

Dangerously Happy

A practical Guide to health, wealth and happiness in the 21st century

Quy Langridge-Tien (2023)

[Intro](#)

I. Foundations

1. [Who This Is For](#)
2. [The Meaning of Life](#)
3. [Universal Truths](#)
 - [Uniquely analogue](#)
 - [Continuously WIP](#)
 - [Nature vs nurture](#)
 - [We are Gods](#)
 - [People are selfish](#)
 - [The wise man knows](#)
 - [If knowledge was all it took](#)

II. Health & Wealth

4. [Health \(Mind, Body, Soul\)](#)
 - [Energy](#)
 - [Mind Control](#)
 - [Relationships](#)
 - [Food](#)
 - [Exercise](#)
 - [Sleep](#)
 - [Sunlight](#)
 - [Meditation](#)
 - [Music](#)
 - [Social media](#)
5. [Wealth](#)
 - [Money](#)
 - [Time](#)
 - [Knowledge](#)

III. Lighting the Way

6. [28 Leaders for the 21st Century](#)
7. [Six Emotional Needs](#)
8. [Big Five Personality Traits](#)
9. [Let it Flow](#)
10. [Solve For Happy: Six Seven Five](#)
11. [Three Legged Stool](#)
12. [Six Maxims to Live By](#)
13. [Four Investments You'll Wish You Started Sooner](#)

IV. Dangerously Happy

[Warning & Disclaimer](#)

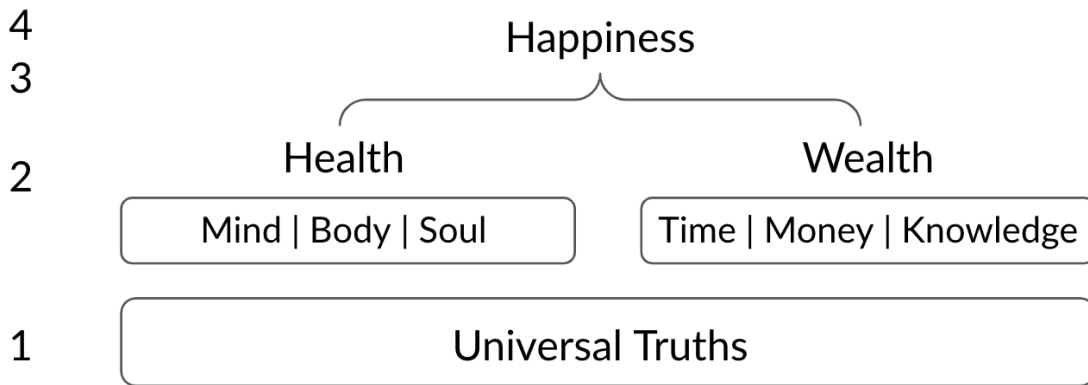
14. [Gratitude](#)
15. [Reframing & Relativity](#)
16. [Living Free](#)

[Outro](#)

[References](#)

DISCLAIMER: This is not intended to constitute or be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your doctor or other qualified healthcare provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. Please do not disregard professional medical advice or delay seeking it because of something you have read here or on my website www.qlsonline.net.

Intro



There are four parts to this Guide:

1 explores the meaning of life, three types of happiness and seven universal truths.

2 homes in on the numerous constituents of Health and Wealth, each with formidable potential to make life more agreeable or challenging. Sure, happiness is an inside job, but it's rather difficult if either Health or Wealth are suffering.

3 highlights outstanding thinkers and powerful ideas I've been privileged to learn from in three decades of an ongoing obsession with the science and art of happiness.

4 details the habits and easy-as-123 steps for a level of blissed out living so potent you should really check out the [Warning and Disclaimer](#) before proceeding.

Whilst starting with 1 is recommended, please pick and mix the rest according to what calls out to you. There's a reason for their order but they don't necessarily have to be read as such.

Thanks for reading, I appreciate you.

Live long and prosper,

Quy

Now if you're positioned comfortably, I'd like to tell you the true story of an extraordinary woman.



Vanessa was a bright young country girl whose job took her to the big city far, far away from all she'd ever known. To those who knew her it was no surprise it didn't take long for her to settle in. Hard working, outgoing and always ready to light up the room with her smile, she had a charming way with words, her poems often read out in the morning assembly.

Amongst her newfound colleagues was Tom, a dashing hot headed engineer. Multi-skilled and seemingly able to solve whatever technical problem he was pointed at, his talents were highly valued by management if not his ability to get on with others.

After he got into a fist fight with a colleague over something trivial, again, the Company realised something had to be done. Vanessa was assigned to mentor Tom. The brief: teach him to play nice.

Almost inevitably, the good looking and charismatic couple fell in love, much to the displeasure of Tom's parents. Chinese expats, his father had built a thriving business importing medical supplies from his homeland that had paid for the finest education for their only son, and a large house with live-in servants and a chauffeur.

Tom still lived there and his mother was especially vocal that her boy could do better than this country peasant. Nonetheless when Vanessa fell pregnant, Tom married her and as was customary in these parts, she moved in with them. Her sense of duty outweighed any concerns about the undoubted friction to come with her mother-in-law.

The following year she gave birth to a bouncing baby girl.

Yay!

No.

No?

No. The inlaws want a son. Girls are no good until you've sorted a son.

Vanessa and Tom tried again and she gave birth to a second healthy girl. The in-laws are incandescent with rage. Tom's mother lays it out thus:

"If the next one is also a girl, that's three in a row. You then owe it to your family to get rid and find a woman who can give us a son."

This understandably left Vanessa more than a little reticent about falling pregnant again. In those days, the gender reveal happened on the day of birth.



Vanessa, Tom and their two girls

Five years go by. Then whether planned or in spite of efforts, she conceives again. The suspense mounts...

Nine months later Vanessa is holding her precious son close as the midwife cuts the umbilical cord and makes do with what few supplies there are. Although fighting officially ended this year in 1975, twenty years of brutal warfare against the USA have wrecked the country in every way possible.

"Your husband's here," a nurse informs her.

Vanessa paused. *"Tell him it's a girl,"* she said, as she cradled her little boy. Life would be just fine.

It wouldn't. As war with the USA came to an end (technically a civil conflict with the Americans backing the losing side), Vietnam found itself in open conflict with China, another geopolitical giant with towering resources. This one on its doorstep with 806 miles of shared border and a long history of animosity.

As if a 21st consecutive year of war, *just as you thought peace was on the horizon*, wasn't bad enough, what really complicated matters was Tom's ethnicity.

The Vietnamese government enacted increasingly brutal measures against those of Chinese origin who'd had the temerity to set up home within their borders. Businesses and homes were seized, restrictions to daily life applied without exception. Anyone and everyone with the wherewithal took steps to leave.

Tom's father had been gravely ill for some time, too sick to travel and the reason for their continued presence in a hostile environment. When his ageing body finally succumbed to his affliction, it was the cue for action.

"I'm going back to my father's home in China." Tom said, *"I'm taking my son."*

"No!" Vanessa was adamant, *"He won't survive without his mother."*

A visa to accompany her husband wasn't happening. Besides the inconvenience of her country being at war with his, she was a skilled worker, an asset the local communist ruling party had no intention of relinquishing.

Constrained by the tide of deadly world events, the irresistible force of a mother's love and the immovable object of a father's need for a son, the only way forward was to flee and seek asylum in the west.

English being the only western language either had any scant knowledge of, this suggested the USA or the UK. They reasoned that attitudes to Vietnamese refugees would be less hostile in the latter, and the decision was made.

Contacts were made, people smugglers paid. Late one summer night Tom, Vanessa, their three children and his elderly mother left everything behind and embarked on the deadly crossing by boat. With determination, a huge amount of luck and three months at sea, Hong Kong lay just within reach. Beyond that, they would have to trust in the whims of the gods.



Days before their departure in 1979

Of the 12 million refugees that fled Vietnam during this era, the 'boat people', 4 million did not survive. For the three vessels that set off in Vanessa and Tom's convoy, the mortality ratio was twice as horrific and two were lost at sea. But after three harrowing months at the mercy of the elements, they held their children close as their lone surviving boat limped into the Hong Kong bay. The gods were finally with them.

The family spent several months in a crowded refugee camp before being offered asylum in the UK. At the age of 36, Vanessa faced up to starting a new life thousands of miles away from her roots. Language, culture, climate - everything was alien. But at least they were together. Onwards and upwards.

She would go on to have another son with Tom and together they raised their four children in a quiet suburb fifty miles north of London.

As parents do, Vanessa wanted nothing more than for them to have a good education leading to a respectable, well paid career. She was overjoyed when their first son was accepted for business studies at university in Manchester. To her this was the meaning of life, what she'd aspired to since their arrival in the UK.



Vanessa and her first son



Vanessa, son and daughter-in-law-to-be

He stayed in the northwest after graduating and a mere two decades later got engaged to a charming young lady he met in Leeds.

Vanessa wrote to congratulate him:

Quy

How are you?

We are very please to hear your recent good news, congratulation. When you told us you got the help from Jade's family to improve your environment, we think Jade has great parents whom love their daughter very much. They love their daughter and extend that love to you, so you are lucky one, you have to value this affection and always remember it.

We are sorry for we can't help you when need, as you know for our age and health not allow us so but we always think of you. We do wish you and Jade get happy together forever.

Love from Dad and Mom

P.S. (The beginning of more income you will feel great and sometime late you will feel as same before. So please becare your budget. That's life.)

"We do wish you and Jade get happy together forever"



I love this letter. There is so much to unpack. I've re-read it many times and it never fails to make me smile and on occasion shed a tear.

The broken English, impeccably written in beautiful handwriting, reminds me she is far from home yet never lost her poise, of the staggering sequence of events that brought us here.

Tough decisions made, unthinkable hardships endured so my siblings and I could have a better life. A journey that might have left her embittered with the cruel hand dealt by fate.

Yet here she is apologising that she can't help with house renovations because she's old and frail, and lives three hours drive away. I'm a company director in my late thirties yet she carefully reminds me to be sensible with my money and not get carried away with a recent win, because Life.

As usual, she signs for my dad so he isn't left out. Dad and Mum, not Mum and Dad.

With such humility, grace and warmth in one who has been through so much, to whom I owe so much, in comparison to whom I've had such a sheltered life in the lap of luxury, **how could I complain about anything?** She is a rock solid foundation for my [Gratitude](#).

Family is of paramount importance to her. As are many traditional values treasured by most cultures: saving money, good whole food and lots of it, warmth of home and heart, a good education, raising the next generation to be hard working people of good character... *all powerful components of a happy life.*

Mum has never held back in conveying the importance of each of these to me. I used to see it as nagging and get irritated, offended that she somehow thought I still hadn't got it. I now appreciate it as a compulsive parental drive to pass on life experience, wanting nothing but the best for their child, centred on the truism that material wealth is not unimportant yet merely a stepping stone to happiness and fulfilment.

Just as her instincts led to that letter, so this effort to gather the most useful, often life changing knowledge that's come my way. I'm now eleven years older than my mother was when she left everything behind and boarded the boat to Hong Kong, knowing there was a 1 in 3 chance we would all perish. What have I learnt myself?

To our daughter:

I've not yet held you in my arms and I already know I want you to be happy, whatever form that may take.

