You Can Be Happy

Discover the steps that can change your life.

QUICK OVERVIEW

Get Happy Now offers more than just feel-good, “I did it, so can you” stories about achieving happiness. Author Joseph McClendon III, who went from being homeless to become an international expert on peak performance, presents a narrative that leads readers on a journey to happiness. His enjoyable book features simply presented science, which ensures the prescribed methodology makes sense.

McClendon’s style in Get Happy Now is conversational, and the science explained in layman’s terms. He lays the groundwork for his points and illustrates them through appealing anecdotes. The challenging and fun activities sprinkled throughout the book make it engaging as well as highly applicable.

APPLY AND ACHIEVE

McClendon explains that happiness is an emotion to which physical responses are linked. He shares that we can re-create the physical responses of happiness by fully engaging in the memory of a happy moment. Here’s an exercise you can do now:

Think of a happy moment in your life. Try to relive the details.

• Where exactly were you?
• Who was with you?
• What were the light and the temperature like?
• Were there any scents you can recall?
• What happened that made you happy?
• What feelings did you experience? (Contentment, security, excitement, etc.)

Fully remembering that moment allows you to feel happy now by duplicating the physiological effects of happiness from the chemicals your body released during the moment.
The tears were frozen on the side of my face, because I had been weeping for 75 miles. As I crossed the double yellow line and pulled out into the oncoming traffic lane, my mind raced with a mixture of fear and self-pity and I knew I couldn’t go on any longer. In an effort to hasten the end I twisted the throttle wide open on my dilapidated 1937 Harley-Davidson. I wanted to go out in a blaze of glory. Well, okay, cowardly stupidity.

HOMELESS AND BEATEN: THE JOURNEY BEGINS

Seventy, 80, 95, 100 miles an hour… I pushed that tired old engine beyond the limit.

When I saw the headlights coming, it occurred to me that I could swerve the bike into the path of the vehicle and in one second my pain would be over. I heard my mother’s voice…

“You never hurt another human being.”

Her voice was crystal clear, as if she were there with me. It was something she had said to me many times. And it struck me like lightning. I am another person! Not to mention that I could hurt someone else by doing something selfish and stupid. So at the last second I swerved back into my lane. Here I was, with absolutely nothing to live for, and I couldn’t even kill myself.

In that moment when I was drowning in my own self-pity and worthlessness, a semi in front of me blew a tire. I looked up and saw a large piece of rubber in the air. Talk about an immediate shift in perspective!

Seconds before, I wanted to die. But now I had no choice and I watched in horror as a 100-pound chunk of flying, jettisoned rubber propelled backward toward my head.

When I woke up it was dark, and I was all alone. My first realization was that no one had stopped to help me. I didn’t know what else to do so I pushed my broken bike the final ten miles back to my cardboard house. Then it started raining.

It never rains in the desert.

I began crying like a little baby, as I watched the rain running like a river through my homeless camp, flooding everything. I lost it. I began screaming, out loud.

“This will change, right now!”

“This will change, right now!”

“This will change, right now!”

My tears were mixed with anger and frustration. Then I looked down at my watch. Midnight.

Suddenly it dawned on me; “I’m 19 years old,” I thought, remembering my birthday. Literally, I just turned 19, and in my mind 19 meant that you were a man. I don’t know why but I snapped and started screaming again. Like a crazy lunatic I began yelling.

“I’m a man!”

“I’m a man!”

“I’m a man!”

It occurred to me that I was a man now, and there was no way to continue to fail, and do childish things. That’s not what a man does. I continued yelling until I fell asleep in the mud.

Little did I know that, during that evening with my behavior and my thought processes, I had stumbled upon the beginnings of rewiring my brain for happiness.

“Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.”

—Aristotle

THE CHOICE

When I was in my lowest state in life, I would see other guys my age driving nice cars, passing me on the street. I remember seeing one well-dressed young man in a brown suit getting out of a really nice car with shiny rims. He walked with a sense of purpose and confidence. He was going somewhere, and you know what? He didn’t stop to look back.

