to incorporate into your life that will help you overcome the sneaky schemes of the enemy of happiness.

No one taught you otherwise….until RIGHT NOW!

I am going to show you six tricky things you probably do most days of the week that operate in opposition to you and your best life – they keep you from reaching your potential levels of life happiness.
Quickly – before I start in on the list (I HATE wasting time, and certainly hate wasting YOUR time even more!), I want to define “happiness.”

**People believe that happiness is an emotion. It is not.** When we use “happy” to describe how we are feeling, most often we are more accurately feeling joy, contentment, glad, blissful, delighted, or cheerful.

In English, we have a wide range of ways to describe positive emotions. Yet for some reason, most people default to saying, “I feel happy.”

There is nothing wrong with that, of course! Go on and continue to use the word in whatever way you like. But for the purposes of this book, I want you to know that happiness is not limited to being a positive emotion.

In fact, when we say, for example, that all we want for our kids’ futures is “for them to be happy,” we do not generally mean that we want them to only experience positive feelings (although what a wonderfully utopian idea!).

What we **really** mean is that we want our children to have a meaningful, satisfying, purposeful, and contented life. We want these things for ourselves as well, by the way. It’s just that most people have compromised on their striving for a happy like, assuming instead that “Oh, well, I guess this is just as good as it gets.”

When it comes to research into happiness, psychologists look at a very broad definition of the word, more along the lines of the iconic words of Thomas Jefferson: “….life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”
The pursuit of happiness means to pursue contentment, satisfaction, meaning, and engagement with life. It means experiencing not only more positive emotions in general, but also learning how to apply and expand your personal character strengths in the quest for purpose.

Happiness is far more than a feeling. And it is completely within your grasp!

But the problem is that we fight an invisible enemy, one who stands in the way of broadening and expanding the best of who we are.

And this enemy is within our own minds!

Over the course of our lifetime, we have developed some really sinister ways of keeping ourselves from being our best. Although it happens in a very stealth way, the impact is overt and obvious. We feel its effect whenever we start to feel discouraged about how our life is, even when things are generally “good.” Or we notice its influence when we feel stuck, out-of-balance, or frustrated about not achieving something important. The list goes on....and the questions at the beginning of this book give you more examples.

As children, we absorb so much from our environment. Because children lack life experience, they are particularly good at observing and figuring out how they are supposed to think about themselves and the world around them, as well as how they are supposed to behave.
Children pick up their cues about the world from a whole range of sources. Certainly parents and family members have the most influence. But sometimes it can be a random comment from some kid on the playground that ends up forming a person’s self-concept for years to come. I cannot tell you how many clients over the years have told me about some stupid, mean comment some kid hurled at them as a child….and these clients absorbed it as “truth” about themselves!

Maybe this has happened to you? Or maybe the comments came from someone closer to you - a parent, a family member, a teacher, or a coach?

I worked with a client one time who had a clear memory of a boy calling her ugly while at recess one day. For whatever reason, that mean comment lodged itself into her mind. And she repeated it to herself, ABOUT herself, for the rest of her life.

She thought back to that event, and recalled how she yelled back at him, “I’m not ugly!” However, when she is honest with herself (and with me), she also knows that she tends to replay that event in her mind with a part of her believing the comment to be true – “I probably really am ugly.”

This is why our daily habits are sneaky and devious – we just go along with the memories we have from our childhoods without challenging those memories or the interpretations and meanings that our young, immature minds conjured. Imagine if the things you remember from your childhood are true, but only one slice of the totality of what happened, and you only focus on the negative parts?
This client, in fact, stood up for herself in that instance. If you noticed when you read about her story, she yelled back at the kid. Over time, she learned that she could change her perception of that event from, “Maybe I’m ugly,” to, “Wow, I’m powerful and able to defend myself against lies!”

Empowering, isn’t it?

The point is that we allow things to pass through our minds all day long, and we never challenge those thoughts. We never stop to evaluate whether those thoughts are true, whether they help you in pursuing happiness, or whether they launch you closer to reaching the meaning and worth you yearn for.

The first step in reversing all of these mental habits is to first learn how many underhanded, tricky ways you have absorbed a lifestyle that is the enemy of the happiness you desire not only for yourself, but for your children.

