

# **Way to Christian Happiness**

By: Robert Harrison Black

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# A Way to Christian Happiness

## Get Started:

Jesus told us we are not to worry, not to hate, not to be angry, to forgive, to treat others as you would like to be treated, give expecting nothing in return and love God. If we all did all that Jesus commanded, we would be happy. This book fills in the details.

In Paul's letter to the Galatians in the New Testament he wrote: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." (*The Holy Bible*, 1952) As Christians it is our duty to not only show love but also to show Joy and all of the fruits of the Spirit. The best way we can make disciples is to show the spirit so that people will say: "I want to be like that person."

A grumpy person is not going to be much help in making disciples and we have been given the task: Matthew 28:18-20 New International Version (NIV) "Then Jesus came to them and said: All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

## Happiness is important

Happier people have more friends and happier friends. This is a good circle to be in. Grumps elicit negative reactions, and this is a bad cycle. Happier people have better careers. They find it easier to get hired, to keep a job and be promoted. Happier people are better salesmen. It is easier for them to get help from their peers. Happiness boosts our immune system. It makes our digestive system work better; our heart can be healthier even our complexion will be better. We will accomplish more in our life. We will have better lives.

## Science of Happiness

Scientists have developed ways to measure happiness. This allows the scientific study of happiness. William Thomson, 1st Baron Lord Kelvin, did important work in the formulation of the mathematics of electricity and the laws of thermodynamics. He developed mathematical expressions that describe the laws of physical systems. In 1854 he said: "In physical science the first essential step in the direction of learning any subject is to find principles of numerical reckoning and practicable methods for measuring some quality connected with it. I often say that when you can measure what you are speaking about, and express it in numbers, you know something about it; but when you cannot measure it, when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a limited and unsatisfactory kind; it may be the beginning of knowledge, but you have scarcely in your

thoughts advanced to the state of Science, whatever the matter may be." (zapatopi.net, n.d.)

In ancient times mathematics, logic, chemistry, physics, psychology, theology, botany etc. were not separate subjects. The thinking about these subjects was done by philosophers. Philosopher means lover of wisdom. It comes from the Greek word *philein* meaning love and the Greek word *sophos* that means wisdom. If you were a philosopher, then you would study and teach whatever piece of knowledge you were interested in. When Islam rejected philosophy they rejected all of it. The students were probably happy that they didn't need to do any math story problems. Over time the separate subjects of philosophy have been carved out. What remains and what we now call philosophy is the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence. Before Lord Kelvin none of the fields of philosophy used many numbers. Even as far back as Galileo the need for measurement and use of numbers was recognized but the tools and the understanding did not exist. Galileo said: "Mathematics is the language in which God has written the universe." (Galileo Galilei, 1600)

Lord Kelvin's idea of expressing things by a number has helped advance many disciplines. It was only since we started to measure happiness with a number that we have been able to treat happiness scientifically and measure what we can do to change it.

Becoming happier is a difficult task. I explore studies that demonstrate how difficult it is to increase happiness and or decrease happiness. I discuss the wisdom of historical philosophers, historical religious figures, more recent discoveries by academics which confirm the historical wisdom, and tools made by the author and others for application to present society. I must note psychologists tend to discredit spirituality. They cannot measure it or have good tools to manipulate it. I am not influenced by their prejudices; spirituality both in the modern clinical literature and in historical literature has been shown to be valuable to personal happiness. I will use personal examples from my mostly happy life, look at the lives of others that have had struggles becoming happy, and those that have done well at being happy. I owe a great deal to Eric Barker who has a blog which includes ideas about happiness.

You may wonder why I have included three pagans and two other religions in a Christian Book. St. Thomas Aquinas 1225-1274 AD has given us a good way to think about knowledge. He says that there are two types of knowledge: natural knowledge available to be discovered by philosophers of every religion and by atheist alike. The second knowledge is God knowledge only available to Christians. (Marshall, n.d.) He recommended that we use the natural knowledge from any source.

St. Thomas Aquinas lived in North Africa and was in a position to observe what happened to Islam when they rejected the knowledge of the philosophers. This happened between 1000 and 1100 AD. This knowledge included mathematics, logic and science. This was done by either Abu Hamid Al Ghazali or Nizam al-Mulk (Hassan, 2016) It was the end of the golden age of Islam. Islam went from the leading the development of

civilization to being where they are today little more than stone age with western weapons.

Epicurus was the first Western Philosopher to study happiness, Seneca studied how the rich and powerful and the slaves interacted. He understood anger. Aurelius and Lao Tsu gave us thoughts about status. Buddha gave us thoughts about possessions.

Below are two examples of how we can follow Lord Kelvin's advice and put a number on our happiness. It is helpful to take either the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire: <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/nov/03/take-the-oxford-happiness-questionnaire> or the Subjective Happiness Scale at the end of the book. I recommend readers do this before reading the book and to check back to observe your progress.

### Being a Christian

I am a Christian and I pray that you will become one also.

To be a Christian is to:

- Know that God loved you before you knew him.
- Know that God loved you enough to send Jesus.
- Study the Bible to learn more about what God has for you and to mature as a Christian.
- Attend meetings with other Christians regularly (With religious freedom this means Church).
- Attend a Sunday School or other small church activity to become part of a Christian community.
- Contribute your talents to the Church in a way God directs you to serve.
- Contribute financially as you are able.
- Invite others to become Christian.
- Show Christ's love in your daily life.
- Show the fruits of the spirit
- Help others to be better Christians.

Being a Christian will not make you rich, keep you in perfect health, keep you from pain or prevent bad things from happening to you. It will make you better able to handle life as it happens and lead you to make better decisions. It can make you happier.

The Christian Religion is a religion of joy. We are to know that it is by faith that we are saved and not by works. Good works are what we enjoy doing because we are saved, not an obligation we are forced to do in order to get into heaven. A Christian does not want to burden others to force them to do good works but do them out of love. This love is an example and should be the way to tell a true Christian.

## Depression

In doing the research I have found that there are many people who are depressed. Suffering in silence is not the answer. If this describes you, it is possible that you may be able to get out of depression with the help of this book and friends. You will have great difficulty doing it alone. If that doesn't work, please seek professional help. Life is too short to stay depressed. There is a self-test that will also score the test and provide the person taking the test an indication of their state. It is available on line at: <http://traumadissociation.com/qids> Being depressed is nothing to be ashamed of it is a condition to be cured. Early treatment is crucial.

Dr. Helen Lavretsky is Professor of Psychiatry at UCLA. She also directs the Late Life Mood, Stress, and Wellness Research Program at the Semel Institute at UCLA. She found that older patients suffer from higher rates of depressive disorders and symptoms than younger patients. Medical symptoms leading to death include, taking many medications, and cognitive decline are hallmarks of geriatric depression. Treatment resistance and suicidal ideations are common. Only 30-35% respond to the standard antidepressants. (Lavretsky et al., 2015)

We have genetic traits that come from our parents and random mutations that cause us to be predisposed to contract various diseases: cancer, heart disease, lung disease etc. If we know about this genetic predisposition we don't say: Oh well, I guess I will get heart disease and leave it at that. We do something about it with diet, exercise and Statin drugs. If we have predisposition to depression, we need to do something about it.

If you have tried are now are thinking of suicide put this down and get professional help now. Read this later.

## Chapter 1 What doesn't work

King Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes that is in what we call the Old Testament of the Bible and what Jews call the Tanakh. He was the son of David and Bathsheba. At the time, he was the most powerful king in the region. His wealth was unsurpassed. In Ecclesiastes Solomon expresses his unhappiness. He sees the evil in man. He said he had gold, silver, palaces, gardens, singers, musicians, dancers, male and female slaves, wives, and concubines yet he found no pleasure in these possessions. He took the job of king away from his older brother when his father was dying. Unfortunately, long ago, relatives of a king were a danger to a king; they were a threat to take the job of being king. In this text, I look at what had that made him unhappy and what he needed to make him happy. Later in the book of Ecclesiastes Solomon said, "For if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in all of them." (*The Holy Bible*, 1952)

Here are what people think will make them happier, but will not:

- Possessions
- Money
- Cosmetic surgery
- Better job
- More loving parents
- Children
- Cure from illness
- Losing weight

Chasing pleasure does not work. The momentary pleasure numbs us from future pleasure. The pleasure of seeing a fireworks show makes the next show less pleasurable. Finally, fireworks shows no longer provided pleasure and can even become annoying. Going to Disneyland is perhaps only fun the first time. This adaption is why the winners of lotteries quickly return to their former level of happiness or worse. They usually chase pleasure only to find it does not lead to happiness.

## Chapter 2. Difficulty in increasing happiness

People often say they would be happier if they only had a better place to live, a bigger TV, a better car, etc. There is no end to the list of the things that people say would make them happier.

### Genetics:

The 1978 study by Brickman, Coates, and Janoff-Bulman on lottery winners and paraplegics shows the fallacy of chasing things to make us happy. The abstract of their paper said:

"Adaptation level theory suggests that both contrast and habituation will operate to prevent the winning of a fortune from elevating happiness as much as might be expected.

Contrast with the peak experience of winning should lessen the impact of ordinary pleasures, while habituation should eventually reduce the value of new pleasures made possible by winning.

In their study Brickman, Coates, and Janoff-Bulman compared a sample of 22 major lottery winners with 22 controls and also with a group of 29 paralyzed accident victims who had been interviewed previously. As predicted, lottery winners were not happier than controls and took significantly less pleasure from a series of mundane events.

A later study indicated that these effects were not due to preexisting differences between people who buy or do not buy lottery tickets or between interviews that made or did not win the lottery. (Brickman et al., 1978)

We are programmed to have a base level of happiness. If we do nothing about it, this level will be fixed independent of our life circumstances. This base level also can predispose us to depression when stress happens.

Lykken, D. and Tellegen did a study of identical twins raised apart. It showed that despite differences of circumstances (sometimes large differences) their happiness was nearly identical. The conclusion is that you are programmed to be at a certain level. (Bouchard, Lykken, McGue, Segal, & Tellegen, 1990)

Caspi and others investigated the difference between individuals with specific genetic anomalies. The technical description they provided: The subjects had none, one or two copies of the short allele of the 5-HT T promoter polymorphism gene. An allele is a piece of genetic code. It can be in one of two alternative forms of a gene that arises by mutation and are found at the same place on a chromosome. It is possible to have one or two short; or both long forms. The subjects with one or two of the short alleles exhibited more depressive symptoms, diagnosable depression, and suicidality in relation to stressful life events than individuals with both long alleles. This epidemiological study provided evidence of a gene-by-environment interaction, in which an individual's response to environmental insults is moderated by his or her genetic makeup. (Caspi et al., 2003) This is an extreme case of our genetics determining our happiness.

Sonja Lyubomirsky has done a literature study, and she comes to the conclusion that about 50% of your happiness is genetic, 10% is circumstances and 40% is what you do about it. (Lyubomirsky, Dickerhoof, Boehm, & Sheldon, n.d.)

### Positive psychology

Psychology is usually focused on the many explanations for unhappiness and the causes of mental illness. Positive psychology is the branch of psychology that uses scientific understanding and effective intervention to aid in the achievement of a satisfactory life. Positive Psychology is a field of study that deals with healthy psychology rather than mental illness. It is better to make someone happy than treating mental illness or give them drugs later for depression. The focus of positive psychology is on personal growth



rather than on pathology, as is common among other frameworks within the field of psychology. (Seligman, Martin E. P.; Csikszentmihalyi, 2000)

Positive psychology is a relatively new field of academic study with the first positive psychology summit taking place in 1999 and the first International Conference on Positive Psychology taking place in 2003.

The findings of positive psychology indicate that happiness is improved and affected in a large number of different ways. Social ties, a spouse, family, friends and wider networks through work, clubs, or social organizations are of particular importance. In a literature study by Diener and others they found happiness is partially correlated with income. The correlation is not strong and factors involved make it hard to determine if happiness increases income or income increases happiness. It seems that with increasing financial income happiness increases but reaches a plateau at which point no further gains are made. (Diener, Shu, Lucas, & Smith, 1999)

During the second world war while my father was in the Navy my mother took me to live with her parents on a farm in rural Pennsylvania. We did not have electricity, running water, central heat or any of the modern conveniences. We had an outhouse and we pumped water from a well. We grew corn, wheat, buckwheat, hay, vegetables, and fruits. We raised cows, pigs, chickens, guineas and geese. If we didn't raise it, we did not eat it. We were relatively high tech compared to our neighbor used who horses. We had a tractor. I worked with the men. I was given the job of raising the geese. I would take them to the creek to drink and then to the vegetable garden to eat the bugs and the weeds. Life was hard but I do not remember being unhappy.

If happiness was truly fixed by our genes, then there would not be a reason for this book. It is not fixed and I believe Sonja Lyubomirsky may be too pessimistic. It does require many modifications in our behavior and thinking. It isn't easy but it is worth it.

### **Chapter 3 How can the thoughts of Epicurus help us today?**

Epicurus was a Greek philosopher who lived from 341 to 270 BC. He studied philosophy as a boy, later taught philosophy and founded the Garden, an Epicurean school of Philosophy. He focused his studies on understanding happiness and how to improve it. He is wrongly attributed to saying "Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we may die." This is what his critics said of his school because they did not understand that chasing pleasure does not work; they did not know of happiness in any other context. ("Epicurus & Quotes," n.d.) (Konstan, 2014)

#### Friends

Epicurus believed that friends are key to a happy life. He said that we do not so much need the help of our friends as the confidence of having their help, if needed. The school he formed would now be called a commune. It is where he could spend time with friends and eat meals with them. He also said of all things which can make us happy, the greatest

is the possession of friendship. Looking back at Solomon it does not seem to be good to be the king with absolute power. How could you have friends who would not be subservient? (Konstan, 2014)

In John 15 Jesus talked to his decuples about their coming mission after his departure. He told them greater love has no man than to lay down his life for his friends. Jesus told them that they were his friends. (*The Holy Bible*, 1952)

Today, many particularly the youth spend much of their life on the internet. Online friends do not help. In a study of the effect of Internet use on social relationships in adults aged eighteen to sixty-three, Dutch psychologist Thomas Pollet found time spent using online social networks resulted in more online contacts but didn't translate into genuine offline connections or a feeling of closeness. Indeed, not only is online contact experienced as less fun, but without face-to-face contact, social relationships decay, and are soon replaced by others. (Pollet, Roberts, & Dunbar, 2011)

My friend Dan said that one year after they moved, Dan and his wife found that their contacts with their closest friends in their former neighborhood by phone and e-mail had become less and less and that they became less interested in their friends lives.

