

**WORKBOOK**

# Twelve Weeks to Finding Happiness

**BOOT  
CAMP**



**FOR BUILDING HAPPIER PEOPLE**

Todd Patkin

**W O R K B O O K**

# **Twelve Weeks to Finding Happiness**

**A “Boot Camp” for Building Happier People**

**Todd Patkin**

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[www.toddpatkin.com](http://www.toddpatkin.com)

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# Twelve Weeks to Finding Happiness

## A “Boot Camp” for Building Happier People

Developed by Todd Patkin through decades of experience, Twelve Weeks to Finding Happiness is a program built on the theory that significant lifestyle transformation can be achieved one simple change at a time. The ultimate aim of this twelve-week process is to give you the tools you need to create your greatest life.

Every week for twelve weeks, you'll be given a new task or lifestyle change to focus on (while keeping up the habits you've begun in previous weeks). Each week's focal point is an important building block of an overall happy lifestyle. At the end of twelve weeks, you'll find that you're more firmly in the driver's seat of your own life. Your attitude, outlook, moods, and relationships will have improved, and you'll be in better control of your thoughts and habits.

**Please visit [www.toddpatkin.com/twelveweeks.php](http://www.toddpatkin.com/twelveweeks.php)  
for a short video clip on the importance of each step.**



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# INTRODUCTION TO “TWELVE WEEKS TO FINDING HAPPINESS”

Earlier in my life, if you had told me that happiness was a choice, I would have told you that you were crazy. After all, no one *chooses* to experience things like the pain of low self-esteem, anxiety, or depression. But what I’ve come to realize is that happiness isn’t about leading an obstacle-free life—instead, it’s about learning how to change what you focus on and how you react to circumstances, regardless of whether they’re good or bad. “Twelve Weeks to Finding Happiness” is designed to help you do just that—focus more often on the behaviors, people, and things that will enrich and fulfill you, and that will inspire your positive physical, mental, and emotional growth.

In this program, you’ll be given a new task or lifestyle change to focus on each week for twelve weeks, while keeping up the habits you’ve begun in previous weeks. Each week’s focal point is an important tool that you’ll need to create your greatest life.

While this program is designed to last for twelve weeks, it’s important to realize that you’ll be making major lifestyle changes. Many of the things I’ll ask you to do might sound simple at first, but you’ll probably find that accomplishing them is much more difficult in practice! And as I’ll remind you several more times throughout this book, it might take much longer than the next twelve weeks to hardwire many of them into your life.

So please, don’t get discouraged if you still have some work to do after the initial three-month period is over. (In fact, that’s to be expected!) Remember, happiness doesn’t just happen. It takes time—months, and even years—to make positive attitudes, outlooks, and habits a part of your life. Actually, finding happiness is a lot like getting into top physical shape: It takes time and effort, and you may be sore at

first, but the end results will be more than worth it. And if you find yourself getting really frustrated with this process, I encourage you to remember that you're not only building a healthier life for yourself; you're also doing it for your children (if you're a parent) and for their children after them, as well as for all of the people whose lives you impact every day.

Sincerely,  
Todd Patkin



# Week One

## **FOCUS ON: EXERCISING**

Yes, you've heard it (a million times) before, but exercise is one small change that yields really big, life-changing benefits. For starters, it will begin to make you feel more relaxed, stronger, and more capable of handling life's challenges—also, it will improve your sleep, and it's a natural anti-depressant that will help your attitude and outlook. And as time passes, you'll gain the added bonus of being happier with your physical appearance as well.

I've placed exercise in the number-one spot because I think it's the single most important thing you can do to improve your life right now. Exercise is a fantastic energizer, and it actually opens you up to future change by invigorating your mind and body. If working out is already a part of your life, great! If it isn't, commit to walking just twenty minutes every other day to start out. You don't have to join a gym, sign up for exhausting classes, and completely reorder your life to reap the benefits of this investment.

While I do suggest prioritizing exercise, I also highly recommend other practices such as meditation and yoga. Meditation in particular has also been scientifically proven to spark positive changes in your brain's biochemistry. Not only can it make you more mindful and content, it might also alleviate stress and lower your blood pressure. And best of all, you'll be able to continue meditating even if an injury or health problem makes it temporarily impossible for you to exercise.

WHAT THREE THINGS CAN I DO RIGHT NOW TO INCORPORATE MORE EXERCISE INTO MY LIFE?

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I WILL EXERCISE BECAUSE:

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I HEREBY COMMIT TO INCORPORATING EXERCISE INTO MY DAILY LIFE.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

*Movement is a medicine for creating change in a person's physical, emotional, and mental states.*

—Carol Welch

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*It is exercise alone that supports the spirits, and keeps the mind in vigor.*

**—Marcus Tullius Cicero**

*Exercise and application produce order in our affairs, health of body, cheerfulness of mind, and these make us precious to our friends.*

**—Thomas Jefferson**

# Week Two

## **FOCUS ON: TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR MIND**

You eat breakfast to give your body the nutrients it needs so that you'll have the energy to get through the day. And guess what? Your mind is no different. If you want your thoughts and attitudes to be positive, you must fill your brain with encouraging ideas. For this reason, I recommend making motivational books and audio recordings part of your daily ritual.

Trust me, listening to a motivational CD during your morning commute or reading something uplifting for fifteen minutes as you sip your coffee in the morning can put you in a positive place until you go to sleep in the evening. When you do this each day, you'll find that your attitude is improved, and that you have learned new tools to eliminate your own self-doubt and self-criticism. By focusing more on all the positive aspects of who you are, what you are doing, and what is great in your life, you'll find that the whole direction of your life can change. If you're not sure where to start, I have included a recommended reading and listening list on page 51 of this workbook.

*I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can  
adjust my sails to always reach my destination.*

—Jimmy Dean

WHAT THREE COMMITMENTS CAN I MAKE RIGHT NOW THAT WILL HELP ME TO READ OR LISTEN TO MOTIVATIONAL MATERIAL FOR 20 TO 30 MINUTES EACH DAY?

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I WILL FILL MY MIND WITH MORE POSITIVE IDEAS BECAUSE:

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I HEREBY COMMIT TO “FEEDING” MY MIND WITH ENCOURAGING AND MOTIVATIONAL MATERIALS EACH DAY.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

*Very often a change of self is needed more than a change of scene.*

—Arthur Christopher Benson



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*There are two primary  
choices in life: to accept  
conditions as they exist, or  
accept the responsibility for  
changing them.*

**—Denis Waitley**



# Week Three

## **FOCUS ON: BEING EASIER ON YOURSELF**

If you're like most people, you probably tend to focus a lot of your mental energy on the things you mess up rather than on the things you do well. And as a result of magnifying your failures, you reinforce in your mind just how "subpar" you think you are. No wonder you're unhappy! It's time to realize that you're human—and thus fallible—so you *will* make mistakes. Instead of beating yourself up, start celebrating your many successes. Until you give yourself permission to break free of the cycle of self-blame and negativity that causes you to be stuck demanding perfection from yourself in every situation, you'll never have a chance to be a truly relaxed, content, and happy person.