I would see successful guys my age who seemed to have everything I didn’t have and think, I’m just as smart as he is. I should be driving that car and wearing that suit!

Well, I’ve since learned that there’s a huge gap between knowing something and doing it. It doesn’t matter what you know. It matters what you do that creates change. I recognized that I needed to change to achieve any kind of success, but it wasn’t until I had a crisis and almost got myself killed that the light bulb clicked on. In fact, even though I knew I needed to change, it didn’t happen until the man in the repair shop gave me the book to read, until I actually chose to change.
The Crossroads

“Today is my birthday and today I’m a man,” I announced.

Instead of the look of compassion I was hoping for he looked at me like I was trash. “Like I said, there ain’t nothing here for you, now get!”

He slammed the door in my face. It struck me as a challenge. Even a bit funny. I thought to myself, I’m a man now and a man never takes no for an answer. So I knocked on the door again. When he came to the door I said, “Look, I know I must look like hell but I am determined to prove to you that I can help you and if you give me a chance you won’t be sorry.”

He finally said. “The only reason I’m going to help you is because I used to have an old knucklehead (motorcycle) like that one back in the day.”

I pushed my bike into his garage and he gave me some clean clothes and told me to go in the back and clean myself up. When I returned he was sitting behind his cluttered desk in his junky, grease-smeared office.

“Sit down,” he barked. “Before I lift one finger to fix your hog you are going to read this book cover to cover.”

The old man sensed my irritation. “Look,” he said. “The garage is locked and the only way to get the bike is to read this book.”

It was worn out and dog-eared and there was no front or back cover. The book was Think and Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill.

The book changed my life forever and ignited a fire inside. Within a week I had a job, and a new attitude. I’d changed. For real.

Reading Think and Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill changed my life forever and ignited a fire inside. Within a week I had a job, and a new attitude. I’d changed. For real. Though the book was and still is magnificent, it was just my starting point of a lifelong fascination with human behavior and function. I went on to study psychology in college and eventually earned my doctorate in neuropsychology. I opened a practice in Los Angeles and have had the honor and privilege of assisting hundreds of individuals quickly alleviate the emotional and behavioral challenges that have impeded their lives. I’ve been there.

HOW HAPPY CAN YOU REALLY BE?

When you are living in the fullness of life, you begin to see that you have no limitations. Although I’m not a medical doctor, I do hold a doctorate in neuropsychology and one of my passions and gifts is in the area of health and wellness. I believe that what is happening with the physical body is also happening with your brain. Your brain is physical and organic in nature and works in conjunction with literally every other part of your body. They are all interconnected and what happens to one will affect all of the others on some level. In my opinion this is also the most overlooked area in the field of psychology and possibly the most important. Although it helps to be healthy, I’m not saying that unless you are in perfect health you can’t be happy. But what you do with your body in terms of movement is one of the greatest components of the state of happiness!

Your body and brain are wired for happiness. Countless laboratory experiments and brain science studies report that positive moods reduce stress-related hormones. This chemical chain reaction increases the immune function in the human body, promoting health, healing, and vitality. When you look at the scientific data, you can see that happiness isn’t an option but a necessity, as important as air and water. Happiness makes your body strong and your brain work better. You’re supposed to be happy. You were constructed for it!

CONSTRUCTING HAPPINESS

Although the process of constructing happiness is simple, there is a bit of a battle that needs to take place. The battle is between the old way of thinking and the new way of thinking and behaving. The truth is, in order to win and overcome and get what you want, sometimes it’s a fight!

At times you’ll have to slay dragons that you’ve grown accustomed to living with. Those are the things you’ve held onto because it seems harder to go through the process of letting them go or you simply have become comfortable with them. But battle doesn’t have to be lengthy or bloody. It can be exhilarating and swift. When you adopt a warrior mindset (versus a victim mindset) you WILL be victorious. In the end, you will have redemption and victory over negative thought processes and behaviors.