Robin Ian MacDonald, Dunbar Director of the Institute of Cognitive and Evolutionary Anthropology at Oxford University said: "Emotional closeness declines by around 15 percent a year in the absence of face-to-face contact, so that in five years someone can go from being an intimate acquaintance to the most distant outer layer of your 150 friends,".(Pollet et al., 2011)

I note: Depending on the definition of friend it seems hard to have more than five friends that would be free to visit and ask for a drink, and then go to the refrigerator and get it themselves. We have become too formal. The number 150 is probably the upper limit of friendly acquaintances. I tried to think of 150 people I could name that I would say are friendly acquaintances and was not able. To get past 60 I needed to include people that I have not contacted in years and may not even be alive. Some that I thought of are dead. My best friend from grade school lived in Michigan and may still be there. He and his wife came to visit me here in Florida about 12 years ago. I communicate to him with a card each Christmas. He has completely slipped out of my mind. I only remember him now because of trying to count how many friends I had. If Pollet has 150 friends he must be super gregarious.

An excellent tool for having friends is introducing friends to friends. These need to be people that make you laugh and not those that make you angry. Do things that make your friends happy. It is the little things like: Congratulations on something that they did, thanking them for what they did for you or others, complementing them on their looks or dress, Saying their name as a greeting. Giving gifts can be counterproductive as it may lead to their stress in concerns about reciprocation.

### Possessions:

Material possessions were something that Epicurus thought were not necessary for happiness. He said: “Do not spoil what you have by desiring what you have not; remember that what you have now was once among the things you only hoped to possess.” He believed to make a man happy, do not add to his riches but take away from his desires. (“Epicurus > Quotes,” n.d.) Nothing is enough for a man to whom enough is too little. This was also pointed out by Lao Tsu in 531 BC when he said: “A man is wealthy when he knows he has enough.” (English, 1972) We will learn more from Lao Tsu later. Diogenes of Oenoanda, the ruler of a local territory, liked the philosophy of Epicurus about material possessions, As a result he built wall at a market that said: “Things do not make you happier.” Epicurus most likely would have approved of such a wall in our shopping centers. It was not only about possessions not helping, but about the concern for them.

He said you cannot live a happy life with many possessions, because mobs or monarchs would covet what you have. This is similar to what Buddha and my mother said: Possessions are a burden.

Marie Kondo, a Japanese woman, teaches neatness and helps people organize their homes. Her clients usually throw away 2/3 of what they have in their houses. Her first rule is to sort by category, not by location. Too many people try to tackle one closet or room at a time. Instead, she says take one item, such as every book in your house, and put them on the floor so you can truly see what you have. Step number two is to pick each item up and ask yourself "does it spark joy?" "It's important to touch every item and hold it with your hands," Kondo explains. Your body actually has a physical reaction. You either feel uplifted or you sink down. (Kondo, 2014)

Consider: Solomon had lots of possessions but these did not give him happiness; his possessions were a burden.

Jesus was not in favor of many possessions when he said: Matthew 6:19: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal” (*The Holy Bible*, 1952)

### Live in the present

Living in the present is also advised by Epicurus. Epicurus said we should neither focus on the future nor the past; it is like saying that the season for happiness is not yet or it is now no more. Epicurus also said death does not concern us, because as long as we exist, death is not here. When it does come, we no longer exist. (“Epicurus > Quotes,” n.d.) We Christians believe that we will still exist but in spiritual bodies. In Paul’s letter to the Corinthians 15:44 Paul said: “it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.” This means, as Christians we have even less reason to worry about death.

Consider: Could Solomon have relaxed in one of his gardens and enjoyed the present? Jesus in Mathew 6:25-33 told us not to worry. We are not to worry about food, drink or clothing. He told us we should not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.

### Honesty and Justice

Honesty and justice was important to Epicurus. He said it is impossible to live a pleasant life without living wisely, well, and justly. And, it is impossible to live wisely, well, and justly without living a pleasant life. The evil in man was summarized when he said if God listened to the prayers of men, all men would quickly have perished: for they are forever praying for evil against one another. (Konstan, 2014) Solomon would most likely have agreed about the evil in man, but was unable to let go of the unhappiness it caused him. Proverbs 19:1: “Better is the poor that walks in his integrity than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool”.

One of the founders of the United States, Benjamin Franklin, gave us a way to live wisely and well. In his writings is a plan of action:

“In the various enumerations of the moral virtues I met in my reading, I found the catalogue more or less numerous, as different writers included more or fewer ideas under the same name. Temperance, for example, was by some confined to eating and drinking, while by others it was extended to mean the moderating every other pleasure, appetite, inclination, or passion, bodily or mental, even to our avarice and ambition. I proposed to myself, for the sake of clearness, to use rather more names, with fewer ideas annexed to each, than a few names with more ideas; and I included under thirteen names of virtues all that at that time occurred to me as necessary or desirable, and annexed to each a short precept, which fully expressed the extent I gave to its meaning.

These names of virtues, with their precepts were:

1. Temperance    Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.
2. Silence        Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.
3. Order    Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.
4. Resolution    Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.

5. Frugality      Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself, i.e., waste nothing.
6. Industry      Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.
7. Sincerity.      Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.
8. Justice      Wrong none by doing injuries or omitting the benefits that are your duty.
9. Moderation      Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.
10. Cleanliness      Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes, or habitation.
11. Tranquility      Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.
12. Chastity      Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.
13. Humility      Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

“My intention being to acquire the habitude of all these virtues, I judged it would be well not to distract my attention by attempting the whole at once, but to fix it on one of them at a time, and, when I should be master of that, then to proceed to another, and so on, till I should have gone thro' the thirteen; and, as the previous acquisition of some might facilitate the acquisition of certain others, I arranged them with that view, as they stand above. Temperance first, as it tends to procure that coolness and clearness of head which is so necessary where constant vigilance was to be kept up, and guard maintained against the unremitting attraction of ancient habits and the force of perpetual temptations. This being acquired and established, Silence would be more easy; and my desire being to gain knowledge at the same time that I improved in virtue, and considering that in conversation it was obtained rather by the use of the ears than of the tongue, and therefore wishing to break a habit I was getting into prattling, punning, and joking, which only made me acceptable to trifling company, I gave *Silence* the second place. This and the next, *Order*, I expected would allow me more time for attending to my project and my studies. Resolution, once because habitual, would keep me firm in my endeavors to obtain all the subsequent virtues; *Frugality* and *Industry*, freeing me from my remaining debt, and producing affluence and independence, would make more easy the practice of *Sincerity* and *Justice*, etc.” (“The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin,” n.d.)

#### Fear for the future:

Additionally, Epicurus said a fool's life is empty of gratitude and full of fears; its course lies wholly toward the future. This is certainly true of Solomon who did not seem to

express gratitude to his people or God. Solomon was certainly focused on fear of the future. From Psalm 118:24: “This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” From Paul: Colossians 3:17: ”And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

### Application of Paul and Epicurus

Using Epicurus’s philosophy and Paul’s admonitions, I suggest that we follow the guidelines below to lead a happy life:

In conversations with friends:

- No discussion of medical conditions of yourself unless it is to ask for specific advice
- No discussions about others unless it is to find a way to help them, No gossip
- No discussion of politics unless that is the reason to be together.
- Only discuss subjects that are relevant to the other person. For example: I don’t play golf, so if the subject comes up in a group, I find another group.
- Discuss food and drink, restaurants, farmer’s markets, and fashion
- Discuss religion if it is being accepted. We are not to cast pearls before swine it is counterproductive. Mathew 7:6 (*The Holy Bible*, 1952)
- Discuss local news focused on what you can do to help
- Discuss future events that will be enjoyable.
- Only discuss sports if it is of interest to everyone.
- Discuss mindfulness
- Reminisce about happy events
- Laugh about unhappy experiences
- Discuss this book
- When asked for help, try to help the person develop their own solution.

As a start to reduction of stuff:

- Give 10 things to the Salvation Army or your church.
- Do not buy anything but consumables necessary for immediate use for one week. This is to obtain freedom from stuff.

## **Chapter 4 How can the thoughts of Lucius Annaeus Seneca help us today?**

Seneca was born in 4 BC. He was conscripted to be the tutor to Nero. Nero was evil and apparently worse than he is portrayed. He had part of Rome burned down to make way for his design and blamed it on the Christians. He is the 666 of Revelations, the last chapter of the bible. It was common at the time to convert a name to a number. Alpha would be one, beta would be two, etc. Using this system, Emperor Nero would have either been 616 or 666 depending how the title was used. Both are found in early copies

of Revelations. Seneca did not want to be Nero's tutor because he was afraid of him, but Nero would not let him go. Seneca was right to be afraid because Nero had him killed. Seneca was a careful observer of the Roman court and the lives of the slaves and nobility. (Multiple, 1952), (Schnider, 2015)

Seneca's overall rules are: (1) Obey God, (2) Do not seek pleasure, (3) Accept the world as it is, and (4) Have Gratitude. Seneca said: "A man is as miserable as he thinks he is." Similarly, Abraham Lincoln said: "Folks are usually about as happy as they make their minds up to be. ("Abraham Lincoln Quotes (Author of The Gettysburg Address)," n.d.)

#### Quarreling:

Seneca advised against quarreling. His advice was, "A quarrel is quickly settled when deserted by one party; there is no battle unless there be two." (Schnider, 2015), (Seneca the Younger, 2016) When Seneca was saying God he was probably thinking of god as envisioned by Plato. Rather than the God of Christians and Jews. He recognised the need to honour and respect a higher power but didn't know about Christianity.

A person I know is a converted socialist. Logical discussions with her are like trying to teach a pig to sing. It wastes your time and it annoys the pig. I like this person, she is a good person, but I stay away. Avoid taking such bait by others or giving in to temporary negativity. Just let it go.

#### Doing good:

Seneca said: "He that does good to another, does good for himself. It is another's fault if he is not grateful, but it is mine if I do not give." Shared joy is increased joy. One of the best ways to become happier is simply to help others be happier. When you make others happier, positive feelings seem to be generated from within. (Seneca the Younger, 2016)

Psalm 112:9 "Giving to the poor is counted as righteousness." From Proverbs 14:21: "Blessed is the one who is kind to the needy." Usually translations from Aramaic or Hebrew that are shown as blessed can be translated as someone who is envied or someone that is happy. From Proverbs 19:17: "He that has pity upon the poor lends unto the LORD; and that which he has given will he pay him again." (*The Holy Bible*, 1952)

Unhappy groups of people are those standing in line in any number of places. They want to get on with their lives. The frustration causes the same fight or flight hormone release as would a confrontation with a tiger. Here are some suggestions for helping these people be happy, and in doing so, making yourself happy. Make positive comments like some of the following:

- (1) The people that work here do a good job but they seem to be overwhelmed at the moment. I hope that they are able to handle the stress.
- (2) It turned out to be a nice day; or I am glad it is raining; the plants and the farmers need it.

- (3) I am interested in (insert something); do you know something about it?
- (4) You sound like you have had a really tough day.
- (5) I noticed a Fisker in the parking lot. Wow is that a snazzy car. (A Fisker is a type of automobile.) I did this. The owner was in line and we discussed his experience. It was so interesting no one seemed to care how long they had to wait.

As an exercise think of several ice breakers that would work for you. As a caution; if you're a guy do not start with a pretty girl. It may be misinterpreted and come off as creepy. One of my students said that her husband walks with a cane and he finds that he is not perceived as a threat and finds it is easier to start talking to someone.

### Anger:

Seneca observed that the nobility were always angry. They expected perfection and perfection was never obtained. It was a case of unrealistic expectations. (Schnider, 2015). Solomon counseled against anger: Ecclesiastes 7:9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger rests in the bosom of fools. (*The Holy Bible*, 1952)

The angry customer at the airline ticket counter is likely the wealthiest in the room. His anger is hurting his body, his brain, and the chance that he will get help from the clerk he is berating. I once was on a business trip and found that my schedule was a problem. The clerk behind the counter had a name tag that read Jefferson. I said, please Mr. Jefferson could you do anything to fix my problem? He worked on his computer and solved the problem. I imagine if I had been angry and berated him I would not have had my problem resolved. Thanking him profusely when he finished made us both happier.

I have observed the domestic help in Hong Kong that come from the Philippines. They live in with their employers. They must do whatever they are asked. Their employer can send them back at any time. They have a six-day week. On Sunday they will leave their employer early in the morning. They do not have any place to go. On Sunday morning some go to church. Some churches have a part of the service in Tagalog the language of the Philippines. All day they are found in the open area of the bus terminal, in the walk over bridges downtown, in covered places at the beach, or in covered areas at public parks. They do not have any money as they send all of their money back home to support their families. They talk, play cards and visit with their friends. I have watched them and noted that they had happy faces and seemed to talk continually. My son-in-law referenced the South China Morning Post and said studies have found they are happier than any other section of Hong Kong society. They have no more freedom than a slave of ancient Rome and no possessions. They are happier than their employers. It is a mirror of ancient Rome. They also do not worry about their status.

My wife and I sailed our boat from Florida to the Exumas on the other side of the Bahamas; the wind picked up and we went back to Nassau to wait for better weather. I was sitting on the deck in the shade having a drink of ice tea and bantering with the local young men who were serving drinks. The young men and I were having fun with each other. I was enjoying myself and enjoying the local young men discussing life. I



overheard two couples at the next table. One couple owned one of the large yachts and was waiting for lower winds and calmer seas, like us. They were unhappy and angry. Their captain was not living up to their standards. They had a list of grievances about him, their crew members, the weather, the harbor facilities, etc. It was exactly as Seneca had observed. The rich people were angry and unhappy while the young men employed at the facility were having a good time. I did not need a captain and my boat was one half of the size of theirs. I could be thankful I did not need to have to take care of theirs.

In Thailand, anger is treated like a contagious disease. If someone is angry the locals stay away. When I have traveled in Thailand and met new local people someone often pointed out an angry person who is off to one side. The reaction is exactly the same as if this person had Ebola. The Thais are correct, anger is contagious. They are smart enough to run away from someone who is angry. The Thais use a smile to stop anger. They have found that you cannot be angry and smile at the same time. Trying to preserve anger and smile will only cause a giggle. Thailand is sometimes called the land of smiles. When a group is complaining about the mayor, the governor, or the president, the anger of one person soon becomes the anger of the group. Protect yourself by changing the topic or join a different group. Smiling is not only an antidote for anger, it is helpful for your body. If you smile you will be happier and it will make others happier. I always say: smile, it will make others look at you with wonder. Smile before a meeting; it will turn on the right hormones and make you more likable and more effective.