The really tragic thing about fixating on your screw-ups is that for every one thing most people do wrong in a day or a week, they usually do a hundred things right. It's not an easy thing to do, but if you want to be happier, you've got to start showing more compassion and love to yourself. This means giving yourself a break when things don't go perfectly, and giving yourself a pat on the back when they do. For instance, let yourself bask in your family's compliments when you cook a delicious meal, and savor your boss's praise when you offer an ingenious solution at a meeting. Basically, extend to yourself the same love and kindness that you would to others you care about!

And finally, please realize that making the switch from beating yourself up to building yourself up won't happen overnight. In fact, it will probably take you weeks, if not months, to ingrain this new way of thinking into your life. For now, congratulate yourself on simply noticing the problem, which is a great first step. Learning to replace those negative thoughts with positive ones will eventually follow!

WHAT THREE THINGS CAN I START DOING RIGHT NOW THAT WILL HELP ME TO SHOW MYSELF MORE COMPASSION AND LOVE?

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I WILL STRIVE TO BE EASIER ON MYSELF BECAUSE:

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I HEREBY COMMIT TO POSITIVELY REFOCUSING THE WAY I LOOK AT MYSELF, MY LIFE, AND MY ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

*Being happy doesn't mean that everything is perfect.  
It means that you've decided to look beyond the  
imperfections.*

—Unknown

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*Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.*

**—Abraham Lincoln**

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*The loudest and most influential voice you hear is your own inner voice, your self-critic. It can work for you or against you, depending on the messages you allow.*

**—Keith Harrell**

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*Evidence is conclusive that your self-talk has a direct bearing on your performance.*

**—Zig Ziglar**

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*Self-image sets the boundaries of accomplishment.*

**—Maxwell Maltz**

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*Remember, happiness doesn't depend upon who you are or what you have; it depends solely upon what you think.*

**—Dale Carnegie**

# Week Four

## FOCUS ON: PLAYING TO YOUR STRENGTHS

Most of us don't spend a lot of time doing things we enjoy or are truly good at. In fact, it sometimes seems like frustration, boredom, and discontentment are the bricks that are used to build the so-called "American Dream." The fact is, though, we all possess special abilities and unique talents. And if you want to be happy, you need to recognize, use, and share them. When you do, you'll feel more fulfilled and proud of yourself, and the world will be better off, too.

If you've never done so before, sit down and make a list of the things you are best at. Next, make a list of the things you enjoy doing the most. Often, the same items will appear on both lists. Make it a goal to spend more time doing the activities that appeared on both lists. Focusing more on a hobby or personal interest is a good start, even if, like exercise, you do it for only twenty minutes every other day. And if you determine that your *career* doesn't utilize your strengths, start looking at online job postings or for local classes in your field of interest. It's never too early—or too late—to start doing the things that make you happy.

*The biggest tragedy in America is not the great waste of natural resources—though this is tragic; the biggest tragedy is the waste of human resources because the average person goes to his grave with his music still in him.*

—Oliver Wendell Holmes

WHAT THREE THINGS CAN I DO RIGHT NOW THAT WILL HELP ME TO ENGAGE MORE OFTEN IN ACTIVITIES THAT FULFILL ME?

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I WILL STRIVE TO PLAY TO MY STRENGTHS MORE OFTEN BECAUSE:

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I HEREBY COMMIT TO UTILIZING MY SPECIAL TALENTS AND ABILITIES ON A MORE REGULAR BASIS.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

*To live is the rarest thing in the world.  
Most people exist, that is all.*

—Oscar Wilde

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*God gives everyone certain attributes, characteristics, talents, and then He says, “If you use what you have I’ll increase it, but if you don’t use it, you’ll lose it.” Use it or lose it; it’s a law.*

**—Charlie “Tremendous” Jones**

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*One machine can do the work of fifty ordinary men. No machine can do the work of one extraordinary man.*

**—Elbert Hubbard**



# Week Five

## FOCUS ON: ELIMINATING STRESSORS

Newsflash: Stress is bad! It prevents you from living in and enjoying the moment, and it can also cause negative long-term effects, ranging from high blood pressure and insomnia to depression and anxiety. So although it's easier said than done, it's smart to eliminate as many stressors as possible. Often, something as simple as a shift in perspective can make all the difference.

Start by identifying the two or three things that cause you the most stress on a consistent basis—maybe having a messy house is one. Often, you'll find that there are concrete things you can do to lessen or even eliminate the pressure. For example, you might have a frank discussion with your spouse and kids regarding chores. Or, you might finally hire a cleaning service to help you once or twice a month if you can afford it.

If you *can't* eliminate or change a stressor, such as a job you hate but can't afford to quit, challenge yourself to handle it differently. Specifically, decide beforehand how you will react in a more enlightened way when certain stressful situations occur—actually visualize yourself handling them with poise instead of becoming outwardly or inwardly worked up. Having a game plan in place *before* the “beast” rears its ugly head really can reduce your negative reactions to stressors.

*I am grateful for all of my problems. After each one was overcome, I became stronger and more able to meet those that were still to come. I grew in all my difficulties.*

—J.C. Penney

WHAT THREE THINGS CAN I HANDLE DIFFERENTLY OR VIEW DIFFERENTLY IN ORDER TO CUT DOWN ON THE AMOUNT OF STRESS I FEEL IN MY DAILY LIFE?

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I WILL STRIVE TO ELIMINATE STRESSORS AND/OR CHANGE MY PERSPECTIVE REGARDING STRESSFUL SITUATIONS BECAUSE:

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I HEREBY COMMIT TO DOING WHAT IS IN MY POWER TO REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF STRESS I FEEL.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

*Life's challenges are not supposed to paralyze you; they're supposed to help you discover who you are.*

—Bernice Johnson Reagon



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*Change is the watchword of progression. When we tire of well-worn ways, we seek for new. This restless craving in the souls of men spurs them to climb, and to seek the mountain view.*

**—Ella Wheeler Wilcox**

# Week Six

## FOCUS ON: LIVING IN THE PRESENT

How often do your thoughts “live” in the present? More to the point, how often are they instead fixated on your disappointing or disturbing past or spent worrying about your future? If you are like most people, your percentage of time *not* spent in the present is way, way too high, and thus you’re missing out on life itself. If you’re ruminating on what’s already happened or fretting about what *might* come to pass, you’re not enjoying the blessings all around you. You’re exacerbating your anxiety and unhappiness by choosing to dwell on things you can’t change or control.

In order to practice being in the present, you’ll have to do a little bit of homework. Specifically, you’ll need to look at your past and forgive others (and yourself!) for any wrongs you might be holding on to. This task might or might not entail actual conversations; what is most important is that you extend forgiveness in your heart. Also, you’ll need to identify what, exactly, you dread about the future. First, figure out how likely these things are to actually happen (in most cases, they won’t be very probable), and then plan how you’d deal with the worst-case scenarios if they actually did occur. Usually, you’ll see that even the worst turn of events would not destroy you and could be handled, albeit with some stress and difficulty.

