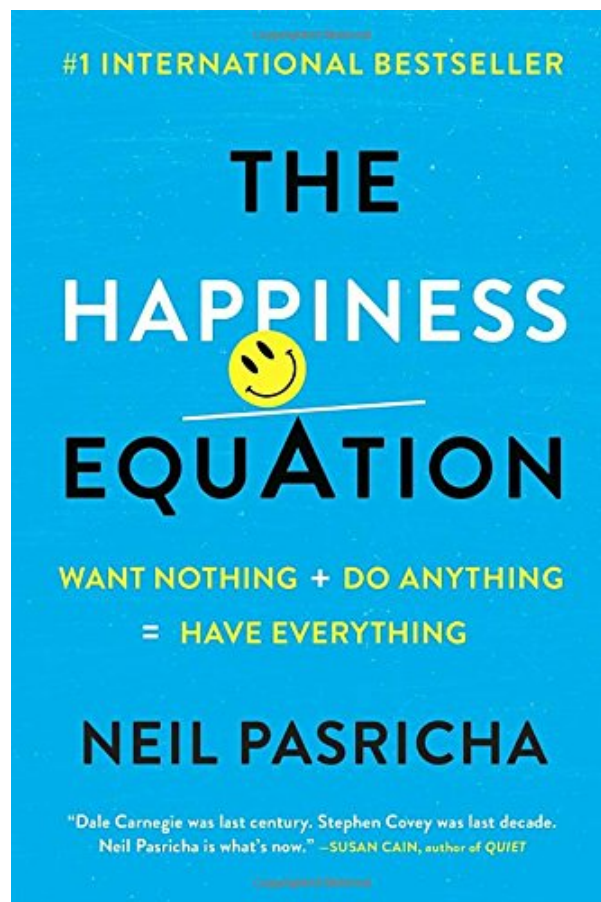


THE HAPPINESS EQUATION: WANT NOTHING + DO ANYTHING=HAVE EVERYTHING BY NEIL PASRICHA



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THE HAPPINESS EQUATION

WANT NOTHING + DO ANYTHING
= HAVE EVERYTHING

NEIL PASRICHA

"Dale Carnegie was last century. Stephen Covey was last decade.
Neil Pasricha is what's now." —SUSAN CAIN, author of *QUIET*

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The Happiness Equation: Want Nothing + Do Anything=Have Everything By Neil Pasricha. Change your routine to hang or waste the time to only chat with your friends. It is done by your everyday, do not you really feel burnt out? Currently, we will show you the new habit that, actually it's a very old habit to do that can make your life more qualified. When really feeling bored of consistently chatting with your friends all spare time, you can locate the book entitle The Happiness Equation: Want Nothing + Do Anything=Have Everything By Neil Pasricha and then read it.

Review

Praise for The Happiness Equation:

"Dale Carnegie was last century. Steven Covey was last decade. Neil Pasricha is what's now. The Happiness Equation is a two-hour ticket to changing your life!"

--SUSAN CAIN, author of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*

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--DUNCAN MAC NAUGHTON, former Chief Merchandising Officer of Walmart

"Want to get happy? Steal everything you can from this book."

--AUSTIN KLEON, author of Steal Like An Artist

"Pasricha, counterintuitively, opens by saying that the trick is not to do great things and achieve great success that will lead to happiness but instead to be happy, which will yield great works and achieve all the success a person might want. Counterintuitive, yes, but not if you consider deeply his observation that happiness is 'based on how we see the world' and, moreover, that there are plenty of specific things a person can do to adjust his or her attitude northward.... Very good and well worth a look."

--Kirkus Reviews

"Empathetically, [Pasricha] shows how to gain self-acceptance, feel passionate, and master important relationships...supply[ing] a great recipe for a contented life."

--Library Journal

"If you want to find your authentic self then read The Happiness Equation"

--Glamour

From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author

Neil Pasricha is the New York Times–bestselling author of *The Happiness Equation* and the *Book of Awesome* series, which has been published in ten countries, spent more than five years on bestsellers lists, and sold more than a million copies. Pasricha is a Harvard MBA, one of the most popular TED speakers of all time, and founder of the Institute for Global Happiness. He has dedicated the past fifteen years of his life to developing leaders—creating global programs inside the world’s largest companies and speaking to hundreds of thousands of people around the world. He lives in Toronto with his wife and son.

From the Hardcover edition.

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1. 6 words that will forever change how you see happiness

Let’s start off with some bad news. The happiness model we’re taught from a young age is actually completely backward. We think we work hard in order to achieve big success and then we’re happy. We think the scribble goes like this:

Study hard! → Straight A’s! → Be happy!

Interview lots! → Great job! → Be happy!

Work overtime! → Get promoted! → Be happy!

But it doesn’t work like that in real life. That model is broken. We do great work, have a big success, but instead of being happy, we just set new goals. Now we study for the next job, the next degree, the next promotion. Why stop at a college degree when you can get a master’s? Why stop at Director when you can be VP? Why stop at one house when you can have two? We never get to happiness. It keeps getting pushed further and further away.

What happens when we snap “Be happy” off the end of this scribble and stick it on the beginning?

Now everything changes. Everything changes. If we start with being happy, then we feel great. We look great. We exercise. We connect. What happens? We end up doing great work because we feel great doing it. What does great work lead to? Big success. Massive feelings of accomplishment and the resulting degrees, promotions, and phone calls from your mom telling you she’s proud of you.

Harvard Business Review reports that happy people are 31% more productive, have 37% higher sales, and are three times more creative than their counterparts.

So what’s the first thing you must do before you can be happy? Be happy. Be happy first.

Being happy opens up your learning centers. Your brain will light up like Manhattan skyscrapers at dusk, sparkle like diamonds under jewelry store lights, glow like stars in the black sky above a farmer’s field.

American philosopher William James says, “The greatest discovery of any generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitude.”

The *Happiness Advantage* author Shawn Achor says, “It’s not necessarily the reality that shapes us but the lens through which your brain views the world that shapes your reality.”

William Shakespeare says, “For there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.”

2. The single biggest reason it’s so hard to be happy

Shakespeare says, “For there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.” But if it’s just thinking, plain thinking, why can’t we think ourselves into a good mood whenever we want?

Seems like we should be able to just flip a mental switch.

But we all know it’s not that easy. Sometimes our brains get focused on negative things. We can’t stop! I do this all the time. And you want to know a secret? Everybody does. Every single person gets stuck focusing on the negative sometimes. I’ve spoken on stages with the best-known motivational speakers, Fortune 500 CEOs, and political leaders from around the world. Do you know what they’re all doing backstage? Freaking out. Sweating. Thinking something might go wrong.

We all have negative self-talk. There is no such thing as an eternal optimist. There are people who feel optimistic, but those people have negative self-talk, too. And that’s okay. The problem isn’t that we have negative thoughts in our brain.

The problem is we think we shouldn’t have negative thoughts.

But why do our brains focus on negative things? Once we understand this we can learn how much we can control and make conscious efforts to be happy using proven techniques.

This is one of the most important things I can share with you. Why is it so hard to be happy?

Because life was mostly short, brutal, and highly competitive over the two hundred thousand years our species has existed on this planet. And our brains are trained for this short, brutal, and highly competitive world.

How short, brutal, and highly competitive was it? Let’s do a quick experiment.

Stop, close your eyes, and picture the last time you felt completely alone in the middle of nowhere.

Was it camping in the mountains when you walked away from the fire and stood on the jagged edge of a mirrory lake? Was it a misty waterfall you found on a field trip when your classmates disappeared and all you could hear was the wind rustling the leaves in the forest canopy? Was it jogging at sunrise on a sandy beach when you curled around the coastline and suddenly couldn’t see anyone for miles in any direction?