Dr. Don Colbert, M.D., author of *Deadly Emotions*, says anger can damage your health. Anger triggers a biologically embedded “fight-or-flight” response. In ancient times, when human beings faced physical threats like animal predators, the fight-or-flight response saved our lives by pumping our bodies with hormones and chemicals necessary to be ready for intense physical action. When anger kicks in, your body readies itself to respond to a perceived threat, your muscles tense...your digestive processes stop...and certain brain centers start firing in ways that alter brain chemistry. When angry, any bodily function not directly related to fighting or fleeing is put on hold, including: digestion, assimilation, cell production, body maintenance, circulation to internal organs, healing, and immunological defenses. The anger processes damages internal organs and can lead to a heart attack, stroke and other diseases. Your heart is especially vulnerable to the deadly effects of anger and its consequences. (Colbert, 2006)

Researchers at Washington State University conducted a study with participants 50 and older. Those with explosive tempers were significantly more likely to have arterial calcium deposits, a primary indicator of heart attack risk, than those who did not.

The effects of anger and stress on the brain has been studied by Hotchkiss Brain Institute in Calgary. They discovered one of the effects of anger on the brain is that neurons in the hypothalamus, the brain's command center for stress responses, can be compromised. Normally these neurons receive different chemical signals which prompt them to switch on or off. Stress and anger compromise these functions and jeopardize the brain's ability to slow down. All of the damage done by anger is also done by fear by activating the flight or fight response. (Hendricks & Aslinia, 2013) Laughter may not be the best

medicine, but it is a good one. James 1:20 In his letter said: “Human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires we should get rid of it.” (*The Holy Bible*, 1952) *From the Old Testament* Proverbs 16:32: “Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.”

One day recently, I was trying to put gasoline into my car and having a problem using the gas pump. The system kept sending me back to the beginning. It was very frustrating. I was in danger of losing the 40 cents a gallon discount on the card I was using. Since I was going to buy more than 10 gallons, it would have been more than four dollars. This four-dollar danger was alarming my subconscious and sending my system into the fight or flight mode. The danger of losing four dollars caused the same reaction as seeing a tiger coming out of the jungle. On the way to the cashier to ask for help, I realized what was happening. I smiled and felt myself relaxing. I vowed to be more sensitive to the fight or flight signals. By catching it early, I was able to avoid a full blown red face confrontation with the clerks at the registers of the gas station/convenience store. After I caught myself, I went into the store and explained my situation; a young woman in a cheery voice said: I will help you. She came out to the pumps, punched some buttons, and made the system work. I thanked her, she smiled and I smiled. A possible negative turned positive.

Activity: Think of stories about the people who cut us off in traffic. Is his wife in labor in the back seat? Does he have an overactive bladder? Is she rushing to school because her child has had an accident? Think about how lucky we are not to have those problems. It becomes a fun game and when you think up an outrageous story you may find that it brings a smile.

At an intersection with a traffic signal where the turn lanes are signaled the north/south turn lanes go; then the north/south traffic lanes go; after that the east/west turn lanes go and finally the east/west lanes go. No matter which way you want to go only one of the four possibilities will be green. We should expect 25% of traffic lights to be green when we get there. Count those on the way to the store or the office or the Church. Celebrate when there are less than 75% red. When there are more than 75% red then set this as the new expectation and celebrate when there are less than that percentage. Expect to miss even some of the green lights because of the number of cars in line. Getting upset because a light turns red is not logical. Seneca would most likely say it is an example of unrealistic expectations.

Solomon did not say he was angry, but he was unhappy with life. As the richest of the rich he is likely to have the same unrealistic expectations.

### Live in the present

Seneca said there is no person so severely punished; as those who subject themselves to the whip of their own remorse. True happiness is to enjoy the present, without anxious dependence upon the future. Seneca notes there are more things to alarm us than to harm us, and we suffer more often in apprehension than reality. (Schnider, 2015) Calvin

Coolidge agreed when he said: “If you see ten troubles coming down the road, you can be sure that nine will run into the ditch before they reach you.” (“Calvin Coolidge at BrainyQuote,” n.d.) From Paul’s letter to the Philippians 4:6-7: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

This also matches my observation of the self-appointed experts in the stock market. Every time I look at The web site [finance.yahoo.com](http://finance.yahoo.com) to do research I see articles by these experts predicting a crash and at the same time there will be other articles predicting a strong upward movement in price. Yogi Berra was right when he said: “It's tough to make predictions, especially about the future.” (“Yogi Berra Quotes...,” n.d.)

To be happy we need to remember that tomorrow is not here yet. Yesterday has passed. Now is the present moment. So, our only opportunity for us to change events is right now. But still we insist on spending much time regretting yesterday and/or fearing tomorrow. That may be normal but, is not a useful exercise. (Seneca the Younger, 2016) One of the characteristics of Christianity is that if we confess our sins and do what we can to sincerely attempt to refrain from further sin, God forgives us and we no longer need to worry about the past. This belief is liberating. We cannot really do anything about the past. We can learn valuable lessons from it, but after that it is not so important. Most of the things we fear in the future rarely occur. A negative attitude can do wonders to create monsters within the mind to occupy much of your time. So, planning your future is very useful but over thinking it is seldom helpful. So much time is lost thinking compulsively, over and over again, about things we have little control over. And, it can cause a huge amount of suffering within that can be manifested in destructive behaviour.

Solomon was not living in the present.

## **Chapter 5 How can the thoughts of Marcus Aurelius help us today?**

Marcus Aurelius was emperor of Rome from AD 161 until AD 180. He spent most of his reign with his army fighting the Celts in Gaul. During his reign the persecution of Christians was severe. He talked a good game but he did nothing to prevent these persecutions. He was also a philosopher and wrote Meditations. Marcus repeated much of what was said by those before him (J. T. Cacioppo et al., n.d.)(Casaubon, 2013)

### Life acceptance:

We should accept the things to which fate binds us, and love the people whom fate has brought together. Most importantly do so with all your heart. When you arise in the morning think of what a privilege it is to be alive, to think, to enjoy, to love ... Our life is what our thoughts make it. Never let the future disturb you. You will meet it, if you have to, with the same weapons of reason which today arm you against the present. (Casaubon, 2013)

Marcus Aurelius echoed Epicurus when he said: “No one can lose either the past or the future - how could anyone be deprived of what he does not possess? ... It is only the present moment of which either stands to be deprived: and if this is all he has, he cannot lose what he does not have.” (Casaubon, 2013)

We see some of Albert Ellis in Marcus quote: “you are pained by external things, it is not they that disturb you, but your own judgment of them. And it is in your power to wipe out that judgment now.” (Casaubon, 2013) We will introduce Albert Ellis in chapter 8.

#### Need for action:

Marcus recommended action when he said: “Do not act as if you had ten thousand years to throw away. Death stands at your elbow. Be good for something while you live and it is in your power.” (Casaubon, 2013) Jesus said in Matthew 25:13: “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man comes.” (*The Holy Bible*, 1952)

Death is also at the elbow of those we know. Both my mother and my father died in a way in which I was able to say things to them that brought closure. If they had died in a car accident, I would have regretted not being able to have those opportunities. Do not miss the opportunities we have to tell people we love them, tell people we are thankful for the part they played in our lives, or tell them we forgive them. In any case, this will give us freedom from the past.

I had a friend that was a wonderful man. He was a Special Forces Officer in the Vietnam war. When he got out of the military, he went to flight school and became an instructor pilot. When he had health problems, he studied and became an attorney and started an international law firm. As his health failed, a neighbor and I took him to the mall to walk with his oxygen bottle. When he became too blind and started running into things with his walker, we were only able to visit. Jim enjoyed scotch whiskey. I suggested that we give Jim a Scotch tasting. His wife agreed. I brought six different bottles; Jim's wife Betty made a plate of cheese and crackers. Jim only had a tiny taste of each one and he gave us a tutorial in Scotch. Jim had a smile that went from ear to ear. He died a week or so later. When I went to his funeral, I was so happy that I did not miss this opportunity to do something nice for my friend.

#### Status anxiety:

Marcus added were thoughts about Status anxiety when he said: “Or is it your reputation that's bothering you? But look at how soon we're all forgotten. The abyss of endless time that swallows it all. The emptiness of those applauding hands. The people who praise us; how capricious they are, how arbitrary. And the tiny region it takes place. The whole earth, a point in space - and most of it uninhabited. The happiness of those who want to be popular depends on others; the happiness of those who seek pleasure fluctuates with moods outside their control; but the happiness of the wise grows out of their own free acts.” (Casaubon, 2013)

Lao Tsu lived in 600 BC. He was a Chinese philosopher who has been given credit for writing the Tao. This is the founding document of the Tao religion. Tao temples are found in South Asia. There are very few and hard to find. I accidentally found two: one in Bangkok West of the canal near the train station. I also found one in Shanghai West of the Bund. Worship practices are similar to Buddhist practices and consist of lighting incense and meditation. The Tao consists of 81 chapters, each eight to twenty-five sentences.

This is what Lao Tsu said about 750 years before Marcus :

From 13:      Favor and disgrace make one fearful  
                  The greatest misfortune is the self  
                  What does "favor and disgrace make one fearful" mean?  
                  Favor is high; disgrace is low  
                  Having it makes one fearful  
                  Losing it makes one fearful  
                  This is "favor and disgrace make one fearful" (English, 1972)

Lao Tsu also was warning those in power about being aloof. The Chinese have a name for those in power that are too conceited. They call them white eyes because when they hold their head up you can see the whites of their eyes.

From 24:      Those who are on tiptoes cannot stand  
                  Those who straddle cannot walk  
                  Those who flaunt themselves are not clear  
                  Those who presume themselves are not distinguished  
                  Those who praise themselves have no merit  
                  Those who boast about themselves do not last (English, 1972)

## **Chapter 6 How can thoughts of Martin Seligman help us today?**

Martin E. P. "Marty" Seligman is an American psychologist, educator, and author of self-help books. He was born in 1942 and worked at the University of Pennsylvania. Seligman has been an avid promoter within the scientific community for the field of positive psychology. He recommends an activity to improve happiness; make a list of things for which you are grateful. This is what Paul said: Colossians 3:15: "And let the peace of God rule in your heart, to the which also you are called in one body; and be thankful." (*The Holy Bible*, 1952)

Every night for the next week, set aside ten minutes before you go to sleep. Write down three things that went well today and why they went well... Writing about why the positive events in your life happened may seem awkward at first, but please stick with it for one week. It will get easier. The odds are that you will be less depressed, happier, and addicted to this exercise six months from now. (Seligman, 2002)

Thinking about the absence of something positive in your life produces more gratitude and happiness than imagining its presence. What would your life be like if you had not met your spouse? If you did not live in your current neighborhood? If you had not had that chance encounter with the stranger on the plane who later became a business associate?... By taking something away in our minds, we become more aware of benefits that we still have but previously took for granted. Mentally subtracting something good from your life can make you more grateful for it. Think of an aspect of your life for which you feel grateful and then write about the ways in which this might never have happened (e.g., “what would have happened if I had never met my wife?” as opposed to “I am so grateful to have met my wife”). (Seligman, 2002)

Express gratitude to people in your life. Thank your partner, your neighbor, your clerk, your cleaning person, your relatives, your clergy etc. (Seligman, Martin E. P.; Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) Say I am so pleased to have this in my life. Saying it out loud with or without others present will add to the happiness of the event.

Express happiness openly particularly if it is in conjunction with expression of gratitude. If you hit a home run jump for joy. Be careful not to brag.

If you want to pray a petitionary prayer, (a prayer asking God to do something) I recommend keeping it a separate exercise. Some people may find comfort in petitionary prayers but I personally do not find them to be a happy exercise; I find it impertinent to tell God what he should do. My prayers are mostly about giving thanks and asking for guidance. This is a personal thing with me and not one supported by scripture.

When Jesus was asked how to pray he said this: Matthew 6:9–13 (ESV) "Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'" We add: For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever.

This was to be a way to pray not a prayer to repeat. We are to acknowledge that God is in control. Ask that his will is done here on earth. Ask only for life. Ask for his guidance and help in resisting temptations. There isn't a list of jobs we are to give God. Mathew 6:7: “And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.”

## **Chapter 7 How can the thoughts of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi help us today?**

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi was a Hungarian psychologist born in 1934. He emigrated to the United States as a young man. He developed a concept called flow.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi says the best moments in our lives are not the passive, receptive, relaxing times...The best moments usually occur if a person's body or mind is

stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. He describes the state of composers, ice skaters, and artists that report being in the flow.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi discovered that people find genuine satisfaction during a state of consciousness called flow. In this state they are completely absorbed in an activity, especially an activity which involves their creative abilities. During this “optimal experience” they feel “strong, alert, in effortless control, unselfconscious, and at the peak of their abilities.” Csikszentmihalyi insists that happiness does not simply happen. It must be prepared for and cultivated by each person, by setting challenges that are neither too demanding nor too simple for ones abilities. (Seligman, Martin E. P.; Csikszentmihalyi, 2000)

Eric Barker who writes a blog on personal development wrote: “The experience of “flow” is strikingly reminiscent of Zhuangzi’s description of “great skill” achieved by Taoist sages such as carpenter P’ien and butcher Ting, the latter finding bliss in the art of chopping up ox carcasses by “going along with the Tao” of the ox. It is no coincidence that these blue-collar sages are situated on the bottom rungs of the social hierarchy. They discover the Tao much more readily than Confucian scholars, who, according to Zhuangzi, are studying the “dregs of wisdom” in lifeless books and have lost touch with the world of concrete affairs.” (Barker, 2015)

Mihaly believes it takes 10 years to develop the skills to be able to get in the flow at the highest level. His flow is where high skill matches high challenge. He says our brain only has a limited ability to process thoughts in our conscious. When operating at a maximum level of skill/high challenge mode, all of our mental processing is in the task and we are not aware of other stimulus or time. (Seligman, Martin E. P.; Csikszentmihalyi, 2000)

Being in a job or doing tasks that allow our skills to grow to handle high-challenge tasks is a formula for maximum happiness.

