

HAPPINESS MANUAL

by Dominik Skupina



Only you know how much you can lose if you don't read this manual and only you know how much you can gain by reading it all :-)

Hi there, It all started 6 years ago in the lowest point of my life when I was in college, far from my home, far from my girl ... I was also addicted to weed and alcohol and cigarettes, which was not helping me with my negative mood at all at that time, I thought the exact opposite was true :-)

So what did I do? Thanks to some kind of higher coincidence, I got into personal development, which eventually let me to realization that I need to do something about my depressive situation. So I did. I quit college because I realized that was not what I wanted to pursue in my life. Next I quit smoking. Next I quit my relationship with my girl because I realized that our relationship was not healthy at all.

Then I moved across the world from my native country (Czech Republic) to Florida, USA ... And what happened? I was the happiest I ever been in my entire life ... BUT it lasted only for a while :-) Everything was new and exciting and I decided to pursue personal development even more. I also started to take care of my health so I quit all my addictions.

I felt awesome but it was weird to me that even though I was experiencing a lot of positive emotions temporarily , I always ended up crashing into some form of negativity. I had a good days and bad days and I thought that's normal :-)

One day I was really thinking about my bad days and wishing for change. I wanted to feel good all the time and I should because of all the positive changes I made in my life. That was the time when I started to look for more answers. It was the time when I discovered positive psychology (the science of happiness) and I started to experiment with it.

At this point, I was absolutely in love with the ideas and principles of positive psychology and related fields of science. Not only because of the benefits that happiness had in my life but also because most of the principals are just common sense, which is unfortunately not that common in today's world.

Let me tell you about some of the benefits of being happier, as you may also recognize them in your own life.

Research shows that in a happy state, our brain works 30% better than in negative state (in some cases even 100% times better :-). Which means that our ability to learn improves, we can make better decisions, we are more creative, more intelligent.

Researchers call it the happiness advantage, which gives you plenty of advantages in work and business, at relationships, spirituality and you also get healthier.

In short, being happier helps you to adapt better to your environment and adaptation is a key, not only for survival but for a good life in today's fast changing times.

I bet you see the difference in your days when you're feeling strong, positive and optimistic compared to when you're a bit down, feeling stressed out or depressed ... What a difference in how you are able to handle all the daily tasks right ? :-). I know for me it's a huge difference because I remember those times when I wasn't even able to crawl out of my bed... My mood affected my food choices, my relationships with people, in short , it affects everything in my life.

That's why being happy consistently is so important to me ... It's the daily quality of my life that matters to me.

Exploring positive psychology led me to follow my chain of whys - That means asking myself why I do what I do - Why I moved across the globe, why I'm interested in personal development, why I want to be a better person, why I want to be healthier. And when I was digging deep enough and asking myself "why" enough times - only one answer came to me constantly and it was - "I want to be happy and enjoy my life in a fully happy state."

And that's what positive psychology basically taught me: that we all are striving for happiness in our life, we all want to feel positive emotions on a daily bases. Makes sense, right? But why it often seem so difficult to do so?

First, it's because there is a lot of misunderstanding when it comes to happiness. And second, it's because our brain (from an evolutionary perspective) is not designed to make us happy, it's design to make us survive - Researchers call it the negativity bias. I will tell you more about overcoming it later in this manual.

So... When I first decided to raise my happiness in life, I had to bust through all the myths about happiness I been taught to believe in since young age. I had to look at all of those beliefs I created growing up till now and understand how it's blocking me from experiencing stable life satisfaction and joy, stable happiness. In other words, why do I always end up in some sort of negativity, whether it's stress, anxiety, depression, anger, sadness or just feeling emotionally numb.

Let's go through the most common myths I see many people still tend to believe in. You may recognize these in your own life as well so please keep your mind open because

otherwise your mind won't take this seriously and it won't help you eliminate negative emotions to achieve higher levels of happiness in your life. By believing in and living according to those myths, you create rules of happiness for yourself which keeps you from being better in life. Most of us, including me, did it without a conscious decision while growing up and during early adulthood. And now it does not serve us.

These rules are a part of a happiness game we all play if we want to or not ... The happiness game means all the rules when I allow myself to be happy and feel all the positive emotions and in what circumstances I need to be unhappy, feel all the negative emotions ... As you can see, everybody has different rules of happiness therefore everybody plays the game differently - you can see it in the people around you, your friends and family perhaps ... example: One person may get totally frustrated being late to work or school, another person may be totally relaxed in the same situation. I'm sure you can see thousands of other examples from your own life. It's important to know that you, and only you, created these rules so only you can change them for your own good and the good of others around you.