Picture yourself back in that scene.

Now mentally erase from our planet all of the following:

- Toilets
- Sinks
- Showers
- Running water
- Computers

- Phones
- Internet
- Beds
- Chairs
- Roads
- Bikes
- Cars
- Planes
- Boats
- Books
- Paper
- Pencils
- Pens
- Hospitals
- Doctors
- Medicines
- Tools
- Grocery stores
- Fridges
- Freezers
- Farms
- Stoves
- Microwaves
- Shirts
- Sweaters
- Jackets
- Pants
- Socks
- Shoes
- Underwear

You are now standing alone in the middle of the planet with none of those things. Take your phone out of your pocket and toss it away. Take your shoes and shirt off, too, because they don't exist. Take everything off. You are completely naked with nothing around. None of those things exist. And none of them will begin to exist before the end of your life!

Now close your eyes, picture yourself there, and remember that:

99% of our history was living in this world.

99% of our history was with a life span of thirty years.

99% of our history was with brains constantly battling for survival.

Life was short, brutal, and highly competitive, and we have the same brains now that we've had throughout our history.

Were we happy back then? The better question is: Did we have time to be happy?

This instinctive need for what we don't yet have creates in us a persistent state of dissatisfaction. Without it, our ancestors would always be only one failed hunting session away from starvation. This simple, ruthless

script is programmed to drive survival at all costs. It works exceedingly well for this purpose, but it leaves us feeling stress and unpleasantness much of the time. Unhappiness is nature's way of keeping people on their toes. It's a crude system, but it has worked for thousands of years.

We have the same brains we've always had through this short, brutal, and highly competitive time in our history. Our brains didn't just suddenly change when we got printing presses, airplanes, and the Internet. How have our brains been programmed?

What did this fear do? It drove our survival. We survived at all costs. We were paranoid. We were fighters. We were ruthless. We were brutal. We were murderous. And because of it . . . we got here. And because of it . . . we took over the planet. And because of it . . . we have everything in the world.

So this begs the question: Is that fear still programmed into our heads today?

3. The one thing your doctor, teacher, and Tom Hanks all have in common

Yes, that fear is still programmed into our heads.

It's everywhere, it's between our ears, it's in our brains. Tom Hanks, one of the world's most successful actors, who earns millions with every movie and has scored two Academy Awards, said, "Some people go to bed at night thinking, 'That was a good day.' I am one of those who worries and asks, 'How did I screw up today?'"

Andy Grove is the longtime Intel executive who helped transform the company into a multibillion-dollar success. He was believed by many to have helped drive the growth phase of Silicon Valley, was named Time's Man of the Year in 1997, and was idolized by Steve Jobs, according to Jobs's biography. How did he famously put it? "Only the paranoid survive."

Our brains still follow this paranoid model every day, and it is a recipe for unhappiness! Some call it Medical Student's Syndrome. That's a term Jerome K. Jerome first coined in his 1889 classic, *Three Men in a Boat*: "I remember going to the British Museum one day to read up the treatment for some slight ailment of which I had a touch—hay fever, I fancy it was. I got down the book, and read all I came to read; and then, in an unthinking moment, I idly turned the leaves, and began to indolently study diseases, generally. I forget which was the first distemper I plunged into—some fearful, devastating scourge, I know—and, before I had glanced half down the list of 'premonitory symptoms,' it was borne in upon me that I had fairly got it.

"I sat for a while, frozen with horror; and then, in the listlessness of despair, I again turned over the pages. I came to typhoid fever—read the symptoms—discovered that I had typhoid fever, must have had it for months without knowing it—wondered what else I had got; turned up St. Vitus's Dance—found, as I expected, that I had that, too—began to get interested in my case, and determined to sift it to the bottom, and so started alphabetically—read up ague, and learnt that I was sickening for it, and that the acute stage would commence in about another fortnight . . ."

It's not just medical students. We've all been there.

We scan the world for problems because that led to our survival. And our current design of the world only reinforces and grows these negative-lens feelings.

At your doctor's office when you get lab results, the doctor says, "Your blood sugar is fine, your cholesterol is fine, but your iron is low." What do you do? You talk about getting your iron up. Eat steak! No work is done improving your blood sugar or cholesterol. If cholesterol should be below 200mg/dL and you're at 195, great! If you're 205, that's a problem. Doctors get paid when we're sick. Shouldn't we pay them when we're healthy?

Retail store managers "manage by exception" by staring at morning reports, finding a number below average, and trying to bump it up. If that report says your traffic count is fine, basket size is fine, but checkout time is below average, what does the boss want? Faster checkouts. More cashiers! No work is done improving statistics that are already average.

In the classroom the teacher hands back test results and offers extra help to those below average. They have to pass! If not, the year is repeated, the system is drained, friends all move ahead. What happens for the below average kids? Extra help at lunch. Tutoring sessions. Remedial tests. Why aren't students who get 100% offered any extra challenge?

It's no different in the workplace. We get job evaluations showing how well we're doing. What happens if you're below expectations? Performance improvement plan! Extra meetings with the boss! Shipped to training classes! What happens if you're doing well? Two percent raise. Pat on the back.

Rather than find good results and make them better, our brains do this:

1. Look for problem.
2. Find problem.
3. Improve problem.

That's what our brains have been trained to do for two hundred thousand years. But because we scan the world for problems, sometimes that's all we see. Here's how New York Times–bestselling author Kelly Oxford framed our Medical Student's Syndrome on Twitter: "WebMD is like a Choose Your Own Adventure book where the ending is always cancer."

So what do we do about it?

5. How much can we control?

Aristotle says, "Happiness depends upon ourselves."

Viktor Frankl says, "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." Walt Whitman writes, "Keep your face always toward the sunshine—and shadows will fall behind you."

I love what Aristotle, Viktor Frankl, and Walt Whitman say. But how do you get there?

Well, we now have scientific evidence of the importance of attitude and specific proven actions we can take to manage our attitude.

Do you know what's amazing about this quote? The second last sentence!

"I am convinced that life is 10% what happens and 90% how I react to it."

Well, new research published in *The How of Happiness* by University of California psychology professor Sonja Lyubomirsky tells us exactly how much of our happiness is based on our life circumstances.

And it is 10%!

10% of our happiness is what happens to us.

So 90% of our happiness isn't based on what's happening in the world! It's based on how we see the world. What's included in the 90%? Our genetic predisposition and our intentional activities. Yes, intentional activities. This is big. Those are specific things we can do to improve our happiness. And they alone have four times the effect on our happiness than anything happening in our life.

Let me put it another way: If I knew everything about your life circumstances—your job, your health, your marital status, your income—I could predict only 10% of your happiness. That's it!

The remaining amount is not determined by your external world but by the way your brain processes it.

6. 7 ways to be happy right now

How do you be happy first?

For this chapter we look to the emerging field of positive psychology. What's that? It's not fluffy lollipop experiments. Professors of psychology Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi are called the fathers of positive psychology because of their passion for cold hard facts. As they put it themselves in *American Psychologist*:

“Psychology is not just a branch of medicine concerned with illness or health; it is much larger. It is about work, education, insight, love, growth, and play. And in this quest for what is best, positive psychology does not rely on wishful thinking, faith, self-deception, fads, or hand-waving; it tries to adapt what is best in the scientific method to the unique problems that human behavior presents to those who wish to understand it in all its complexity.”

Positive psychology is a new and growing field.

I have sifted through hundreds of studies to find the Big 7 ways to train your brain to be happy. Many of these studies have been discussed in journals, conference keynotes, and research reports, but I've brought them together for you here.