Once you have begun to take control of your past- and future-oriented thoughts, you can truly begin to appreciate the present moment. You’ll need to continue to be aware of what your thoughts are “doing,” though—and please don’t get discouraged when you find yourself going back to your old negative mental habits! In fact, pat yourself on the back because you’re *noticing* that you’re doing something you don’t want to do anymore. Over time, you’ll start to live the adventurous, wonderful life in the present you were always meant to.

WHAT THREE THINGS CAN I DO RIGHT NOW TO LIVE IN AND ENJOY THE PRESENT MOMENT MORE OFTEN?

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I WILL STRIVE TO STOP NEGATIVELY RUMINATING ON THE PAST AND WORRYING ABOUT THE FUTURE BECAUSE:

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I HEREBY COMMIT TO RIDDING MYSELF OF THE MENTAL BURDENS THE PAST AND THE FUTURE REPRESENT SO THAT I CAN ENJOY MY LIFE *NOW*.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

*People are always asking about the good old days. I say,  
why don't you say the good now days?*

—Robert M. Young



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*Don't let yesterday take up  
too much of today.*  
—Will Rogers

*Enjoy the little things in  
life...for one day you will  
look back and realize that  
they were the big things.*  
—Robert Brault



# Week Seven

## **FOCUS ON: SPENDING MORE OF YOUR TIME WITH POSITIVE PEOPLE**

Have you ever heard of “social proof”? It’s the phenomenon of being influenced more by the people we are around the most. And what does social proof have to do with happiness? Well, if you spend as much of your time as possible with positive people, the physical and mental improvements you’ve made thus far through week seven will be much more likely to “stick”—and you’ll continually be inspired. However, if most of your friends, family, and coworkers are negative, they will inevitably pass their unhealthy attitudes on to you. In fact, studies show that you will be the average of the five people you spend the most time with in terms of your attitude and outlook.

So if you’re truly serious about building a happier life for yourself, you need to look at the people with whom you spend most of your time and decide which are positive influencers and which are negative influencers. Gradually, you need to gravitate more toward the “positives” and distance yourself from the “negatives.” This might mean calling a positive friend and asking to meet up for coffee or a beer, or walking away from the water cooler when your coworkers begin to gripe and complain.

Over time, your goal must be to make a significant shift (if one is necessary) in terms of the people with whom you surround yourself. I know that it’s hard to put distance between yourself and a person who has been a big part of your life, but the fact is that you’re at a crossroads. Would you rather maintain relationships that are familiar, but built on negativity, or would you rather form new ones that will propel your happiness journey forward? I strongly recommend you choose the latter.

WHO ARE THE FIVE PEOPLE WITH WHOM I SPEND THE MOST TIME?  
WHAT 1 TO 6 RATING WOULD I GIVE EACH PERSON ON THE "ATTITUDE  
SCALE" (WITH 1 BEING "MOST NEGATIVE" AND 6 BEING "MOST  
POSITIVE")?:

**1** NAME \_\_\_\_\_ RATING \_\_\_\_\_

**2** NAME \_\_\_\_\_ RATING \_\_\_\_\_

**3** NAME \_\_\_\_\_ RATING \_\_\_\_\_

**4** NAME \_\_\_\_\_ RATING \_\_\_\_\_

**5** NAME \_\_\_\_\_ RATING \_\_\_\_\_

THE AVERAGE OF THESE NUMBERS IS: \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT THREE THINGS CAN I DO RIGHT NOW TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH  
POSITIVE PEOPLE AND LESS TIME WITH NEGATIVE PEOPLE, THEREBY  
BRINGING MY AVERAGE "ATTITUDE NUMBER" (LISTED ABOVE) UP?

**1** \_\_\_\_\_

**2** \_\_\_\_\_

**3** \_\_\_\_\_

I HEREBY COMMIT TO SEEKING OUT POSITIVE INDIVIDUALS MORE OFTEN  
WHILE LIMITING MY TIME SPENT WITH THOSE WHO ARE NEGATIVE.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

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*Letting go of negative  
people doesn't mean you  
hate them. It just means  
that you love yourself.*

**—Elizabeth Medina**

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## NOTES

*You are the average of the  
five people you spend the  
most time with.*

**—Jim Rohn**

*Some cause happiness  
wherever they go;  
others whenever they go.*

**—Oscar Wilde**

*The kindest thing you can  
do for the people you care  
about is to become a  
happy, joyous person.*

**—Brian Tracy**

*Keep away from people who  
try to belittle your ambitions.  
Small people always do that,  
but the really great make  
you feel that you, too, can  
become great.*

**—Mark Twain**

# Week Eight

## **FOCUS ON: STRENGTHENING CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS**

Unless a family member or close friend is a truly, irredeemably toxic influence, it's *always* worth putting work into improving close relationships. This is simply because the quality of the relationships you have with the people you are the closest to—your family and friends—can make or break the quality of your life. Loving, supportive relationships will majorly enhance your happiness levels. But fractious, unstable, or even distant relationships with your family members and historically close friends can leave you feeling unappreciated, angry, alone, and anxious.

Starting with your immediate family members and the people you see every day, and then working outward, reach out to the people who are meaningful to you and tell them how important they are to you! Also, try to address any unresolved grievances and apologize for the things you may regret.

There are three relationships you need to focus on in particular. The first one is with your parents. If you, like me, are blessed to still have spry, loving parents, don't take them for granted. We are all getting older every day. We must never forget this! Also, there is no substitute for learning from your parents and letting them know how important they have been—and continue to be—in your life. And most importantly, always let them know how much you love them.

Next, if you have children, never neglect your relationship with them. Your children need to feel your love unconditionally and at all times, not only when they get a great report card and score goals on the soccer field. Also, realize that it is devastating to children when their parents are clearly with them only in body and not in mind. (You know what I mean: You're eating a bowl of ice cream with your kids, but you're really thinking about the office, for instance.)

Lastly, always prioritize your spouse or significant other. Put more work into this relationship than you do into anything else: your house, your car, or your job, etc. Celebrate your spouse every day. Trust me: This can make such a great difference in your relationship and thus in your own emotional health, stress levels, and overall happiness!

**WHAT THREE THINGS CAN I DO RIGHT NOW TO STRENGTHEN MY RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PEOPLE I LOVE AND VALUE?**

**1** \_\_\_\_\_

**2** \_\_\_\_\_

**3** \_\_\_\_\_

**I WILL IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF MY BONDS WITH MY LOVED ONES (FAMILY AND FRIENDS) BECAUSE:**

**1** \_\_\_\_\_

**2** \_\_\_\_\_

**3** \_\_\_\_\_

**I HEREBY COMMIT TO STRENGTHENING MY CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

*There is only one happiness in life, to love and be loved.*

**—George Sand**



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*The art of love...is largely  
the art of persistence.*

—Albert Ellis

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*The greatest gift that you  
can give to others is the gift  
of unconditional love and  
acceptance.*

—Brian Tracy



# Week Nine

## FOCUS ON: BEING FRIENDLY

Although our society is more and more “connected” by technology, we interact less and less with other people on a meaningful, face-to-face level than ever before. But guess what? Extending simple human kindness to other people can make a huge difference in their lives...and in yours. This could mean starting up a conversation with the guy beside you on the subway, sincerely thanking a bank teller for her help, or just smiling at coworkers you pass in the hallway.