1. Know Your Destination

The question right now is, What will you decide to change? And the best answer to that question is to make the decision to
change the things that will make the biggest difference. Change the one thing that will have a profound impact on all of the other areas of your life.

Think about it for a minute, and write it down.

________________________________________________________________________

2. Find What Holds You Back

For every procrastination there is an equal or greater hesitation. There is always a reason why someone does what they do. Something is triggering them to behave that way. What stops you from feeling the way you want is important to discover, so that we can deal with it accordingly.

The same mechanism has been in play for why we haven’t made the change in the past. Finding out how we justify the bad behaviors and feelings will give us valuable leverage to create change. It will knock the wind out of the sails of procrastination and hesitation.

Think about it for a minute and write it down.

________________________________________________________________________

3. Obliteration

In my opinion the biggest reason why people don’t change is because they don’t do anything about their existing pattern of behavior and emotion. They try to add on something new without making room for it.

In the practice of neurolinguistic programming this process is called interrupting the pattern. Whenever a person is in a particular pattern of thought, behavior, or emotion, if that pattern is interrupted, that interruption will cause a blank spot in the mind. The blank spot interrupts everything, including emotion. This is what we are going to do in exercises throughout this book.

A blank spot is called a scotoma. The most useful part about scotomas is that we can deliberately create them and use them to our advantage.

No matter what your age, researchers have proven that you can change your brain, and change your life.

In the practice of neurolinguistic programming this process is called interrupting the pattern. Whenever a person is in a particular pattern of thought, behavior, or emotion, if that pattern is interrupted, that interruption will cause a blank spot in the mind. The blank spot interrupts everything, including emotion. This is what we are going to do in exercises throughout this book.

A blank spot is called a scotoma. The most useful part about scotomas is that we can deliberately create them and use them to our advantage.

Coached to Success

My son sat down at the computer with me one day. I said: “Throughout your life you will need a coach. In order to get anywhere, fast, it’s important to use a coach.”

I pulled up a boxing match on YouTube and showed him a brief clip. The professional boxers fought a round, and then the bell rang and they retreated to their corners. In the corners their coaches talked to them, and the boxers nodded and went right back out for another round. I stopped the video. What just happened? I asked.

My son reported what he saw. “The boxers sat down and a man came over and talked to them.”

I hit play once again, and the same process was repeated. I stopped it again and told my son, “See how the boxer didn’t argue with his coach and didn’t ask questions. He just learned what he needed to know to go back out there and win the fight.” I told him that the fastest way to win the fight is to listen to the coach.

Here’s a simple example. You’re sitting in your living room and you decide to get up and go get a glass of water. You stand up and walk into the kitchen and there you are looking around confused, trying to remember what you went in there for! When it happens, it’s a weird feeling. In reality, when you stood up and moved your body you actually interrupted the pattern of thought and emotion that you were in sitting on the couch. You interrupted yourself and it caused you to draw a blank.

It is possible to deliberately interrupt a negative pattern and create space to be filled with something useful. Do this enough times the right way and you will destroy the original pattern of emotion and replace it with the desired emotion and subsequent behavior. It is possible to obliterate negative thoughts, emotions, and behaviors and create space for the good to flow in.

4. Creation

Remember Step 1: navigation. We determine what it is we want. But in reality everything that we want is a feeling. An emotion. Those feelings will precede any behavior.

Remember when you were 17 and had feelings for someone special? Maybe it was your first real relationship and your heart skipped a beat when you thought about that person. The emotions, hormones, and beliefs were amped up and linked to getting what you wanted. When we remember those
things in our past that make us feel good, we can capture those feelings to be used to our advantage. And here’s the real cool part. Your mind can’t tell the difference between what’s real and what’s not when you imagine it vividly.

So we now take that destination emotion and this is where we place it into the space that we created with the obliteration process. Remember that the mind wants control and seeks answers, so if there is a vacuum it feels unnatural. When we make the space it is searching for something to fill it. And here is when we place in that spot what it is we really want.

5. Automation

We not only can install those feelings in the scotoma that we create, but we can also condition our nervous system to accept them as real and they will become a part of who we are.

