A book discussion:

what happy people know

by Dan Baker Ph.D.

Dan’s definition of happiness:
It’s neither a mood nor an emotion, but a way of life. It’s an
overriding outlook that includes optimism, courage, love &
fulfillment.

Happiness is the sum of 12 qualities:

1. LOVE:
   a. Being loved is the 2nd best feeling in the world (the best is
      loving someone else).
   b. Love is the polar opposite of fear, the antidote to fear, & the
      1st step to happiness.
2. OPTIMISM:
   a. Provides power over painful events.
   b. Happy people (HP for short) know that every hurtful event
      holds lessons.
   c. Optimism is realizing the more painful the event, the more
      profound the lesson.
   d. Gives you POWER OVER fear of the future & regrets of the
      past.
3. COURAGE:
   a. The strongest weapon for overcoming the split-second power
      of fear.
   b. IS Not the absence of fear, but a rising above it.
4. A SENSE OF FREEDOM:
   a. Freedom is CHOICE.
   b. When we choose, we define who we are.
   c. Everyone has the power to exercise choice, but unhappy
      people don’t know it.
   d. Choice is available to anyone who has the courage to
      exercise it.
5. PROACTIVITY:
   a. Forge your own happiness. Don’t wait for it to come from others (or blame others when it doesn’t).
   b. HP are not passive victims

6. SECURITY:
   a. HP know nothing lasts, so they don’t measure security with a calendar or a calculator.
   b. HP are not graspy
   c. HP simply like who they are

7. HEALTH:
   a. Is interdependent with happiness.

8. SPIRITUALITY:
   a. HP welcome extraordinary experiences
   b. They’re not concerned about dying; they’re concerned about NOT LIVING

9. ALTRUISM:
   a. Connects you to others
   b. Gives you a purpose
   c. Gets you outside of yourself & connects you to others

10. PERSPECTIVE:
    a. HP don’t see in absolutes
    b. They know how to turn problems into possibilities
    c. In times of trouble, HP don’t lose sight of life’s big picture

11. HUMOR:
    a. A shift of perspective which lifts suffering off the heart

12. PURPOSE:
    a. HP know WHY they’re here
    b. They’re doing the things they were meant to do
    c. They are satisfied with their lives

“When you achieve these qualities, there’s no need to search for happiness; it finds YOU.”
The 5 happiness traps:

1. TRYING TO BUY HAPPINESS:
   a. As humans, we can never have enough because in the hunt we are driven by an innate sense of scarcity.
   b. Therefore, we are driven by exactly that which we are trying to overcome: FEAR

2. TRYING TO FIND HAPPINESS THROUGH PLEASURE
   a. Pleasure masks fear but only temporarily preoccupies the brain.

3. TRYING TO BE HAPPY BY RESOLVING THE PAST
   a. There is simply no way to erase memories
   b. Opening a wound CAN let you see what needs healing
   c. And you CAN let your intellect & spirit create new meaning out of old memories

4. TRYING TO BE HAPPY BY OVERCOMING WEAKNESSES
   a. Doesn’t work because focusing on weaknesses reinforces FEAR
   b. Trying to cure a weakness is a waste of the energy that’s needed to achieve change
   c. Focus on strengths instead. This works because it feels good, which creates energy needed for change, is self-sustaining & full of rewards

5. TRYING TO FORCE HAPPINESS
   a. Doesn’t work because happiness is the sum of qualities which require ACTION.
   b. Mere will power isn’t strong enough to overcome fear
The 6 Happiness Tools:

1. Appreciation (my favorite by far!):
   a. Is the purest, strongest form of love
   b. Gives EVERYTHING and asks for nothing in return
   c. Is not a philosophy, it’s an experience
   d. Appreciation to reduce fear & create a perception shift
      i. Create a top 5 list of appreciation each day
      ii. Look for the good in life, not the best
      iii. Analyze what’s right instead of what’s wrong

2. Choice
   a. Is the voice of the heart
   b. Can govern perception - you can CHOOSE the way you perceive things
   c. Is ALWAYS there. Always.

3. Personal Power
   a. Is taking responsibility & taking action
   b. It keeps you from being a victim
   c. Requires dumping the false beliefs that destroy it
   d. Requires living in accordance to your values – make sure you know what you stand for, desire & admire
   e. You may take responsibility for your behavior, but do you take responsibility for your feelings?

4. Leading with Your Strengths
   a. Fixing weaknesses is too painful, which is why it doesn’t work
   b. Leading with strengths feels good, which is why it does
   c. Involves shifting focus from problems to possibilities
   d. Involves learning optimism, finding meaning in your pain, becoming proactive – and achieving wisdom
   e. Your strengths are every bit as real as your fear – just harder to find. Find your greatest strengths & decide what you’ll do with them.

5. The Power of Language & Stories
   a. The stories we tell ourselves about our lives BECOME our lives
   b. We get to CHOOSE the types of stories we tell ourselves
   c. Self-talk is very powerful, so choose your words carefully
   d. Listening to the words you choose will give you great insight
   e. Rewrite your story
6. **MULTI-DIMENSIONAL LIVING**
   a. You may know the words of happiness, but do you know the music?
   b. Happiness comes from a full life, which includes relationships, health & purpose
   c. Integrate all 3 elements into every day & then let your passions take you where they may
   d. Decide what you really want, then put your energy where it will do the most good

**Discussion points:**

1. **How close is happiness?**
   • Do you think happiness is common among others?
     Do you think (or know someone who thinks) happiness is just over the horizon – tomorrow’s payoff for today’s pain?
   • Do you know anyone who’s so used to being unhappy that they barely even notice it (like someone who lives near the airport & doesn’t hear the planes anymore)?

2. **Do you agree or disagree with these statements?**
   • Dan’s states, “We think it’s the happy experiences in life that makes us happy. But it’s not.”
   • He also says, “Your problems are not your problem.”
   • “...you really can’t feel someone else loving you... You can only feel it when you love them.” Altruism empowers you to love people even when they don’t love you.
   • “We do not describe the world we see, we see the world we describe.”
   • “You can talk about your problems over & over again & still end up with nothing but an insight into your misery... Putting something under a microscope doesn’t change what it is.”
3. Are you committed? Why or why not?
   - To choosing love over fear?
   - To finding a way to let your spirit lead when dancing with fear?
   - To tapping into your power of choice?
   - To exercising personal power?
   - To learning a new language in which to retell your stories?
   - To taking the events of your life, even the painful & unbearable, & transforming them into meaningful experiences?
   - Dan contends that it doesn’t take long to learn what happy people know, but it may take a while to work these lessons into the heart of your life - until happiness becomes a habit and unhappiness feels foreign. How committed are you to working these lessons into your life?

4. What do you think about what Emily knows?
   - “The meaning of life is to live."
   - The secret to happiness: “Every moment that’s ever been, or ever will be, is gone the instant it’s begun. So life IS loss. And the secret to happiness is to learn to love the moment more than you mourn the loss.”

Thanks for being a part of this incredible book discussion! Find future book discussions here: http://lindabucher.com/events/

Much love,
Linda