You must realize that everyone on Earth is carrying some sort of burden. You can't make their pain, stress, or grief just magically *disappear*...but you *can* be what I call a “lamp-lighter”—someone who makes others feel just a little bit lighter and happier on their journey, even if only for five seconds. And when you make friendliness a habit, you'll attract kindness and smiles in return...and you'll feel great about yourself for making a positive difference in the world!

*Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.*

—Leo Buscaglia

WHAT THREE THINGS CAN I DO RIGHT NOW TO BE A MORE FRIENDLY AND CHEERFUL PERSON EACH DAY?

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I WILL TRY TO BE FRIENDLIER TO ALL THE PEOPLE WITH WHOM I COME INTO CONTACT BECAUSE:

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I HEREBY COMMIT TO BEING FRIENDLY TO OTHERS WHENEVER I SEE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

*What sunshine is to flowers, smiles are to humanity. These are but trifles, to be sure; but, scattered along life's pathway, the good they do is inconceivable.*

—Joseph Addison



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*Kindness is more important than wisdom, and the recognition of this is the beginning of wisdom.*

**—Theodore Isaac Rubin**

# Week Ten

## FOCUS ON: HELPING OTHERS

It really is better to give than to receive. In fact, givers are over 40 percent more likely to consider themselves to be happy, and 25 percent more likely to consider themselves to be healthy. You see, humans are by nature social beings, and we *do* find our greatest fulfillment in helping others. Plus, reaching out a helping hand to someone who isn't as fortunate as you tends to quash selfish impulses and highlight your own blessings. Giving of yourself doesn't have to involve money, either—remember that your time, talents, and compassion are just as valuable as cash, if not more so.

I know; we're all busy—but as often as you can, make the effort to do something nice to help another person or organization. This could be visiting a disabled veteran at the VA, or simply rolling your neighbor's trash can up the driveway! And if you have kids, you'll be setting a wonderful example for them. I promise you, whether you're giving time, energy, money, or encouragement, being generous will build up your self-esteem, broaden your perspective, keep you anchored in reality, and connect you to your blessings—all components of a happy life.

*Those who bring sunshine into the lives of others  
cannot keep it from themselves.*

—James M. Barrie

WHAT THREE THINGS CAN I DO RIGHT NOW TO BE MORE HELPFUL TO OTHERS?

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I WILL BECOME A MORE GENEROUS GIVER OF MY TIME, TALENTS, ENERGY, COMPASSION, AND RESOURCES BECAUSE:

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I HEREBY COMMIT TO HELPING TO MAKE OTHERS' LIVES BETTER ON A REGULAR BASIS.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

*In about the same degree as you are helpful,  
you will be happy.*

—Karl Reiland



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*Everyone can be great...  
because everyone  
can serve.*

**—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**

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*The greatest degree of inner  
tranquility comes from the  
development of love and  
compassion. The more we  
care for the happiness of  
others, the greater is our  
own sense of well-being.*

**—Tenzin Gyatso**



# Week Eleven

## **FOCUS ON: YOUR “HIGHER POWER”**

Yes, spirituality (much like politics) is a touchy subject. But believing in something bigger than yourself is essential to developing the kind of perspective you need in order to be happy long-term. Whether you consider your Higher Power to be God, Yahweh, Allah, Buddha, Krishna, the Universe, or even Nature or another entity, being willing and able to see and feel His (or Her, if you prefer!) presence in your life will enable you to move away from self-centeredness and focus your energy and concerns on the greater community. It'll also provide solace and give meaning to unfortunate events and troubling life circumstances. Personally, I've been connected to the Jewish faith for my entire life, and my beliefs have helped me create a strong sense of identity that's rooted in a heritage I'm proud of.

If you're not religious or consider yourself to be an agnostic or an atheist, you can still benefit from this week's step. You don't have to believe in a specific deity (or any deity at all) to still accept the truths that we are all in this life together, and that a fulfilled, fruitful existence is one spent in the service of others as well as yourself. In many ways, all of the various types of life on Earth combine to form an interconnected “Higher Power” from which you can never separate yourself. As John Donne famously wrote, “No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main...”

This week, make an effort to clarify your thoughts about faith and also make an effort to connect to your Higher Power, whether it's through prayer, meditation, writing in a journal, doing random acts of kindness, or just spending more time in nature. Eventually, I hope you'll begin to see your Higher Power—whomever or whatever it is—as a source of inspiration, renewal, strength, guidance, and aid—as I do.

*One of the most spiritual things you can do is embrace your humanity. Connect with those around you today.*

—Steve Maraboli

WHAT THREE THINGS CAN I DO RIGHT NOW TO DEVELOP AND ENRICH MY SPIRITUAL SIDE?

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I WILL SEEK TO BECOME CONNECTED TO MY HIGHER POWER BECAUSE:

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I HEREBY COMMIT TO CLARIFYING MY THOUGHTS ABOUT FAITH AND TO STRENGTHENING MY PERSONAL CONNECTION TO MY HIGHER POWER.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

*All men have need of the gods.*

—Homer





# Week Twelve

## **FOCUS ON: DEVELOPING AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE**

Yes, living with an “attitude of gratitude” is a clichéd concept. But across the board, grateful people are happy people—25 percent happier, in fact. Incidentally, they also tend to be significantly healthier than their unappreciative peers, too. And the way I see it, if you’re reading this, you have a *lot* to be thankful for already.

If you live in America, you have access to great education, healthcare, and the freedom to worship and work as you choose. Those are *huge* things to be thankful for right out of the gate! We take these “basics” and much more for granted, and we often have others—whether it’s an ancestor of ours, a veteran, or a coworker—to thank for them. It’s extremely important to be aware of all of your blessings and also to show your sincere appreciation. Once you start recording your blessings, you’ll probably be amazed by how long the list of people you have to thank for them is. And the humility that comes from knowing you owe so much to so many others will, in turn, spur you to give back more often to those less fortunate than yourself.

*We tend to forget that happiness doesn’t come as a result of getting something we don’t have, but rather of recognizing and appreciating what we do have.*

—Frederick Keonig

WHAT THREE THINGS CAN I DO RIGHT NOW TO BETTER IDENTIFY MY BLESSINGS AND TO SHOW MY APPRECIATION FOR THEM?

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I WILL SEEK TO BECOME A MORE GRATEFUL PERSON BECAUSE:

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

I HEREBY COMMIT TO DEVELOPING AND DISPLAYING AN “ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE” IN ALL ASPECTS OF MY LIFE.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

*Just think how happy you would be if you lost everything you have right now, and then got it back again.*

—Frances Rodman



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*Happiness is not having what you want, but wanting what you have.*

**—Hyman J. Schachtel**

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*Happiness doesn't depend on what we have, but it does depend on how we feel towards what we have. We can be happy with little and miserable with much.*

**—W. D. Hoard**

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*Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.*

**—William Arthur Ward**

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*This day will not come again. Each minute is worth a priceless gem.*

**—Master Takuan Sono**



# Resources

## SUGGESTED READING AND LISTENING

**A Note from Todd:** Over the years I've read and listened to a large selection of motivational materials. If you're a newcomer to these types of books and audio recordings and are looking for a starting point, I've compiled a list of some of my favorites that you can choose from. My top picks are listed first, though all are well worth your time and attention.