If you do any of these seven things for two straight weeks, you will feel happier.

So what are the Big 7?

1. Three Walks

Pennsylvania State researchers reported in the *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology* that the more physically active people are, the greater their general feelings of excitement and enthusiasm. Researcher Amanda Hyde reports, “We found that people who are more physically active have more pleasant-activated feelings than people who are less active, and we also found that people have more pleasant-activated feelings

on days when they are more physically active than usual.” It doesn’t take much: Half an hour of brisk walking three times a week improves happiness. The American Psychosomatic Society published a study showing how Michael Babyak and a team of doctors found that three thirty-minute brisk walks or jogs even improve recovery from clinical depression. Yes, clinical depression. Results were stronger than studies using medication or studies using exercise and medication combined.

2. The 20-Minute Replay

Writing for twenty minutes about a positive experience dramatically improves happiness. Why? Because you actually relive the experience as you’re writing it and then relive it every time you read it. Your brain sends you back. In a University of Texas study called “How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Words,” researchers Richard Slatcher and James Pennebaker had one member of a couple write about their relationship for twenty minutes three times a day. Compared to the test group, the couple was more likely to engage in intimate dialogue afterward and the relationship was more likely to last. What does the 20-Minute Replay do? It helps us remember things we like about people and experiences in our lives.

3. Random Acts of Kindness

Carrying out five random acts of kindness a week dramatically improves your happiness. We don’t naturally think about paying for someone’s coffee, mowing our neighbor’s lawn, or writing a thank-you note to our apartment building security guard at Christmas. But Sonja Lyubomirsky, author of *The How of Happiness*, did a study asking Stanford students to perform five random acts of kindness over a week. Not surprisingly, they reported much higher happiness levels than the test group. Why? They felt good about themselves! People appreciated them. In his book *Flourish*, Professor Martin Seligman says that “we scientists have found that doing a kindness produces the single most reliable momentary increase in well-being of any exercise we have tested.”

4. A Complete Unplug

“The richest, happiest and most productive lives are characterized by the ability to fully engage in the challenge at hand, but also to disengage periodically and seek renewal,” say Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz in *The Power of Full Engagement*. And a Kansas State University study found that complete downtime after work helps us recharge for the next day. Turning your phone off after dinner. Not using the Internet on vacation. There’s a lot more to this, and we’re going to chat about it in *Secret #6*. If you can’t wait, flip to page 145.

5. Hit Flow

Get into a groove. Be in the zone. Find your flow. However you characterize it, when you’re completely absorbed with what you’re doing, it means you’re being challenged and demonstrating skill at the same time. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes this moment as “being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you’re using your skills to the utmost.” In his book *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, he describes it using an image I’ve redrawn on the following page:

6. 2-Minute Meditations

A research team from Massachusetts General Hospital looked at brain scans of people before and after they

participated in a course on mindfulness meditation and published the results in *Psychiatry Research*. What happened? After the course, parts of the brain associated with compassion and self-awareness grew while parts associated with stress shrank. Studies report that meditation can “permanently rewire” your brain to raise levels of happiness.

7. Five Gratitudes

If you can be happy with simple things, then it will be simple to be happy. Find a book or a journal, or start a website, and write down three to five things you’re grateful for from the past week. I wrote five a week on 1000awesomethings.com. Some people write in a notebook by their bedside. Back in 2003, researchers Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough asked groups of students to write down five gratitudes, five hassles, or five events that happened over the past week for ten straight weeks. Guess what happened? The students who wrote five gratitudes were happier and physically healthier. Charles Dickens puts this well: “Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has many, not your past misfortunes, of which all men have some.”

Those are the Big 7. You know it’s important to be happy first, and these are the seven ways to get there. Remember: Just like driving a car, throwing a football, or doing a headstand—you can learn to be happier.

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THE HAPPINESS EQUATION: WANT NOTHING + DO ANYTHING=HAVE EVERYTHING BY NEIL PASRICHA PDF

The new book from the New York Times–bestselling author of *The Book of Awesome* that “reveals how all of us can live happier lives” (Gretchen Rubin).

What is the formula for a happy life? Neil Pasricha is a Harvard MBA, a New York Times–bestselling author, a Walmart executive, a father, a husband. After selling more than a million copies of the *Book of Awesome* series, wherein he observed the everyday things he thought were awesome, he now shifts his focus to the practicalities of living an awesome life.

In his new book *The Happiness Equation*, Pasricha illustrates how to want nothing and do anything in order to have everything. If that sounds like a contradiction in terms, you simply have yet to unlock the 9 Secrets to Happiness. Each secret takes a piece out of the core of common sense, turns it on its head to present it in a completely new light, and then provides practical and specific guidelines for how to apply this new outlook to lead a fulfilling life.

Once you've unlocked Pasricha's 9 Secrets, you will understand counterintuitive concepts such as: *Success Does Not Lead to Happiness*, *Never Take Advice*, and *Retirement Is a Broken Theory*. You will learn and then master three brand-new fundamental life tests: the *Saturday Morning Test*, the *Bench Test*, and the *Five People Test*. You will know the difference between external goals and internal goals and how to make more money than a Harvard MBA (hint: it has nothing to do with your annual salary). You will discover that true wealth has nothing to do with money, multitasking is a myth, and the elimination of options leads to more choice.

The Happiness Equation is a book that will change how you think about pretty much everything—your time, your career, your relationships, your family, and, ultimately, of course, your happiness.

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- Dimensions: 8.20" h x .70" w x 5.30" l,
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- 304 pages

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--BILL MARSHALL, Co-Founder of TIFF, one of the world's largest film festivals

"The Happiness Equation shows you how to live life on your own terms. A dazzling and highly useful action book I'll be giving to everyone I know!"

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"Want to get happy? Steal everything you can from this book."

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"Pasricha, counterintuitively, opens by saying that the trick is not to do great things and achieve great success that will lead to happiness but instead to be happy, which will yield great works and achieve all the success a person might want. Counterintuitive, yes, but not if you consider deeply his observation that happiness is 'based on how we see the world' and, moreover, that there are plenty of specific things a person can do to adjust his or her attitude northward.... Very good and well worth a look."

--Kirkus Reviews

"Empathetically, [Pasricha] shows how to gain self-acceptance, feel passionate, and master important relationships...supply[ing] a great recipe for a contented life."

--Library Journal

"If you want to find your authentic self then read The Happiness Equation"

--Glamour

From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author

Neil Pasricha is the New York Times–bestselling author of *The Happiness Equation* and the *Book of Awesome* series, which has been published in ten countries, spent more than five years on bestsellers lists, and sold more than a million copies. Pasricha is a Harvard MBA, one of the most popular TED speakers of all time, and founder of the Institute for Global Happiness. He has dedicated the past fifteen years of his life to developing leaders—creating global programs inside the world’s largest companies and speaking to hundreds of thousands of people around the world. He lives in Toronto with his wife and son.

From the Hardcover edition.

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1. 6 words that will forever change how you see happiness

Let’s start off with some bad news. The happiness model we’re taught from a young age is actually completely backward. We think we work hard in order to achieve big success and then we’re happy. We think the scribble goes like this:

Study hard! → Straight A’s! → Be happy!

Interview lots! → Great job! → Be happy!

Work overtime! → Get promoted! → Be happy!

But it doesn't work like that in real life. That model is broken. We do great work, have a big success, but instead of being happy, we just set new goals. Now we study for the next job, the next degree, the next promotion. Why stop at a college degree when you can get a master's? Why stop at Director when you can be VP? Why stop at one house when you can have two? We never get to happiness. It keeps getting pushed further and further away.