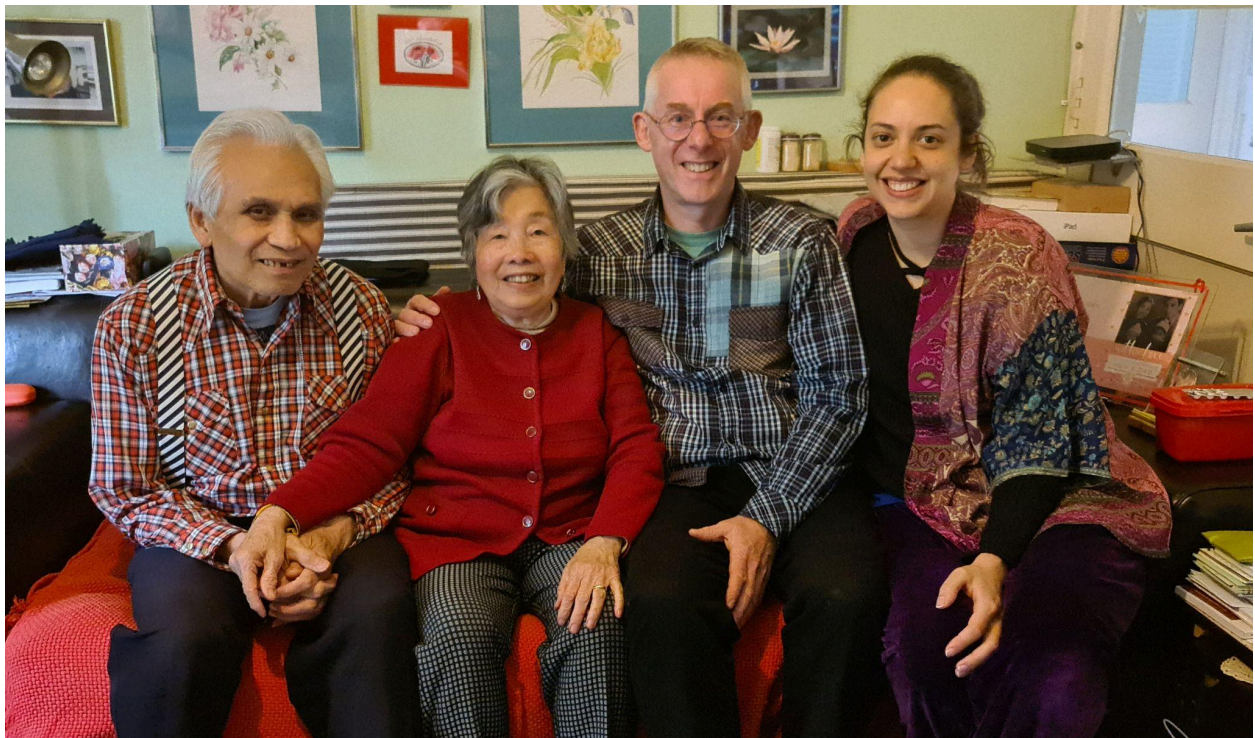
The world we're bringing you into is a wonderful but complex place, full of magical experiences and hidden pitfalls - the ultimate game of snakes and ladders. I can't wait for you to experience it.

I hope you get a deeper sense of who your family are, and some utility for the journey ahead from these pages.

Your mother and I love you, more than anything in the world.



PS Your grandma was over the moon when she found out you're on the way.



Tom, Vanessa, Gordon, Jade

I. Foundations

1. This Who This Is For

Short version:

This Guide is a collection of actionable knowledge for anyone who wants to be happy.

The emphasis throughout is on practical tips that make a difference to how you think, feel or act.

[Go to next chapter - The Meaning of Life](#)

[Chapters](#)

Full version:

The first time I saw our daughter she was relaxed on her back with not a care in the world, the embodiment of serenity.

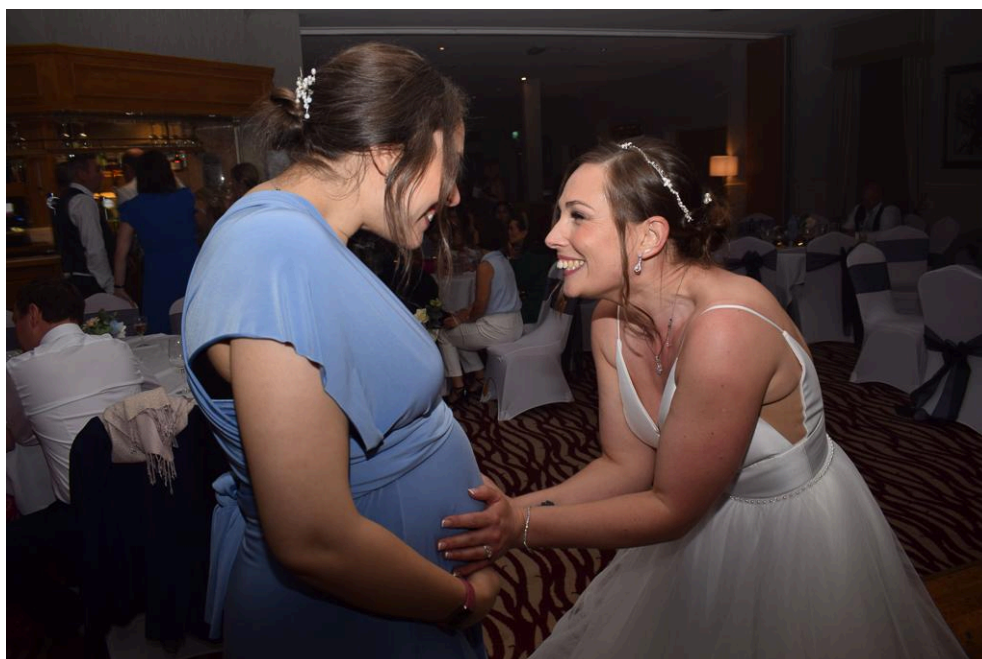
I was instantly smitten.

Wow. OMGosh. This is Life. New Life that Jade and I have brought into the world. She looks so peaceful. So happy ❤️



Love at first sight (12 week scan)

Family and friends are all beyond excited and can't wait to meet her. She's going to be so loved, wrapped in a cocoon of the purest affection and compassion wherever she goes.



Jade at Kirsty's marriage to Rob

There's something about the innocent vulnerability of pets and babies that triggers a near universal reaction of protective adulation.

It's a painful realisation that her world won't always be so perfect.

"Life starts out with everyone clapping when you take a poo and goes downhill from there."

- Sloane Crosley

Haha... that always makes me chuckle. I can completely identify. That is, if you took the cut-off point at two months after my 19th birthday.

Until then, I'd had a really rough ride, so I thought. My life was one **Big Downer**. Everything was just shit. (I know. I blame puberty).

Then during my first Christmas away from home at university, I had an epiphany that revolutionised thoughts and emotions. No facts changed, just the realisation that actually there was a stupendous amount to be grateful for. Thank you Universe. (**Big Up**).

New outlook notwithstanding, life events continued to be a roller coaster ride, until the almighty crash of the lowest point of my life.

Eleven years following my Christmas revelation and mere months after thinking I'd cracked the enigma of existence, I walked away from a position promising a six figure future, with no job to go to, then promptly separated from my newly wedded wife, belatedly realising we'd lost our connection a long time before. (**Big Down**).

The rebound from this led to the most mind blowingly satisfying and fulfilling period of this mortal experience *so far*.

With a renewed passion for the value of happiness and a gratitude based approach to life: several childhood traumas were resolved, financial freedom achieved, I enjoyed a glorious decade of fun in some of the most happening clubs in the UK and Ibiza, met the A-Team, co-founded several businesses, met Jade on a dancefloor, somehow convinced her to marry me and... here we are. (**BIG UP that just continues to rise and rise**).

More on this journey and gratitude model in [Part 4](#).

A lifetime ago, my 4 year old self, two sisters, our parents and my paternal grandmother made the perilous journey to the UK. Refugees from a twenty year war, we didn't speak English and had little more than the shirts on our backs.

It's not obvious to rationalise how it all came together (eventually).

I'm now wealthy beyond my wildest dreams. I work when I want, where I want, part of a dream team of A-players who share my values and standards.

I'm in good health - top 5% VO2 Max for my age, blood pressure: good, strength: good, sleeping well, eating more healthily than ever.

I'm playing the piano again and... <<drum roll>> I'm married to Jade and we're expecting our first child.

Call me old fashioned, but all this fills me with joy, purpose and a sense of fulfilment like never before. **You might say I'm happy.**

Life has become beautifully wonderful, or is it wonderfully beautiful, and I would not trade places with anyone I can think of, dead or alive. Anyone.

Is karma paying me the dividends of having been an extremely pious monk in a previous existence?

Am I in a [Truman Show](#) where my entire world has been meticulously crafted for the benefit of an audience that likes a happy ending?

Gratitude and positivity are cornerstones of how I try to live. Is there cause and effect? Which came first - the positivity or the good life?

Whatever the reason, and rest assured it's been immense fun to ponder, I've gone from **hating** my existence as a teenager, to feeling on top of the world all day, every day.

To paraphrase the little green man, joy leads to gratitude. Gratitude leads to the desire to give back, to pass on, to share.

If there's one thing I want without reserve and would move mountains for, it's for our daughter, family, friends, friends of friends and as many others as I can share my wealth with, to be happy.

[*Wealth is more than money, it's also time and knowledge.*](#) More precious than any inheritance cheque, I want to pass on what helps me live a happier life.

There are many topics ahead. The human brain alone is the most complex thing we know of in the universe, never mind the body and the intricacies of relationships, or the dynamics between time, money and knowledge.

There are many unknowns. Omigosh so many unknown unknowns.

But also many well trodden paths, illuminated by learned scholars and curious thinkers, trailblazers on this quest that the soul instinctively seeks.

The purpose of this Guide is not to teach. OK it is a little. But it's more about sharing directions I found useful and compelling. Aside the universal truths in Part 1, there are often several credible alternatives to every belief or recommendation. Much depends on your desires and values, and the environment you're in.

Besides, every topic given its own chapter is deep enough that people much smarter than me have devoted entire careers to them. Follow your bliss and dive deep.

Don't be daunted by the bewildering array of choice - it's part of the magic. One of the many glorious things about being human is that we are so uniquely individual.

From nutrition and exercise, to understanding personality traits, mind control and wealth generation, do what works for you, go where your soul urges you.

To learn directly with those who inspire me, please see [\(chapter 6\) 28 Leaders for the 21st Century](#).

"People take different roads seeking fulfilment and happiness. Just because they're not on your road doesn't mean they've gotten lost."

- Dalai Lama

Time is precious. I very much appreciate you giving me yours. By way of return, the emphasis throughout is on practical tips that are low (often zero) cost and low effort, but carry huge potential for positive change.

Shall we?

2. The Meaning of Life

Short version:

There are three types of happiness and most people need varying degrees of each:

- Eudaimonic well being
- Hedonic well being
- Psychological richness

Being clear that happiness is your objective helps to prioritise and to discount anything that doesn't really matter. Are [money, fame, Likes, Views, the opinion of strangers] worthy in their own right or harmful distractions?

Look inside yourself to establish values, to understand what sparks joy and what gives you meaning.

[Go to next chapter - Universal Truths](#)

[Chapters](#)

Full version:

"The purpose of our lives is to be happy."

- Dalai Lama

"Stop trying to be happy."

- Mark Manson

"Whoever you are, you want to be happy. It's a human desire about as basic as the drive to take the next breath."

- Mo Gawdat

"Happiness makes you impulsive and stupid."

- Dr. Jordan Peterson

"If you can be blissed out, no matter what's happening around you, that is success."

- Sadhguru

"Humans are not built to be in a constant happy state."

- Dr. Julie Smith

Six very smart people I really look up to. Awkward.

Philosophers, priests, poets, psychologists and biologists have pondered over the millennia what it is that makes us happy (Harari 2011). Yet for all the collective time and effort, there remains no definitive concept, never mind how to measure it.

Per the above, many are those who question whether it's even something you should want.

I do. I absolutely do want.

It's why [Part 2](#) contains a roadmap to Health and Wealth. Without them, whatever you want from life is going to be that much more of a challenge.

Also why [Part 3](#) presents some breathtakingly inspirational people and useful concepts around the many facets of happiness.