Let's get into it!

Most of the myths are about our beliefs / habits, intentions in life and our expectations

It's all in our head ...

1) The common myth / belief that SUCCESS = Happiness.

In fact, the exact opposite is true.

Let me explain:

Many of us were conditioned to create a belief that "once I become somebody I will be happy. Or after I get this or that, I will be happy. After I fall in love, I will be happy. I will be happy after I successfully achieve something. This is the problem ...- "I will be happy after ..."

This may appear to us as something very logical and also it may be perceived as something good because it may push us to achieve greater things in life, it may push us to grow as a person which is great thing to do! The problem may occur when we assign our happiness to some achievement in the future ... Why?

Let me explain 4 more happiness traps hidden in this belief.

a) The belief that happiness is a destination: " I will be happy after ... " is actually saying that - " I'm NOT happy now " ... so if you are in this trap, all the time you spend

achieving that goal of yours, that dream of yours ... you are expecting to be happy later, therefore you cannot be fully happy in the process of achieving it. Does that make sense? This took me a while to swallow and wrap my head around because I was coming from the background of personal development where I learned to pursue all the dreams I could think of and I did not fully understand to this trap... And again - it's great to have a dreams, goals etc. but what I did not understand about this happiness trap is that there was always very thin layer between feeling good about my dreams and feeling bad about them . I mean, all the thoughts like - "I did not achieve it yet" or "I was not working enough towards my goals" or I felt bad when someone wanted to "attack" my dreams etc ... When I was so uptight about them because I saw fulfilling my dreams and goals mainly as the destination of my happiness ... a big pot of gold at the end of the rainbow

b) You may spend all that time and effort to finally achieve something (succeed) in life but when you do so, it feels different or is different than you expected. Therefore you won't be happy as expected so you just "wasted" all that time and effort. (You can take a lesson from it at least)

c) You may achieve something (you succeed) and yes it makes you happy, but it only makes you happy for a while and sooner or later, you will be hunting for the next achievement, the next goal, the next dream and the hunt for happiness continues forever. I bet you can see some examples from your own life when this happened to you as well. It's because our brain is naturally adapting to the circumstances in our life (it's called a hedonic adaptation) - you adapt to the achievement and then it's not so exciting anymore so you start looking for the next achievement and the vicious circle continues .

d) The next problem with assigning our happiness to achievement is that we may never achieve what we intend to achieve in life ... It's hard to admit it, but only a small percentage of people are able to fulfill their dreams and desires fully . So if I believe that "I will be happy after I make a million \$\$\$," there is a huge chance that I will never be able to make it and that would lead me to life of unhappiness... And again, I'm not saying that you should drop all your motivations and do nothing so you won't end up unhappy ... no ...

I'm saying it's a trap to assign your happiness to something that should happen in the future. Today I still have my dreams in life, I still have my intentions I'm working towards but at the same time I'm absolutely fine if I am unable to achieve any of that ... I do not assign my happiness to it....

2) Second happiness trap is - Focusing on the wrong things which does not guarantee happiness - for example, having a lot of money, fame, social status, love, friends will make me happy etc ...

All of these may contribute to your happiness but if you are focusing purely on money, fame, status etc, that in itself does not guarantee happiness simply because none of these

things are happiness. This may sound a bit weird but think about that. We tend to believe that money, fame, status etc will bring us that happiness in life, but it makes no logical sense. If I focus on money, I will get more of what? Money ... If I focus more on fame, I will get more fame... SO to get more happiness in life we must focus on happiness directly otherwise we will always get different results. Aim at the right target, otherwise it's like you would want to be a professional football player but instead you only practice playing tennis.

3) The belief that external circumstances makes us happy or unhappy - This is a huge Myth! This was a reason why I was experiencing happiness only temporarily in my life. One day I was happy but next I was feeling under the weather... It was like a rollercoaster ride! Then I understood - The truth is that the WAY we react to those external circumstances determine our happiness, not the external circumstance itself. And this is huge! This puts you the reins of your happiness in your hands!