What happens when we snap "Be happy" off the end of this scribble and stick it on the beginning?

Now everything changes. Everything changes. If we start with being happy, then we feel great. We look great. We exercise. We connect. What happens? We end up doing great work because we feel great doing it. What does great work lead to? Big success. Massive feelings of accomplishment and the resulting degrees, promotions, and phone calls from your mom telling you she's proud of you.

Harvard Business Review reports that happy people are 31% more productive, have 37% higher sales, and are three times more creative than their counterparts.

So what's the first thing you must do before you can be happy? Be happy. Be happy first.

Being happy opens up your learning centers. Your brain will light up like Manhattan skyscrapers at dusk, sparkle like diamonds under jewelry store lights, glow like stars in the black sky above a farmer's field.

American philosopher William James says, "The greatest discovery of any generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitude."

The Happiness Advantage author Shawn Achor says, "It's not necessarily the reality that shapes us but the lens through which your brain views the world that shapes your reality."

William Shakespeare says, "For there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."

2. The single biggest reason it's so hard to be happy

Shakespeare says, "For there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." But if it's just thinking, plain thinking, why can't we think ourselves into a good mood whenever we want?

Seems like we should be able to just flip a mental switch.

But we all know it's not that easy. Sometimes our brains get focused on negative things. We can't stop! I do this all the time. And you want to know a secret? Everybody does. Every single person gets stuck focusing on the negative sometimes. I've spoken on stages with the best-known motivational speakers, Fortune 500 CEOs, and political leaders from around the world. Do you know what they're all doing backstage? Freaking out. Sweating. Thinking something might go wrong.

We all have negative self-talk. There is no such thing as an eternal optimist. There are people who feel optimistic, but those people have negative self-talk, too. And that's okay. The problem isn't that we have negative thoughts in our brain.

The problem is we think we shouldn't have negative thoughts.

But why do our brains focus on negative things? Once we understand this we can learn how much we can control and make conscious efforts to be happy using proven techniques.

This is one of the most important things I can share with you. Why is it so hard to be happy?

Because life was mostly short, brutal, and highly competitive over the two hundred thousand years our species has existed on this planet. And our brains are trained for this short, brutal, and highly competitive world.

How short, brutal, and highly competitive was it? Let's do a quick experiment.

Stop, close your eyes, and picture the last time you felt completely alone in the middle of nowhere.

Was it camping in the mountains when you walked away from the fire and stood on the jagged edge of a mirrory lake? Was it a misty waterfall you found on a field trip when your classmates disappeared and all you could hear was the wind rustling the leaves in the forest canopy? Was it jogging at sunrise on a sandy beach when you curled around the coastline and suddenly couldn't see anyone for miles in any direction?

Picture yourself back in that scene.

Now mentally erase from our planet all of the following:

- Toilets
- Sinks
- Showers
- Running water
- Computers
- Phones
- Internet
- Beds
- Chairs
- Roads
- Bikes
- Cars
- Planes
- Boats
- Books
- Paper
- Pencils
- Pens
- Hospitals
- Doctors
- Medicines
- Tools
- Grocery stores
- Fridges
- Freezers
- Farms

- Stoves
- Microwaves
- Shirts
- Sweaters
- Jackets
- Pants
- Socks
- Shoes
- Underwear

You are now standing alone in the middle of the planet with none of those things. Take your phone out of your pocket and toss it away. Take your shoes and shirt off, too, because they don't exist. Take everything off. You are completely naked with nothing around. None of those things exist. And none of them will begin to exist before the end of your life!

Now close your eyes, picture yourself there, and remember that:

99% of our history was living in this world.

99% of our history was with a life span of thirty years.

99% of our history was with brains constantly battling for survival.

Life was short, brutal, and highly competitive, and we have the same brains now that we've had throughout our history.

Were we happy back then? The better question is: Did we have time to be happy?

This instinctive need for what we don't yet have creates in us a persistent state of dissatisfaction. Without it, our ancestors would always be only one failed hunting session away from starvation. This simple, ruthless script is programmed to drive survival at all costs. It works exceedingly well for this purpose, but it leaves us feeling stress and unpleasantness much of the time. Unhappiness is nature's way of keeping people on their toes. It's a crude system, but it has worked for thousands of years.

We have the same brains we've always had through this short, brutal, and highly competitive time in our history. Our brains didn't just suddenly change when we got printing presses, airplanes, and the Internet. How have our brains been programmed?

What did this fear do? It drove our survival. We survived at all costs. We were paranoid. We were fighters. We were ruthless. We were brutal. We were murderous. And because of it . . . we got here. And because of it . . . we took over the planet. And because of it . . . we have everything in the world.

So this begs the question: Is that fear still programmed into our heads today?

3. The one thing your doctor, teacher, and Tom Hanks all have in common

Yes, that fear is still programmed into our heads.

It's everywhere, it's between our ears, it's in our brains. Tom Hanks, one of the world's most successful

actors, who earns millions with every movie and has scored two Academy Awards, said, “Some people go to bed at night thinking, ‘That was a good day.’ I am one of those who worries and asks, ‘How did I screw up today?’”

Andy Grove is the longtime Intel executive who helped transform the company into a multibillion-dollar success. He was believed by many to have helped drive the growth phase of Silicon Valley, was named Time’s Man of the Year in 1997, and was idolized by Steve Jobs, according to Jobs’s biography. How did he famously put it? “Only the paranoid survive.”

Our brains still follow this paranoid model every day, and it is a recipe for unhappiness! Some call it Medical Student’s Syndrome. That’s a term Jerome K. Jerome first coined in his 1889 classic, *Three Men in a Boat*: “I remember going to the British Museum one day to read up the treatment for some slight ailment of which I had a touch—hay fever, I fancy it was. I got down the book, and read all I came to read; and then, in an unthinking moment, I idly turned the leaves, and began to indolently study diseases, generally. I forget which was the first distemper I plunged into—some fearful, devastating scourge, I know—and, before I had glanced half down the list of ‘premonitory symptoms,’ it was borne in upon me that I had fairly got it.

“I sat for a while, frozen with horror; and then, in the listlessness of despair, I again turned over the pages. I came to typhoid fever—read the symptoms—discovered that I had typhoid fever, must have had it for months without knowing it—wondered what else I had got; turned up St. Vitus’s Dance—found, as I expected, that I had that, too—began to get interested in my case, and determined to sift it to the bottom, and so started alphabetically—read up ague, and learnt that I was sickening for it, and that the acute stage would commence in about another fortnight . . .”

It’s not just medical students. We’ve all been there.

We scan the world for problems because that led to our survival. And our current design of the world only reinforces and grows these negative-lens feelings.

At your doctor’s office when you get lab results, the doctor says, “Your blood sugar is fine, your cholesterol is fine, but your iron is low.” What do you do? You talk about getting your iron up. Eat steak! No work is done improving your blood sugar or cholesterol. If cholesterol should be below 200mg/dL and you’re at 195, great! If you’re 205, that’s a problem. Doctors get paid when we’re sick. Shouldn’t we pay them when we’re healthy?

Retail store managers “manage by exception” by staring at morning reports, finding a number below average, and trying to bump it up. If that report says your traffic count is fine, basket size is fine, but checkout time is below average, what does the boss want? Faster checkouts. More cashiers! No work is done improving statistics that are already average.

In the classroom the teacher hands back test results and offers extra help to those below average. They have to pass! If not, the year is repeated, the system is drained, friends all move ahead. What happens for the below average kids? Extra help at lunch. Tutoring sessions. Remedial tests. Why aren’t students who get 100% offered any extra challenge?