After all, they are watching you for guidance of how to live their lives. Whether you intend to convey positivity and ideas closer to happiness or not, your children ARE WATCHING YOU!

When you start to show them how to be TRULY happy, they will learn how to do it directly from you.

Let’s get started!
Enemy #1: The Tyranny of Negative Emotions

Negative emotions grab our attention FAR more easily and effectively than positive emotions. In general, positivity is more gentle, sublime, soothing, and easy. Contrast this with most negative emotions that seem to “demand” your attention because they are harsh, brash, forceful, and aggressive.

This may seem like a “duh” comment, but if you want MORE positive emotions in your life, you need to first understand this principle – *negativity “screams” while positivity “whispers.”*

So – which will you be more inclined to pay attention to as your day moves along?

The truth is that we simply do not focus on enough uplifting, life-affirming emotional experiences that serve to connect us with other people, our daily activities, and the greater world around us.

When you scroll through your Facebook feed or through SnapChat, you may see a funny cat video (my personal favorite!), or a story about someone doing something incredible and selfless for someone else. And in watching this, you have a moment of feeling inspired, or entertained, or joyful, or hopeful, or any other number of positive emotions.

But then what happens? The video ends, and your emotional state returns to what it was before you hopped on social media. That positive emotion was so temporary and disconnected from your
personal life that it could never have any hope of keeping your emotions uplifted for any amount of time after viewing it.

Most people in modern society feel negative, numb, or bored much of the time. Think about sitting in your car at a red light. “Back in the day,” we would sit there and maybe sing along to the radio, or listen to the news.

Now, most people IMMEDIATELY pick up their smartphones and start to scroll through either texts, emails, message, or social media apps.

Why??? We have become almost fully incapable of entertaining ourselves in our own minds. This means **we have become thoroughly intolerant of feeling bored**. In fact, when we have a moment of “downtime,” you can almost see the anxiety building in someone’s eyes before they find their smartphones to grab their attention.

The next time you have an opportunity, look at people around you and closely watch what they do, the subtle shifts in their facial expressions as they are trying to keep themselves entertained.

You can even see in their body language when they start to get bored with the app they are using. Even worse, if you observe people in a group, you can see when someone starts to get bored in an INSTANT with the conversation – you can predict by watching closely when they will start looking for their device.

You may think, “Well what’s the big deal – isn’t one of the goals to have more positive emotions?”
Well, sure! But that is NOT what happens when we ultimately turn to a device, or food, or “retail therapy,” or drugs, or alcohol, or any other number of activities that we seek out in those moments.

**What we are truly seeking is a shift in our emotional state – ANY shift – and we rely entirely on external stimuli to make that happen.**

Let’s just consider social media for a moment. You are at that red light in your car by yourself. You reach for your phone and decide to check your Twitter or Facebook feed. You scroll through, and your emotions shift rapidly between amusement, righteous indignation at some political post you agree with, to outright anger that one of your “friends” believes the other side of the aisle is right and you are wrong.

Very soon, someone honks their horn behind you because the light has turned green and you did not notice.

In another situation, maybe you are waiting in line at the grocery store. You scroll through and stop for a moment to watch a funny cat video (did I mention that those are my favorite?). You slowly move towards the front of the line, and you are feeling amused.

Now it is time to put your items on the conveyor belt so you put your phone away. That feeling of lightheartedness and amusement immediately goes away. You are back to the drudgery of the groceries.

Contrast these experiences with the following scenario: you are with your best friend or a loved one, and as you drive down the road, you turn a corner and are facing the most stunning sunset you have seen in years. To enjoy it more, you pull off the road.
onto the shoulder, get out of the car, and stare at the sky resplendent in its glorious colors streaking across the sky for miles and miles.

You spend 15 minutes simply staring at the sun as it sets lower and lower, chatting with your friend about the incredible gift of nature all around you. You exchange stories from your lives of various trips you may have been on and seen similar sunsets. In the conversation, you are prompted to ask about your friend’s family members who were struggling with something the last time you remembered to ask. That person shares the updates, and feels cared for, valued, and connected to you because you DID care enough to ask and then LISTEN to the important issue about which your friend spoke.

After the sun disappears and darkness grows, you and your friend get back into the car and continue your excursion to the destination.