Another truth about externals is that you will never be able to influence them completely. Nobody can. We just do not have 100% control of what will happen in the external world around us ...BUT We can have 100% control over our internal world - we can control our mind and the way we react to those externals. I'm sure that you do this in your own life already, same as I did, but there was a huge difference when I started to focus on this one consciously and on a daily basis. Huge difference! By the way, I have an interesting challenge for you at the end of this manual - it will help you to focus on this myth! :-)

4) Next trap - Expectation of security - In the Western world, we have insurance, we have a financial system, we have Medicare, we have laws, we have the police and military to protect us, therefore this may give us an illusion that the idea of security is real and attainable. The truth is that nothing is 100% secure and stable on this planet. One of the natural laws we have to obey is a law of change. Everything is changing in time and we can't influence it at all, we can't just stop it. Again we do not have 100% control of external world. It's impossible.

So if you're seeking or expecting security, you may be unpleasantly surprised when things go wrong, not according to your expectations. For many, the seeking of security can be more stressful than admitting that the idea of security is just an illusion ... it's not real... never has been. Things go wrong in life, the unexpected happens. If you cannot accept this law of nature in your life, you will never be able to achieve true peace and happiness in life. That may not be a problem for many, but if you're reading this manual now, I assume that your happiness is something dear to you :-)

I learned to fall in love with the idea of change. It's exciting to me. It brings aliveness into my life ...

5) The illusion of permanency - Another common belief we have is that when things are bad in life, we tend to believe that it will be like that forever, which brings us into a negative spiral, pulling us down into negative emotions like a depression, fear, sadness etc.

On the other hand, we tend to believe the same when things in our life go right and everything is great! We think that it's going to be this way forever and if the good times end, we are unpleasantly surprised. I know I was definitely guilty of this behavior :-). Again, it has a lot to do with our expectations.

6) The belief that negative emotions are bad - Just because negative emotions may cause us psychological pain or suffering, it does not mean that they are all bad. In most cases, negative emotions are trying to give us some kind of message - that we are doing something wrong in our life. If we perceive negative emotions as an opportunity to find out what we are doing wrong in life and fix it then it becomes a blessing. This way the emotional pain we go through is used for something good, for something positive at least. Being negative about negative emotions has no positive outcome at all.

7) The belief that my happiness is genetically predetermined - There was a study done on identical twins, separated at young age, living separately, suggesting that 50 % of our happiness may be genetic. Even some researchers from the field of positive psychology blindly took this belief and started to spread it around. Later, they admitted it was a mistake. I looked at that study saw how poorly designed it was. I 'm not saying that our level of happiness is not genetically influenced. It may be, but definitely not at 50 % ...And let me ask you this, even if it is true, what would be the positive aspect of this fact? Not much because many would just take this "fact" as an excuse for why their life sucks, which would totally discourage them from changing their situation and they would even contaminate others with their negativity :-)

8) The belief that happiness is excitement - Usually nobody teaches us at school or at home exactly what is happiness, therefore many people have different definitions of happiness and, oh boy, I had some too :-). I later distinguished the difference between excitement and happiness. Excitement is everything that brings us short-term positive emotions. There are two types - constructive (healthy exercise, sex, chats with friends etc.) and destructive (drugs, junk food etc.). Happiness is long-term stable life

satisfaction and joy. Constructive excitement may help you to build your happiness a bit but it always will be just a temporary boost of positive emotions.

9) The pill mentality - Unfortunately a more and more common belief in western society is that "one pill, one quick solution, technique or strategy will help me get rid of my problem instantly." Although it may work with a painkiller, it does not mean that everything in life will be solved as easily as taking one pill or applying one technique or strategy. Life and especially happiness is a bit more complicated than that, but let's not over complicate it either :-)

10) The belief that happy / optimistic people are naive and stupid - Have you ever heard someone saying this: I'm not a pessimist, I'm a realist? It usually means that the person is a pessimist :-). No seriously, positive happy people may have tendencies to be a bit naive but the question is - is it beneficial behavior or not? According to Dr Saligman and his research (and mostly common sense), optimistic people tend to do better in all sorts of activities, they have stronger immune systems (better health), they tend to see problems as opportunities and therefore can solve problems more effectively than pessimistic people. Optimism turned out to be an advantage in life for many people.

Of course, in optimistic cases, we have to use common sense so, for example, we do not expect to get A+ on a test we never prepared for. Therefore I would describe a person using the beneficial form of optimism as a positive realist. That's how I see myself - being positive, believing in myself, hoping for the best but at the same time being aware of possible dangerous and negative outcomes.