It’s no different in the workplace. We get job evaluations showing how well we’re doing. What happens if you’re below expectations? Performance improvement plan! Extra meetings with the boss! Shipped to training classes! What happens if you’re doing well? Two percent raise. Pat on the back.

Rather than find good results and make them better, our brains do this:

1. Look for problem.
2. Find problem.
3. Improve problem.

That's what our brains have been trained to do for two hundred thousand years. But because we scan the world for problems, sometimes that's all we see. Here's how New York Times–bestselling author Kelly Oxford framed our Medical Student's Syndrome on Twitter: "WebMD is like a Choose Your Own Adventure book where the ending is always cancer."

So what do we do about it?

5. How much can we control?

Aristotle says, "Happiness depends upon ourselves."

Viktor Frankl says, "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." Walt Whitman writes, "Keep your face always toward the sunshine—and shadows will fall behind you."

I love what Aristotle, Viktor Frankl, and Walt Whitman say. But how do you get there?

Well, we now have scientific evidence of the importance of attitude and specific proven actions we can take to manage our attitude.

Do you know what's amazing about this quote? The second last sentence!

"I am convinced that life is 10% what happens and 90% how I react to it."

Well, new research published in *The How of Happiness* by University of California psychology professor Sonja Lyubomirsky tells us exactly how much of our happiness is based on our life circumstances.

And it is 10%!

10% of our happiness is what happens to us.

So 90% of our happiness isn't based on what's happening in the world! It's based on how we see the world. What's included in the 90%? Our genetic predisposition and our intentional activities. Yes, intentional activities. This is big. Those are specific things we can do to improve our happiness. And they alone have four times the effect on our happiness than anything happening in our life.

Let me put it another way: If I knew everything about your life circumstances—your job, your health, your marital status, your income—I could predict only 10% of your happiness. That's it!

The remaining amount is not determined by your external world but by the way your brain processes it.

6. 7 ways to be happy right now

How do you be happy first?

For this chapter we look to the emerging field of positive psychology. What's that? It's not fluffy lollipop experiments. Professors of psychology Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi are called the fathers of positive psychology because of their passion for cold hard facts. As they put it themselves in *American Psychologist*:

“Psychology is not just a branch of medicine concerned with illness or health; it is much larger. It is about work, education, insight, love, growth, and play. And in this quest for what is best, positive psychology does not rely on wishful thinking, faith, self-deception, fads, or hand-waving; it tries to adapt what is best in the scientific method to the unique problems that human behavior presents to those who wish to understand it in all its complexity.”

Positive psychology is a new and growing field.

I have sifted through hundreds of studies to find the Big 7 ways to train your brain to be happy. Many of these studies have been discussed in journals, conference keynotes, and research reports, but I've brought them together for you here.

If you do any of these seven things for two straight weeks, you will feel happier.

So what are the Big 7?

1. Three Walks

Pennsylvania State researchers reported in the *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology* that the more physically active people are, the greater their general feelings of excitement and enthusiasm. Researcher Amanda Hyde reports, “We found that people who are more physically active have more pleasant-activated feelings than people who are less active, and we also found that people have more pleasant-activated feelings on days when they are more physically active than usual.” It doesn't take much: Half an hour of brisk walking three times a week improves happiness. The American Psychosomatic Society published a study showing how Michael Babyak and a team of doctors found that three thirty-minute brisk walks or jogs even improve recovery from clinical depression. Yes, clinical depression. Results were stronger than studies using medication or studies using exercise and medication combined.

2. The 20-Minute Replay

Writing for twenty minutes about a positive experience dramatically improves happiness. Why? Because you actually relive the experience as you're writing it and then relive it every time you read it. Your brain sends you back. In a University of Texas study called “How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Words,” researchers Richard Slatcher and James Pennebaker had one member of a couple write about their relationship for twenty minutes three times a day. Compared to the test group, the couple was more likely to engage in intimate dialogue afterward and the relationship was more likely to last. What does the 20-Minute Replay do? It helps us remember things we like about people and experiences in our lives.

3. Random Acts of Kindness

Carrying out five random acts of kindness a week dramatically improves your happiness. We don't naturally think about paying for someone's coffee, mowing our neighbor's lawn, or writing a thank-you note

to our apartment building security guard at Christmas. But Sonja Lyubomirsky, author of *The How of Happiness*, did a study asking Stanford students to perform five random acts of kindness over a week. Not surprisingly, they reported much higher happiness levels than the test group. Why? They felt good about themselves! People appreciated them. In his book *Flourish*, Professor Martin Seligman says that “we scientists have found that doing a kindness produces the single most reliable momentary increase in well-being of any exercise we have tested.”

4. A Complete Unplug

“The richest, happiest and most productive lives are characterized by the ability to fully engage in the challenge at hand, but also to disengage periodically and seek renewal,” say Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz in *The Power of Full Engagement*. And a Kansas State University study found that complete downtime after work helps us recharge for the next day. Turning your phone off after dinner. Not using the Internet on vacation. There’s a lot more to this, and we’re going to chat about it in *Secret #6*. If you can’t wait, flip to page 145.

5. Hit Flow

Get into a groove. Be in the zone. Find your flow. However you characterize it, when you’re completely absorbed with what you’re doing, it means you’re being challenged and demonstrating skill at the same time. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes this moment as “being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you’re using your skills to the utmost.” In his book *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, he describes it using an image I’ve redrawn on the following page:

6. 2-Minute Meditations

A research team from Massachusetts General Hospital looked at brain scans of people before and after they participated in a course on mindfulness meditation and published the results in *Psychiatry Research*. What happened? After the course, parts of the brain associated with compassion and self-awareness grew while parts associated with stress shrank. Studies report that meditation can “permanently rewire” your brain to raise levels of happiness.

7. Five Gratitudes

If you can be happy with simple things, then it will be simple to be happy. Find a book or a journal, or start a website, and write down three to five things you’re grateful for from the past week. I wrote five a week on 1000awesomethings.com. Some people write in a notebook by their bedside. Back in 2003, researchers Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough asked groups of students to write down five gratitudes, five hassles, or five events that happened over the past week for ten straight weeks. Guess what happened? The students who wrote five gratitudes were happier and physically healthier. Charles Dickens puts this well: “Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has many, not your past misfortunes, of which all men have some.”

Those are the Big 7. You know it’s important to be happy first, and these are the seven ways to get there. Remember: Just like driving a car, throwing a football, or doing a headstand—you can learn to be happier.

Most helpful customer reviews

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

Practical, Straightforward Approach to Building Greater Happiness

By Ed Nottingham

As a consulting and clinical psychologist I have the opportunity to plan, organize, and deliver stress management workshops. In fact I delivered one recently and regret that I had not read "The Happiness Equation" prior to that program!

Managing personal (and organizational) stress and distress depends on multiple factors including finding ways to bring greater happiness and contentment into our worlds. Mr. Pasricha's outstanding book presents so many practical and useful ways to build happiness which I believe in turn helps people better manage daily stress. Personally I also like the fact that he is a MBA and not a mental health professional, practitioner, or academic since he provides a more "personal" view than simply reporting findings from multiple research studies. (That said, he backs up his content with relevant science and findings as needed.)

I take notes in the back of books when I read and "The Happiness Equation" is filled with notes. There are so many practical ideas, many of which I am applying in my own life, that can be easily applied. In my work I always emphasize that happiness is an "inside job" and too often people make happiness contingent, e.g., "I'll be happy when ... (I have that job, make that money, live there ...)." I love that the book starts by reminding the reader of the fallacy associated that belief and the importance of working on happiness first that in turn can lead to life outcomes for which we search.