When you watched that cat video, you had no idea whose cat it was, if that cat is even still alive, or if it ultimately injured itself after doing the funny video-worthy antics.

And the very moment you stopped watching it, your emotional state plummeted to whatever it was before – likely something unpleasant and even “intolerable” like boredom or numbness.

But with the example of you and your friend (spouse, significant other – whomever you want it to be!), that total immersion experience not only of savoring the sunset but sharing it with someone important allowed you the time and space to ingest those minutes of engagement, connection, and absorption.

**That experience seeps deep inside your mind, building important internal resources that provide psychological strength that you will draw upon at a later time** in life when you are being challenged and want to have more will power or more ability to ride out tough times.
Of course, the advantages of truly experiencing life extend, in this instance, far beyond your personal moment with your close friend. Putting a premium on deepening your level of interaction with your world around you powerfully deposits emotional “currency” into your mind, believe it or not!

When you concentrate on mindfully absorbing the fullness of where you are from moment to moment, you heighten your perception and your connection with other people and events. This translates directly into the bricks and mortar of your “wall” of emotional strength.

Research is slowing us clearly that the growing disconnection in our society is eroding our ability to cope emotionally with normal life events. Making a priority of connecting more fully with our environment builds those internal resources and strengths that we all need to rely upon when life eventually gets tough.

Here is why it is so crucial to build up the amount of MEANINGFUL positive, emotional experiences – research shows that for every two negative events or situations, we need five positive events or situations to counter-balance the negative.

This 2:5 ratio of negative to positive proves what many of us intuitively understand – that negative things really DO have a greater impact than positives.

For example, you may do something at work and have nine people praise you. But a tenth person criticizes or challenges you.
Which feedback will you focus on? The negative feedback, if you are like the vast majority of people. This is simply how human nature works. But now you have information and knowledge to counteract this tendency!

If you want specific help in learning the steps of how to have more positive emotions in your life, make sure to sign up for your 40 Day Pursuit of Happiness Project here: 
Enemy #2 – MULTITASKING!!!

This one always makes people nervous! For some reason, the idea of giving up multitasking immediately threatens a person’s perception of their ability to get things done. Often when I have a rant about multitasking, someone inevitably asks, “Well how am I supposed to get everything DONE???”

Yes, as a society we have warmly embraced multitasking. In fact, people tend to boast about their multitasking prowess, and wear their abilities like a badge of honor.

Here is the deal – multitasking is one of your enemies. It is bad for you for two main reasons.

The first reason I will mention, but not focus on because it has less to do with your life happiness (unless it starts to make your ability to concentrate decrease, in which case it DOES directly influence happiness). Multitasking operates AGAINST you because you actually do not accomplish as much as you THINK you accomplish.

I could cite not only numerous research studies, but also the direct experience of my clients over the years who have swapped out multitasking for focus and concentration, showing that
multitasking actually makes each task take LONGER to complete properly.

Briefly, multitasking makes tasks take longer in two ways: first, when you multitask, you spread your limited focusing power across too many activities. This means that no one task gets your full attention. You probably drop the ball on at least one task and then have to return to it and re-do it properly. This happens quite a bit, and if you think it does NOT happen to you, you might want to consider that you are paying so little attention to a task to even know if you messed something up or failed to properly complete it.

Also, because “multitasking” in actuality requires rapidly shifting your attention back and forth between tasks (it is impossible for the brain to focus on more than one thing at a time), it lengthens the overall amount of time any individual task needs. Once you shift your mind to an activity, it takes some time for your brain to absorb it and understand what needs to be done.

Basically, focusing gets things DONE and done properly!

The second way that multitasking is your enemy of happiness is that it robs you of one of your most powerful mechanisms of happiness – your ability to experience and immerse yourself in YOUR OWN LIFE!

As I taught you about your first enemy of happiness – not having enough positive emotions – true and deep engagement with the events of your life DEEPEN and EXPAND how you experience your life.

**Attempting to manage your life at only a surface level – and that is exactly what happens when you multitask – creates a**
barrier between you and the occurrences of your existence.
Experience requires TIME and focus. Rushing through any experience strips your engagement with it.

If you want to test this theory out, then try this little exercise: the next time you have the opportunity to give someone a hug (whether it is a child or friend or spouse), intentionally extend the length of time you hug that person by only 3 seconds. See what happens. Notice how making a hug last only 3 seconds longer than normal should be noticeable by you and the person receiving that hug. It will make a remarkable difference.