For now though, let's park all the theory because frankly it can make your head hurt. Time to have some fun and go...

BACK TO BASICS

[Justice Potter](#) famously said of pornography, "*I know it when I see it.*" Similarly, you know happiness when you feel it.

Happiness is specific to the person.

Whilst many go all gooey at the sight of a puppy or newborn baby, legion are those who see nothing but a mobile poo machine with a high propensity for getting hairs or vomit on your freshly ironed top.

Country & western music does the square root of nothing for me. Ditto for stamp collecting. But for many other souls, they awaken passions that my heart reserves for uplifting vocal trance music and playing the piano.

No two people have exactly the same combination of things that repel and attract, not even twins. We are all [uniquely analogue](#), our characters shaped by where we came from (nature) but also what we have lived (nurture).

That said, I'm going to take an educated guess that the following will probably resonate with you too:

(if they don't, we can still be friends but there might be moments of awkward silence)

Love (when Jade and I formalised ours)



Other moments from that day



Laughing



Sharing music



Friends from childhood, from college, from work, from random events as you explored life

(a 'Guess Who' game Jade made for our wedding guests to play, containing 24 of their faces with/without scarves/ hats/ glasses/ facial hair)



Family

(with my sister Bonnie and her collective)

Weddings are naturally supercharged with positivity, the day itself a Greatest Hits compilation of things that make us smile.

For obvious reasons you don't want to be doing them too often (weddings, not smile inducing activities) but that's ok because the rich tapestry of daily life yields an unending multitude of things capable of making us happy. Rare are the mornings I don't wake up early without an alarm clock, eager to experience what the day holds.

- Good food, good conversation
- Quality time with your significant other
- Listening to music
- Going to a concert / gig / festival
- Dancing (at a gig / in a club / the kitchen when no-one's watching)
- A good workout at the gym
- A hot post-workout shower
- Learning an interesting fact
- Stand up comedy
- A good read
- A good film
- Smiling at a stranger who smiles back
- Receiving a compliment (especially from a random person)
- Giving a compliment
- A random act of kindness (to a friend, to a stranger in the street)
- Walking Starla
- When Starla eats all her food
- Making breakfast for my wife

If happiness is wrong, I don't want to be right.

"I think life's beautiful. I think the world is amazing. I love people, animals, art, every hobby. I can't believe my luck that I'm alive."

- Ricky Gervais

What would qualify for your Happy List?

Take a few minutes to write down what makes you happy. Anything that completes the phrase, "I feel happy when _____"

Revisit this List regularly - diarise it if you need to. Besides helping you identify what's good in your life (and whether you're giving the time/energy it deserves), there is a proven benefit:

"The very act of creating your Happy List makes for a very happy experience... [doing this regularly] cultivates something that psychologists say contributes to happiness over the long haul: an attitude of gratitude."

- Mo Gawdat, Solve for Happy

In perusing your list, be aware of this critical nuance: **no event happens in isolation.** The context of your expectations matters, because it's not the event that makes you (un)happy, it's how you think about it (Gawdat 2016).

Happiness = Perceived Reality - Expectations

This was the essence of my own awakening at the age of 19 when I realised I wasn't alone and destitute, but rich and loved.

Then again at the age of 30 with the epiphany that I could look back on my broken marriage as a monumental failure, or an important phase of my journey to learn and grow from.

It's a huge reason why social media can be so pernicious - they set our expectations of lives and bodies based on the filtered, carefully curated and totally unrealistic images that we see of other people.

We'll explore techniques to help shape your perceptions and expectations in [Mind Control](#) and [Reframing & Relativity](#).

Also be wary of the difference between things that make you happy, and things you think will make you happy.

"Most of our happiness scripts come from somewhere else. We didn't write them ourselves. Someone else did. They didn't really teach us how to be happy, either. They teach us how to consume."

- Jessica Wildfire

The piece that came from, [I Know Exactly Why You're Not Happy](#), JW at her insightful best, is most definitely worth 9 minutes of your time.

Happiness: *bad*?!

Zooming out of the details to take a bird's eye view, it seems obvious that happiness in and of itself is a good thing. *We all want this, right?*

I was greatly surprised to learn one day that many don't. Seeing an intellectual hero of mine be very vocal and specific in their Youtube critique of happiness, it floored me. Because it was them, and because their words made sense.

I thought of little else for weeks as I frantically revisited its validity as a life goal - something blithely assumed as universal, such was my empathy with it.

Panic over. Validity reaffirmed.

You see, broadly speaking, there are two types of happiness deniers.

The first say, *"Don't try to be happy,"* at least partly to be contrarian.

Sensationalist headlines will always attract more clicks and reads than stating the obvious, *"It's nice to be happy."*

When you dig into the detail, their point is *how* to pursue/create/find happiness. In other words just dancing around the semantics. The end goal is... to be happy.

The second type, who triggered this quasi-existential crisis of mine, are more robust if ultimately unjustified in their proclamation. They opine that '*Happiness is wrong, you should seek meaning instead*'.

Meaning = eudaimonia

to give its posh name.

For those not already familiar with this, many have long considered happiness to fall into one of two camps: hedonia and eudaimonia.

“

<i>Hedonic well-being</i> <i>is generally agreed to be:</i> ● <i>life satisfaction</i> ● <i>happiness</i> ● <i>positive affect</i>	<i>Eudaimonic well-being</i> <i>is somewhat less agreed-upon; it is often equated with :</i> ● <i>meaning in life</i> ● <i>purpose in life</i> <i>although some theorists would also add:</i> ● <i>engagement</i> ● <i>flow</i> ● <i>self-acceptance</i> ● <i>autonomy</i> ● <i>environmental mastery</i> ● <i>positive relationships with others</i> ● <i>personal growth</i> ● <i>the satisfaction of basic needs such as competence, autonomy, and relatedness.</i>
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”

Oishi et al (2019)

Wait a minute... this says happiness is a component of hedonism.

Didn't we just assert that hedonia and eudaimonia are the two main dimensions of happiness?! The image of a snake eating its tail comes to mind.

"Happiness is such an overloaded word. I'm not even sure what it means."

- Naval Ravikant

"The idea of happiness has been hijacked over the years by an elusive fairytale of constant pleasure and satisfaction with life."

- Dr. Julie Smith

Herein lies the confusion:

- Some say 'happiness' as a synonym for 'hedonism' - pleasure, enjoyment, satisfaction and the absence of distress.
- Others, myself included, use 'happiness' as an umbrella term for wellbeing which comprises hedonism and eudaimonia.

Obviously within the pages of this Guide, the latter reign supreme.

Your right to enjoy life / you're right to enjoy life

There are many belief systems especially religions where eudaimonic ideals are lauded whilst hedonism is denounced as undesirable. Sinful even. *Ouch.*

This isn't surprising. Having everyone be all meaningful and purposeful usually benefits the system and those running it, whilst hedonism is predicated on the enjoyment of the individual.

I guess they object to someone having fun that they don't get anything from.

From individual dissenters, a typical comment is *"Tried fun once. Didn't like it. Therefore, you shouldn't either."*

This evokes the textbook response to those who say sex is overrated.

"You're not doing it right."

Here's the real moral question: Do you think everyone has an **overriding** duty to give back to the world/society? That each person has a moral obligation to make something of themselves?

If so, it follows that hedonism is a potentially catastrophic distraction and should be dissuaded. Can't fault the logic.

If, however, you believe individuals have a right to do what they want, as long as they are not harming others, then hedonia is just as valid as eudaimonia.

ESPECIALLY IF (sorry for shouting, this bit's important to me) **YOU'RE ALSO PURSUING A MEANINGFUL LIFE.**

If I can rub my belly whilst patting my head, I can certainly sign up to both eudaimonia and hedonism. Life is to be lived.

Life is too precious not to do something meaningful with it. It's also too precious not to be enjoyed wherever possible.

When someone says, "*You should seek a virtuous life of meaning, not a life of happiness,*"

I say,

"I beg to differ.

*Firstly, you mean you disapprove of 'hedonism' not 'happiness'. **Happiness** is a feeling of wellbeing that **includes the virtuous life you speak of**, eudaimonia, as well as hedonism.*

Secondly, there is no morally justifiable reason for suppressing hedonistic desires, as long as they are not harming others. What's next - free speech? The right to vote?

Thirdly, nor is it self-evident that there is always a tradeoff as frequently implied by proponents of eudaimonia:

Eudaimonia or Hedonism. Purpose or Fun.

*That's just nonsense. You can, you **should** have both.*

Some of the most successful people who ever lived looked back and wished they'd had fun too (Senra 2022)."

Usually at this point Jade gets our coats and calls a taxi.

Just kidding. All that goes down *in the Mind*. What I actually say is, "OK, cool. *Whatever floats your boat dude.*"

"I'm not here to persuade people against their beliefs. I'm here to show others like me that they're not alone."

- A meme I saw. I'm paraphrasing (it was a while ago)

It's clear some are simply saying that you shouldn't value pleasure over meaning. I completely agree. However there is often a puritan avoid-pleasure-completely approach which is unjustifiable and backfires when desires take over anyway because then everything else you said is also discredited.

Three is not a crowd

Not only is there room for both eudaimonia and hedonism, there is a third category of happiness, namely a **psychologically rich life**.

A psychologically rich life is best characterised by variety, novelty, and interest.

One problem with happy and meaningful lives is that both can be monotonous and repetitive.

A person with a steady - perhaps even rewarding - 9-to-5 job, happily married with children, may have a happy and, in many respects, meaningful life, but not necessarily a life rich in diverse experiences.

Recent studies show that people dislike the state of boredom so much so that some are even willing to give themselves a painful electric shock rather than sit idly.

‘Psychological richness’ passes the ‘*does it feel right?*’ test with flying colours. I’ve long been conscious of this as a powerful driver for all the male Tiens I know (dad, brother, me) but previously classed it as ‘hedonic’, when only aware of that and eudaimonia as the options.

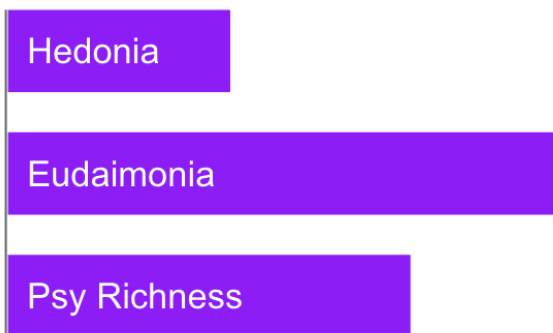
If Robert Waldinger, professor of psychiatry, zen priest and director of the world's longest study of happiness, also thinks it’s in a class of its own ([Modern Wisdom 578](#)), that’s a home run for me.

When we cover the [6 Emotional Needs](#) in Part 3, we’ll see that ‘variety, novelty and interest’ are the ‘Need for Uncertainty’, further validating psychological richness as a cardinal driver of our wants and desires.