Mihaly also said to take recess from work; take a break at least every 90 minutes. He did a study where he found working without a break for an extended period of time causes clinical anxiety. (Seligman, Martin E. P.; Csikszentmihalyi, 2000)

When I sail and attain maximum speed in the desired direction, I am in my flow. I find that I am completely focused. It requires knowledge of the wind and waves, knowing how to trim the sails and how to hold the optimum course. My wife finds flow in making a quilt. It requires focus in measuring, cutting, assembly and stitching. All of the quilt making steps are tedious and require complete focus. This not only provides her flow but it also provides a good goal.

Having goals is important, it gives life a purpose, focuses our efforts and will also focus our brain in a good way.

Life purpose:

Life purpose and life goals are different things. Setting life goals can be devastating when later in life you know that you are not going to be able to reach the goal. Life purpose can be different. It can consist of setting a succession of obtainable goals. My current goal is decluttering my desk. This may not be obtainable in my lifetime. My life purpose is helping others in obtaining financial peace of mind. I do this by being a volunteer teacher of financial management to disadvantaged and felons for United Way and being a volunteer teacher of financial security for the Osher Life Long Learning Institute (OLLI) at the University of North Florida. I also want to help people be happy by teaching happiness at OLLI.

Amy Wrzesniewski of the Yale School of Management did a study on job satisfaction of janitors that work in hospitals. They have jobs that seem on the surface as one to avoid. They must clean up after very messy events. I had a broken finger repaired 30 years ago and I still remember waking up from the procedure and throwing up on everything in the operating room. Some person had to clean up the mess. Some janitors found it a job and did not look forward to doing it. A second, happier group didn't see themselves as custodial workers at all. They saw themselves as members of the care team. One described forming such a bond with patients that she continued to write letters to some of them after they were discharged. Another paid attention to which patients seemed to have few visitors or none at all, and would make sure to double back to spend some time with them... What these workers were doing, Wrzesniewski came to realize, was quietly creating the work that they wanted to do out of the work that they had been assigned -- work they found meaningful and worthwhile. (Stillman, 2013)

We can do this where ever we are and whatever we are doing. Like the man cleaning up at a work site can say he is cleaning this area or he can say that he is helping build a cathedral. Use the technique used by the janitors and discovered by Wrzesniewski. Find a purpose.

## **Chapter 8 How can the thoughts of Albert Ellis help us today?**

Albert Ellis was an American psychologist who in 1955 developed Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT). He wrote the book, *The Secret to Never Being Frustrated Again: How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything-Yes, Anything*. Central to REBT teachings is the ancient psychological insight of Epictetus (not Epicurus), who said, "What disturbs men's minds is not events but their judgments on events." (Matheson, 1916) My friend Dan who holds a PhD in psychology tells me he observed Ellis at psychological meetings. Dan said Albert Ellis had a way of provoking frustration in psychologist that would disagree with him. (Ellis, 1990) I guess you do not need to personally make people happy to write about how to be happy.

Albert describes how our beliefs interact with circumstances that in turn cause emotions.

He says it works like this:



Something happens.

Your subconscious mind makes up a story about the situation.

You have an emotional reaction to the story and cling to both the story and the belief.

For example:

You are cut off in traffic.

Your subconscious believes that you have been attacked and the person is a threat.

You feel angry and your subconscious turns on the fight or flight hormones.

You cling to the belief in the reaction of your subconscious.

If you had held a different belief, your emotional response would have been different:

You are cut off in traffic just as before

Your subconscious reacts in the same way

Your conscious mind overrides it with a story that the person may have an emergency

You feel good about not having an accident and hoping that the driver is OK. All of the unnecessary, irrational, and detrimental reactions are put under control.

The problem is the three basic musts:

I must do well and win the approval of others for my performances or else I am no good.

Other people must treat me considerately, fairly and kindly, and in exactly the way I want them to treat me. If they do not, they are no good and they deserve to be condemned and punished.

I must get what I want, when I want it; and I must not get what I do not want. It is terrible if I do not get what I want, and I cannot stand it.

We can reduce the frequency, the duration, and the intensity of our irrational beliefs by developing two insights:

- 1) We do not merely get upset but mainly upset ourselves by holding inflexible beliefs.
- 2) No matter when and how we start upsetting ourselves, we continue to feel upset because we *cling* to our irrational beliefs. (Ellis, 1990)

The only way to improve our outlook is to work hard at changing our beliefs. It takes practice, practice, practice and an acceptance of reality. Emotionally healthy human beings develop an acceptance of reality, even when reality is highly unfortunate and unpleasant.

REBT therapists strive to help their clients develop three types of acceptance: (1) unconditional self-acceptance; (2) unconditional other-acceptance; and (3) unconditional life-acceptance. These types of acceptance are described below:

(A) Unconditional self-acceptance:

I am a fallible human being; I have my good points and my bad points.

There is no reason why I must not have flaws.

Despite my good points and my bad points, I am no more worthy and no less worthy than any other human being.

(B) Unconditional other-acceptance:

Other people will treat me unfairly from time to time.

There is no reason why they must treat me fairly.

The people who treat me unfairly are no more worthy and no less worthy than any other human being.

(C) Unconditional life-acceptance:

Life doesn't always work out the way that I'd like it to.

There is no reason why life must go the way I want it to.

Life is not necessarily pleasant but it is seldom awful and it is nearly always bearable (Ellis, 1990)

As an activity: Start by listing all of your limitations and shortcomings, including moral and ethical failures. For myself: I cannot sing, dance, or play an instrument. I am incompetent at any sport with a ball and I never could run fast; age has not helped. If we are brutally honest, we all will come to the conclusion that despite what our mother said, we are not special. We are all unique and special to ourselves (and our mothers). This exercise will make it easier to be humble. We need to love ourselves, in spite of our flaws. This also makes it easier to follow the directive from Jesus to love others as ourselves. This exercise will make it easier to accept others, even if we are not treated well by others.

Life is a succession of now (the present); there is only now. We can look at each now to see if we are in pain, if we are hot or cold, or if we are hungry or thirsty. Life will have pain, hunger, thirst and, heat and/or cold. In our advanced civilization, we seldom experience any of the unpleasant states for very long.

REBT is very effective at increasing happiness. It requires repetition of the steps until we can go through life without upsetting ourselves with an unfounded belief in our superiority or inferiority and worth, unreasonable and unnecessary beliefs about others motives and how they should treat me, and unrealistic expectations of how life will proceed.

REBT is also a way to have a better marriage. After listing our faults and limitations it becomes easier to accept the faults in your spouse. It is also a good start at admitting our faults and limitations.

#### Another technique for not being annoyed:

Do not be upset at a barking dog, snoring spouse, pile driver or gonging clock

In the Movie Blues Brothers the characters are in a flop house next to the elevated rail line. A train comes by and the entire building shakes. Jake says to Elwood: "Don't worry it comes so often you won't notice it." A constant or repetitive annoyance does not need to be an annoyance at all.

I listen to the dog. Is it barking at another person? Is the dog barking to be let in the house? Is the dog mad for some reason? I listen intently and try to analyze the dog's motivation for barking. The next thing I will notice is it is light and it is morning.

The pile driver goes: Bang! Bang! .... It is rhythmic. There may be a song that can be linked. The rhythm is slow for songs. Old Man River Bang, He just Keeps flowing Bang, He don't know nothing Bang... The sun is up and I had a good night sleep but, dang the song is stuck in my head. The song is quickly displaced by the activities of the day

If my wife goes: ZZZ, ZZZ, ZZZ, snort, ZZZ, ZZZ, ZZZ, snort. There are three ZZZ to the snort. I carefully count them. 1, 2, 3 – 1,2,3... Then I lose track and it is morning.

My aunt and uncle lived in Hollidaysburg Pennsylvania next to the court house. The court house had a clock that chimed each one quarter hour. At the quarter hour, it would do a series of dings and donges. At the one-half hour, it would be more elaborate and on the hour, it would do an even more elaborate series followed by another series of bonges, one for each hour. My parents visited them often. When we visited them and I slept there the first night would be annoying, by the second night I didn't even notice it.

My wife's parents lived .2 miles from train tracks. It was on the other side of a hill so the sound wasn't direct. It was on the main line from Pittsburgh to New York. There was a steady stream of trains day and night. The nearest crossing was 1.3 miles down the line so we never heard the gates closing but, did hear the whistle. In the night, it was just like Jake said to Elwood. It was so often we didn't notice it. In the day, we would sometimes need to repeat a word but we must have learned to speak up. It was never a problem. If her parents had decided it was a problem, it would have been.

In the day, unless it is extremely loud we can allow the thought of the noise to come into our consciousness. Then let it be displaced by other thoughts. Repeat and it will come in less and less.

What links all of the above is a conscious decision that we need not react to things in a way that is upsetting. Our head is our property and we can let in or not let in any thought.

## **Chapter 9 Loneliness**

Many characters in the Bible felt the pain of Loneliness David expressed it well: Psalms. 25:16: "Turn Yourself to me, and have mercy on me, for I am desolate and afflicted. Palms. 102:6,7 I am like a pelican of the wilderness; I am like an owl of the desert. I lie awake, and am like a sparrow alone on the housetop." (*The Holy Bible*, 1952)

Loneliness has real detrimental effects on our health and mental wellbeing.

John Terrence Cacioppo the Tiffany and Margaret Blake Distinguished Service Professor at the University of Chicago. found that Loneliness results in two potentially pre-disease mechanisms that warrant special attention: cardiovascular activation and sleep dysfunction. He needed a larger sample size and more sensitive measurement to link behavior and cortisol regulation. (J. T. Cacioppo et al., n.d.)

In another study in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, a team of researchers argues that, in rats at least, loneliness can increase cancer incidence. The scientists separated their test rats at birth, keeping them either in groups of five or alone. Those kept alone had a 135% increase in the number of mammary tumors, a 8,391% increase in the size of tumors, and a 3.3-fold increase in the relative risk of malignancy They also showed higher levels of the hormone corticosterone, which is connected to stress. (Hermes et al., 2009)

In a literature study by Cacioppo ,that we met earlier: He found that loneliness was twice as deadly as obesity and also caused decreased brain function. (S. Cacioppo, Capitanio, & Cacioppo, n.d.)

Depression will make it hard to have friends and to spend time with friends. Without friends we experience loneliness. Loneliness leads to depression. It can be a descending cycle. Antidepressants cannot cause friends. It is hard to break out.

When I turned 21 at the beginning of my senior year at Penn State I decided to go to a bar. My only experience with alcohol was beer at fraternities. I wanted to see what this world that I had not been allowed to visit was like. It was depressing. It was mostly old men. (I was 21 so they may not have been as old as I now remember.) They were slumped over their drink. It was as Billy Joel said in his song Piano Man: "Yes they're sharing a drink they call loneliness. But it's better than drinking alone." ("BILLY JOEL LYRICS - Piano Man," n.d.) This is an example of self-medication. People who go to

bars to drink are likely self-medicating for loneliness induced depression. It is not the answer.

My experience at the bar in Pennsylvania was in contrast with what I observed in England. In those pubs there was actual conversation. The pubs were located in neighborhoods and within walking distance of the houses. The people in the bar were neighbors and knew each other. I am sure there was some self-medicating but with known neighbors it was possible to break the lonely, depressed, lonely cycle.

We cannot wire people and make them lonely, but we have enough antidotal examples including noticing the effect on ourselves away from social contact to conclude the above effects are true in people as well as rats. Times Square in New York and the Ginza in Tokyo can be lonely places. When I have been on a business trips by myself and go back to the hotel room, I find I am restless and want to be with someone. It is not being in the company of others which is desired; it is the one-on-one social interaction. Unfortunately, lonely people try to find comfort in counterproductive ways like social media, cell phones, TV, computer games, food, and worst of all drugs and alcohol.

A penalty to prisoners who get in trouble with the prison authorities is solitary confinement. Prisoners find it worse to be alone than being locked up in a small box with a serial ax murderer. It must be preferred to the pain of loneliness.

We not only need to see and listen to someone but we need touch. We need hugs and kisses. It has been found that kissing your spouse before going to work leads to increased earning, life expectancy and less chance of an automobile accident (Kirshenbaum, n.d.) Hugs have been found to make us happier. (Lyubomirsky, 2007) It is too bad we don't condone more hugging. I never turn down a hug. Hugs for me are love and not sex. Some women hug everyone. They make everyone happier. It is unfortunate our society does not condone men randomly hugging.

One man tried to do something about it. Juan Man made it his mission to reach out to strangers and offer free hugs. His campaign started when he observed people getting out of an airport and meeting people. He saw the happiness that it generated. He said: I'd been living in London when my world turned upside down and I'd had to come home. By the time my plane landed back in Sydney, all I had left was a carry-on bag full of clothes and a world of troubles. No one to welcome me back, no place to call home. I was a tourist in my hometown.

"Standing there in the arrivals terminal, watching other passengers meeting their waiting friends and family, with open arms and smiling faces, hugging and laughing together, I wanted someone out there to be waiting for me. To be happy to see me. To smile at me. To hug me.

So I got some cardboard and a marker and made a sign. I found the busiest pedestrian intersection in the city and held that sign aloft, with the words "Free Hugs" on both sides.

And for 15 minutes, people just stared right through me. The first person who stopped, tapped me on the shoulder and told me how her dog had just died that morning. How that morning had been the one-year anniversary of her only daughter dying in a car accident. How what she needed now, when she felt most alone in the world, was a hug. I got down on one knee, we put our arms around each other and when we parted, she was smiling.

Everyone has problems and for sure mine haven't compared. But to see someone who was once frowning, smile even for a moment, is worth it every time." ("Official Home of the Free Hugs Campaign - Inspired by Juan Mann - Home," n.d.) He was later banned but it may be legal where you live.

The only solution to loneliness is to meet people and interact with them one-on-one. Seeing facial expressions and noticing voice inflection and body language is key to real socializing. To counteract the loneliness, we need to socialize. Use meetup.com, join groups in which you have something in common with others in the group, join a church, take classes, and/or help others. Small groups in a church are best. In home Bible Studies are also good. Be sure to use a guide. Picking sections out of context can lead to wrong thinking.

Asking others to play a game can be a way to socialize. I consider Rummikub® a good game to play with friends. It can be learned in a few minutes. The games are short and it can be challenging. My wife and I play it with friends and find that it is conducive to laughter and happy conversation. We also have played it with grandchildren as young as eight. I don't cut them any slack and they still beat me. I would only add one rule to the one on the box and that is what I call the pity rule; when a player has a full tray, the player can come out on the next turn even without the required points or combinations. We also do not count the score; counting the score is boring.