Taking the time to fully engage with the episodes of your life will bring you more joy, contentment, and happiness. But the trick is to TAKE that time! Multitasking demands the exact opposite type of process, one of only surface level engagement and doing it quickly.

I know that I am not going to convince you through just this book to find ways to unravel your multitasking lifestyle. And for sure, there are times and situations in which multitasking is helpful and not harmful.

As in much of life, it all comes down to moderation and intentional decision making – where are you going to place your time, attention, and energy? And what specific outcome are you trying to achieve?
I want to help you figure out the answers to these questions, because once you grasp your answers, your level of happiness and life satisfaction will grow!
There are a LOT of misconceptions and “common delusions” about what will make people happier. It is easy to fall into believing these delusions – they are quite compelling. For instance, I FIRMLY believe that I would be happier if I lived at the beach. Apparently, research has shown that I am wrong, and that in fact, my happiness level will not increase should I find a fabulous beach house.

[I would like an opportunity to test out this “research finding” myself….but I digress…]

But alas, I do know it to be true. Beach vacations are fabulous. But a large portion of what makes them so wonderful is that I can disconnect from my normal day-to-day routines. The last time we were at the beach, I imagined myself living there, and having to do my client calls, workshop planning, and writing projects all day long.

True, I realized my view would be much nicer than my current view from my desk in Pennsylvania. However, I also understood at that very moment how much my daily mood really wouldn’t shift from where it currently sits.

I would have my normal work and family stuff, just in a prettier place. Moving would not remove my responsibilities. It would only change my vista. Now, I could argue that my lifestyle might also shift – spending more time outside and the ocean providing a great way to connect to nature more easily – but in terms of overall life happiness and satisfaction? Nope, no impact.

Shockingly, the same relationship (or really, LACK of relationship) between changing some status in your life to create more happiness occurs in every area: money, relationship status, education level, or
even health status. Changes in these areas may help you reach a particular goal. But your overall life satisfaction will not permanently shift after these changes happen.

This may be shocking, but the research data, and also actual human experience, demonstrates this to be true.

There is a concept called “the hedonic treadmill.” This concept says that each of us has kind of a “set-point” of our level of happiness, unhappiness, and satisfaction. No matter what happens in life, eventually we find our way back to the same relative level of happiness.

When psychologists researched this concept, they asked a whole lot of people a series of questions about various positive or negative life events. Specifically, they asked people how much something like having a higher salary or specific amount of money would impact their emotions and happiness level. They asked about things like moving to a fancier house, or winning the lottery, or having a certain level of education and how long their level of happiness would be affected. The researchers also asked about negative events, like the death of a loved one, or losing a job, or a decline in physical health.

The results were fascinating! **People tended to vastly overestimate how big of an impact both positive and negative events will affect them.**

In other words, people expected that when a desired positive change happens, their level of life happiness would increase and STAY higher for two to five years, and when an undesired, negative event
happens, people anticipate depression or stress to last for two to three years.

But what ACTUALLY happened was far different. When they followed up with study participants, they found that among the people who did experience some major life change (either positive or negative), the impact on their mood and happiness level lasted around six months.

They did experience more joy for the positive events, and more sadness, stress, and grief for the negative ones. But those shifts in mood lasted far less than they all thought it would.

As humans, we tend to overestimate how much a life change will impact us. In fact, we have this “happiness set-point.” In many ways, a portion of our life happiness is determined at birth.

We have a baseline of life satisfaction and emotions, and while we experience highs and lows, most people end up right back at the level at which they started.

You may wonder if your ability to be happier is impossible then. I would hope that since you have read this far, you would assume my answer to be, “Of course it’s possible!” And in fact, it IS possible, and not even too hard to do.

I teach people those skills and techniques in the 40 Day Pursuit of Happiness Project, because 50% of our total life happiness is completely changeable.

You CAN be happier….even, I’m told, if you don’t live at the beach, or win five million dollars.
So the take-home message is to stop waiting for a change in your life. Be happier NOW!
Enemy #4: Your Past Emotional Baggage That Breaks Into Today

You have baggage from your past. I may not know you personally, but I do know this fact about you. How do I know this? Because ALL people have “stuff” from the past.