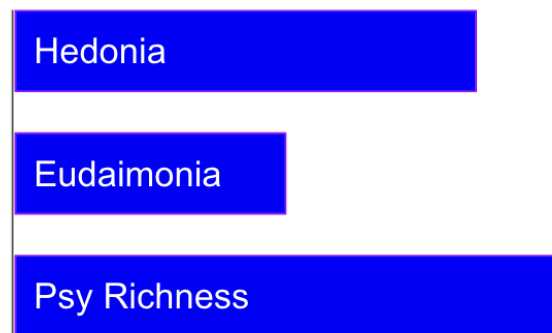
Happiness propensity

If we charted the three dimensions to create a mental model of happiness, it might look like this:

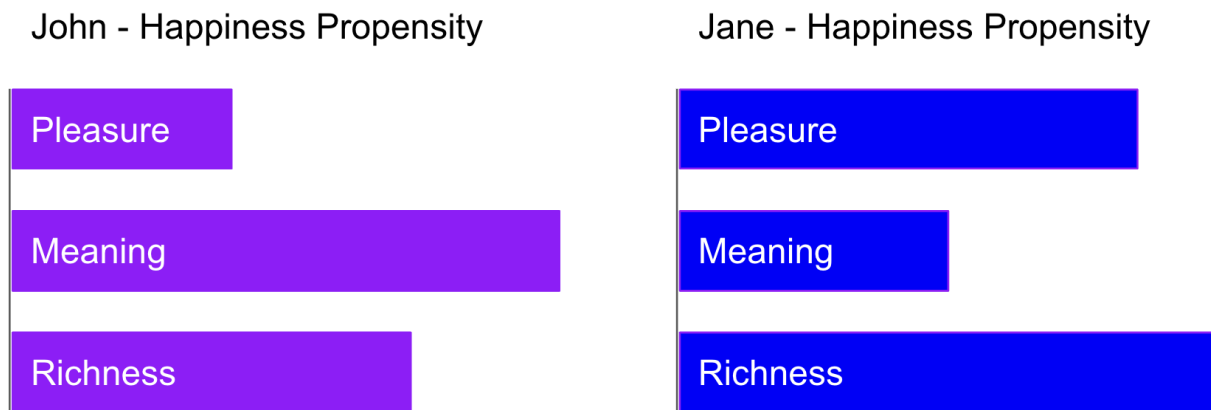
John - Happiness Propensity



Jane - Happiness Propensity



Or with more user friendly labelling:



Do you have that list of things that make you happy to hand?

Fab. For each entry, consider which of the three categories apply. Some might fit into more than one dimension - that's ok.

Are there any that don't fit anywhere and require a new category? No problem. Add the category, call it what you want. It's your construct after all, its purpose is to help you visualise the bigger picture.

Soul purpose

Naval Ravikant, pre-eminent polymath of the digital age, defines happiness as when you don't feel like something is missing (Ravikant 2020).

As with so much else, I think he's nailed it. I also see that 'something' as *a sense of fulfilling your soul purpose*.

The soul is the final objective setter within the [Mind Body Soul](#) triad. When you're not doing what it intends for your existence, it lets you know by way of a deep rooted sensation that things are not right.

When you're aligned with your soul purpose, this is happiness.

I love the concept of *dharma* from Vedic philosophy. According to Deepak Chopra this is what Joseph Campbell meant by ‘follow your bliss’.

The word dharma is an ancient Sanskrit word that refers to your soul's purpose—the big reason why you are here. It's not just what you do, but how you do it, and why you do it.

Your dharma is not a career, or a project, or a certain role you play. It's the unique vibration that your soul carries to everything that you do and every way that you are.

For instance, someone's dharma can be to bring beauty to the world, and how they do it can look in so many different ways, such as through being an artist, an interior designer, or a hairstylist.

- Sahara Rose

Such a beautiful way of putting it.

Doing things that make you happy is to respond to your soul purpose. As your soul is the highest instance of you, fulfilling its purpose is the meaning of life, and therefore ranks before all other axioms.

This clarity of definition is important because it sidesteps the over-familiar and misguided debate of whether hedonism is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’.

Granted there is a debate to be had concerning the extent to which people should be protected from themselves. But if someone is *compos mentis* and this is what they desire, then *live and let live* should be the one principle to rule them all.

At certain stages of your life, usually but not always and not uniquely your teenage and early adult years, the need for hedonism burns bright like excess energy you need to burn off. Like a thoroughbred racehorse pawing at the ground to be raced.

Eventually you settle. Hedonism almost inevitably falls by the wayside of life's journey (though some say it never entirely goes away) as eudaimonia takes its place in the sun. We'll revisit this in a couple of chapters [\(3.02\) Continuously WIP](#).

Russell Brand's journey from drug addict and fame chasing celebrity to teetotal family man on a mission to lift humanity, is a story for the ages.

Naturally, the devil is in the detail:

What is your purpose?

How do you know if it's your genuine purpose or just an emotional reaction?

I know this isn't very helpful, but **you just do**. When you know, the certainty is there.

The key is introspective contemplation. A greater awareness of your values helps identify what truly makes you happy. I recommend Chapter 33 in Dr Julie Smith's *Why Has Nobody Told Me This Before* as an excellent guide to establishing your values.

How is this useful?

At some point you'll stop exploring life (partners, friends, jobs, where to live, hobbies, foods...). Or rather, it will become increasingly difficult to explore. By then, the more you've tried, the more you've got to choose from when identifying what makes you truly happy.

Realising that happiness is the highest objective for your highest self allows you to properly contextualise concerns that might otherwise take on too much significance:

- Money
- Fame (Likes, Views, Follows, other measures of online popularity)
- People's opinions

You stop chasing metrics that don't matter. Things that don't matter lose their ability to affect you emotionally.

This is a powerful level of existence to attain.

And if all that resonated with you, allow me to point you towards [Marc and Angel](#). They don't get bogged down in whether happiness is right, they just get on with it.

Happy reading... 😊

3. Universal Truths

Short version:

Seven universal truths as a foundation for our understanding of happiness:

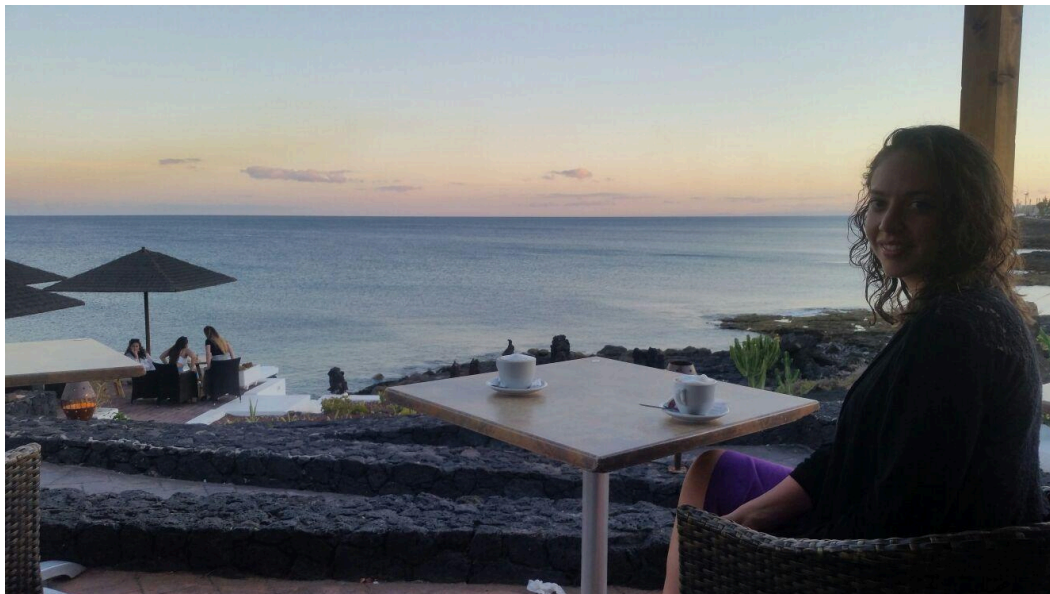
1. [Uniquely analogue](#)
2. [You're a continuous WIP](#)
3. [Nature vs nurture](#)
4. [We are Gods](#)
5. [People are selfish](#)
6. [The wise man knows](#)
7. [If knowledge was all it took](#)

[Go to next chapter - Health \(Mind, Body, Soul\)](#)

[Chapters](#)

Full version:

Uniquely analogue



Our last evening in Lanzarote, for the marriage of Nat and Kieran

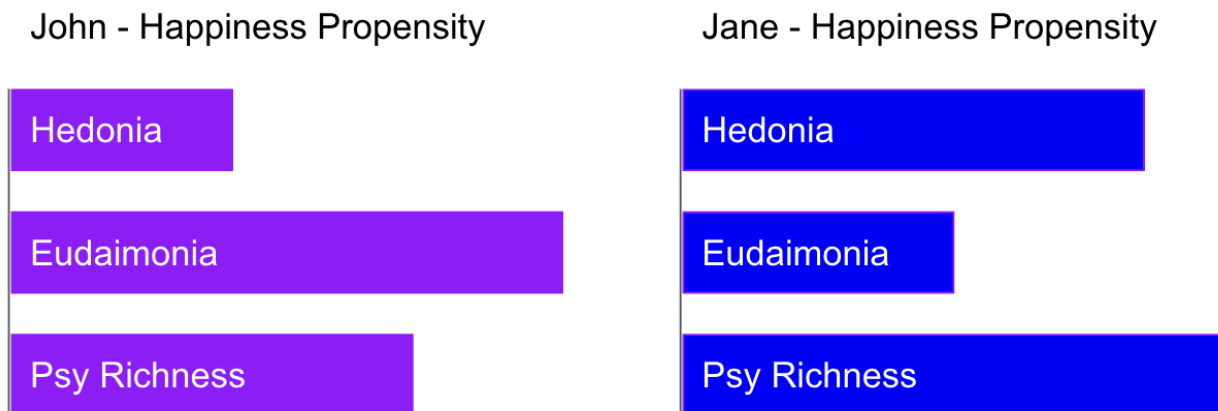
As we saw in the [Meaning of Life](#), there are three broad buckets of happiness:

- Eudaimonia (meaning)
- Hedonia (pleasure)
- Psychological richness

Your propensity to live a meaningful life is not a digital on/off switch, it's a measurement on a scale of 'none' to 'lots'. That's to say, everyone has it to some degree.

The same goes for the need to enjoy pleasure (hedonia), and the desire for psychological richness.

This is why our mental model of happiness shows each dimension as a bar, where the length represents how strongly you feel its drive.



It's possible there might have a complete lack of affinity for a particular dimension.

It saddens me to think some might actually go through life with no capacity or desire for pleasure. Or psychological richness. Or meaning.

For the rest of us, we're a little bit, perhaps more, of everything.

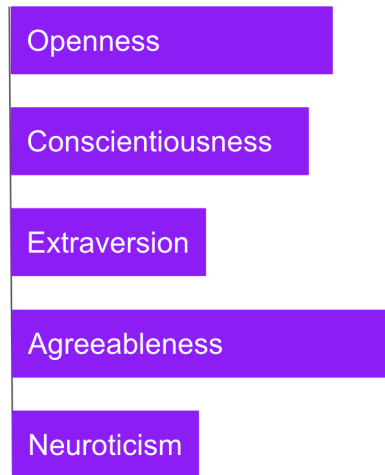
The three types of happiness are just one case in point. Other than Alive/Dead, nearly every substantive human characteristic is a measurement on a scale, not a digital switch (On/Off, Yes/No).

- [6 Emotional Needs](#)
- [5 Personality Traits](#)
- [5 Love Languages](#)
- Etc.

6 Emotional Needs



Big 5 Personality Traits



These different combinations, forged by nature and nurture, translate into our personalities.

We are uniquely analogue.

How is this useful?

- If you think a trait is admirable, then congratulations! You already have it to some degree, it's just a matter of developing it.

- When we see an undesirable trait in someone else, before judging them we should remember, it also exists within us. In their position facing the problems they do, we would have acted in the same way too.
 - Don't be too hard on yourself if you see an undesirable trait. Everyone has it to some degree. Your challenge is to control it so you are at peace with your values.
-

Continuously WIP



Erick Morillo @ Warehouse Project, Manchester, 2008 (the QJ icon indicates the photo was taken by QuayJay, my tag on clubbing social media)

For more than eleven years my Saturdays would start when I went to bed at 9pm.

A thirty minute power nap following a light dinner carefully planned to have the calories to cover me til Monday but nothing so substantive I'll regret it on a night of vigorous movement.

I'm on my feet by the third ring of the alarm. I check Whatsapp and emails on the phone for last minute changes to plans... no news is good news. Quick shower, everything's already packed, I'm good to go within twenty minutes.