### Aggressive, Passive and Assertive

I have observed people who are shy and would never say what they think. If they are told, we should go to Wendy's they would say in a near whisper: well OK. This is even if they were really wanting to go to Taco Bell. This passivity leads to withdrawing from what they would characterize as confrontation. This can lead to withdrawing from social contacts. The result is loneliness and all of the damaging effects of loneliness. The solution is not to be confrontational and aggressive but to be assertive. This is just saying your position on the matter at hand. Learning to do this is hard for these people. I have seen Toastmasters successfully bring one of these people from not speaking other than only answering direct questions with one or two words to being willing to start a conversation. Any small group of likeminded people will do. A book club if it is small enough. Even inviting a neighbor or a few neighbors in for coffee can help. Be brave and take action because if you do not start now it will only get harder.

## **Chapter 10 Electronics**

The Bible doesn't have anything to say about electronics but it does admonish us to use time wisely Colossians 4:5: "Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time." James 4:14: "Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes."

### Smart Phones:

We have discussed friends on line and found they cannot contribute to happiness. Electronics, in general, are not good for happiness and are doing great harm. They mostly use our precious time for nothing. I have an acquaintance that purchased a smart phone. Shortly after getting it he was showing everyone all that it could do. He was focused on the phone and all of its features. A few months later he confided that he found himself wasting his life on the phone. As Christians we need use our time in service to others, not wasting our life on the phone or other electronics.

A team from Northwestern University found the average daily usage of a smart phone for depressed individuals was about 68 minutes. For non-depressed individuals, it was about 17 minutes. They did not investigate if this was a cause or an effect. It is easy to see where it could be both. (Marla, n.d.)

TED is a nonpartisan nonprofit devoted to spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks. TED began in 1984 as a conference where Technology, Entertainment and Design converged, and today covers almost all topics — from science to business to global issues — in more than 110 languages. ("ted talks - Google Search," n.d.)

On February 16, 2016 Ann Makosinski gave a TED talk in which she said she was 18 and just received her first cell phone. The cell phone was necessary because she was going to college and needed to make long distance calls. As a child, she didn't have many toys. Her parents gave her materials and a glue gun. She said her life was different than the other kids of her age who lived in Victoria, Canada. Her lack of toys drove her to become creative and learn to make things. She developed two inventions, a flash light powered by the warmth of a hand and a coffee mug which generates electricity from the heat of the coffee. She said: "Turn off all of the electronics and think of the possibilities of interacting with real people, of the things you can cook or make, the places you can go and the things you can do. Can you help someone? Can you learn a new skill? Can you improve someone's life?" (*Ann Makosinski*, 2016) At the time of the TED Ann had just completed her High School education at a Christian School.

### Television:

Brandon S. Centerwall, MD, MPH describes the increase in crime in the white populations of the US, Canada, and South Africa. Television was not introduced to South Africa until 25 years after it was introduced into Canada and the US. Dr. Centerwall said, "To evaluate whether exposure to television is a cause of violence, I examined homicide rates in South Africa, Canada, and the United States. Given that blacks in South

Africa live under quite different conditions than blacks in the United States, I limited the comparison to white homicide rates in South Africa and the United States and the total homicide rate in Canada (which was 97% white in 1951). Data analyzed were from the respective government vital statistics registries. The reliability of the homicide data is discussed elsewhere. Following the introduction of television into the United States, the annual white homicide rate increased by 93%, from 3.0 homicides per 100 000 in 1945 to 5.8 per 100 000 in 1974; in South Africa, where television was banned, the white homicide rate decreased by 7%, from 2.7 homicides per 100 000 in 1943 through 1948 to 2.5 per 100 000 in 1974. As with US whites, following the introduction of television into Canada the Canadian homicide rate increased by 92%, from 1.3 homicides per 100 000 in 1945 to 2.5 per 100 000 in 1974. For both Canada and the United States, there was a lag of 10 to 15 years between the introduction of television and the subsequent doubling of the homicide rate. Given that homicide is primarily an adult activity, if television exerts its behavior-modifying effects primarily on children, the initial "television generation" would have had to age 10 to 15 years before they would have been old enough to affect the homicide rate. If this were so, it would be expected that, as the initial television generation grew up, rates of serious violence would first begin to rise among children, then several years later it would begin to rise among adolescents, then still later among young adults, and so on. And that is what is observed." (Centerwall, MB, Association, JW, American Academy of Pediatrics, Baker RK, et al., 1992)

This crime rate increase was linked to homicide even when there was little violence on early TV Shows. I Love Lucy and Leave it to Beaver were representative of early TV.

Centerwall did not speculate on the cause but television appears to be bad for happiness by increasing our wants and decreasing the time we spend interacting with real friends.

In 1975, Rothenberg's Special Communication in *JAMA*, "Effect of Television Violence on Children and Youth," first alerted the medical community to the deforming effects the viewing of television violence has on normal child development, increasing levels of physical aggressiveness and violence.<sup>1</sup> In response to physicians' concerns sparked by Rothenberg's communication, the 1976 American Medical Association (AMA) House of Delegates passed Resolution 38: "The House declares TV violence threatens the health and welfare of young Americans, commits itself to remedial actions with interested parties, and encourages opposition to TV programs containing violence and to their sponsors." (Rothenberg et al., 1975)

Other professional organizations have since come to a similar conclusion, including the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Psychological Association. In light of recent research findings, in 1990 the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a policy statement: "Pediatricians should advise parents to limit their children's television viewing..." (Centerwall, MB, Association, JW, American Academy of Pediatrics, Baker RK, Ball SJ, et al., 1992)

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statics Watching TV was the leisure activity that occupied the most time (2.8 hours per day), accounting for more than half of leisure time,



on average, for those age 15 and over. Socializing, such as visiting with friends or attending or hosting social events, was the next most common leisure activity, accounting for 41 minutes per day. (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016) Imagine if all of that time could be put to good use interacting with those that need our help.

News shows are particularly harmful. They show mostly bad things happening. News shows do not depict the 102,465 commercial aircraft flights that arrived safely today (the average in 2014). (Adhikari, n.d.) If there is a news story about a commercial flight it is about someone behaving badly or an aircraft accident. If it is very bad news, it is repeated every 15 minutes. In between bad news is something you should buy to make you happy, but we know it will not.

I have been told by marketing experts there are people who listened to shows like QVC and Home Shopping Network all day and think the people on these shows are their friends. These viewers seldom buy from the show; but, these viewers do buy when they see the product in the store. Other viewers buy frequently to talk to the employees of the company answering the telephone. It is very sad.

Donald Trump's wife must have found it convenient to use Trump and his office instead of the TV as a babysitter. In an interview, one of Trump's sons described his childhood. He said from the time he was a toddler his mother would bring him to Trump's office to play. He said he would play with the things in the office and listen to his father talk to people in the company and make deals. He claims that his years of experience in the Trump business are the same as his age. ("Interview of Trump's Son," 2016) In ancient times this is how the son of a stone mason learned to be a stone mason or a carpenter's son learned to be a carpenter. In some ways, it is how I learned some of what it is to be a farmer. It is unfortunate that most jobs are not conducive to having young children be with their parents at work. Trump was a better baby sitter than the TV. People working at home may be a cure if they keep the TV and the other electronics off.

My daughter says that people at her former work place would discuss the lives of the characters on television shows as if they were real people. They would express concern for the relationships of the characters. They would also look forward to events that the shows would predict.

If your friends are the TV show Friends, you will live an unhappy fantasy life.

#### Computer games:

Computer games have the double unhappy effect of reducing our connection to reality and taking time away from interactions with real people. A computer game is an unhappy replacement for real friends. It also has been linked to lack of empathy. Like any skill, empathy requires practice and requires observing body language as well as speech inflections. It is impossible to develop empathy playing a computer game.

We can do ourselves and our children a favor by greatly reducing time with the TV, computer games and cell phones. Using the TV as a baby setter is not a good substitute for real interaction with the world and people. In large doses, no matter the specific program, TV will do damage by reducing attention span, reducing empathy, and causing loss of reality. As a rule, never have anything electronic on when others are present.

### Internet good and bad

Everywhere scientists look they find the damage done by electronics. Electronics are wonderful tools. I am using electronics to write this and to look up things however, I focus most of my time on social interactions which make me happy. Today I had breakfast and lunch with my wife. We went on some errands together. This evening my wife and I are going to meet friends, have dinner and go to a play. We plan on talking about fun things and laughing about life.

The article below is just one example of many that demonstrate the damage done by electronics.

Too much time online could damage your immune system and make you more likely to catch flu, research suggests. People with greater levels of internet addiction are more susceptible to coughs and colds than those who spend less time online, according to the study. The research was carried out by Swansea University's College of Human and Health Science. They surveyed 500 people, aged between 18 and 101, and discovered that those who go on the internet too much have 30% more cold and flu symptoms than those who do not. It also suggests internet addicts may suffer stress when they are disconnected from the internet and the cycle of "stress and relief" may lead to altered levels of cortisol - a hormone that impacts immune function. Previous studies have shown that people who spend more time on the internet experience greater sleep deprivation, have worse eating habits, have less healthy diets, engage in less exercise, and also tend to smoke and drink alcohol more. (Reed, Phil and Vile, 2015)

The latest research was conducted by Professor Phil Reed and Rebecca Vile from Swansea University, Dr. Lisa A. Osborne from the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board, and Dr. Michela Romano and Professor Roberto Truzoli from the University of Milan. Prof Reed said, "We found that the impact of the internet on people's health was independent of a range of other factors, like depression, sleep deprivation, and loneliness, which are associated with high levels of internet use and also with poor health. "It may also be that those who spend a long time alone on the internet experience reduced immune function as a result of simply not having enough contact with others and their germs." (Reed, Phil and Vile, 2015)

Michael Van Ameringen, MD, FRCPC, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neurosciences, McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada Discussed his work at the 29th European College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ECNP) Congress. He revealed excessive Internet use, particularly excessive use of video streaming, social networking, and instant messaging, may be associated with severe mental health problems in younger

people, results of a Canadian survey indicate. The prevalence of symptoms of depression and anxiety, as well as poorer executive functioning, was significantly increased in students who met diagnostic criteria for Internet addiction. (Davenport, 2016)

In order to be an informed voters and be informed about recent events we need some way to do it without either becoming upset or spending too much time on electronics. I recommend getting news of the United States and the world from [www.drudgereport.com](http://www.drudgereport.com). It has short sentence segments that give the idea of the story. By clicking on the short sentence segments it brings up a link to the full story in a publication. These publications are in periodicals from around the world. It also has links to all of the news services around the world, all of the major periodicals in the world, and all of the columnists. I just timed myself and it took 11 minutes to do a complete review of the news. I only clicked on two links to see the details; usually, the sentence segment is sufficient. In general, it is best to dismiss anything that we cannot do anything to change. I also read the local paper. Again, this is only to read the details which affect me or useful information to guide me how to cast my vote in the local election. I also read the comics.

#### Light from electronics:

The blue light from our computer screens, the blue light from the compact florescent bulbs and the blue light from the LED lights have a substantial effect on our lives. We need the blue light during the day so that the hormones and our system receive the message that it is day. Blue in the day reduces depression and keeps our biological clock in sync. Blue light at night can prevent restful sleep and cause health problems. Lights in a house that are on at night should be what are called warm white. This is color temperature of 2,700 to 3,000. Lights on during the day should have a color temperature of 5,000 which is more like daylight. If there are exterior lights with blue spectrum black out blinds should be used at night.

Now researchers are finding increasingly that an out-of-phase circadian rhythm is a health hazard. Dieter Kunz, director of the Sleep Research and Clinical Chronobiology Research Group at Charité–Universitätsmedizin Berlin says: “Maintaining synchronized circadian rhythms is important to health and well-being,” says “A growing body of evidence suggests that a desynchronization of circadian rhythms may play a role in various diseases that cause tumors, diabetes, obesity, and depression.”

In Florida where I live we have plenty of daylight all year. The slogan is: Florida the sunshine state. In northern countries there is a problem of seasonal affective disorder (SAD). When the days are short some people become depressed. Exposure to sunlight in the morning when it would shine on a spring day was found effective in preventing this depression. It was found that morning bright light phase advanced the dim-light melatonin onset. This resetting of the subject’s internal clock decreased the depression symptoms (Parry & Maurer, 2003)

Shift workers, whom Kunz calls “a model for internal desynchronization,” are known to experience increased morbidity and mortality for a number of diseases, including cardiovascular disorders and cancer. In fact, in 2007, the World Health Organization decreed that shift work is a risk factor for breast cancer, and on that basis, in 2009, the Danish government began compensating some female shift workers with breast cancer.

At the same time, researchers have repeatedly shown that bright white light has the power to mitigate depression and other maladies of mood. An emergent recent literature suggests that blue light may be particularly potent for such applications. (Holzman, 2010)

In response, physicians at the Annual Meeting of the American Medical Association (AMA) today adopted guidance for communities on selecting among LED lighting options to minimize potential harmful human and environmental effects. The concern was the blue light that would shine into houses during the night and the exposure to blue light outside at night. This would improperly reset the internal clock at night. (FDA Guidance, 2016)

## **Chapter 11 The power of the subconscious**

The work below describes how our subconscious works to alarm us even before we are consciously aware. Since we have remembered links to previous visual stimuli that were threatening this link can cause alarm even if our conscious brain would simply ignore it because of the context.

Constantino Méndez-Bértolo, a researcher from Moncloa Campus of Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM) and Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (UPM). Explained: “The amygdala has a privileged spot in the brain, being one of the best-connected structures. It sends and receives projections from brain areas at different levels and at the same time is capable of indirectly unleashing physiological changes and autonomic nervous system responses”, However, its location deep inside the brain makes it a difficult structure to study with common neuroimaging techniques.” (Méndez-Bértolo et al., 2016)

The researchers implanted electrodes in the brains of eleven patients as a part of treating them for Epilepsy. This gave them an opportunity to study the amygdala in action. They found that it was able to react to visual stimuli in less than 100 milliseconds and stimulate the emotional brain canners associated with fear.