Oh, and I shared the book with my wife who also found it incredibly useful! And, I have purchased some of Mr. Pasricha's books and can't wait to read them!

Ed Nottingham, PhD, PCC

Consulting & Clinical Psychologist

Author, "It's Not as Bad as It Seems: A Thinking Straight Approach to Happiness" It's Not As Bad As It Seems

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

An Inspiring Summary of What Leads to Well Being

By Jim Clemmer

With the rapid growth of Positive Psychology there's been an explosion in books on happiness. Amazon lists 100,000 books on the topic!

I lean heavily toward personal, leadership, or organization development books that are evidence-based. Neil does cite some research and many of his approaches align well with the emerging science of well-being. What sets this book apart is simplicity, practicality, and readability. Neil uses a breezy, conversational style, liberally illustrated with his "scribbles" or hand drawn diagrams. The very short chapters — some only one page — makes the book easy and fun to browse.

Here are a few points that stood out most for me:

- The traditional equation of Great work -> Big Success -> Be Happy needs to Change to Be Happy -> Great Work -> Big Success. Be happy needs to come first.
- Do it for you. Don't do it to please others.
- Lack of self-confidence is the root of why we pay too much attention to critics and compare ourselves to others to gauge our success. High opinion of both ourselves and others is what brings confidence.
- We're programmed to scan for problems to fix and dangers to watch out for. We have much to be grateful for and need to focus on our strengths and positives.
- Retirement is a new concept, a Western concept, and a broken concept based on the assumptions that we enjoy doing nothing instead of being productive. Work gives us socializing, structure, stimulation, and story (purpose).

- How much are you truly earning when you break it down hourly? Overvalue you and your own time.
- Reduce your choices and decisions.
- Multi-tasking is a myth — we can only do one thing at a time.
- Create space for yourself.
- It's easier to act yourself into a new way of thinking than to think yourself into a new way of acting.
- Be you — be authentic. Your relationship with yourself is the most important relationship in your life.
- Your spouse/life partner has a huge impact on your happiness.
- You can take advice, but you need to listen to your inner voice and decide for yourself.

Neil calls many of his chapters and sections “secrets.” But they’re becoming pretty well-known now. If you’re looking for an inspiring and uplifting summary or reminder of what leads to higher happiness and well-being, “The Happiness Equation adds up” to time well invested.

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

I highly recommend this book.

By Brian Johnson

[[VIDEOID:8ed6e7830c20e5665db83f522e0f9dc6]] “So don’t you think every college, university, and library would be full of courses and advice on how we can become happier? On how we can make decisions that spur ourselves into positive action every day?”

When I asked a hospitality CEO if he knew a book, model or website that actually helped people navigate and simplify their most challenging decisions so they can live with contentment, freedom, and happiness, he said, ‘That book doesn’t exist. It would be like asking every high-powered executive, successful person, and positive leader to distill all the personal mental models they’ve created over their lives into one book. Nobody has ever done it.’

I know this is true because I’ve been searching for a practical book with real frameworks on leading myself to happiness for years. I wanted something beyond stories about generals, parables about penguins, and research studies with data pointing any which way. I wanted real, I wanted practical, I wanted clear. I wanted an action book that I could use every day.

This is that book.”

~ Neil Pasricha from The Happiness Equation

Neil Pasricha is awesome. And so is this book.

Ryan Holiday connected us and I’m glad he did.

Neil’s a fascinating guy—a Harvard MBA who runs a site called 1000awesomethings.com who also happens to be the director of leadership development for Walmart, one of the most popular TED speakers ever, the director of the Institute for Global Happiness AND the best-selling author of The Book of AWESOME series—with over 1 million books sold. (

THE HAPPINESS EQUATION: WANT NOTHING + DO ANYTHING=HAVE EVERYTHING BY NEIL PASRICHA PDF

It's no any faults when others with their phone on their hand, as well as you're as well. The distinction may last on the product to open **The Happiness Equation: Want Nothing + Do Anything=Have Everything By Neil Pasricha** When others open up the phone for talking and chatting all things, you can often open up as well as review the soft data of the The Happiness Equation: Want Nothing + Do Anything=Have Everything By Neil Pasricha Naturally, it's unless your phone is available. You can additionally make or wait in your laptop computer or computer system that reduces you to review The Happiness Equation: Want Nothing + Do Anything=Have Everything By Neil Pasricha.

Review

Praise for The Happiness Equation:

"Dale Carnegie was last century. Steven Covey was last decade. Neil Pasricha is what's now. The Happiness Equation is a two-hour ticket to changing your life!"

--SUSAN CAIN, author of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*

"The Happiness Equation will lead to tremendous changes in both your professional and personal life!"

--TONY HSIEH, author of *Delivering Happiness* and CEO of Zappos.com, Inc.

"Clear, practical, and thought-provoking, The Happiness Equation reveals how all of us can live happier lives."

--GRETCHEN RUBIN, author of *Better Than Before* and *The Happiness Project*

"I'm blown away by The Happiness Equation. Neil's nine secrets will improve how you think, how you feel, and how you act!"

--KEN BLANCHARD, coauthor of *The New One Minute Manager* and *Refire! Don't Retire*

"When Neil Pasricha talks, leaders of all levels and backgrounds stop what they're doing... and listen."

--HOWARD BEHAR, Former President of Starbucks Coffee

"While everyone else implies that happiness is 'out there', Neil points out that it is really 'in here'!"

--MARSHALL GOLDSMITH, author of *Triggers* and *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*

"Nobody has hacked happiness like this before!"

--FRANK WARREN, author of *PostSecret*

"Neil Pasricha is a life coach for the next generation! He makes happiness attainable by using scientifically proven habits that require low time investment and reap massive rewards!"

--SHAWN ACHOR, author of *The Happiness Advantage*

"With simple effortlessness, Neil renders complex ideas easily memorably and everyday practical. Disarmingly written, memorably fun, and unstoppably useful."

--COL. CHRIS HADFIELD, Former Commander of the International Space Station and author of *The*

Astronaut's Guide to Life on Earth

“Be happy first. These three words are so counterintuitive that most of us don’t know what to do with them. Neil does.”

--SETH GODIN, author of *What To Do When It’s Your Turn*

“How is it possible for subtle, non-judgmental lessons to hit you on the head like the proverbial ton of bricks? I'm not sure how he did it, but Neil Pasricha is the modern-day master of what it means to live intentionally. I loved this book!”

--CHRIS GUILLEBEAU, author of *The Happiness of Pursuit* and *The \$100 Startup*

"This lighted hearted and compelling book presents common sense suggestions for achieving happiness that will most definitely motivate new rituals and change habits in your life."

--STEVE REINEMUND, Former Chairman and CEO, PepsiCo and Former Dean, Wake Forest University School of Business

“Neil joined the Audi Executive Team across the United States and his happiness lessons were the highlight of the show. His is always on point, thought provoking, and receives near perfect ratings. Listen to him!”

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“Pasricha, counterintuitively, opens by saying that the trick is not to do great things and achieve great success that will lead to happiness but instead to be happy, which will yield great works and achieve all the success a person might want. Counterintuitive, yes, but not if you consider deeply his observation that happiness is 'based on how we see the world' and, moreover, that there are plenty of specific things a person can do to adjust his or her attitude northward.... Very good and well worth a look.”

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"Empathetically, [Pasricha] shows how to gain self-acceptance, feel passionate, and master important relationships...supply[ing] a great recipe for a contented life."