Depending on the city, I'll get to the club anytime between 11pm and midnight. The doors haven't been open long, but it's filling fast with hundreds of single minded party goers.

I walk to the front of the queue, greeting the door staff by name as they unhook the barrier cord and wave me through. My heart is steady but elevated like it knows there's a workout to follow. My stomach tingles with excitement. What a time to be alive.

You can feel the frisson in the air and it's clear no one is thinking about anything remotely work related. It doesn't matter what you do for a living, where you come from or how you identify - *we're all here for one reason.*



Garlands, Liverpool, 2014



SpeedQueen, Leeds, 2016



SpeedQueen, Leeds 2014



Garlands, Liverpool, 2015

We dance as one til dawn, united by the rhythm and the bass, exiting the club en masse as the rising sun heralds the morning. The crowd scatters to the 4 corners of the city and beyond, each deeply satisfied with another notch on the social bedpost, another night of raw connections.

Some go home to feed pets or children. Others go on to afterparties of all shapes and sizes, from intimate smokeathons with chilled beats and a couple of friends, to organised mass mayhem involving top notch sound systems and actual dance floors.

Sunday would not be a productive day, and everyone's already planned accordingly.

When Facebook made us happy

Those were the early days of FB, before your nan and Sue from Accounts joined. Not only did it indicate you were reasonably switched on, it was perfect for meeting randoms on the dance-floor.

After real names, Facebook names were the most asked question, and that's if they hadn't already been offered in conversation. One accepted Friend Request later, often within the hour, you're connected.

I lived alone and was single, but never lonely. I had few 'real' friends but nearly five thousand Facebook contacts and not a weekend to myself. Every moment on the commute, every break, every meal, was spent catching up on how Everyone was. And telling them how great my life was.

Who cares if the optics in both directions were filtered and airbrushed to the max? It was all part of the game.



The infamous drag room at Garlands, Liverpool 2013



Boat party, leaving do for Daneep before she moved to Australia

My [happiness propensity](#) looked like this:

Happiness Propensity

Quy, ages 30 - 41

Hedonia

Eudaimonia

Psychological Richness

Was I happy?

Abso-fkn-lutely.

Did I have a nagging sense that something was missing and I should be making more of my life?

Can't say that I did.

Not least because something happened which locked down how I look back on this era.

It was at our [beloved SpeedQueen](#) that I first spoke to Jade in the summer of 2014.

This means I regret nothing about my entire life leading up to then. Every thought, every decision led me to that dance floor at that moment. None of it can be wrong.



Leeds, 2014. Jade dancing with Ray, the night I first spoke to her. I knew him from before and he vouched for me — partly why she said yes to our first date! Photo by QuyJay



My nickname for Jade is TinkerBell because she was bouncing around the club like a magical ball of light. Photo by QuyJay



Our first selfie



Leeds, 2015. It helped that we had several mutual friends and liked the same club nights.



One of my favourite pictures of all time, about to set off for Secret Garden Party in 2015, our first festival together.

Then just like that...

Ironically, meeting Jade was also the beginning of the end with the scene that had defined me for so long.

It could have gone the other way, as has happened with couples we know.

We could have gone on a hedonic spiral, bouncing off each other's energy, an ever increasing positive feedback loop from knowing the same DJ's, promoters and clubbers.

We both had disposable income and a never-ending stream of invitations to events the length of the M62, from Leeds thru Manchester to Liverpool. And of course every summer, the pull of Ibiza.

Hideout Festival. Miami Winter Music Conference. Burning Man. Machu Picchu.
Hmmm....

Instead, our thoughts instinctively turned to family building very soon after committing our exclusivity to each other. Our internal compasses had shifted in unison.

We never made a conscious decision to stop going out, we just tried less hard to make it happen. It's not long before Life elbows everything out of the way e.g. Things We Used To Do.

You've changed...

We were recently offered VIP passes to an event of the sort that used to dominate our social lives. Free priority entry, great music guaranteed with DJ's we knew, only 15 minutes into town... whaddaya fink?

Although Jade wasn't pregnant yet, we made excuses so as not to offend, and stayed in to watch TV and play with Starla.



Not a dancefloor, Leeds, 2023

I mean, how could you tear yourself away from this...?



I genuinely do not know where to put my eyes

We were both in bed by 11pm just as people we used to party with were having their first drinks in the club.

The most fulfilling thing I've ever done (yet)

There is something so tremendously rewarding about nurturing a life through its early years (first bath, first Xmas)...

It takes you over, it dominates any attempt to prioritise or plan other parts of your life.



Club nights have been replaced by walks in fields as the highlight of my week, even though quite often I'm holding a bag of poo.





How cute is that coat?!

For all the intense emotions lived on hundreds of dance-floors and at countless afterparties, they pale in comparison to the contentment I get from walking Starla.

Or a quiet night in with a book, Jade by my side, and The Furry One hoping for the yoghurt pot when she's done with it.



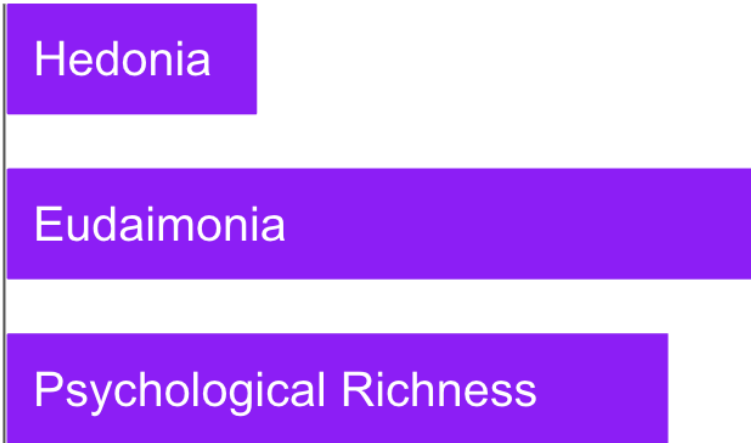
Life is (now) about making sure my family has what it needs to flourish, and giving back to the universe wherever and whenever I can.

What makes me happy now?

In the dead of night or at least when I wasn't looking, my [soul yearnings](#) had evolved into this:

Happiness Propensity

Quy, ages 41 - ??



A horizontal bar chart with three bars of different lengths, all in a vibrant purple color. The bars are stacked vertically, with the shortest bar at the top and the longest bar in the middle. Each bar contains white text. A thin vertical line is positioned to the left of the bars, acting as a baseline.

Category	Relative Length (approximate)
Hedonia	15%
Eudaimonia	65%
Psychological Richness	55%

Hedonia

Eudaimonia

Psychological Richness

I don't miss the hedonic nights **nor do I regret them**. They were a necessary step in getting to who I am today.

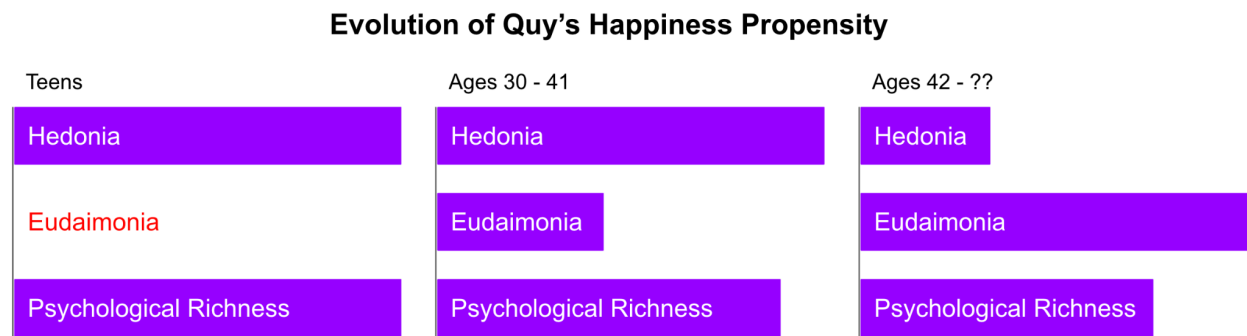
They're packed full of fond memories, the high that comes from crossing paths with the most wonderful people, the satisfaction of knowing that those people will also be looking back on their memories with a smile.

Also that's also not to say pleasure no longer has a role to play. Only rather than head out to a club, I find ecstasy in playing the piano with the sun on my face.



When I stayed at Sarah's, en route to moving to Leeds. On a sunny day... simply magnificent.

Looking at their evolution since my teens, eudaimonia (meaning) has increased steadily over time, whilst hedonia (pleasure) goes in the other direction.



There were a few other stages too but you get the gist

This seems to be a common evolution, whatever your gender and wherever you live. Indeed, Facebook's Newsfeed tells me that it's practically a trope.

From *party central*

to *settled*

to *nest building*

to *family building*.

From enjoyment of the self to

a lifetime of putting others first.

It's a familiar, heart warming trajectory that is the essence of human meaning. I wish it on everyone, from my dearest friends to those I don't give any thought to.

PS.

and this is a VERY BIG PS.

Until very recently it wasn't even my path, and I was at peace with where I thought my life was going. It took meeting with Jade to fully awaken it within me. Now I'm here, it's kinda easy to shout about it.

Without the right person, it can swiftly and catastrophically swing from the sublime to the torturous.

What I can say is, *it's worth finding the right person for.*

I've experienced pleasure and meaning in more ways than I should admit to, and this is in a different league to them all. I've never felt more relaxed and assured of the path that I'm on. It feels like my soul has come home.

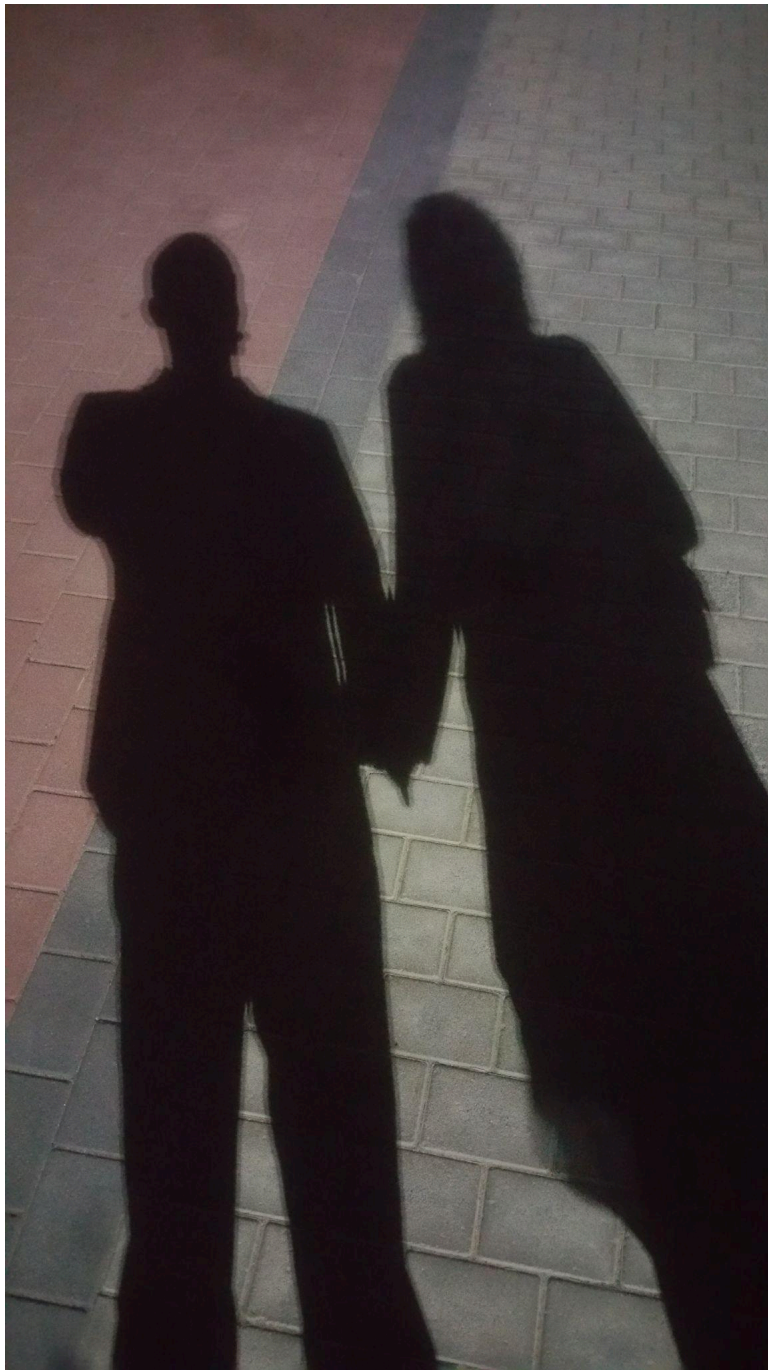


Photo by QuyJay

It's possible that your own path will have some similarities. Equally, that it looks nothing like mine.