Some have a past riddled with abuse, neglect, or intense family instability. Some have a past peppered with bullying from others at school. Some have had an overall emotionally stable childhood, but had parents who were anxious, avoidant, or insufficient for your needs.

We are all human. This means that parents will let children down in any number of ways. If you are a parent, you have probably let your own children down, not because you are not a good parent, but because you are HUMAN. No human is capable of meeting another human’s needs 100%.

We all have a past, and that past has varying degrees of hurt and pain. This is what makes us unable to fully meet another person’s – even our own child’s – needs.

You may have heard the phrase, “Hurting people hurt people.” This is so profoundly true! But it is ALSO true that “Transformed people transform people.”

Learning how to finally put your past into a different perspective can vault you over many of the barriers you might find yourself continually bumping up against.
You cannot change your past. And I would never suggest that you try to talk yourself out of the impact your past had on you. **Your memories, fond or otherwise, are real and important.**

The problem stems from what we DO with those memories. How do those memories of past events become a major factor in what you do today and every day?

Most people believe that our past helps to define us, helps to shape and mold who we are, our self-concept, our optimism for the future, and how we view other people. Indeed, this is true – our past DOES define our present….but not in the way you think it does.

To help explain this concept, let’s do a short exercise. In your mind, go back over your day’s events up to this point. What time did you wake? What did you do next? When did you brush your teeth? Did you leave the house? If so, what time, where did you go, and how did you get there?

Go through every activity up to this moment. Notice how many tiny, sometimes insignificant things you did throughout just one portion of one day.

When you go to bed tonight, what will stand out about your day? What will seem to have been the “major theme” or “major event” of this day?

If you focus on that major event, does that mean that all of the other, smaller events and activities did not happen? No, of course you recognize that those smaller things happened!

Placed into context, though, the major event will take up more “space” in your mind when you think about this day. One month from today, you will look back on this day and ONLY think about that major happening, in all likelihood.
Every single day you have lived, you are choosing what to latch onto for your memory of that day. It occurs automatically, and sometimes it happens because the specific event is so dramatic (either positive or negative) that it demands your attention.

As a child, if you experienced trauma, your memory locked into that moment or series of moments in a very specific way. In fact, you probably recall those memories almost like telling a story – the same things happen in the same order, and with the same result.

The “script” we develop in our memories about life events are helpful – they help us remember things, and that helps us develop meaning and context around life events.

The flaw in our brain’s ability to do this naturally is that we often forget some other, also major things that happened either around the same time, or even afterwards.

Learning how to leave your emotional baggage in your past involves starting to “flesh out” the details of your past that you tend to minimize, or even avoid all together.

I have worked with numerous clients over the years with histories of varying levels of trauma and pain (sexual and physical abuse, neglect, extreme bullying). **In each case, part of the healing process involves identifying what ELSE happened at those times.**
In some cases, they realized that their abusive situation lead them to make more strong connections with teachers at school, who then became incredible mentors to them. Not to glamorize trauma, but the reality is that their experiences pushed them to either reach out for support, or to be more open to receiving support from someone else in their lives.

Then, they could also focus on how those trials – while horrific and senseless – also built up resources that allowed them to not only survive the ordeals, but to use those internal resources each and every day in productive and effective ways.

To reiterate – healing from emotional pain from the past does not involve denying or minimizing what did happen. Rather, it is about learning what ELSE happened that ALSO contributed to who and what you are today.

An important note here – the thoughts you have about your past life events are not wrong or always bad or unhelpful.

BUT, I’d invite you to understand a new concept – that the specific things you have told yourself about your past over the decades have been just ONE WAY of looking at that event or your past.

It may be the most painful, the most obvious, the most dramatic, and even the most understandable way of looking at your past.

But it is still only ONE WAY of interpreting it. The hitch happens when that one way of interpreting your past becomes like a story you tell about it.

This is not about denying any part of your past. You are constrained by reality, as we all are.

But you are NOT constrained by how you interpret what happened. You SURVIVED. So something, somewhere went incredibly RIGHT in your situation.
Our minds are kind of pre-programmed to focus on the negative. Struggle and failure may always trump success if you allow it to go unchecked.

In times of trouble is when courage and tenacity appear.