11) The belief that "I cannot be happy in my current situation" because of something or someone - It's a huge happiness trap that has to do a lot with achieving success. It's simply FALSE because I can guarantee you that there is someone on this planet who was in a very similar or even the same situation you are in now and they we're happy. I can guarantee that there are people out there who have less than you have. People living in "worse" circumstances and they are happy.

Again, happiness is not about external circumstances. Happiness is about how we react to those external circumstances, happiness is about our internal circumstances and how we are able to manage them.

There was a great man who survived a concentration camp in Nazi Germany. His name is Dr. Victor Frankl. In his book, "Man's Search for Meaning" he describes how it is possible to find meaning in life even in the harsh circumstances of a concentration camp and how it helped him to be one of a few who survived. As you can see, it's all mainly about managing our psychology and our emotions. If you are not able to find happiness in your current life

situation, the chances are that you won't be able to find sustainable happiness in any other situation you may be in.

I hope this make sense to you because it took me a while to fully understand all of these happiness traps and myths and, more important, it took me a while to fully change these beliefs in my mind.

Now I covered some of the most common happiness traps, myths which negatively affect the quality of our life. There are definitely more of these out there but I feel like I covered the most important ones. The rest of it is very individual so there is no way to find out which trap or myth is keeping you from being 100% happy without talking to you in person and getting to know you a bit better.

Let's now talk about what to do if you decide to focus on your happiness more and growing your happiness more.

1) First, it's important to recognize and stop doing / believing in those happiness traps and myths I just described. Those are all just a beliefs and habits in your mind and I hope that you been able to change some of them while reading this happiness manual. If not, it's time to go back and look at some of those closer, think about it a bit more and start finding patterns and beliefs in your own life and your psychology which are related to those traps and myths.

Without this step, there will always be something in your mind that blocks you from experiencing true happiness in life. There will be always something that will make you suffer. If you will struggle with any step we will go through here, I will be happy to help you. The best way to reach me is to call me on my cell phone: 386 -576- 4584 (if I do not answer right away, please leave a message with your name, phone number and the best time to reach you).

2) Next: Find new constructive beliefs and start acting on those. In the previous section, I told you about the traps and myths and I also explained the truths about happiness. Take those and find as many confirmations in your own life as possible so you can start to truly believe in those positive self empowering beliefs so you can start acting on it.

3) You can also start changing parts of your environment you are able to change in current situation and time - example : not everybody is able to just quit their job and move across the world because of the responsibilities and circumstances they have - kids, family , disabilities etc.. Remember, happiness is mainly about internal circumstances but

sometimes a change in the external environment may help us to focus better on the internal. So find those distractions in your external world and change them if possible - it may be people who drag you down, it may be some situations you run into regularly that make you feel bad (in this case, it's really hard to give general advice because there are so many possibilities out there). Again you can call me at 386-576-4584 and we can do this together, so we can find better solutions suitable for your own unique situation . We can talk more about specific life situations and how to deal with them because not every time is good to just run away from some life situation, and also not every time is good to stay and "fight."

4) Realize the effect negativity bias has on your psychology. How it affects your mood and emotions on daily basis. How it effect you decisions, your thinking.

As I told you, the negativity bias is deeply written in our psychology. It has helped us to survive since the beginning of mankind. But these days, there is less need to focus on what could potentially harm us, what could kill us, because we are no longer fighting tigers in the wild. Our brain is designed for survival therefore it's easier to focus on the negative than the positive. By saying this, I do not mean that all negativity bias is bad and you should get rid of it ... no ... I am trying to say that if we want to be fully happy in life, we have to learn and recognize how the negativity bias works and how it affects us daily ...

Here are just a couple examples which you may also recognize in your own life:

- Negative experiences tend to be more memorable than positive ones.
- Having a tendency to be more vigilant and wary than being calm.
- For positive experiences to resonate, they have to occur much more frequently than negative ones.
- If something good and something bad happens to you on the same day, we'll react more strongly to the bad and we have a tendency take the good as normal and expected.
- We remember insults more than we remember praise.
- When your mind wanders, it's more likely to recall something that made us angry or upset, instead of recalling something positive.
- When we see a plane crashing or a robbery in TV , our brain thinks automatically that this is a threat to us even though the chance of this happening to you is very small.
- Complaining about something we can't directly influence like traffic, the government, weather etc. In those situations, it's eating away at your happiness and most likely there is not much you can do about it.