### Reading:

- *Leading an Inspired Life* by Jim Rohn
- *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success: A Practical Guide to the Fulfillment of Your Dreams* by Deepak Chopra
- *Awaken the Giant Within* by Anthony Robbins
- *Your Best Life Now—7 Steps to Living at Your Full Potential* by Joel Osteen
- *Defining Moments: Stories of Character, Courage, and Leadership* by Gordon Zacks
- *All You Can Do Is All You Can Do, But All You Can Do Is Enough!* by Art Williams
- *Success Is a Choice: Ten Steps to Over-Achieving in Business and Life* by Rick Pitino with Bill Reynolds
- *The Conquest of Happiness* by Bertrand Russell
- *In the Name of Sorrow and Hope* by Noa Ben Artzi-Pelossof

- *Marriott, The J. Willard Marriott Story* by Robert O'Brien
- *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson* by Mitch Albom
- *7 Strategies for Wealth & Happiness* by Jim Rohn
- *An American Life* by Ronald Reagan
- *Losing My Virginity* by Richard Branson
- *Big and Tall Chronicles: Misadventures of a Life Long Food Addict* by Gary Marino
- *Customer Satisfaction Is Worthless; Customer Loyalty Is Priceless* by Jeffrey Gitomer
- *Finding Happiness: One Man's Quest to Beat Depression and Anxiety and—Finally—Let the Sunshine In* by Todd Patkin

## **Listening:**

- *Personal Power II—The Driving Force* by Anthony Robbins
- *The Art of Exceptional Living* by Jim Rohn
- *The Psychology of Achievement* by Brian Tracy
- *A View from the Top* by Zig Ziglar
- *Lessons in Mastery* by Anthony Robbins
- *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill
- *The Strangest Secret* by Earl Nightingale
- *The Weekend Event* by Jim Rohn
- *Thirsting for God: The Spiritual Lessons of Mother Teresa* by Dr. Lou Tartaglia
- *The Science of Personal Achievement: The 17 Universal Principles of Success* by Napoleon Hill
- *Goals* by Zig Ziglar
- *Leadership Mastery* by Dale Carnegie

# **FIFTEEN THINGS I LEARNED FROM MY NERVOUS BREAKDOWN...AND HOW THEY CAN HELP YOU START LIVING YOUR BEST LIFE NOW**

*I suffered a nervous breakdown at age thirty-six—and it turned out to be a breakthrough. Here are fifteen important things about life and happiness that I have learned.*

**By Todd Patkin**

You're living a "successful" modern life, which means that you spend most of your time at work. If you're lucky, you're able to fulfill your responsibilities without hooking up a caffeine IV, and if you're *really* fortunate, you genuinely enjoy what you do. You love the feeling of accomplishment you get when you complete a project, sign a new client, or are recognized for a job well done, but you wish you weren't so tired all the time, and you hate the feeling of anxiety that's always lurking in the corners of your mind. You also regret not having more time to relax and spend with your family. You haven't been home in time to tuck your son into bed all week, and you can't remember the last time you and your spouse had a date night. Still, you tell yourself that everything's okay. After all, you're working to build a better future for you *and* everyone you love, right?

Maybe not. You may not be working toward successful new heights...you may be driving yourself over the brink.

When I was thirty-six years old, I was successfully leading my family's auto parts business, I was well respected by my community, I had a wonderful wife and son...and I also suffered a nervous breakdown. Yes, at that point in my life, I enjoyed what I did and was truly proud of my successes, but I was also pushing myself too hard and prioritizing the wrong things...and eventually, it all caught up with me.

For months leading up to my breakdown, I suffered from a paralyzing depression and anxiety, and found it difficult to complete tasks as simple as deciding whether to order coleslaw or potato salad with my lunch.

As horrific as it was, my breakdown was actually also my breakthrough. It was an in-your-face wake-up call that forced me to realize that I was driving myself too hard, and for the wrong reasons. I finally had to say, “Enough is enough! I am done destroying myself and ruining my life!” Admitting to myself that my former way of life wasn’t working was the beginning of my road to recovery and true happiness. For the past decade, I have taken a closer look at what *really* makes people happy and unhappy, and I have seen most of my goals and priorities shift.

I have come to realize that how happy and fulfilled you are is largely under your control, and that it has less to do with success and accomplishments than you might think. I believe that most people are experiencing many—if not all—of the stressors that led to my breakdown, so please don’t wait until you, too, reach a breaking point to make changes in your life. I’m totally convinced now that true happiness is a possibility for everyone, so I’m asking you to take the lessons I have learned to heart.

If you’re ready to change the way you approach life before you drive yourself over the edge, read on for fifteen life lessons that I have learned:

**1) You have to *choose* and *prioritize* happiness—it doesn’t just happen.**

If you subscribe to the belief that your happiness is wholly dependent on what happens *to* you, you’ll always be dissatisfied. The truth is, your fulfillment largely depends on the choices you make: how you see the world, what you allow to influence you, what you focus on, and how you react to circumstances, regardless of whether they’re good or bad. In other words, it’s not what happens to you; it’s how you *look at* what happens to you.

If you want to make a dent in your stress levels, you have to make choosing happiness a priority every day. With all of the responsibilities on our plates, nothing is likely to happen unless we specifically focus on it. So make happiness one of the two or three priorities you absolutely must accomplish each day. To remind yourself, put a note where you can see it—maybe on the refrigerator or bathroom mirror. And if that sounds selfish, it's not. If you're extremely stressed or become depressed because of the way you're living your life, you're hurting many more people than just yourself. And what's more important than teaching your kids to be happy? Always remember that children learn by example. If they see you living a harried, stressed life, that's the pattern their lives will follow as well...and their children's after them, and so on.

**2) Striving for work/life balance is worth its weight in gold.** Times are tough, and some of us are finding it necessary to work long hours to keep our jobs and livelihoods. Others have fallen into the trap of the work-ego addiction: over time, you become hooked on the “high” you feel when you accomplish something, get a promotion, etc., and you begin to spend more and more time at the office. Whatever the reason, if extremely long hours are becoming a habit for you, break it. No matter how good your intentions are, overloading on work will cause your relationships, mindset, and even health to suffer.

Prior to my breakdown, it was normal for me to work seventy- or eighty-hour weeks. In my personal dictionary, “rest” and “relaxation” were synonymous with “irresponsibility” and “slacking.” Boy, was I wrong. Working as much as I did is more than the human body is designed to take continuously. If you drive yourself that hard, you'll eventually begin to run on fumes before you shut down entirely. Being firm about creating and maintaining a healthy work/life balance is no more selfish than prioritizing happiness—in this case, it's about simple self-preservation! And if you're still skeptical, remember this: no one looks back on their lives at age eighty and says, “Gee, I wish I'd spent less time with my family and friends and more time at the office.”