Over time, this process of evaluating your past with a wider lens, which I teach about how to do step-by-step in your 40 Day Pursuit of Happiness Project, will help you develop more positive emotions about your past. You will not change your feelings, but you will ADD to them so that your “baggage” you pull into each day is a bit more uplifting.
Enemy #5 – The “Shortcut Mentality:” Making Everything Faster and Easier

Want to be happier? There’s an app for that! Okay, not really 😊. But I would bet that some people reading this book WISHED there existed an app to make them happier.

The lifestyle we have created for our society centers around making tasks as easy and streamlined as possible. We have productivity apps, we can check email wherever we go, we don’t even have to wait in line at the coffee shop – we just punch in our order on an app, drive to the store, and the drink is ready for you, already even paid for through that app.

We are obsessed with creating shortcuts about everything! No longer is it acceptable to wait for a person to call you back after leaving a voice mail message. Now we can reach people instantly via texting and other messaging apps, and we expect an almost immediate response back.

We want to outsource more and more activities of our daily living. We want other people to make our foods so that we spend less of our own time doing it. We want electronics to do the work we used to do (Roomba, anyone?). We want our smartphones to keep us more connected, and make it faster and easier to nurture that “connection” (and I put that in parentheses for a reason).

We want to be able to quickly and effectively stay in contact with people via texting, messaging, and social media. It makes us “feel” connected, although all we really do is type out quick and pithy sentences, often passing judgement on what comes across our newsfeed.

Here is the problem – there are NO SHORTCUTS to happiness. None. *The things that can truly make us feel*
connected, engaged with our lives, and deepen the meaning and quality of our relationships take TIME AND EFFORT.

The problem with the “productivity” mentality is that we have extended it from being productive at work and in accomplishing tasks into being “efficient” with maintaining purpose and meaning in life and relationships.

We cannot do it!

I will give you a stark example of how much the “app lifestyle” has decimated any hope of increasing happiness.

When you send a text to someone, you are typing out words on your device. This transmits data that you want the other person to know. Perhaps you want to alert someone that you are running late, or to make or change arrangements to pick up your child after music lessons.

These sorts of tasks are perfect for texting – you have a very specific and targeted piece of information to send.

The problem has become that we insist on having CONVERSATIONS via texting and messaging apps.

We believe that simply sending words across cyberspace equates to speaking verbally with someone.

The reality is that 94% of ALL human communication is NONVERBAL. When you speak with someone in person, you have a tone of voice, you fluctuate your volume, you pause for effect, you change your facial expressions to match the message you deliver, you wave your arms (or maybe cross your arms) to emphasize a point or to convey subtly that you disagree with someone, and you change the physical space you have between you and the person or people you speak with.
All of these nonverbal movements communicate far more than the literal words coming out of your mouth. People have known this for decades – perhaps even centuries!

**When we insist on “communicating” via texting, messaging, or social media, we strip 94% of our humanity out of that “communication.”**

We attempt to treat each other as if we are robots and operate only on the data of “what is typed,” rather than on what is conveyed and intended.

In particular, I worry about the generation of young people who grow up with this style of communication being the norm. At the risk of sounding alarmist, the reality is we are crippling our future generations’ abilities to get along with each other. This will have profound effects on the playground, in the classrooms, in the workplaces, and in governments.

The shortcuts we use undermine our sense of meaning, purpose, and happiness.

Would you not rather have your significant other, or child, or parent stand in front of you and say the words, “I love you,” with heartfelt sincerity, with emotion that you can hear, sense, and KNOW, as opposed to reading on your phone, “I love you?”

True engagement with your own life – the activities you choose, the people who matter, the businesses you grow, even the food you eat – requires time, attention, and focus.
Now, I try not to be unreasonable! Texting is not going away any time soon, and in fact it is extremely useful for certain things.

What I want to support you in doing is to slowly, bit by bit and step by step, to move towards spending more time with certain tasks that will increase your happiness and improve your relationships.

This is not a change most people can make overnight, and that is OKAY!

You CAN make small, incremental changes. What you will notice over time is that those small, easy changes end up having a MAJOR impact on how much happier you are.

*I am continually astonished at how much power just the smallest adjustments can make.*

You CAN do this, too. I have made it a major focus in my life to support your ability to do just that with reliable, trustworthy resources and information.