“Our work highlights the importance of ultra-rapid brain responses to threat-related visual stimuli. The responses in the amygdala are so fast that they could reflect an automatic or unconscious visual process, which might explain why fear can sometimes feel out of our voluntary control”, according to Dr. Bryan Strange, from the Laboratory for Clinical Neuroscience of the UPM, which led the research with participation from the Basic Psychology I department of the UCM, in collaboration with the University of London (UK), the University of Geneva (Switzerland) and the Reina Sofia Centre for Alzheimer's Research (Madrid). (Méndez-Bértolo et al., 2016)

Sometimes I have seen a person or be in a new place and have had the fight or flight feeling. It wasn't logical and I do not remember any bad experience with the person or the place. My subconscious must have had a memory that linked that person or place to something bad that happened early in my life. If that happens, by understanding how it is happening, we are able to just smile and say to our self: It is OK.

Learning skills is teaching our subconscious skills.

A few years ago I took my granddaughter for a driving lesson. With her driving we went down a narrow street with mailboxes close on each side. I took her entire focus to stay properly positioned on the street. She was very nervous. I realized that I no longer think about the position of my car on the street. The focus now is on the things beside the street that may cross into the street and things further down the road that may be of concern. My subconscious now keeps the car in the proper position on the road. The same applies to any skill that is practiced. We can practice keeping a good posture and a smile. That will teach our subconscious and it will become part of who we are.

## **Chapter 12 The power of the placebo effect:**

When new drugs are clinically tested the patient population is usually divided into two groups. One group is given a placebo which is a treatment that is not expected to provide any effect. The other group is given the test medicine. The tests are done double blind. Neither the physicians treating the patients nor the patients know who has which. Both groups improve. The placebo group improves because they expect to get well. The treated group may do better if the drug has any effect. This placebo effect drives drug testing companies crazy. Sometimes the placebo group does so well that it is hard to discern the effect of the drug. I read of a study where in the placebo group were accidentally told that they were given a placebo. They also improved even though they knew it was not the real medicine. It may be that they wanted to believe that they had the real medicine and their subconscious reacted in spite of this knowledge.

The study below describes what may be part of the reason for the placebo effect:

Artificially stimulating the brain's feel-good center boosts immunity in mice in a way that could help explain the power of placebos, a study reported. "Our findings indicate that activation of areas of the brain associated with positive expectations can affect how the body copes with diseases," The findings, reported in Nature Medicine, "might one-day lead to the development of new drugs that utilize the brain's potential to cure," the authors said. (Schnider, 2015)

It has long been known that the human brain's reward system, which mediates pleasure, can be activated with a dummy pill devoid of any active ingredients -- known as a placebo -- if the person taking it thinks it's real medicine.

Immune cells incubated from mice exposed to deadly E. coli bacteria after specific cells in the animals' reward center had been stimulated. These immune cells were at least twice as effective in killing bacteria than ordinary ones, they reported.

In a second test, the scientists vaccinated different mice with the same immune cells. Thirty days later, the new set of rodents was likewise twice as likely to be able to fight off infection. (Schnider, 2015)

The immune-boosting information emanated from a part of the brain called the ventral tegmental area, home to a reward system powered by the mood-modifying chemical dopamine. This area lights up in brain scans when a mouse -- or a human -- knows that a tasty meal, or a sexual encounter, is in the offing. "Maybe they could be used as new therapeutic targets,". (Schnider, 2015)

A smile activates the reward center. Just smiling can boost the immune system. It turns out that a smile is an effective drug. Are happy people healthy because they are happy or are healthy people happy because they are healthy? It seems like both are true.

According to Bennett & Lengacher who investigated the interaction between the brain, behavior, and the immune system found that simply anticipating a mirthful laughter experience boosted health-protecting hormones. (Bennett & Lengacher, 2009)

Use the placebo effect to be happier. Be optimistic, look for and anticipate good things, expect good results from you diet or exercise. Deciding that the flu shot works and you will not get a cold this season will make getting a cold less likely. If disappointed use Albert Ellis.

If we are ill putting ourselves in the hands of God and saying: "Your will be done." can be a powerful way to put our subconscious on notice that we are in good hands and it will reduce all of the negative stress effects that stand in the way of recovery.

We need to be careful in discussing the role of our mind in effecting a disease process with a person who has a disease. It can put pressure on them and make them feel responsible if a cure is not in the offing. We never want to make a person feel that it is their problem that they have a disease or are unable to get well. This pressure can have an opposite effect.

## **Chapter 13 Religion and Happiness**

A study in the American Journal of Epidemiology by researchers at the London School of Economics and at the Erasmus University Medical Centre in the Netherlands found that the secret to sustained happiness lies in participation in religion. The study suggests that joining a religious group could do more for someone's "sustained happiness" than other forms of social participation, such as volunteering, playing sports or taking a class. The researchers noted that it is unclear whether the benefits of participating in a religious

organization are connected to being in the religious community, or to the faith itself. (Croezen, Avendano, Burdorf, & van Lenthe, 2015)

This study must have been done by people who were atheists and do not understand Christianity. I find it amusing to read papers written about religions that they do not practice or understand. Having the result, they obtained and published gives it more creditability than if a Christian group had done this work.

Mauricio Avendano, an epidemiologist at LSE and an author of the study, said “The church appears to play a very important social role in keeping depression at bay and also as a coping mechanism during periods of illness in later life. It is not clear to us how much this is about religion per se, or whether it may be about the sense of belonging and not being socially isolated.” (Croezen et al., 2015)

Researchers looked at four areas: 1) volunteering or working with a charity; 2) taking educational courses; 3) participating in religious organizations; 4) participating in a political or community organization. Of the four, participating in a religious organization was the only social activity associated with sustained happiness, researchers found.

The study analyzed 9,000 Europeans who were older than 50. The study also found that joining political or community organizations lost their benefits over time. In fact, the short-term benefits from those social connections often lead to depressive symptoms later on, researchers say. Although healthier people are more likely to volunteer, the researchers found no evidence that volunteering actually leads to better mental health. Benefits could be outweighed by other negative impacts of volunteering, such as stress, Avendano said.

In the Christian religion we are to confess our sins and thereby are forgiven. We are to not worry about the future. We are to love others as we love ourselves. We are to be grateful. This is Seneca and Albert Ellis combined. A typical church service has group singing, meditating and expressing gratitude. There is a group cohesion that provides a sense of belonging and friendship. It is no wonder that Christianity has proven to be helpful to happiness.

Joining a Christian Church and attending a small group in the church will often improve happiness. Volunteering to help on specific projects with others is also good. Be careful not to be in a position of responsibility if it is stressful. Stress can undo any of the benefits.

It is interesting how hungry people are for spirituality. I have watched the large number of people at shrines in Japan, Korea, Thailand, Hong Kong, Laos, and China. They are hungry for something but do not know what it is. The underground church in China is flourishing because it is under threat all the time and only real Christians will be members. The Chinese government only allows churches that are controlled by the government. The government appoints the leaders of these churches. While visiting an Episcopalian church in an undisclosed location with an underground church member

from mainland China we met the minister. He said how happy he was that the Chinese government was allowing churches. My friend said that the minister did not understand what was happening. It is interesting that they have a stronger and larger church than the United States. The happiness they find in the church is more important to them than the suffering from the government persecution. This is a phenomenon that appears everywhere from Jerusalem in the year immediately after Jesus had risen to now in many countries throughout the world.

I have observed both Eastern and Western Russia where the people are without religion. They are unhappy and very materialistic. Socialism has destroyed religion there and it is only coming back in pockets. The Eastern Orthodox Church is very ritualistic. The core members are quite old and the Church has not found a way to attract youth to the joy of Christianity. Some of the mainline and evangelical churches from the US are finding their way in. We all pray for their success.

## **Chapter 14 Empathy**

Happiness of our species requires a social life. In order to have that life we need to be able to understand others as they understand the world. Having empathy is common to all but the few psychopaths. Three-year-old children have it and even my dog had it. If I stopped moving and was quiet the dog understood that I was listening and she would stand still and cock her head to listen.

Recent studies have shown that the great apes also have empathy. The studies measured the ability of the apes to understand what another ape or person know. They can even know when someone has a false belief. The study had apes observe apes or humans being tricked and determined if the apes understood that the ape or person was tricked into believing something that wasn't true. They used the same procedure on three year old toddlers and obtained the same results. (de Waal, 2016)

Empathy is the ability to step into someone else's shoes and walk with them on their journey. Empathy guides action when dealing with another person. Empathy is not pity it is understanding. I have spent time with the vagrants at the beach to try to understand their motivation. Just listening to them without being judgemental and asking relevant follow up questions seems to brighten their day. I do not feel sorry for the ones I have spoken with. I found that it was their life style choice.

A study at the University of Michigan showed that our empathy is declining. There are theories that this may be caused by less and less real face to face conversations. Part of the decline may be due to the influence of electronics. (Konrath, O'brien, & Hsing, 2011)

The right supramarginal gyrus, a part of our brain, gives us empathy. This is missing or damaged in psychopaths. Scientists are able to see it on a brain scan. (Silani, Lamm, Ruff, & Singer, 2013) Some people have more than others. Most of us are a mix of selfishness and wishing to help others. Just as exercising our muscles can make them



stronger, exercising our empathy can make it stronger. This may become an important part in decisions about incarceration and rehabilitation.

Empathy is the basis of good relationships and good relationships are the basis of happiness. Most relationships fall apart not because there is disagreement about some subject but because each does not see what the other person sees. Empathy would fix many broken marriages. However; It can't be fixed if one of the partners is a psychopath. If we have empathy, we will not follow the golden rule of doing for others what you would have them do for you. It is harder than that: We should do for others as they would have us do for them.

A way to exercise our empathy power is to listen. I heard of a company that had all of their sales people provide to the management a list of details about their customers: marital status, the spouse's name, children, pets, hobbies, etc. They found that it made their salesmen seem more empathetic and more likely to make a sale. By working to seem empathetic we can become more empathetic. When meeting new people, we can learn about them by asking questions about their lives and goals. If we are nonjudgmental and simply let the persons lead we can learn a great deal. We can also supply supportive comments where we agree. Since it is likely that even their dog doesn't listen to them they will feel better. It will make them want to be a friend and that in turn can make us happier.

Be a greeter at church and be part of the follow up team. Do more asking than telling. Only provide the information they want at the time.

When you can't withdraw from an argument it can be helpful to take the other side. You will be more empathetic and it will at least form a basic understanding of the issue. It may also lead to the other person switching sides to understand your argument. Anger will poison any attempt at a logical discussion.

## **Chapter 15 Experience**

Having new experiences gives interest to life. It can make us more interesting to our friends. Seeing all ten of the great wonders of the world is not as good as meeting 10 new people in a new place. Reminisce about new experiences either by thinking about them to ourselves or sharing them with others. An experience that will linger and provide happy feelings is a missionary trip. It can be on the other side of the world or it can be next door to the church. Being with others and sharing Christianity with others will feel good for a long time. Doing it to feel happy will not work. Doing it because of our great commission will provide the happiness.

When we are on a cruise, rather than taking a tour to see some ancient ruin, cathedral or natural formation I prefer to find a local hang out and visit with the natives. There are usually some retired people in a park, locals in a coffee house, or workers on a break. The conversations are fascinating. They ask me about the US, where I live and what I do. They tell me about their lives. They often have pictures of their families. In Asia talking

with me allows them to practice their English. Meeting new people is certainly more enjoyable than the droning of a tour guide and being with a group of ungrateful people taking worse pictures than are available on postcards. It is a helpful way to increase empathy. (I just noticed how unempathetic I am to fellow tourists. I didn't say I was perfect.) Now that I have thought this through I only feel pity.

My wife Harriet and I have tried many new things; some do not turn out well. We often say: "Well, we don't have to do that again." Our friends find it more interesting when we share bad new experiences. In any event they can be a warning or they can just be an interesting story. We can laugh about them later. Laughter takes the pain out of an unpleasant experience.

Researchers Fred B. Bryant and Joseph Veroff came up with suggestions: Tell friends about an experience that was pleasurable. Good food at a restaurant, a journey that you enjoyed, a game you played etc. Be careful to not repeat and not be bragging. If someone is with you tell them how you are enjoying what you are doing. If someone is not with you rehearse what you are going to say about the experience. If you are enjoying something remember it so that you can relive the experience. (Bryant & Veroff, 2007)

Ryan Howell was bothered by a conundrum. He noticed numerous studies conducted over the past 10 years have shown that life experiences give us more lasting pleasure than material things, and yet people still often deny themselves experiences and prioritize buying material goods.

So, Prof. Ryan Howell, associate professor of psychology at San Francisco State University, decided to look at what's going on. In a study published in 2014, he found that people think material purchases offer better value for the money because experiences are fleeting, and material goods last longer. So, although they'll occasionally splurge on a big vacation or concert tickets, when they're in a more money-conscious mode, they will stick to material goods.

But in fact, Prof. Howell found that when people looked back at their purchases, they realized that experiences actually provided better value. "What we find is that there's this huge error in predicting the result," he says. "People think that experiences are only going to provide temporary happiness, but they actually provide both more happiness and more lasting value." And yet we still keep on buying material things, he says, because they're tangible and we think we can keep on using them. (Manriquez & Howell, n.d.)

### Savouring

We can savour things in life. I describe it as focusing senses one at a time on an enjoyable experience. Relax and close your eyes when listening to music you like. Close your eyes and breathe in the fragrance of a special food or drink. Look at a beautiful scene as if you are a camera while not letting other senses in and not let other thoughts linger in your conscious. Feel the warmth of another when giving and getting a hug. Look to expand experiences to savour. (Bryant & Veroff, 2007) The key to savouring is to

focus one sense at a time on an experience. Turn off electronics, sit where it is comfortable, put one (only one) chocolate kiss in your mouth, close your eyes and let it melt. Feel it turn soft, taste it as it becomes liquid and body temperature. Focus on how it tastes and how it feels. Savouring is a way to maximize an experience.

Being in awe.

Being in awe is the sensation we allow ourselves when we experience something magnificent. It can fill us with wonder. It is what is experienced when we, for the first time, walk through the woods to the edge of the Grand Canyon. Suddenly seeing an unimaginable scene almost takes your breath away. The result can be spiritual.