**3) We are our own worst critics.** If you're like most people, you probably tend to focus a lot of your mental energy on the things you mess up rather than on the things you do well—even though most of us do a hundred things right for every one thing we do wrong. And although you may not realize it, focusing on that one wrong thing is very dangerous, because our thoughts are incredibly powerful. Until you give yourself permission to break free of the cycle of self-blame and negativity that causes you to be stuck demanding perfection from yourself in every situation, you'll never have a chance to be a truly relaxed, content, and happy person.

It's not easy to rewire your habitual thought processes, but you need to build yourself up more and beat yourself up less. I used to expect nothing less than perfection out of myself, which was delusional! We're all human, which means that we're going to make mistakes from time to time. That doesn't mean that we're in any way unworthy or undeserving of love. In fact, learning to love myself was at the core of my own happiness journey. If you aren't satisfied with who you are, you'll always be looking outside yourself for validation...and you'll never be truly content. And like me, you might also push yourself beyond healthy limits in order to get accolades from other people.

**4) It's never too late to start living in the present.** How often do your thoughts “live” in the present? More to the point, how often are they instead fixated on your “disappointing” or “disturbing” past or spent worrying about your future? If you are like most people, your percentage of time *not* spent in the present is way, way too high, and thus you're missing out on life itself. If you're letting what's already happened eat away at you or fretting about what *might* come to pass, you're not enjoying the blessings all around you. You're exacerbating your anxiety and unhappiness by choosing to dwell on things you can't change or control.

I used to spend a majority of my time rehashing my past mistakes and worrying about what might happen in the future, neither of which did anything for my

peace of mind or self-esteem. In fact, these unhealthy and self-critical thoughts were a major contributor to my breakdown. Now that I'm making a conscious effort to live in the present, I'm actually *enjoying* all of the great things in my life instead of letting them pass me by unnoticed. Plus, I'm actually a lot more productive now that all of that mental space that used to be occupied with worries has been freed up!

**5) Focusing on what you're good at is best for everyone.** If you aren't good at something—especially if it's work-related—chances are you'll feel compelled to spend a lot of time and effort getting your skills up to par. It's natural to want to shore up your weaknesses, but the fact is, this strategy tends to cause you a lot of stress for (most likely) mediocre results. Instead of trying to be good at everything, stay in your strengths as much as possible. When you're doing what you're good at, you'll be happier *and* higher performing.

As I've said, I used to be a total perfectionist. I felt like I was a failure if I didn't excel in absolutely everything I tried. It probably won't be a surprise to hear that all I accomplished was making myself miserable when I failed to live up to my impossibly high standards. If that sounds familiar, I'd suggest focusing more time on a hobby or personal interest to start, even if you do it for only twenty minutes every other day. And if you determine that your *career* doesn't utilize your strengths, start looking at online job postings or for local classes in your field of interest. It's never too early—or too late—to start doing the things that make you happy.

**6) Exercise is worth its weight in therapy.** Yes, you've heard it (a million times) before, but exercise is one small change that yields really big, life-changing benefits. For starters, it will begin to make you feel more relaxed, stronger, and more capable of handling life's challenges—also, it will improve your sleep, and it's a natural anti-depressant that will help your attitude and outlook. In fact, exercise actually opens you up to future change by invigorating your mind and body.

I'm convinced that exercise is the single most important thing you can do to improve your life right now. Looking back, I believe that my breakdown occurred when it did because I had broken my feet and couldn't work out. Before that point, exercise was essentially acting as a medication that helped to counteract the effects of the stressful lifestyle I was living, and after I recovered, it has continued to boost my energy and outlook. If working out is already a part of your life, great! If it isn't, commit to walking just twenty minutes every other day to start out. You don't have to join a gym, sign up for exhausting classes, and completely reorder your life to reap the benefits of this investment!

**7) You need to feed your mind healthy “food.”** When was the last time you watched the nightly news and turned off the TV feeling positive and uplifted? If anything, hearing the headlines is more likely to be depressing and discouraging. Although many of us don't want to admit it, the things we hear, read, and experience influence our own attitudes and outlooks, so it's important to consciously “feed” your mind positive materials.

It may sound hokey, but over the years I've become a big proponent of motivational books, audio recordings, and DVDs. Whether we're at work, talking with friends, or at home watching TV or surfing the web, most of us encounter a lot more bad news and predictions than we do good. No wonder we become negative and cynical! It's important to seek out positive things that will counteract these influences and dispel unnecessary stress. Learn new, constructive things and expose yourself to fresh ways of thinking so that you don't get stuck in a self-destructive rut.

**8) Surround yourself with positive people.** If you stop for a drink at the water cooler and find your colleagues griping about how much work they have to do and how unreasonable your boss is, you probably don't think much of it. In fact, depending on how your own day is going, you might even join in. And although you may not realize it, your attitude will start to deteriorate. The



fact is, if you spend a significant amount of time around other people who are negative, your own outlook will begin to mirror theirs.

It's much easier for others to drag you down than it is for you to build them up. In terms of your attitude and happiness levels, you will be the average of the five people you spend the most time with, so you need to be around other people who share your commitment to happiness if you want to avoid unnecessary stress. I'm not suggesting that you completely sever relationships that aren't entirely uplifting, but gradually, you need to gravitate more toward positive people and distance yourself from those who tend to bring you down. This might mean calling a positive friend and asking to meet up for coffee or a beer, or walking away from the water cooler when your coworkers begin to gripe and complain.

**9) Invest in your relationships—especially your marriage.** When we're driving ourselves to the brink, personal relationships are usually one of the first things to suffer. After all, the more time you spend at work, the less time and energy you have to invest in friends and family. You don't consciously realize it at first, but this gradual deterioration can leave you feeling unappreciated, angry, alone, and anxious. Remember, though, that loving, supportive relationships will majorly enhance your happiness levels, and that friends and family care about you and accept you in a way that your employer never will.

It's never a waste of time to reach out to the people who are meaningful to you and tell them how important they are to you, or to try to address any unresolved grievances and apologize for the things you may regret. And there's one relationship you need to focus on in particular: the one with your spouse or significant other. Put more work into this relationship than you do into anything else: your house, your car, or your job, etc. Celebrate your spouse every day. Tell her (or him!) all the time how beautiful she is and how lucky you are to have her in your life. Trust me: this can make such a great difference in your emotional health, your stress levels, and your overall happiness! I truly believe

that I would not be as happy as I am today without the love of my wife, and I also believe that my breakdown would have been much worse without her support.

**10) Take control of what you can.** If you're reading this, chances are your life isn't exactly stress-free. It's practically impossible to live in the modern world without a million worries ranging from work deadlines to bills to clogged gutters. While you aren't omnipotent, you probably *can* influence at least a few of the things that are causing your anxiety. Try to eliminate or minimize situations that are stressors instead of constantly dealing with their effects. Often, it's the little things that make the biggest difference when it comes to relieving stress.

Start by identifying the two or three things that cause you the most stress on a consistent basis—maybe having a messy house is one. Often, you'll find that there are concrete things you can do to lessen or even eliminate the pressure. For example, you might have a frank discussion with your spouse and kids regarding chores. Or, you might finally hire a cleaning person to help you once or twice a month if you can now afford it. Also, if you *can't* eliminate or change a stressor, such as a job you hate but can't afford to quit, challenge yourself to handle it differently. Specifically, decide beforehand how you will react in a more enlightened way when certain stressful situations occur—actually visualize yourself handling them with poise instead of becoming outwardly or inwardly worked up. Having a game plan in place *before* the “beast” rears its ugly head really can reduce your negative reactions to stressors—big time.