Along with understanding the need to move back towards “longcuts” in just a few key areas, you also need to understand a related concept to the futile “shortcuts to happiness” trend.

Researchers in positive psychology refer to something called “the tyranny of choice.”

With rapid and expansive advancement in technology and products comes a wide range of options for various things. Simply going to the grocery store demonstrates this concept most clearly.

How many varieties of CEREAL can you find at your local grocery store? How many options for SALAD DRESSINGS do you face each time you go?
How many options do you now have to track and monitor your fitness status? Can you name all the calendar apps in your app store?

While having lots of options is a wonderful thing, it also comes with a downside. That downside is that the number of choices we have has INCREASED our level of stress in our decision-making process, even for the smallest things.

Which type of apple do you want to buy? Why would you choose that one over another one? Did you know that the fresh produce stand down the street has even more varieties to choose from?

The mental energy that making decisions requires is ENORMOUS. People vastly underestimate how tiring it can be to simply decide what to do. In fact, the driving force behind much of procrastination is not simply avoiding the task, but rather failure to simply DECIDE to do it, especially when we have other, more pleasant things we can do.

You have seen me mention the 40 Day Pursuit of Happiness Project throughout this book, and I hope you understand that it is not shameless promotion. I REALLY want to make sure you have information and support to counteract the forces out there in the world that operate against your ability to have a genuinely satisfying and meaningful life.

Our current lifestyle supports the exact opposite of happiness – that is why I accused these factors of being our ENEMY. They work in direct opposition to your best interests.

Now that you have your eyes opened to these enemies, you can start to counteract them. Certainly, you can do this on your own.

But if you find you need a bit of help and guidance, that is why so many people have turned to the 40 Day Pursuit of Happiness Project to gain clarity on exactly WHAT to do, and HOW to do it.
Remember, if you do an internet search on “how to be happier,” you will get millions of hits. How will you choose which one to read? How will you know for certain that the source is reliable?

The tyranny of choice is everywhere in our lives, and its grip on our attention will not loosen any time soon.

Resist the paralysis that comes with too many choices. Your “fight” for life happiness is not hard at all – grab the proven path and get started. You will not be sorry.

And there is even one more enemy of which you want to beware......
Enemy #6 – Not Knowing and Living Out Your Life’s Purpose

You have specific strengths, talents, and skills that are unique. In our modern, western world, there seems to be an emphasis on fixing weaknesses – how can we make children who struggle at math get up to speed? How can we take other children who lag in verbal skills get to “normal” grade level?

In the workplace, we focus on plugging the holes in productivity, making sure the employees who fall behind on paperwork keep up to speed, and generally trying to make progress by fixing what does not work well.

In short, we focus on the worst parts of ourselves, and attempt to accelerate forward motion by strengthening weaknesses.

Underlying this mentality is a flawed belief: that if we concentrate on improving weaknesses, systems and PEOPLE will work better.

Unfortunately, this rarely happens. **Strengthening a weakness only makes a strong weakness.**

The improvements in weaknesses do not justify the tremendous energy expended to address them. Think about it – if something does not come easily to you, your attempts to “fix” them requires you to learn and practice skills that take a huge amount of concentration and effort. That is the definition of a “weakness.”

Certainly, it is important to constantly improve, and it is imperative that we all have self-awareness about our weaknesses. However, research is showing what most great leaders know intuitively – making the improvement of weakness the objective dramatically HINDERS forward progress.
This is because when people are operating in tasks that call on their most skilled and gifted areas, they make fewer errors, are far more efficient, more creative, and even more personable. In short, everyone does BETTER and more effortlessly when operating in their strengths!

I understand that it is not always possible to do this, because not everyone is employed in companies that naturally fit people according to their strengths. Or maybe you are in a life stage that calls for you to be in a care taking role (like for an aging parent), but you are not a natural caregiver.

Life does not always mesh perfectly, that is for sure.

But this does not exempt you from leveraging and enhancing what is uniquely “YOU” in the limited time you have on this earth.

The way to make it happen is by connecting with purposeful, meaningful activities that DO call on the best of who you are. You may not have the opportunity to change your job, or change your specific circumstances.

But you CAN learn to infuse more purpose and meaning into your life!