Paul K. Piff of the University of California was the chairman of a symposium at the 26 annual convention of the association of psychological science. At the symposium Piercarlo Valdesolo of Claremont McKenna College talked about how awe shapes cognition and perception. In particular, he reported studies finding that awe increases both supernatural belief and the tendency to interpret events as the consequence of intentional and purpose-driven agents. Piff discussed the importance of awe for morality. In particular, Piff argues that awe makes people less self-focused and more prosocial. Across several laboratory studies, Piff found that awe, relative to various control states conditions (e.g., amusement), led to enhanced generosity. Moreover, an in-vivo manipulation of awe in which participants stood in a grove of towering trees (versus control) led to reduced feelings of entitlement and increased helping. Process data indicate that awe prompts feelings of being connected to something larger than the self, which, in turn, lead to increased virtuous behavior. (Valdesolo, Piercarlo & Piff, n.d.)

We should be in awe more often. We see sights and don't allow ourselves to be in awe. We should be in awe at every church service when we attempt to comprehend God and what Jesus has done for us. We should be in awe at a new born baby and how such a marvelous complex creature could be formed. Look at the night sky and let yourself be in awe. We can be in awe without traveling. Be in awe while looking at a bridge over a river and think of what was done to build it.

When pineapples were first brought back to Europe they cost the equivalent of thousands of dollars. Only the very rich and royalty could afford them. Later they became inexpensive and were not sought after by the rich and royalty. They taste as good now as they did when they cost thousands. When eating a pineapple, think of how fortunate you are to be eating something that the royalty would have treasured. Be in awe of the inexpensive things now available that we can enjoy, that in earlier times would have cost a fortune.

Bonnie Ware is an Australian nurse who spent several years working in palliative care, caring for patients in the last 12 weeks of their lives. She recorded their dying epiphanies in a blog called Inspiration and Chai, which gathered so much attention that she put her observations into a book called The Top Five Regrets of the Dying.

Here are the top five regrets of the dying, as witnessed by Ware:

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 realize 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 honored even a half of their dreams and had to die knowing that it was due to choices they had made, or not made. Health brings a freedom very few realize, until they no longer have it."

2. I wish I hadn't worked 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."

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."

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

"Often they would not truly realize 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."

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

"This is a surprisingly common one. Many did not realize 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 themselves, that they were content, when deep within, they longed to laugh properly and have silliness in their life again." (Ware, 2012)

Start now: Death is at everyone's elbow.

## **Chapter 16 Forgiveness**

Mathew 6:14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Mathew 18:22 Peter thought that he was being generous when he said to Jesus how many times should I forgive others, seven times? Jesus said I tell you not seven times but seventy-seven times. (*The Holy Bible*, 1952) This really meant always. In most Christian church services everyone repeats a prayer Jesus taught that asks God to forgive us as we forgive others. If we are to be true Christians we must pass this test. I have often wondered why someone doesn't say "I want God to be more forgiving than I am" or ask to negotiate a less demanding standard. This tough standard is for our own good. Our lives would be so much better if we just did what Jesus taught.

Jesus was right and his suggested prayer should make us understand the need to let go of hate and loathing of others. It is like taking poison and thinking the person we have not forgiven will get sick. There are no hate waves we can send out to hurt the other person. Hate hurts the hater not the hated.

During the cold war we never hated the Russians. We felt sorry for them and we worried about what their leaders may do to start a war. We also worried about their expansionist efforts. Their hatred ate at them from the inside.

When we discussed Marcus Aurelius we noted the need for closure. This is particularly important for hate. Hate causes a continued level of stress. Even when we are not thinking about it consciously our subconscious is keeping the thought alive. The constant subconscious alarm triggers a level of the fight or flight hormones that in turn cause the stress hormones. As mentioned before, our body functions are disrupted and real damage is done by the stress. Digestive diseases, heart disease, depression and even skin diseases can be caused by holding on to hate.

The only cure is forgiveness. It starts by bringing the hate or hates into our conscious and dealing with them. Think of the people we hate one by one. Start by thinking of them as flawed individuals then honestly think of ourselves as flawed individuals. Think of how we would like to be forgiven and say: "You are forgiven." It is not easy and may require multiple attacks. Don't give up. If it is possible, tell the person: "You are forgiven." Because of bad memories a face to face contact may be counterproductive. In that case do it by letter. If you are successful it will feel like a weight lifted from your shoulders.

## **Chapter 17 Mindfulness**

Mindfulness practice is not a religious practice per say but it can help us control our mind. We will then be a better and happier person and therefor better able to do God's work.

"Mindfulness practice brings all sorts of insights into the workings of the mind. Perhaps the hardest to grasp is the idea that thoughts are not reality. We're so accustomed to

providing a narrative track to our lives and believing in our story that to see things otherwise is a real challenge. Remember, this practice is not about emptying the mind, getting rid of difficult emotions, escaping life's problems, being free of pain, or experiencing never-ending bliss. Mindfulness practice is about embracing our experience as it is—and sometimes what is can be unpleasant at the moment... We usually try to feel better by decreasing the intensity of painful experiences; in mindfulness practice, we work instead to increase our capacity to bear them. Ronald Siegel, Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychology at Harvard said: "The working definition of mindfulness that my colleagues and I find most helpful is awareness of present experience with acceptance."(Siegel, 2010)

Watching our minds work is a revelation. We will see that we jump from thought to thought and nearly every one causes some emotion. (Barker, 2015)

As a Nobel Prize in Economics winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman made many contributions including how people think about things and why the stock market is not logical. He explained the power of the stream of consciousness when he noted: "Nothing in life is as important as you think it is while you are thinking about it."(Kahneman, 2016)

Harvard happiness expert Daniel Gilberts has shown that a wandering mind is not a happy mind:" People spend 46.9 percent of their waking hours thinking about something other than what they're doing, and this mind-wandering typically makes them unhappy... "Mind-wandering is an excellent predictor of people's happiness," Killingsworth says. "In fact, how often our minds leave the present and where they tend to go is a better predictor of our happiness than the activities in which we are engaged." ... Time-lag analyses conducted by the researchers suggested that their subjects' mind-wandering was generally the cause, not the consequence, of their unhappiness." (Killingsworth & Gilbert, 2010)

Joseph Goldstein notes: "Anybody who's paid any attention to their minds will know throughout the day there's a run of thoughts going through our heads. Usually, we're quite caught up in them and identified with them. We take them to be who we are. Without mindfulness, we're lost in the dream of our thoughts in these mind created worlds and we're not even aware that that's what's happening, we're so enmeshed in them." (Goldstein & Goldstein, 2007)

We need to be mindful more often, rather than assuming just because it's in your head, it's you and it's to be taken seriously. Sharon Salzberg teaches Buddhist meditation. In 1974, she co-founded the Insight Meditation Society at Barre, Massachusetts with Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein. Sharon Salzberg writes: "I think one of the issues that we have is that we don't necessarily recognize that a thought is just a thought. We have a certain thought, we take it to heart, we build a future on it, we think, "This is the only thing I'll ever feel", "I'm an angry person and I always will be", "I'm going to be alone for the rest of my life", and that process happens pretty quickly." (salzberg, 2014)

From Joseph Goldstein's book, *Mindfulness*: "...contrary to some popular beliefs, our aim should be not to follow the heart but to train the heart. All of us have a mix of motivations; not everything in our hearts is wise or wholesome. The great power of mindful discernment allows us to abandon what is unwholesome and to cultivate the good. This discernment is of inestimable value for our happiness and wellbeing. "Where is this action leading? Do I want to go there? ...This thought which has arisen, is it helpful? Is it serving me or others in some way or is it not? Is it just playing out perhaps old conditions of fear or judgment or things that are not very helpful for ourselves or others? Mindfulness really helps us both see and discern the difference and then it becomes the foundation then for making wiser choices and why the choices lead to more happiness. It's really simple. It's not easy to do, but it's very simple." (Goldstein, n.d.)

From Sharon Salzberg: "What we're talking about with mindfulness is not in any way eradicating thoughts or annihilating them, but being able to have a little bit of space so we can make a clear decision: Do I want to nurture this or do I want to let it go?" You need to not be overwhelmed by the feeling in order to remedy it and mindfulness helps you keep that distance so you can be of help. (salzberg, 2014)

From Joseph Goldstein: "Mindfulness has a key role in the development of compassion. In the face of suffering, compassion is that desire of, "How can I help in this situation?" What's necessary for compassion to arise is a willingness to come close to the suffering and this is not always easy to do. Very often in the face of suffering you don't want to see it because it's unpleasant. Mindfulness allows us to let it in and when we let it in and come close to it, that's precisely the condition for compassion to arise." (Goldstein & Goldstein, 2007)

Kragel and Bar developed a way using MRI to observe brain patterns that were associated with different emotions. They were able to determine if a person was angry, afraid, pleased. They found that while we are at rest our stream of consciousness is sending emotional signals to our brain that activate all of the emotion states and hormones are released that correspond to those emotional states. (Kragel & LaBar, 2016) In earlier work Tusche and others found that in periods of rest the wondering mind is active. (Tusche, Smallwood, Bernhardt, & Singer, 2014) An important part of emotional health is managing the flow of consciousness. Mindfulness practice can enable us to manage our flow of consciousness. This will make us more productive, calm and happier.

My mindfulness practice is similar to my meditation practice. I sit upright in a comfortable chair. Close my eyes and listen to the thoughts that run through my head. Unlike meditation I do not dismiss them and return to breathing or a mantra. I observe them and, judge their relevance and helpfulness. I then allow them to be displaced by the next thought. I find that the thoughts slowdown and become more relevant and helpful. In *Ulysses*, James Joyce allows us to observe the thoughts running through the head of his character Harold Bloom. (Joyce, 1922) Joyce has us looking into the head of Bloom just like we are looking into our own heads.

## Chapter 18 Meditation

When people think of Meditation a picture of Buddhists in saffron robes often comes to mind. Meditation is not about Buddhism or about any specific religion. As a Christian it can help us do what Paul recommended. We can show the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

A meditative state is a state of mind that can reduce stress and help us put our lives in perspective. There are four states of the brain each with characteristic brain wave patterns: Deep Sleep, REM Sleep, Awake and Meditative.

There many ways to meditate, none of them wrong. It is only a question of finding what works for you. I find the following works for me: I sit upright in a chair with my hands in my lap. I close my eyes and think of relaxing my feet, then my legs, then my hands then my arms, then my back and then my face. I allow the background sounds of air conditioning system, traffic, distant conversations to move through my conscious but not dwell on them. I pay attention to my breathing and then allow it to be in the background. When thoughts of things like schedules and tasks come to mind I refocus on breathing or use the mantra aba to replace them. For me it is refreshing, unlike a nap. Rather than feeling groggy or weak afterwards I feel invigorated and my senses are more aware. I also find that I can do a meditative experience with my eyes open. I let the visions pass like letting sounds pass. Meditation can be done anywhere.

This is how ABC's nighttime anchor Dan Harris describes his technique: It really involves three extremely simple steps. One: Sit with your eyes closed and your back straight. Two: Notice what it feels like when your breath comes in and when your breath goes out, try to bring your full attention to the feeling of your breath coming in and going out. The Third step is the biggie. Every time you try to do this, your mind is going to go crazy. You are going to start thinking about all sorts of stupid things like if you need a haircut, why you said that dumb thing to your boss, what's for lunch, etc. Every time you notice that your mind is wandering, bring your attention back to your breath and begin again. This is going to happen over and over and over again and that is meditation. (Harris, 2014)

My technique is nearly the same. I will start by purposely relaxing my body one part at a time starting with my feet, legs, hands, arms and shoulders. I then observe my breathing. If there are distractions I use the mantra aba. Repeating the mantra in my head helps block out the world.

Eric Barker provided the basis for the following: The Buddhists have a Meditation called Loving Kindness Meditation. It consists of thinking about someone and thinking: May you be happy, may you be healthy, may you be safe and may you live with ease. It is to be done slowly thinking about each part and really wishing these good things on someone. Start with loved ones and then friends, then acquaintances, then to those you do not know and to people who are difficult. Finally wish these things on all beings. It is easier to do than most meditation because you are using your mind in an active way. It is



not a substitute for the more passive meditation but it can be used in addition to passive meditation. (Barker, 2015)

Loving Kindness meditation will do two good things. It will make you more empathetic, you will also really wish these things on everyone. It can be part of forgiveness. This in turn will make you more likable. It will also make you less covetous. Remember reducing wants is better than increasing things.

If meditation is not helpful, stop.

## **Chapter 19 Health**

We can be happy even with health problems. It is the downward trajectory that can lead to less happiness. If we have bad knees and back (one of my many limitations) that limit some activities, we can still be happy. It doesn't limit our choice of friends or our thankfulness. Just like any other self-help advice document, good diet, regular exercise and proper sleep need to be part of our life. Proper rest is important, depression breeds on insomnia.

### Exercise

Morgan and Goldston found that Physical exercise is correlated with improved mental wellbeing and happiness. It has been found to be as effective in treating depression as other interventions. (Morgan & Goldston, 1987)

Trivedi also found the value of exercise. Exercise has been found to be a useful part of treating depression. This was shown in a study by Trivedi and others. It was as useful as medication. The successful treatments involve talking, medication and exercise. (Trivedi et al., 2011)<sup>3</sup>

In a panel discussion Otto, Trivedi and others concluded that exercise would be a good way to treat the entire planet. One of the members of the panel Dr Church stated: "The risks are relatively minimal if the individual understands the importance of starting slowly and building up the activity over time. The people who typically experience adverse effects are males in their 40s who try to perform the same workout they performed in high school. The goal of treatment should be physical activity, not necessarily buying a pair of running shoes and joining a gym, although joining a gym does motivate some patients. Before initial treatment, the clinician should identify high-risk individuals, such as patients with histories of stroke, heart attack, or diabetes. These patients should be medically cleared before beginning physical activity. For the vast majority of people, the risk of sudden cardiac events is minimal, as long as they start at a realistic pace. For example, a walking program at light to moderate intensity is safe for most people. Intensity can be increased over time, and the patient should pay attention to symptoms such as chest pain or shortness of breath. Common problems patients face when beginning exercise are bone and joint issues, such as sore knees and ankles, and more chronic problems, such as old injuries that are developing into arthritis. If a patient

starts an exercise program slowly, joint stiffness, soreness, and pain can be minimized.” (Otto et al., 2007)

The goal is to release the endorphins that come with exercise and to help control the negative effects of the stream of consciousness.

Exercise can be lonely and I have seen people in the gym that appear to need socialization. Some wear ear phones that discourages contact. That is counterproductive. Working out with a friend would add the effects of the exercise with the personal contact with friends. There are group exercise classes that can provide both the exercise and the socialization. A brisk walk with a friend or friends in the neighbourhood can be low cost, low stress and low impact.