**11) Being friendly is a good investment.** In our culture, it's become a badge of honor to stride around with an air of importance and a stony face. After all, if you're too busy to say hello, you *must* be important. Yes, it's easy to become absorbed by your responsibilities—but you're not doing yourself any favors by shutting out the rest of the world. Even if you don't have time to answer all of your emails, you can still smile at people in the hall and say a friendly hello to

the cashier in the grocery store. Making positive connections will bring more happiness to you *and* to others.

Have you noticed that although our society is more and more “connected” by technology, we interact less and less with other people on a meaningful, face-to-face level than ever before? Our plugged-in lifestyles aren’t doing us as many favors as we thought they would. Even when we’re not at work, we’re likely to be glued to our smartphones or laptops, which amps up our stress. Make a conscious effort to unplug and make a friendly connection with another human—even a simple smile or hello is great. The fact is, everyone on Earth is carrying some sort of burden. You can’t make their pain, stress, or grief just magically *disappear*...but you *can* be what I call a “lamp-lighter”—someone who makes others feel just a little bit lighter and happier on their journey, even if only for five seconds. When you make friendliness a habit, you’ll attract kindness and smiles in return...and you’ll feel great about yourself for making a positive difference in the world!

**12) Helping others is the soul food of life.** One of the (many) negative side effects of our busy lives is that we tend to think mostly about ourselves: how much work we have left on that big presentation, how we’re going to find time to take the kids to sports practice *and* pick up groceries, and much, much more. No matter how busy you are now, consider helping others to be an integral part of the healthy work/life balance that will help you to avoid unhappiness. This will give you perspective, make you feel good, and will prevent you from staying in the negative me-focused cycle that was making you unhappy in the first place.

Since my breakdown, I’ve become very involved in philanthropy. I’ve found that it really is better to give than to receive, and that reaching out a helping hand to someone who isn’t as fortunate as you tends to quash selfish impulses and highlight your own blessings. Giving of yourself doesn’t have to involve money, either—remember that your time, talents, and compassion are just as valuable

as cash, if not more so. Consider visiting a disabled veteran at the VA, or simply rolling your neighbor's trashcan up the driveway! And if you have kids, you'll be setting a wonderful example for them. I promise you, whether you're giving time, energy, money, or encouragement, being generous will build up your self-esteem, broaden your perspective, keep you anchored in reality, and connect you to your blessings—all components of a happy life.

**13) It's important to connect with something bigger than yourself.** Yes, spirituality (much like politics) is a touchy subject. But believing in something bigger than yourself is essential to developing the kind of perspective you need to be happy. Whether you consider your Higher Power to be God, Yahweh, Allah, Buddha, Krishna, the Universe, or even just Nature or another entity, being willing and able to see and feel His (or Her, if you prefer!) presence in your life will enable you to move away from self-centeredness and focus your energy and concerns on the greater community. It'll also provide solace and give meaning to unfortunate events and troubling life circumstances.

Personally, I've been connected to the Jewish faith for my entire life. But it was only after my breakdown that I really allowed my faith to grow. My personal belief that God exists and cares about me has changed the way I view the world—but you don't need to espouse my beliefs, or even join an organized religion and attend services regularly. What I *do* hope you'll do is make an effort to clarify your thoughts about faith and also make an effort to connect to your Higher Power, whether it's through prayer, meditation, writing in a journal, doing random acts of kindness, or just spending time in nature. Eventually, I hope you'll begin to see your Higher Power as a source of inspiration, renewal, strength, guidance, and aid—as I do.

**14) A grateful heart is a happy heart.** It's very easy to take things for granted: the information your coworker emailed you, the fact that your car is running, and even the food you're eating for dinner. The fact is, most of us have gotten into the habit of ignoring all of the good things in our lives. Instead, we focus

our mental energy on being upset about what's wrong and what we *don't* have. Yes, cultivating an "attitude of gratitude" might be a clichéd concept, but the humility that comes from knowing you owe so much to so many others will, in turn, spur you to give back more often to those less fortunate than yourself. Plus, studies have actually shown that thankful individuals are 25 percent healthier than their counterparts, too!

To start tapping into the power of gratitude, just say "thanks" to the people who help you out during your day. And beyond that, try to notice all of the blessings in your life. If you live in America, you have access to great education, healthcare, and the freedom to worship and work as you choose. Those are *huge* things to be thankful for right out of the gate! We take these "basics" and much more for granted, and we often have others—whether it's an ancestor of ours, a veteran, or a coworker—to thank for them. It's extremely important to be aware of all of your blessings, and to honor and thank those whom you owe.

**15) Asking for help isn't a sign of weakness.** All of the things I have learned from my breakdown will help you to cut your stress levels, and they'll also aid you in cultivating a more balanced, happier life. But I'm also adamant that feeling anxious, overwhelmed, or depressed are all very serious, and that you shouldn't expect yourself to easily "fix" these issues on your own.

If you feel that you're in over your head, or if your best efforts aren't working, *please* reach out and ask for help. I might never have recovered after my breakdown without the help of my friends, family, and medical professionals. This is all big stuff. You shouldn't—in fact, you can't—make big changes in your life alone. At the very least, you'll need the support of those who love you.

Ultimately, I've learned that the quality of your life is largely up to you. If you're anything like me—and if you're honest with yourself—you'll have to confess that a striving, stressful lifestyle is not making you happy. I'll admit that many of

the changes I'm asking you to make in order to avoid more unhappiness (and perhaps even a breakdown) go against what society says you *should* do if you want to be successful. But I have found out the hard way that a "successful" yet stressed out and unhappy life is certainly not, in reality, a truly successful life at all.

# TOP FIVE REGRETS OF THE DYING

By Bronnie Ware

For many years I worked in palliative care. My patients were those who had gone home to die. Some incredibly special times were shared. I was with them for the last three to twelve weeks of their lives.

People grow a lot when they are faced with their own mortality. I learnt never to underestimate someone's capacity for growth. Some changes were phenomenal. Each experienced a variety of emotions, as expected, denial, fear, anger, remorse, more denial and eventually acceptance. Every single patient found their peace before they departed though, every one of them.

*When questioned about any regrets they had or anything they would do differently, common themes surfaced again and again. Here are the most common five:*

## **1. I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.**

*This was the most common regret of all. When people realise that their life is almost over and look back clearly on it, it is easy to see how many dreams have gone unfulfilled. Most people had not honoured even a half of their dreams and had to die knowing that it was due to choices they had made, or not made.*

It is very important to try and honour at least some of your dreams along the way. From the moment that you lose your health, it is too late. Health brings a freedom very few realise, until they no longer have it.