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From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author

Neil Pasricha is the New York Times–bestselling author of *The Happiness Equation* and the *Book of Awesome* series, which has been published in ten countries, spent more than five years on bestsellers lists, and sold more than a million copies. Pasricha is a Harvard MBA, one of the most popular TED speakers of all time, and founder of the Institute for Global Happiness. He has dedicated the past fifteen years of his life to developing leaders—creating global programs inside the world’s largest companies and speaking to hundreds of thousands of people around the world. He lives in Toronto with his wife and son.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Study hard! → Straight A’s! → Be happy!

Interview lots! → Great job! → Be happy!

Work overtime! → Get promoted! → Be happy!

But it doesn’t work like that in real life. That model is broken. We do great work, have a big success, but instead of being happy, we just set new goals. Now we study for the next job, the next degree, the next promotion. Why stop at a college degree when you can get a master’s? Why stop at Director when you can be VP? Why stop at one house when you can have two? We never get to happiness. It keeps getting pushed further and further away.

What happens when we snap “Be happy” off the end of this scribble and stick it on the beginning?

Now everything changes. Everything changes. If we start with being happy, then we feel great. We look great. We exercise. We connect. What happens? We end up doing great work because we feel great doing it. What does great work lead to? Big success. Massive feelings of accomplishment and the resulting degrees, promotions, and phone calls from your mom telling you she’s proud of you.

Harvard Business Review reports that happy people are 31% more productive, have 37% higher sales, and are three times more creative than their counterparts.

So what’s the first thing you must do before you can be happy? Be happy. Be happy first.

Being happy opens up your learning centers. Your brain will light up like Manhattan skyscrapers at dusk, sparkle like diamonds under jewelry store lights, glow like stars in the black sky above a farmer’s field.

American philosopher William James says, “The greatest discovery of any generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitude.”

The *Happiness Advantage* author Shawn Achor says, “It’s not necessarily the reality that shapes us but the lens through which your brain views the world that shapes your reality.”

William Shakespeare says, “For there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.”

2. The single biggest reason it’s so hard to be happy

Shakespeare says, “For there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.” But if it’s just thinking, plain thinking, why can’t we think ourselves into a good mood whenever we want?

Seems like we should be able to just flip a mental switch.

But we all know it’s not that easy. Sometimes our brains get focused on negative things. We can’t stop! I do this all the time. And you want to know a secret? Everybody does. Every single person gets stuck focusing on the negative sometimes. I’ve spoken on stages with the best-known motivational speakers, Fortune 500 CEOs, and political leaders from around the world. Do you know what they’re all doing backstage? Freaking out. Sweating. Thinking something might go wrong.

We all have negative self-talk. There is no such thing as an eternal optimist. There are people who feel optimistic, but those people have negative self-talk, too. And that’s okay. The problem isn’t that we have negative thoughts in our brain.

The problem is we think we shouldn’t have negative thoughts.

But why do our brains focus on negative things? Once we understand this we can learn how much we can control and make conscious efforts to be happy using proven techniques.

This is one of the most important things I can share with you. Why is it so hard to be happy?

Because life was mostly short, brutal, and highly competitive over the two hundred thousand years our species has existed on this planet. And our brains are trained for this short, brutal, and highly competitive world.

How short, brutal, and highly competitive was it? Let’s do a quick experiment.

Stop, close your eyes, and picture the last time you felt completely alone in the middle of nowhere.

Was it camping in the mountains when you walked away from the fire and stood on the jagged edge of a mirrory lake? Was it a misty waterfall you found on a field trip when your classmates disappeared and all you could hear was the wind rustling the leaves in the forest canopy? Was it jogging at sunrise on a sandy beach when you curled around the coastline and suddenly couldn’t see anyone for miles in any direction?

Picture yourself back in that scene.

Now mentally erase from our planet all of the following:

- Toilets
- Sinks
- Showers
- Running water
- Computers

- Phones
- Internet
- Beds
- Chairs
- Roads
- Bikes
- Cars
- Planes
- Boats
- Books
- Paper
- Pencils
- Pens
- Hospitals
- Doctors
- Medicines
- Tools
- Grocery stores
- Fridges
- Freezers
- Farms
- Stoves
- Microwaves
- Shirts
- Sweaters
- Jackets
- Pants
- Socks
- Shoes
- Underwear

You are now standing alone in the middle of the planet with none of those things. Take your phone out of your pocket and toss it away. Take your shoes and shirt off, too, because they don't exist. Take everything off. You are completely naked with nothing around. None of those things exist. And none of them will begin to exist before the end of your life!

Now close your eyes, picture yourself there, and remember that:

99% of our history was living in this world.

99% of our history was with a life span of thirty years.

99% of our history was with brains constantly battling for survival.

Life was short, brutal, and highly competitive, and we have the same brains now that we've had throughout our history.

Were we happy back then? The better question is: Did we have time to be happy?

This instinctive need for what we don't yet have creates in us a persistent state of dissatisfaction. Without it, our ancestors would always be only one failed hunting session away from starvation. This simple, ruthless

script is programmed to drive survival at all costs. It works exceedingly well for this purpose, but it leaves us feeling stress and unpleasantness much of the time. Unhappiness is nature's way of keeping people on their toes. It's a crude system, but it has worked for thousands of years.

We have the same brains we've always had through this short, brutal, and highly competitive time in our history. Our brains didn't just suddenly change when we got printing presses, airplanes, and the Internet. How have our brains been programmed?

What did this fear do? It drove our survival. We survived at all costs. We were paranoid. We were fighters. We were ruthless. We were brutal. We were murderous. And because of it . . . we got here. And because of it . . . we took over the planet. And because of it . . . we have everything in the world.

So this begs the question: Is that fear still programmed into our heads today?

3. The one thing your doctor, teacher, and Tom Hanks all have in common

Yes, that fear is still programmed into our heads.

It's everywhere, it's between our ears, it's in our brains. Tom Hanks, one of the world's most successful actors, who earns millions with every movie and has scored two Academy Awards, said, "Some people go to bed at night thinking, 'That was a good day.' I am one of those who worries and asks, 'How did I screw up today?'"

Andy Grove is the longtime Intel executive who helped transform the company into a multibillion-dollar success. He was believed by many to have helped drive the growth phase of Silicon Valley, was named Time's Man of the Year in 1997, and was idolized by Steve Jobs, according to Jobs's biography. How did he famously put it? "Only the paranoid survive."

Our brains still follow this paranoid model every day, and it is a recipe for unhappiness! Some call it Medical Student's Syndrome. That's a term Jerome K. Jerome first coined in his 1889 classic, *Three Men in a Boat*: "I remember going to the British Museum one day to read up the treatment for some slight ailment of which I had a touch—hay fever, I fancy it was. I got down the book, and read all I came to read; and then, in an unthinking moment, I idly turned the leaves, and began to indolently study diseases, generally. I forget which was the first distemper I plunged into—some fearful, devastating scourge, I know—and, before I had glanced half down the list of 'premonitory symptoms,' it was borne in upon me that I had fairly got it.

"I sat for a while, frozen with horror; and then, in the listlessness of despair, I again turned over the pages. I came to typhoid fever—read the symptoms—discovered that I had typhoid fever, must have had it for months without knowing it—wondered what else I had got; turned up St. Vitus's Dance—found, as I expected, that I had that, too—began to get interested in my case, and determined to sift it to the bottom, and so started alphabetically—read up ague, and learnt that I was sickening for it, and that the acute stage would commence in about another fortnight . . ."

It's not just medical students. We've all been there.

We scan the world for problems because that led to our survival. And our current design of the world only reinforces and grows these negative-lens feelings.

At your doctor's office when you get lab results, the doctor says, "Your blood sugar is fine, your cholesterol is fine, but your iron is low." What do you do? You talk about getting your iron up. Eat steak! No work is done improving your blood sugar or cholesterol. If cholesterol should be below 200mg/dL and you're at 195, great! If you're 205, that's a problem. Doctors get paid when we're sick. Shouldn't we pay them when we're healthy?