We'll walk through a quick & easy thought exercise further below, to help visualise your happiness propensity.

Your personal journey is exactly that - [unique to you](#). Nonetheless, some things are universal:

Three Truths You Should Be Aware Of

First, you *will* change and in ways you could not have foreseen at the time. Hindsight is a wonderful thing. And it's sure better than no sight.

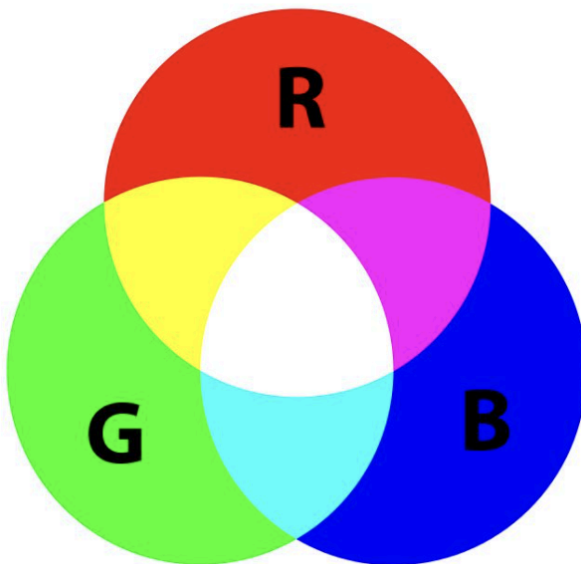
Secondly, each shift to a different stage happens organically and subconsciously.

You don't sit down and think, "*Right, this is what's going to make me happy from now on.*"

Rather, you realise one day that you are a certain way *and have been for some time*.

It's like the colour spectrum. You can see where the different colours are, but the exact point at which red stops being red is... debatable and a matter of opinion.

We wish life were so readily compartmentalised



Where does one element end and another begin?



Thirdly, you never stop changing. The person you are today will not always be the person looking back at you in the mirror.

You will always be a work in progress. Embrace it.

How is this useful?

What made us deliriously happy in years gone by might not even elicit a corner smile today.

What we once dismissed as boring and irrelevant might now be central to our enjoyment of life.

This means we need to periodically check in on ourselves...

Are we leading the lives we are meant to lead? Are we [fulfilling our soul purpose](#)?

If you're not sure how to start, try this:

1. Find some 'me time' where you can shut out the busy world and get down to some contemplative inquiry. It doesn't have to be a deep spiritual meditation (although that definitely has its benefits). It could be as simple as writing a list of where you'd like to be in 5 years. Clichéd but effective.

2. Try these prompts:

What would you do, if you were given:

- the day/week/month/year off with no responsibilities
- an unlimited budget
- anyone you wanted to keep you company (even if you don't currently know them)

Project your mind into any scenario where time, money and companionship are no object, and see what comes to the fore. Your Body and Soul will make themselves known.

3. Write out your 'desires history' in blocks of time-usually 5 years or more, but completely up to you.

Here's mine:

Age	Greatest Desires
5-12	• Be accepted
13-18	• Be accepted • Establish identity • Make money • Have sex • See what's out there
19-30	• Find meaning • Find a girlfriend • Make money • Have Fun
31-40	• Have Fun
41-45	• Get Jade to marry me • Working with the A Team • Rediscovering the piano
46+	• Parenthood • Maintain fitness • Maintain piano • Write 'Dangerously Happy'

Next level

Take another trip down happy memory lane, this time with two columns for each time period.

One for 'things that **would have** made me happy' and one for 'things that **did** make me happy'.

Age	Things that would have made me happy but didn't happen	Things that did happen, and made me happy
4-12	•	•
13-20	•	•
21-30	•	•
31-40	•	•
41-50	•	•
51-60	•	•

For the people and events that made you happy, try and recreate the feeling you had at the time.

- What made you feel good about it?
- Any regrets?

This can bring up a number of unfulfilled desires.

Is it worth doing anything about them now?

How much will this bother you if you never get to do them?

Will you regret not doing them?

Nature vs Nurture

"I hate dad."

"I hate dad. I hate dad. I hate dad. I hate dad..."

Line after line, page after page, those three words repeated over and over again in the scraggly handwriting of an angry twelve year old.

His self proclaimed hatred was so powerful it required an outlet before the mounting tension exploded elsewhere.

Let's see what my father was guilty of.

The first draft of this had me listing out specific types (never mind incidents, of which there were plenty) of... let's go with 'could do with massive improvement or massive attitude adjustment'.

When it got to 12 types, I decided to take a different tack.

He was difficult, angry, lazy, hypocritical...

The point being, I really did hate him at the time.

So why did my mum often say to me,

"You're just like your dad."

"I AM NOT LIKE DAD!" exploded my teen self, as I thumped the table with my fist then stormed off in a huff.

Exactly as he would have done.

Mothers are so wise aren't they.

The Tien Rage we call it. My brother and I both have to to

Did we get it through nature (his genes) or nurture (watching how he did it, imprinted on our personalities).

Hey I know it's not very nurturing but it's so we can have a catch subtitle.

There is no questioning that nature and nurture, your genetics and upbringing, play a joint role in shaping your personality and outlook on life.

Regardless of where your opinion lies on the balance of their respective levels of influence, their combined effect easily overcomes any objection by the rational Intellect, the part of me that thought daily thoughts, moved my body and had no desire to be anything like him. Intellect sometimes wins. Times like this, it's swatted aside like a floppy rag doll.

Rupert Sheldrake has also done some revelatory work on morphic resonance (Sheldrake, 2014).

Attachment theory:

Attachment style is not set in stone. Through therapy and other forms of self-work, it is possible to develop a more secure attachment style and form healthier, more fulfilling relationships.

As I approach my fifth decade, I can still see parts of dad in me.

I also see lots of mum.

I've come to love him since, as I understood him better and his own journey of nurture/nature. It only took a decade or three but hey ho. We're stubborn, us Tiens.

I never looked back after moving out to go to university at 18, visiting once or twice a year out of consideration for his mother, resentful of the negative energy he was returning to and keen to leave again.

From his perspective:

His father was a successful businessman, fully focused on making money. His mother spent much of her time showing off her largesse at the temple. 'Hoping to buy her way into heaven' as her daughter-in-law put it.

His

[The One Subject You Really Need to Study: Your Own Childhood](#)

Attachment theory:

Attachment style is not set in stone. Through therapy and other forms of self-work, it is possible to develop a more secure attachment style and form healthier, more fulfilling relationships.

Parents have a responsibility that determines their child's future

Van der Kolk's *The Body Keeps the Score* (2014) discusses how the body can carry trauma at a cellular level that the mind has no

Dr Gabor Mate

Dr Steve Peters, a world renowned psychiatrist asks his patients to start with a blank piece of paper (Peters 2021) and write out who they think they are.

The common factor in these and many others is that you're reaching within to reveal something that is already there. It's not a case of rationalising, 'It would be good to be x, therefore I shall be x.'

We are Gods

- Create life
- Become what we do
- Access to unlimited knowledge
- Can talk to anyone, anywhere

Do something with all this!

If a person could take an apple, and turn it into a living creature, you would call them a god

- Sadhguru

I believe all life has this ability

Man has an intellect, a Mind capable of analysing how to learn, and then applying repetition until it is learnt.

1. Technique is the ability to do what the imagination requires
 2. Practise doesn't make perfect, it makes permanent
-

People are selfish

Many years ago, I was the commercial director at a startup.
I gave a presentation explaining our new company strategy

All they care about is. "What does this mean for me?"

Understand their emotional needs, understand what drives them.

If you give people what they want, they will give you what you need. They don't even have to like you.

6 emotional needs

The wise man knows

During COVID, meme re double checking everything.

When I was a child, my father would often say to me, the wise man knows how little he knows

How much do you trust the source? It's physically impossible to double check everything

Copernicus - sun at the centre of universe

Einstein

Neil deGrasse Tyson - the more books are written about something, the less we know about it (happiness / consciousness)

Even a stopped clock tells the right time twice a day

- [Joseph Addison](#)

If trusted experts from different domains say the same thing, it's more likely to be true
Naval Ravikant, Tim Denning,

Trust your gut

Things we don't know:

- Dreams

- Consciousness
- Happiness
- Emotions

If you look hard enough there's always someone on the internet to agree or disagree with what you're saying.

If knowledge was all it took, we'd all be billionaires with six-packs

Information age - need guides

Need committed action (compound steps)

You could just sit there and watch life go by.

That is your right to have that attitude.

Life is such

To get *rich enough*

To *live free*

To be happy

II. Health & Wealth

4. Health (Mind, Body, Soul)

Short version:

Your good health requires [Mind, Body and Soul](#) to be working well and harmoniously with each other.

10 factors with great potential to improve or impair your health:

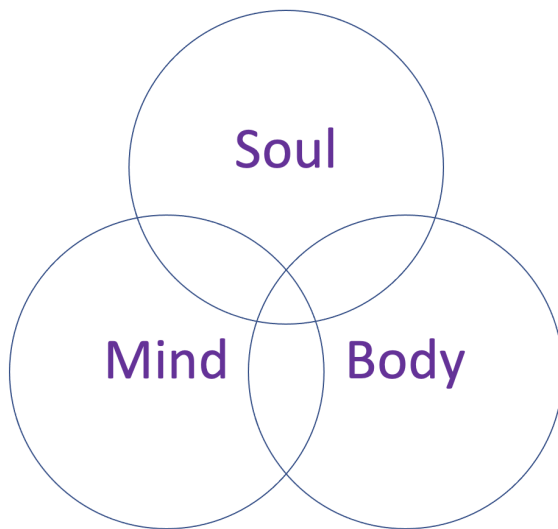
1. Energy
2. Mind Control
3. [Relationships](#)
 - a. Self
 - b. Partner
 - c. Family
 - d. Friends
4. [Food](#)
5. [Exercise](#)
6. [Sleep](#)
7. [Sunlight](#)
8. [Meditation](#)
9. [Music](#)
10. [Social media](#)

[Go to next chapter - Wealth \(Money, Time, Knowledge\)](#)

[Chapters](#)

Full version:

Did you know there are three you's in every you?



Soul = consciousness

Mind = intellect and emotions

Your body is the vehicle through which you move and physically interact with the world. Think of it as an incredibly sophisticated robot (or car, or steed, whichever works better)

Your mind is the pilot. It's where logical thoughts are deployed to rationally analyse situations and propose what to do next. It exercises deliberate control of the body to execute those plans.