## **2. I wish I didn't work so hard.**

*This came from every male patient that I nursed. They missed their children's youth and their partner's companionship. Women also spoke of this regret. But as most were from an older generation, many of the female patients had not been breadwinners. All of the men I nursed deeply regretted spending so much of their lives on the treadmill of a work existence.*

By simplifying your lifestyle and making conscious choices along the way, it is possible to not need the income that you think you do. And by creating more space in your life, you become happier and more open to new opportunities, ones more suited to your new lifestyle.

## **3. I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings.**

*Many people suppressed their feelings in order to keep peace with others. As a result, they settled for a mediocre existence and never became who they were truly capable of becoming. Many developed illnesses relating to the bitterness and resentment they carried as a result.*

We cannot control the reactions of others. However, although people may initially react when you change the way you are by speaking honestly, in the end it raises the relationship to a whole new and healthier level. Either that or it releases the unhealthy relationship from your life. Either way, you win.

## **4. I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends.**

*Often they would not truly realise the full benefits of old friends until their dying weeks and it was not always possible to track them down. Many had become so caught up in their own lives that they had let golden friendships slip by over the years. There were many deep regrets about not giving friendships the time*



*and effort that they deserved. Everyone misses their friends when they are dying.*

It is common for anyone in a busy lifestyle to let friendships slip. But when you are faced with your approaching death, the physical details of life fall away. People do want to get their financial affairs in order if possible. But it is not money or status that holds the true importance for them. They want to get things in order more for the benefit of those they love. Usually though, they are too ill and weary to ever manage this task. It is all comes down to love and relationships in the end. That is all that remains in the final weeks, love and relationships.

#### **5. I wish that I had let myself be happier.**

*This is a surprisingly common one. Many did not realise until the end that happiness is a choice. They had stayed stuck in old patterns and habits. The so-called 'comfort' of familiarity overflowed into their emotions, as well as their physical lives. Fear of change had them pretending to others, and to their selves, that they were content. When deep within, they longed to laugh properly and have silliness in their life again.*

When you are on your deathbed, what others think of you is a long way from your mind. How wonderful to be able to let go and smile again, long before you are dying.

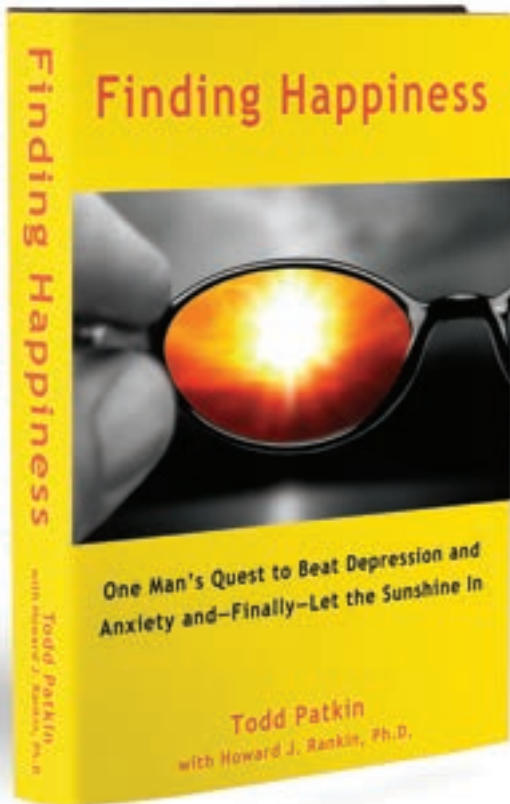
**Life is a choice. It is YOUR life. Choose consciously, choose wisely, choose honestly. Choose happiness.**

Source: <http://www.activistpost.com/2011/11/top-5-regrets-of-dying.html>

## ABOUT TODD PATKIN

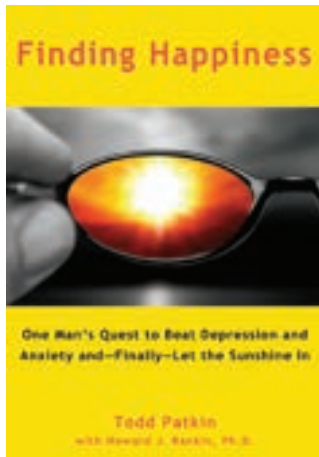


At age 36, Todd Patkin had an experience that completely changed the way he views the world: a debilitating nervous breakdown. On paper, he had everything: a great family, wonderful friends, financial security—but that didn't stop him from hitting rock bottom. From breakdown to breakthrough, Todd chronicles his journey out of the murky depths of depression and anxiety and into the light in his book, *Finding Happiness: One Man's Quest to Beat Depression and Anxiety and—Finally—Let the Sunshine In*. Today, Todd travels the country speaking to various groups, telling his story, and teaching people how they, too, can find their own happiness.



To learn more, visit  
[www.findinghappinessthebook.com](http://www.findinghappinessthebook.com).

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT TODD PATKIN'S STORY, MESSAGE, AND ONGOING EVENTS, CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES:**



*Finding Happiness: One Man's Quest to Beat Depression and Anxiety and—Finally—Let the Sunshine In* (StepWise Press, 2011, ISBN: 978-0-9658261-9-8, \$19.95) is part memoir, part self-help guide. It chronicles Todd's life, including his breakdown and subsequent realizations, and concludes with an expanded version of the "Twelve Weeks to Living a Happier Life" program that is found in this workbook.



**Coming in 2013:** *The Sunny Days Secret: A Guide for Finding Happiness*

**Todd's website** is full of resources to help you live a happier and healthier life, including excerpts from *Finding Happiness*, videos to accompany each week in the “Twelve Weeks to Living a Happier Life” program, videos of Todd's speaking events, blog posts, and much more. <http://www.toddpatkin.com>

**Todd Patkin's Twelve Weeks to Living a Happier Life program** was developed through decades of experience, and is built on the theory that significant lifestyle transformation can be achieved one simple change at a time. Each week's focal point is an important building block of creating an overall happy lifestyle. <http://www.toddpatkin.com/twelveweeks.php>

**“Guide to the Good Life”** (Todd's blog) is updated biweekly. Posts cover topics ranging from current issues to self-help to parenting...and more!  
<http://www.toddpatkin.com/blog/>



<http://www.facebook.com/ToddPatkin>



<https://twitter.com/toddpatkin>

# A Boot Camp for Building a Happier You

Creating a happier, more fulfilling life for yourself is one of those things that's easier said than done. This workbook, which functions as a companion to Part Two of Todd Patkin's book, *Finding Happiness*, is designed to help you take the first steps toward doing just that.

In this program, you'll be given a new task or lifestyle change to focus on each week for twelve weeks, while keeping up the habits you've begun in previous weeks. Each week's focal point is an important tool that you'll need to create your greatest life.

Guided by thought-provoking questions and bite-size tasks, you'll learn to focus on the behaviors, people, and things that will enrich and fulfill you and that will inspire your positive physical, mental, and emotional growth.

You'll find that the physical act of putting pen to paper helps to sharpen your thinking, clarify your priorities, and—best of all—take your intentions from wishes to actions. Remember, happiness doesn't just happen. You have to make it a priority *and* a habit. *Twelve Weeks to Finding Happiness* will give you the tools you need.



[WWW.TODDPATKIN.COM](http://WWW.TODDPATKIN.COM)

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