Luke and Cooper found that while exercise is important for physical and mental health it is not a practical way to lose weight. Only calorie restriction can prevent and reverse obesity. (Luke & Cooper, 2013) Others have found the same thing.

### Sleep

Sleep is important to both health and happiness. Adequate sleep has been found to be an important part of a healthy and happy life. Please read the reference below. I should make you appreciate sleep and take action. The studies discussed in this reference suggest that sleep loss (less than 7 hours per night) may have wide-ranging effects on the cardiovascular, endocrine, immune, and nervous systems and can cause the following: Obesity in adults and children, Diabetes and impaired glucose tolerance, Cardiovascular disease and hypertension, Anxiety symptoms, Depressed mood, and Alcohol use (Colten, Altevogt, Research, & and, 2006) If you need an alarm clock to wake up you are not getting enough sleep. Sleep deprivation causes obesity which causes sleep apnea which causes obesity. This causes all of the above problems. It is an easy cycle to start and hard to break. Turn off the electronics and get to bed.

Real effective sleep cannot be done while we are anxious about the future, worrying about the past, holding hate, concerned about our status or using alcohol or drugs to fall asleep. Be thankful for what you have and where you are. Turn your concerns over to God by saying: I have done all I can do now. I leave it all in your hands.

### Diet

The usual American diet has a high content of high glycemic carbohydrates. These carbohydrates are quickly broken down to simple sugars and enter the blood quickly. High levels of sugars are toxic to tissue. The pancreas produces insulin to prevent the sugars from running free. The insulin carries the sugar to where it can be used to produce energy, to produce glycogen an animal starch for temporary energy storage or make fat. After the sugar rush is past the insulin continues to transport sugar out of the blood. The result is low blood sugar. Continued cycles of high sugar, high insulin, low sugar will cause insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes. Long before the actual diabetes arrives the low sugar periods produce depression. The temporary low sugar will turn down metabolism which also turns down the brain.

Bevin Fletcher, Associate Editor, [@biosciencetech](#) writes: Limiting high glycemic foods like potatoes, rice, bread and cereals and replacing them with low glycemic foods like beans, nuts, seeds, most vegetables and most fruits will reduce the sugar spike and resultant insulin spike. This is just a recent example of studies on Carbohydrates. (Fletcher, 2016)

If we start a day with a cereal that is loaded with sugar, add sugar, drink orange juice that is high in sugar, and add sugar to tea or coffee we set ourselves up. There will be the mid-morning sugar crash. depression, lack of focus and the craving for anything with sugar.

It would seem that eating the doughnut in the break room would make you happier but after the sugar rush the day will drag on and it will be hard to stay in a good mood. Reduction of high glycemic foods is also good for health in general. In contrast, consuming healthy carbohydrates with a low glycemic index, such as legumes, non-starchy vegetables and whole grains seemed to have a protective effect, and was associated with 67 percent lower breast cancer risk. “One of the most important findings here is that the type of carbohydrate-containing foods you consume can impact your cancer risk,” said the lead study author, but non-healthy ones, such as fast foods and sugary beverages, seem to increase the risk of these cancers.” (Gangwisch et al., 2015) One of my students in a finance class said that her husband warned against rewarding yourself for abstaining with the thing you were trying to conquer. He was talking about successfully restraining from overspending. You should not reward yourself by spending. The same applies with food. Don’t reward yourself with a doughnut for having lost weight. Tell a friend about your success and ask for a hug.

James E. Gangwisch, PhD, assistant professor at Columbia University in the department of psychiatry, wanted to find out whether foods with a higher glycemic index (GI)—a scale that ranks carbohydrate-containing foods by how much they raise your blood sugar—would be associated with greater odds of depression. “When I was a kid, I was almost like a candy junkie,” Gangwisch says. “I noticed for myself, if I eat a lot of sugar, it makes me feel down the next day.” Gangwisch says he stopped eating added sugar years ago but remained curious about whether a junk food diet could make people depressed. He and a team of researchers looked at data from food questionnaires and a scale that measures symptoms of depressive disorders from postmenopausal women in the Women’s Health Initiative Observational Study. The data came from roughly 70,000 women, none of whom suffered from depression at the study’s start, who had baseline measurements taken between 1994 and 1998, and then again after a three-year follow-up.

Diets higher on the glycemic index, including those rich in refined grains and added sugar, were associated with greater odds of depression, the researchers found. But some aspects of diet had protective effects against developing depression, including fiber, whole grains, whole fruits, vegetables and lactose, a sugar that comes from dairy products and milk that sits low on the glycemic index. Added sugars—but not total sugars or total carbohydrates—were strongly associated with depression. Though the authors couldn’t pinpoint a mechanism from this study—it was associative—they note that one possibility

is that the overconsumption of sugars and refined starches is a risk factor for inflammation and cardiovascular disease, both of which have been linked to the development of depression. This kind of diet could also lead to insulin resistance, which has been linked to cognitive deficits similar to those found in people with major depression.

Gangwisch directed the following to Psychiatrists that were treating patients. In a book somehow it is not personal and I can put this in but if the reader wants to discuss this with friends and acquaintances we should remember to be as sensitive as a Psychiatrist with a patient.

Further research is needed, Gangwisch says, and it's not yet known whether the results would translate to a broader group of people, including men and younger women. But even now, diet may be worth discussing with people who suffer from depression, Gangwisch says—even though doing so may be difficult. “It’s hard enough to get the general public to avoid those kinds of foods, but it’s even harder to get someone who suffers from depression to avoid them and give them up,” he says. “You don’t want people to feel guilty either...to say, ‘Your diet’s bad and you should change it,’ would take kind of a soft sell approach.” Still, he believes the effort is worth it. “I think it’s important and I think it has a big effect on your mood and how you feel and your energy level,” he says. “If it’s something that people can change; they really would benefit from it.”(Gangwisch et al., 2015)

Banini Gopinath and others studied a total of 1,609 adults aged 49 years and older who were free of cancer, coronary artery disease, and stroke at baseline. They were followed for 10 years. In all, 249 (15.5%) participants had aged successfully 10 years later. However, participants in the highest versus lowest (reference group) quartile of total fiber intake had greater odds of aging successfully than suboptimal aging. They found that Consumption of dietary fiber from breads/cereals and fruits independently influenced the likelihood of aging successfully over 10 years. These findings suggest that increasing intake of fiber-rich foods could be a successful strategy in reaching old age disease free and fully functional. (Gopinath, Flood, Kifley, Louie, & Mitchell, 2016) Wanting to be in the group that aged successfully I have increased my fiber intake. A sample of one does not make a good study however: My one person clinical study (me) shows that high fiber is a good idea. I have more energy and I feel better. I have less midafternoon drowsiness.

I looked into our cupboard and found we have many cereals with high added sugar. We are easily fooled into thinking that with a title like granola it would be healthy. I took the grams of sugar and divided by the serving size. For example, Post Great Grains lists their serving size as 55 grams and the sugar is listed as 13 grams.  $13 \div 55 = .236$   
 $.236 \times 100 = 23.6\%$  Here is what I found:

Product	Percent sugar
Great Value Old fashioned oats	2.5
Quick Oats	0.0

Grape Nuts	8.6
Post Shredded Wheat	0.0
Quaker Granola	25.4
Post Great Grains	23.6
Kellogg Raisin Bran	23.6*
Wheat Chex	10.6
Cheerios	3.6

\*Some of the sugar is from the raisins and is not added sugar.

The damage done by sugar is extensive in its effect on the body. Even when we would not think that there could be link between lungs and sugar intake: Stephanie C. Melkonian and others of The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center found that high glycemic foods were linked to higher risk of lung cancer. (Melkonian et al., 2016)

## Chapter 20 Additional thoughts

A few years ago there was a flight from Australia to the United States. While over the Pacific, a long way from any possible landing, one of the engines caught fire. The passengers all knew that death was a significant possibility. There were two distinctly different possible reactions:

Reaction A: Blind fear with high levels of adrenalin. Muscles clenched, stomach tight, mind racing, logic gone.

Reaction B: Thinking about possible escape with a water landing. Mapping out the path to the exit, checking for the life vest and once there was no longer additional planning possible sitting back, forgiving anyone that had done harm in the past, reminiscing happy times and thanking people that had been helpful. It was a good time to pray a prayer of thanksgiving. Tell God that the rest is in his hands. Reaction two is only possible if life is lived as if we do not know the day nor the hour.

If the plane did crash, reaction B people would have been more likely to survive. When the plane did land safely reaction B people would be motivated to be more thankful to others and in some cases express forgiveness. The experience would have been positive and something to share with friends. Winston Churchill said: Nothing in life is so exhilarating as to be shot at without result. (“Nothing in life is so exhilarating as to be shot at without result. - Winston Churchill at BrainyQuote,” n.d.)

Reaction A people would be less likely to survive if the plane did crash. When the plane did not crash they would have damaged internal organs including a damaged heart. They would also have real brain damage.

If we have closure on negative events and people we have known or continue to know and have lived a life of integrity, thankfulness and service the fear of dying will not be as

strong. Without an excessive fear of dying we can be more rational in a dangerous situation.

This is the same test as Jesus did to his disciples. Matthew 8:23-27 New International Version (NIV): “<sup>23</sup> Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. <sup>24</sup> Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. <sup>25</sup> The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” <sup>26</sup> He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. <sup>27</sup> The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!” In the Mathew version he rebuked his disciples before calming the waves.” We need to have faith before the need for faith has passed.

## **Chapter 21 What Solomon Discovered**

In the end Solomon discovered that we could and should enjoy the present, enjoy youth, enjoy each day but remember you will be judged by God. His findings are the same as Seneca, Epicurus, Lao Tsu, Buddha and others. It is interesting how all of the ancient religions and ancient philosophers converge on the same things. (Multiple, 1952)

## **Chapter 22 A Review of what can make you happier**

It is not practical to try everything at once. Try some of the items listed here. Focus on the ones that suit you best. Go back and look at the list from time to time and try to add others. Check on progress with the Oxford Happiness questioner. (The link is in the introduction.)

Have friends that make you happier  
Be thankful and express it to others  
Help others  
Have empathy  
Have integrity  
Look for new social experiences  
Live in the present  
Be in awe  
Savour life  
Have less stuff  
Follow the commandment to not covet  
Have a belief system that eliminates being upset  
Do not worry about status  
Do not chase pleasure  
Smile  
Practice mindfulness  
Meditate  
Forgive  
Look for flow experiences

Take care of your body; Exercise and Diet  
Join a Church and attend small group meetings  
Get adequate sleep  
Have a purpose in life  
Have blue light in the day and not at night

## Chapter 23 After Thoughts

When I started this project I did not know where it would go. The research was fun. I learned that we are in an exciting time. The science of positive psychology has just started to bloom. In noting the dates of the referenced studies I see most are quite recent. Everywhere I turned I found new and exciting work. It was if hundreds of brilliant well qualified people were doing the work for me. Finding and documenting all of the references was drudgery. Now that it is done I find that readers can expand their knowledge in these areas by going to the source. You are not limited to my interpretation. I pray you can become happier and have a better life.

### About the author:

Robert Black has a BS in Chemistry from Penn State, an MS in Electrical Engineering from the University of Missouri, and an MBA in finance from the University of Akron. He has been a farm kid, a paper boy, a dishwasher, waited counter, a short order cook, a camp counselor, a captain in the US Air Force, a scientist, a registered professional engineer, an inventor with 17 US patents, a corporate executive at one time managing over 600 employees in both the US and Canada, and an entrepreneur. He has traveled to 57 countries including a year in Thailand spending part of that time with the Thai people living in Northern Thailand and returned to Thailand three times for month long visits. back packed through Laos, traveled to Hong Kong six times also for a month each time. He is fascinated by sailing and has sailed in the Atlantic, the Pacific, Lake Erie and the Gulf of Mexico. He is a Christian and he and his wife just became members of the Shepard of the Woods Lutheran Church.



Robert and wife Harriet in  
Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky  
Siberia Russia



Robert, Grandson Daniel and police in  
Dalian Northern China

About my mentor Dan Hardt who has a resume with as many twists and turns as mine. We make each other happy.

Dan Hardt has enjoyed variety in his life. First came traveling. It began by following his father from place to place during World War Two; by high school they had lived in 9 places. As an adult, eight more places were added to this list, plus visits to parts of North and South America and Europe. His college degree in chemical engineering taught him much that is still valuable, but he also learned that a different career choice might have been wiser. He went back to college and earned an MBA. Spending 24 years in the Navy Reserve as well as 25 years working at a large pharmaceutical company exposed him to two very different viewpoints. This period included almost 10 years living in Puerto Rico. He says it was an outstanding experience. After retiring, he returned to college once more to get a doctorate in Counseling Psychology. Much of his time as a clinical therapist was spent at a mental health clinic in a VA hospital. Dan says that this was another high point. Dan is a Christian. Since he has moved recently, he has not joined a local church. In the interim he and his wife have been attending a local Methodist Church.

## Happiness Testing

This Subjective Happiness Scale was published by Lyubomirsky and Lepper and can be used in place of the Oxford Happiness Questioner. The numerical scale is different so a 4 on this scale is not a 4 on the Oxford scale. To keep track of progress use one or the other.

Permission is granted for all non-commercial use by them if their paper is referenced. To score the scale, reverse code the 4th item (i.e., turn a 7 into a 1, a 6 into a 2, a 5 into a 3, a 3 into a 5, a 2 into a 6, and a 1 into a 7), and compute the mean of the 4 items. Norms are available in the reference below, as well as in many other publications that have used the scale (see PsycInfo).

Please cite the following scale validation paper in all work mentioning the scale. Lyubomirsky, S., & Lepper, H. (1999). A measure of subjective happiness: Preliminary reliability and construct validation. *Social Indicators Research*, 46, 137-155. The original publication is available at [www.springerlink.com](http://www.springerlink.com). (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999)

### SCALE IS SHOWN BELOW:

*For each of the following statements and/or questions, please circle the point on the scale that you feel is most appropriate in describing you.*

1. In general, I consider myself:  
not a very happy person    1        2        3        4        5        6        7    a very happy person
2. Compared with most of my peers, I consider myself:  
less happy    1        2        3        4        5        6        7    more happy
3. Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization describe you?  
not at all    1        2        3        4        5        6        7    a great deal
4. Some people are generally not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterization describe you?  
not at all    1        2        3        4        5        6        7    a great deal



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