Human circuit = logical and rational

Chimp circuit = emotions. Reads body language

Emotions might come from Soul or Body

Intuition is previous experience of what happened. Early experiences programme the chimp brain

(Peters 2021)

Decisions made jointly by human and chimp circuits are the best.

you can tell the decision someone is going to make by looking at the read-out from their limbic emotional brain, before you get a read-out from the cortex

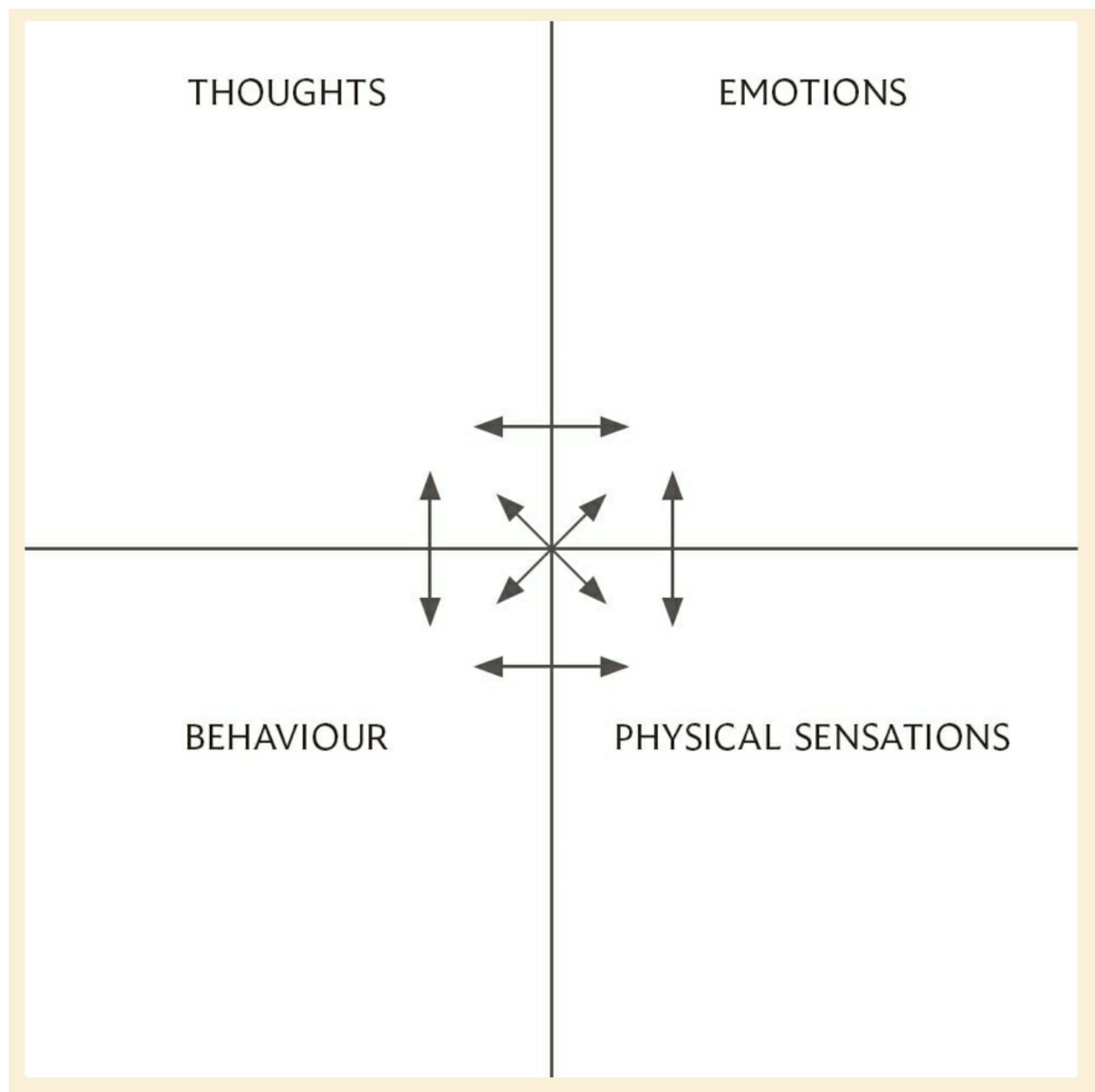
(Sapolsky)

Marketing: buy on emotion, justify on logic after the act

influences on our behavior from a variety of timescales, from the very short (signals from the amygdala) to the quite ancient (genetic factors tracing back tens of thousands of years and more)

Sapolsky 2021

What you think, feel and do are determined by a complex interaction between all three.



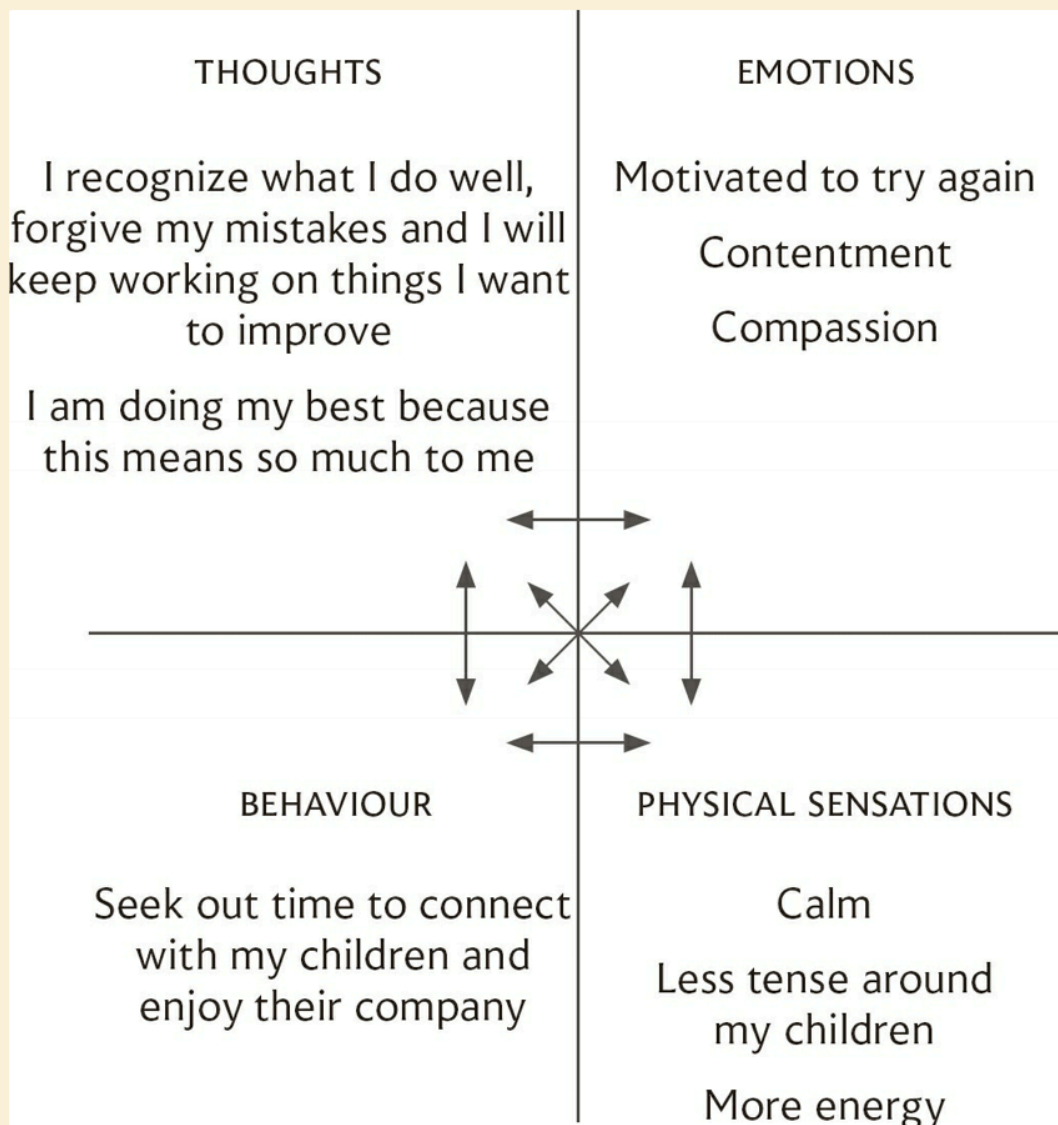


Figure 6: Example formulation for better days. How do you want to feel, behave, think?

Emotions are like waves, you can't stop them from coming but you can choose which ones to surf

- Unknown

Take care of your body. It's the only place you have to live

- Jim Rohn

Body has several danger reaction and auto control systems (breathing, heart, digestion, etc)

Darwin and the snake

Controlling the body is way too complex for the mind to do alone so there are numerous auto-pilot and reflexive actions

- Brain - conscious / lizard brain

Society and modern living have changed so rapidly our bodies have not evolved to keep up (e.g. social media pitfalls).

Stress response (Robert Sapolsky - Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers)

[The Art and Science of Mind-Body Medicine](#) - Kevin Barrows

○

To really get into the detail of the Mind Body Soul nexus, I recommend you deep dive into anything by:

- Dr Andrew Huberman
- Dr Peter Attia
- Dr Julie Smith
- Dr Rangan Chatterjee
- Mel Robbins
- Professor B. Alan Wallace
- Robert Sapolsky
- [Part 4 \(Dangerously Happy\)](#) is a set of techniques to help you surf your emotions.

Panksepp

Men that base their meaning of life on their career - you don't get a life
Most often if you want a healthy life, you spread it - you have a family, network of friends, health. Then if one thing collapses, not everything goes. But then you're less likely to be fantastically successful at any one

Energy

"In the yogi tradition we see life as a dance of time and energy"

- [Sadhguru](#)

Tesla quotes

Jade is a light worker and reiki healer. Dad was skilled in acupuncture

Billions of people can't be wrong.

Use this to gauge whether you should be stepping towards people or avoiding them.

Do they raise your energy or lower it?

You become like the 5 people you spend most time with

Information diet for the brain - watch what you feed it

Mind Control

Your Body and Soul will try and steer your thoughts and actions, through emotions and various autonomic systems throughout your body..

Your Mind can do many things to reassert control.

Nothing is good or bad, but thinking makes it so

- Shakespeare

There is such power in understanding the many ways you can influence how you feel and nurture good mental health...

When you feed your body with good nutrition and build up stamina and strength with regular exercise, you know that your body is more able to fight infection and heal when faced with injury. It's just the same with mental health.

Science has confirmed we have more power to influence our emotions than we thought

- Dr Julie Smith

Dr Smith has a similar message to Dr Attia in that both advocate prevention as being preferable to cure.

The best time to learn to swim is before you're drowning

- Unknown

As we discussed in We are Gods, the more you do something the easier it becomes.

- Happiness = Expectation - Reality
- Affirmations and manifestations work
- 5 Second Rule
- Therapy works
- Routines and habits - Practise makes permanent
- Systems and reminders
- Part 4 - using logic to surf my emotions
- Make enquiries that tend to your soul
- Cognitive bias

Happiness = Expectation - Reality

Affirmations and manifestations work

- [What is Manifestation? Explained for Beginners | Mel Robbins](#)
- Peters (2021) - start the day by saying it's going to be a good day

5 Second Rule

Therapy works

When you talk, it's your chimp brain expressing itself, and your rational mind listens
When we talk, we listen to ourselves. Our human brain is taking the lead over the chimp brain

Routines and habits - Practise makes permanent - see We Are Gods

We either form habits consciously or unconsciously

Systems and reminders

- Systems not goals

Part 4 - using logic to surf my emotions

Make enquiries that tend to your soul

- Unresolved traumas?
- Soul purpose?

Cognitive bias

- the mind is easily tricked. Like calibrating a precision tool, in order to ensure it's doing its job accurately, be aware of common biases so you can take them into account

- Availability bias
- <https://gurwinder.substack.com/p/40-mind-expanding-concepts-spring>

Relationships

I measure success by how many people love me. And the best way to be loved is to be loveable.