Studies show that there's a greater surge of electrical activity in the brain when we see a picture of something negative —like a bloody hand — than when we see a picture of something positive — like a happy face.

As you can see, our brain is wired more pro negativity ...

To overcome negativity bias, you must start to consciously focus on the positive more than the negative. A great exercise for this is well-known: the gratitude journal - when you're constantly writing down things you can be grateful for every day. I will also give you one tool later in this manual that will help you with overcoming the negativity bias.

5) Start adding more of the positive habits into your life that will help you to maintain your happiness and positive emotions during the day.

I call those "habits of happiness" and there are 3 categories - Psychological, physical and long term .

Let me give you one example from each category:

Psychological - habit of giving up the past - Many people had some negative events in the past that are still keeping them from experiencing happiness in the present. The habit of giving up the past is the realization that the past does not exist anymore. The past lives only in our memory and only WE keep bringing it into the present over and over again. We cannot change the past, we can only change the way we perceive what happened in the past and we all are perceiving the past circumstances a bit differently anyway (let's say, you may have had a situation in life when you and your friend had totally different beliefs about what happened in the past even when you both experienced the same thing together). So we are all changing the way we perceive the past anyway - the habit of giving up the past is just a matter of how to do it consciously whenever we need to.

Physical - habit of philanthropy - In other words, the act of kindness and giving. The more we give, the happier we become. -Of course, for some people it may work better than for others (it depends on your personality type) but in general, it's true that we get happier if we give to someone than if we give to our self. You don't have to necessarily buy something for someone. You can do little things like hold the door for someone, make someone smile, compliment someone etc. Today you do something nice for someone and tomorrow the person may do something nice for you (but please do not give with the expectation of getting something in return - this may lead to disappointment and it won't have the same positive effect on your happiness as unconditional giving :-). And I have to tell you that this habit totally changed my life for the better. It's amazing to give and it

has so many benefits. You may already be doing it in your life but ask yourself - Can I give even more often? :-) That's basically what I'm doing here - I'm giving you great ideas which will help you live a happier life :-) Yeeey!

Long term - Habit of love - The core of habit of love is a self love because without self love you're not able to fully love others. Self love starts with a decision that you and your happiness in life matters, your health matters, your relationships matters, YOU matter. When you start acting upon this belief and once you love yourself enough, you will be able to love anything and anybody else more. I saw it in my own life. I started to practice self love when I moved to the USA about 5 years ago and it led me to find the love of my life and get happily married (before I used to have a problem keeping a healthy relationship). It helped me to appreciate other people better, it helped me to appreciate nature and its beauty more and animals as well.

Self love was a game changer for me even though I did not realized right away that it was a self love I was working on :-)

There is way more habits of happiness you can implement into your life. If you want you can give me a call and we can talk about it more
386-576-4584 (if I do not answer right away, please leave a message with your name, phone number and the best time to reach you).

So as you can see, happiness is something we must work on but the rewards can be absolutely worth it. It's something that's very dear to me and something I'm deeply passionate about, as you can probably see :-)

Because of my passion for happiness and constant trial and error, I was able to come up with **tool which helps me** to focus on my happiness on a daily basis. It's a tool I wish I had many years ago when I started my journey of personal development. It would have saved me so much time and effort and it would have brought me results faster.

I called this tool a "**Reminder list**" and it's designed to remind you on a daily basis of everything important you want to work on when it comes to your happiness and it also helps you to overcome the negativity bias which is causing you to experience majority of negative emotions .

It's like an extension for your brain because our natural tendency is to forget, or fade out slowly and stop doing things that are beneficial for us ... we tend to lose focus and motivation over time **BUT NOT ANY MORE** , my friend! :-) This tool will help you to focus on the important stuff.

It will help you to build positive beliefs and habits of happiness more effectively.
And because I love to over-deliver and give as much as I can, I will explain you over the phone how to use this tool and I will give you access to it completely for free .
Here is my phone number 386-576-4584 - I look forward to talk to you :-)) We can discuss any topic related to happiness and I can also answer any questions you may have about this happiness manual etc ...

(if I do not answer right away, please leave a message with your name, phone number and the best time to reach you).

That's it for now. I Thank you and you thank yourself for reading this manual and being interested in such an important topic - your own personal happiness :-)) Stay in touch !

Dominik Skupina

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Skupina', written in a cursive style.