Retail store managers "manage by exception" by staring at morning reports, finding a number below average, and trying to bump it up. If that report says your traffic count is fine, basket size is fine, but checkout time is below average, what does the boss want? Faster checkouts. More cashiers! No work is done improving statistics that are already average.

In the classroom the teacher hands back test results and offers extra help to those below average. They have to pass! If not, the year is repeated, the system is drained, friends all move ahead. What happens for the below average kids? Extra help at lunch. Tutoring sessions. Remedial tests. Why aren't students who get 100% offered any extra challenge?

It's no different in the workplace. We get job evaluations showing how well we're doing. What happens if you're below expectations? Performance improvement plan! Extra meetings with the boss! Shipped to training classes! What happens if you're doing well? Two percent raise. Pat on the back.

Rather than find good results and make them better, our brains do this:

1. Look for problem.
2. Find problem.
3. Improve problem.

That's what our brains have been trained to do for two hundred thousand years. But because we scan the world for problems, sometimes that's all we see. Here's how New York Times–bestselling author Kelly Oxford framed our Medical Student's Syndrome on Twitter: "WebMD is like a Choose Your Own Adventure book where the ending is always cancer."

So what do we do about it?

5. How much can we control?

Aristotle says, "Happiness depends upon ourselves."

Viktor Frankl says, "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." Walt Whitman writes, "Keep your face always toward the sunshine—and shadows will fall behind you."

I love what Aristotle, Viktor Frankl, and Walt Whitman say. But how do you get there?

Well, we now have scientific evidence of the importance of attitude and specific proven actions we can take to manage our attitude.

Do you know what's amazing about this quote? The second last sentence!

"I am convinced that life is 10% what happens and 90% how I react to it."

Well, new research published in *The How of Happiness* by University of California psychology professor Sonja Lyubomirsky tells us exactly how much of our happiness is based on our life circumstances.

And it is 10%!

10% of our happiness is what happens to us.

So 90% of our happiness isn't based on what's happening in the world! It's based on how we see the world. What's included in the 90%? Our genetic predisposition and our intentional activities. Yes, intentional activities. This is big. Those are specific things we can do to improve our happiness. And they alone have four times the effect on our happiness than anything happening in our life.

Let me put it another way: If I knew everything about your life circumstances—your job, your health, your marital status, your income—I could predict only 10% of your happiness. That's it!

The remaining amount is not determined by your external world but by the way your brain processes it.

6. 7 ways to be happy right now

How do you be happy first?

For this chapter we look to the emerging field of positive psychology. What's that? It's not fluffy lollipop experiments. Professors of psychology Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi are called the fathers of positive psychology because of their passion for cold hard facts. As they put it themselves in *American Psychologist*:

“Psychology is not just a branch of medicine concerned with illness or health; it is much larger. It is about work, education, insight, love, growth, and play. And in this quest for what is best, positive psychology does not rely on wishful thinking, faith, self-deception, fads, or hand-waving; it tries to adapt what is best in the scientific method to the unique problems that human behavior presents to those who wish to understand it in all its complexity.”

Positive psychology is a new and growing field.

I have sifted through hundreds of studies to find the Big 7 ways to train your brain to be happy. Many of these studies have been discussed in journals, conference keynotes, and research reports, but I've brought them together for you here.

If you do any of these seven things for two straight weeks, you will feel happier.

So what are the Big 7?

1. Three Walks

Pennsylvania State researchers reported in the *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology* that the more physically active people are, the greater their general feelings of excitement and enthusiasm. Researcher Amanda Hyde reports, “We found that people who are more physically active have more pleasant-activated feelings than people who are less active, and we also found that people have more pleasant-activated feelings

on days when they are more physically active than usual.” It doesn’t take much: Half an hour of brisk walking three times a week improves happiness. The American Psychosomatic Society published a study showing how Michael Babyak and a team of doctors found that three thirty-minute brisk walks or jogs even improve recovery from clinical depression. Yes, clinical depression. Results were stronger than studies using medication or studies using exercise and medication combined.

2. The 20-Minute Replay

Writing for twenty minutes about a positive experience dramatically improves happiness. Why? Because you actually relive the experience as you’re writing it and then relive it every time you read it. Your brain sends you back. In a University of Texas study called “How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Words,” researchers Richard Slatcher and James Pennebaker had one member of a couple write about their relationship for twenty minutes three times a day. Compared to the test group, the couple was more likely to engage in intimate dialogue afterward and the relationship was more likely to last. What does the 20-Minute Replay do? It helps us remember things we like about people and experiences in our lives.

3. Random Acts of Kindness

Carrying out five random acts of kindness a week dramatically improves your happiness. We don’t naturally think about paying for someone’s coffee, mowing our neighbor’s lawn, or writing a thank-you note to our apartment building security guard at Christmas. But Sonja Lyubomirsky, author of *The How of Happiness*, did a study asking Stanford students to perform five random acts of kindness over a week. Not surprisingly, they reported much higher happiness levels than the test group. Why? They felt good about themselves! People appreciated them. In his book *Flourish*, Professor Martin Seligman says that “we scientists have found that doing a kindness produces the single most reliable momentary increase in well-being of any exercise we have tested.”

4. A Complete Unplug

“The richest, happiest and most productive lives are characterized by the ability to fully engage in the challenge at hand, but also to disengage periodically and seek renewal,” say Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz in *The Power of Full Engagement*. And a Kansas State University study found that complete downtime after work helps us recharge for the next day. Turning your phone off after dinner. Not using the Internet on vacation. There’s a lot more to this, and we’re going to chat about it in *Secret #6*. If you can’t wait, flip to page 145.

5. Hit Flow

Get into a groove. Be in the zone. Find your flow. However you characterize it, when you’re completely absorbed with what you’re doing, it means you’re being challenged and demonstrating skill at the same time. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes this moment as “being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you’re using your skills to the utmost.” In his book *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, he describes it using an image I’ve redrawn on the following page:

6. 2-Minute Meditations

A research team from Massachusetts General Hospital looked at brain scans of people before and after they

participated in a course on mindfulness meditation and published the results in *Psychiatry Research*. What happened? After the course, parts of the brain associated with compassion and self-awareness grew while parts associated with stress shrank. Studies report that meditation can “permanently rewire” your brain to raise levels of happiness.

7. Five Gratitudes

If you can be happy with simple things, then it will be simple to be happy. Find a book or a journal, or start a website, and write down three to five things you’re grateful for from the past week. I wrote five a week on 1000awesomethings.com. Some people write in a notebook by their bedside. Back in 2003, researchers Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough asked groups of students to write down five gratitudes, five hassles, or five events that happened over the past week for ten straight weeks. Guess what happened? The students who wrote five gratitudes were happier and physically healthier. Charles Dickens puts this well: “Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has many, not your past misfortunes, of which all men have some.”

Those are the Big 7. You know it’s important to be happy first, and these are the seven ways to get there. Remember: Just like driving a car, throwing a football, or doing a headstand—you can learn to be happier.

The Happiness Equation: Want Nothing + Do Anything=Have Everything By Neil Pasricha. Change your routine to hang or waste the time to only chat with your friends. It is done by your everyday, do not you really feel burnt out? Currently, we will show you the new habit that, actually it's a very old habit to do that can make your life more qualified. When really feeling bored of consistently chatting with your friends all spare time, you can locate the book entitle *The Happiness Equation: Want Nothing + Do Anything=Have Everything* By Neil Pasricha and then read it.