The first step seems obvious – you need to realize that you can absolutely have purpose in your life, and that you DO have at least one purpose out there. I teach people routinely, including in the 40 Day Pursuit of Happiness Project, the exact steps of how to find life purpose.

Even if you have no clue at all, simply start by understanding that you DO have meaning and purpose beyond your current situation, no matter what it is.

Second, realize that your purpose is going to be best pursued when you are operating within your individual strengths, skills, and talents.
Some of us are great with details, some are better with big-picture thinking. Some are really powerful motivators of others, some of us work best behind the scenes in supportive roles.

Some of us value education and learning, while some have artistic and creative talents beyond imagination. (Just consider taking an artist and trying to make that person learn accounting – it simply does not work, yet you might be in a position that calls on skills that you have to work really hard to conjure up.)

The point is that we are all different, and we are different for a reason. Our differences, when properly put together, make whole systems work beautifully!

If you cannot move into a different job, or you cannot move away from your current situation, I urge you to, at a minimum, start being honest with yourself about what you love to do, what comes naturally to you, and what activities bring out your best.

For some people, it can take a long time to figure these things out because they have spent so long detached from their highest calling.

This detachment from purposeful, meaningful experiences that align with your strengths creates a sense of dullness, dreariness, and boredom. Ultimately it can lead to outright depression.

You can see how living out of alignment with life purpose is in opposition to happiness!

Separation from the things that make you “YOU,” keeps you at odds with contentment, satisfaction, and enjoyment. The enemies degrade and erode your core being, making you believe that “this is as good as it gets.”

This is absolutely a LIE of the highest magnitude! Life is abundant, fulfilling, and meaningful, and it can be that way for you, too!
The Next SIMPLE Steps to Build Happiness in Your Life

I think by now you have a full understanding of how much of our modern lifestyle exists to prevent you from pursuing happiness. These enemies are subtle, but powerful.

Luckily, simply learning about the mere existence of these forces will deflate their impact on your life! Now that you know about them, you will naturally start paying more attention to one or more of these situations. And you will also naturally start deciding to change one of them, just a little bit, in order to have more contentment and happiness.

I know this will happen, because I hear from so many people after listening to my webinars or Facebook Lives regarding these topics that it is almost impossible to ignore how powerfully your daily habits pull you away from happiness.

There is a part of your being that yearns for contentment, satisfaction, and happiness. Thomas Jefferson and our founding fathers knew this, which is why they included the pursuit of happiness as one of the key human rights for our government to protect.

Human nature yearns not simply for liberty, but liberty for a purpose, for an outcome, for a destiny that lives on.

Whether you know it or not, you are leaving a legacy. If you have children, they will be carrying that legacy on to their children and grandchildren. If you do not have children, your legacy will be in your career or the impact you have on your community.

That legacy depends on you pursuing happiness, on you striving for the type of life that research, and centuries of direct human experience, has shown makes the biggest impact.

Happier people live longer, they are healthier, they perform better at their tasks, and have a wider social network than less happy
people. Did you know that, on average, Academy Award winners live a bit longer than those who were “just” nominated for the award?

Pushing forward to fulfillment makes a difference. In making your personal life happiness a priority, you will be, at the same time, nurturing the important people around you in more powerful ways. You will be teaching them the same skills you will be implementing, and that will allow THEM to move with more confidence and influence in their lives.

As sad as it is, telling our children and important people in our lives that we want them to be happy, without showing them by doing it ourselves, falls on deaf ears.

You CAN learn the skills of happiness, I promise! I have made it as easy for you as possible in the 40 Pursuit of Happiness Project. You get lifetime access to the program, so you can go at your own pace through the material, AND be automatically included whenever I update the information (which has already happened twice!).

Naturally, you can do this on your own as well. I know not everyone wants to spend more money to learn this stuff.

Whether you learn it from me, or from your own personal research, I urge you to begin the process by simply noticing the habits you read about this in this book.

Go out and pursue YOUR happiness! Your life-long journey will bring others along, and create an atmosphere of contentment, build
your inner psychological resources, and defeat those enemies of your life satisfaction!

It has been a deep honor to allow me to take up your precious time as you read this book. I am humbled by the trust you place in me, and it is my sincere wish that you learned some life-changing information.

To YOUR Happiness!
Dr. Anita