So instead of having to remind yourself to be happy or respond favorably, this step conditions the nervous system to accept that the desired emotion and subsequent behavior is its natural default. This is where you utilize things that naturally occur in your life to actually trigger you to be happy. This is how our bodies, muscle memory, and the nervous system have worked for millions of years, so all we are doing is taking advantage of this process and directing it in the direction that we desire.

THE POWER OF LAUGHTER

Your physiology is directly connected to your mind and together they produce feelings and emotions. It’s safe to say that how we are moving and thinking is how we are being. Our minds and bodies are inseparable and completely connected in every way. Trying to change how we feel without including a change in some or all of our body movements is like trying to drive your car with two flat tires.

Laughter really is the best medicine. When laughter is authentic and uninhibited it frees up the diaphragm for deeper breathing, and triggers the release of endorphins. It brings more oxygen to the bloodstream and helps the body repair itself. When you laugh you stimulate several things in the body, not the least of which is the fact that when you laugh it forces you to take deep breaths. The increased oxygen gives cells what they need and the movement of the lymph eliminates toxins.

In super-centenarian studies (people who live to 115 or more), socialization and an outgoing personality are big factors. People who are happy live longer and have deeper relationships. People who can laugh and be lighthearted when things go wrong manage stress better.

YOUR PERSONAL STORY HAS POWER

Think of the negatives that come into your mind as garbage. If the garbage truck dumped a truckload of garbage onto your front yard and left it there, you’d have to deal with the stench of it for days and possibly even weeks. Eventually the garbage would reek so bad that the neighbors would complain. It would rot and fester, and infiltrate the air and soon everything around you would take on the odor of the garbage. And this is the way it is with the toxins we allow into our minds. It doesn’t matter if it’s from the Internet, a posting or message from Facebook or Twitter, an email, or a phone call. Sometimes we even create the toxic messages ourselves.

On the other hand, if you think of yourself as a joyful, compassionate, loving, fun, and energetic person and you tell yourself stories that support that thought then the exact opposite will happen. You will fill your reservoir with magic honey that strengthens everything that it touches and enhances your entire life. Either set of stories can be true or false.

The choice is always yours. But the one that is told the most is the one that you will believe the most.

Happiness Facts

- Happiness can be learned.
- Happiness speeds up success.
- Happiness will increase your energy.
- Happiness will increase your longevity.
- Happiness attracts you to what you want and what you want to you.
- Happiness increases your health and wellness.
- Happiness is contagious.
- You can condition yourself to be habitually happy.
ACTION STEPS
Get more out of this SUCCESS Book Summary by applying what you’ve learned. Here are a few thoughts and questions to get you started.

1. Write down a habit you want to replace.
2. Write down the habit you want to replace it with.
3. Write a list of things, memories, people and places that make you happy. As you write, relive each moment, fully experiencing what you feel.
4. After you list each one, smile and say, “Magnificent.”
5. Make a list of songs and music that make you happy. Use this list to add to your MP3 player, or listen to them on YouTube.
6. Write down exactly how you felt in your happiest moment (excited, thrilled, content, etc.).
7. Spend a few moments envisioning Your Most Magnificent Future Day. What would you do? How would you feel? Who would you see? Don’t limit yourself by your current financial situation or your existing career. Now, write about that day.

About the Author
Joseph McClendon III has a Ph.D. in neuropsychology and has co-authored books with personal-development great Anthony Robbins and written several of his own books. McClendon specializes in helping people overcome fears and has coached many on how to find to happiness.

He is a former instructor at UCLA, founder of the peak performance company ProSequence Research Group and has taught more than 3 million people worldwide how to change their lives. As senior head trainer for the Robbins Research International, he has worked side by side with Anthony Robbins for more than two decades.

Recommended Reading
If you enjoyed this summary of Get Happy Now, check out:

Live Your Dash by Linda Ellis

QBQ: The Question Behind the Question by John G. Miller

If You Want to Walk on Water, You’ve Got to Get Out of the Boat by John Ortberg