- Warren Buffett

1. Yourself
2. Family
3. Partner
4. Friends
5. Work

When you choose a life partner, you're choosing a lot of things, including your parenting partner and someone who will deeply influence your children, your eating companion for about 20,000 meals, your travel companion for about 100 vacations, your primary leisure time and retirement friend, your career therapist, and someone whose day you'll hear about 18,000 times. Intense shit.

1. Relationship with Yourself

2. Relationships with Family



Walks with Jade's sisters, aunt and uncle

A father protects. It's what gives him meaning.

- Jake Sully



Jade and her mum, after announcing that she was pregnant with our first child



3. Relationship with your Partner

The most hardhitting scene from Homeland S2 -

5 love languages

1. Gifts

2. Words of affirmation
3. Physical touch
4. Acts of service
5. Quality time

[Gary Chapman](#)

Mark Manson

4. Friends

Pay attention to the energy

You become like the 5 people you hang out with the most.

5. Work Relations

Ultimate is to work for yourself.

Food



When we eat, should do three things:

- Energy for activity
- Broken down to rebuild tissues
- A little should be stored for when food is not available

Modern problem: we store too much energy and never get to using it

- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Alzheimers

Heart disease - caused by the rise in consumption of sugar

Ovadia (2023)

[How Americans Are Tricked Into Buying Fake Food](#)

As much fresh fruit and veg as possible
Avoid ultra processed foods
Intermittent fasting
Avoid sugars
Diabetes

Sugar damages the lining of the blood vessel

We used to think it was cholesterol - although some have been saying since the 50's it was sugar

It's because our metabolic health is broken. Only 12% of adults are metabolically healthy.

5 indicators of metabolic health

- Waist circumference
- Blood pressure
- Cholesterol
 - LDL
 - HDL
 - Triglycerides

Lots of diet options

To eat healthily:

- Eating whole real food - eliminate processed foods
 - Within this framework lots of possibilities
 - Carnivore
 - Paleo
 - Mediterranean
 - Keto

Whole real food = things that grow in the ground, things that eat the things that grow in the ground

As humans we evolved to eat meat, our bodies are designed to eat meat, not to extract nutrients from plants

Vegan diets = need to have supplements. Vegans don't deny this

Food industry

“Breakfast is most important meal of day”

Our health is not a concern of the food industry, their profits is

Their goal is to design foods that make people more hungry (ie processed foods). These don't give the nutrients we need so also causes us to eat more

[DIET MASTERCLASS: What To Eat, When To Eat & How To Eat For LONGEVITY | Sal DiStefano](#)

[Fasting For Survival Lecture by Dr Pradip Jamnadas](#)

Fasting:

- The average person today consumes calories 8 times a day
- The body never get the opportunity to burn the stored energy

[Everything You Thought You Knew About Protein Is Wrong | Stanford's Professor Christopher Gardner](#)

[What is "Ultra Processed" Food, and Why Does It Lead to Weight Gain?](#)

Exercise

One of the greatest misconceptions is that we should become less active as we grow older.

Pete Attia: risk factor

VO2 Max and strength

Muscle is metabolically active throughout the day - it burns more calories throughout the day. Muscle building is a better way of losing weight than cardio

With cardio,

- You eat more
- Your body burns less in the rest of the day

Hand eye Coordination

Sleep

Improves metabolic health

Threatens mental, physical and cognitive health

Navy SEALs deprive sleep to really drive them to the limit.

Lack of sleep will impact every major operation in your body (Walker)

Increased risk of Alzheimer's

[The Common SLEEP MISTAKES You Make That DESTROY Your Health! | Matthew Walker](#)

<https://www.livescience.com/make-up-for-lost-sleep>

Two way relationship between metabolic health

If you're not sleeping well, it may be a sign that you're not metabolically healthy

Dreams are

1. Creativity
2. Emotional aid, overnight therapy

Sunlight

Meditation

Meditation is turning off society and listening to yourself.

It only “works” when done for its own sake.

Hiking is walking meditation.

Journaling is writing meditation.

Praying is gratitude meditation.

Showering is accidental meditation.

Sitting quietly is direct meditation.

- Naval Ravikant

[10 Mind-Blowing Benefits of Meditation](#)

Music

Energy

<https://knowablemagazine.org/article/mind/2018/music-moves-us-how>

Social media

Happiness = Perceived Reality - Expectations (Gawdat 2016)

On social media you're comparing your everyday life to everyone else's highlights reel.

<https://gurwinder.substack.com/p/tiktok-may-be-a-chinese-bio-weapon>

5. Wealth (Money, Time, Knowledge)

Short version:

“Some people are so poor, all they have is money”

Time is not equal - we don't all have 24 hours, we have the hours we are awake and can pursue what makes us happy.

[Go to next chapter - Three Types of Happiness](#)

[Chapters](#)

Full version:

Naval Ravikant uses 'wealth' to refer to a type of money.

My apologies sir, whilst you remain an intellectual hero of mine, often quoted when wanting to sound smart, I need the word 'wealth' to refer to resources with which to do things that make you happy, with people you love. Not least because it rhymes with 'health'.

Money

Where profits have gone, society has been sure to follow

- Mo Gawdat

Don't seek to be rich. Seek to be rich enough.

I give myself a £35k bonus once.

When I made this realisation, I was already rich enough. It was like winning the lottery.

Get into coding or creating

- Naval Ravikant

Not everyone will be able to
Nearly everyone will be able to write

Time

Value your time. It is all you have. It's more important than your money. It's more important than anything. Your time is all you have. Do not waste your time.

Knowledge

[Jordan Peterson - What is consciousness & how does it relate to the brain?](#)

This is peak Peterson

Convergent information across multiple measurement systems.
Multi method multi trait matrix process

T shaped (idea from marketing)

I attend the best university in the world
Youtube Medium

Spotify = free

Information is not lacking - the internet plugs you.

Useful Information or Intelligence is another matter.

I have a list of 28 people, that I devote most of my reading and non-fiction viewing time to.

This is a carefully curated list - their content, their style, their integrity.

Other thought leaders will arise, but everything this list says is evergreen, and will be relevant as long as we are human.

Take my list as a starting point, but explore your own

Be careful of echo chambers. I also have a list of people I fundamentally disagree with, but I like to steel man their point of view, in case I've missed something and should be giving it more credit.

80%	The 28
10%	Random
10%	People I usually disagree with

Although I avoid unnecessary conflict and negativity, it's useful to practise empathising with views I don't hold.

III. Lighting the Way

6. 28 Leaders for the 21st Century

Short version:

Podcasters

1. Chris Williamson
2. Steven Bartlett
3. Tim Ferriss
4. Joe Rogan

Life

5. Sadhguru
6. Dr Jordan Peterson
7. Shi Heng Yi
8. Yuval Noah Harari
9. Mel Robbins
10. Naval Ravikant
11. Gurwinder Bhogal
12. Tim Denning
13. Jessica Wildfire
14. Mona Lazar
15. Robin Wilding

Mind & Body

16. Dr Andrew Huberman
17. Dr Peter Attia
18. Dr Julie Smith
19. Dr Rangan Chatterjee

Soul & Consciousness

20. Professor B. Alan Wallace

Digital Entrepreneurs

- 21. Sinem Gunel
- 22. Zulie Rane
- 23. Ayodeji Awosika
- 24. Eve Arnold

Business & Economics

- 25. Rory Sutherland
- 26. Thomas Sowell

Current Affairs

- 27. Russell Brand
- 28. John Oliver

[Go to next chapter - Let it Flow](#)

[Chapters](#)

Long version:

I don't agree with everything they say.

When I find myself disagreeing, it reassures me that my critical faculties are still on ie I'm not just blindly accepting everything because of who is saying it.

Podcasters

1. Chris Williamson - Modern Wisdom

2. Steven Bartlett - The Diary of a CEO

3. Tim Ferriss

4. Joe Rogan

Life

5. Sadhguru

6. Dr Jordan Peterson

I listened to a lot of JP during lockdown. A lot. There's nowhere to hide in a single 3 hour podcast. I clocked up triple figure hours easily, and the abiding impression is a good man who wants to better the world.

7. [Shi Heng Yi](#)

-

8. [Yuval Noah Harari](#)

9. [Mel Robbins](#)

10. [Naval Ravikant](#)

- <https://www.navalmanack.com/>

11. [Gurwinder Bhogal](#)

- [Substack](#)

- [40 Mind-Expanding Concepts \(Spring 2023\) - by Gurwinder](#)

12. Tim Denning

13. Jessica Wildfire

14. Mona Lazar

15. [Robin Wilding](#)

Mind & Body

16. Dr Andrew Huberman

17. Dr Peter Attia

18. Dr Julie Smith

- Why Has Nobody Told Me This Before?

19. Dr Rangan Chatterjee

Soul & Consciousness

20. Professor B. Alan Wallace

Writing & the Creator Mindset

21. Sinem Gunel

22. Zulie Rane

23. Ayodeji Awosika

24. Eve Arnold

Business & Economics

25. Rory Sutherland

26. Thomas Sowell

Current Affairs

We used to laugh at comedians and trust politicians. We now laugh at politicians and trust comedians.

- Unknown

[Jon Stewart: How the Fake Newsman Won Over America](#)

27. Russell Brand

28. John Oliver

Other names worth looking out for

- Sam Harris
- Brian Cox
- Brett Weinstein
- Steven Pinker
- Jon Morrow
- Tom Bilyeu

7. Six Emotional Needs

Short version:

1. Certainty
2. Uncertainty
3. Connection
4. Social
5. Growth
6. Contribution

[Go to next chapter - Big Five Personality Traits](#)

[Chapters](#)

Full version:

<https://www.tonyrobbins.com/mind-meaning/do-you-need-to-feel-significant/>

When we feel love and kindness toward others, it not only makes others feel loved and cared for, but it helps us also to develop inner happiness and peace.

- Dalai Lama

A chimp in the wild needs to be part of the troupe, or the leopard's waiting... in order to that it must prove that it's worthy

- Steve Peters

The chimp has got it right. It only needs approval from it's local troupe. We need approval from the whole world

8. Big Five Personality Traits

Short version:

OCEAN

1. Openness
2. Conscientiousness
3. Extraversion
4. Agreeableness
5. Neuroticism

[Go to next chapter - Let it Flow](#)

[Chapters](#)

Full version:

9. Let it Flow

Short version:

[Go to next chapter - Solve For Happy](#)

[Chapters](#)

Full version:

Csikszentmihalyi became a happiness researcher because of the adversity he faced growing up. He was a prisoner during World War II, and he witnessed the pain and suffering of the people around him during this time. As a result, he developed a curiosity about happiness and contentment.

Csikszentmihalyi observed that many people were unable to live a life of contentment after their jobs, homes, and security were lost during the war. After the war, he took an interest in art, philosophy, and religion as a way to answer the question, What creates a life worth living?

- <https://positivepsychology.com/mihaly-csikszentmihalyi-father-of-flow/>

10. Solve For Happy

Short version:

[Go to next chapter - Three Legged Stool](#)

[Chapters](#)

Full version:

11. Three Legged Stool

Short version:

[Go to next chapter - Six Maxims To Live By](#)

[Chapters](#)

Full version:

12. Six Maxims To Live By

Short version:

1. This too shall pass
2. You measure what's important, what's measured becomes important
3. You can only connect the dots looking back
4. Is it true, is it necessary, is it kind?
5. Great things are achieved by doing small things consistently well
6. You'll worry less about what people think of you when you realise how seldom they do

[Go to next chapter - Three Investments You'll Wish You Started Sooner](#)

[Chapters](#)

Full version:

13. Four Investments You'll Wish You Started Sooner

Short version:

1. MMS - Made Me Smile
2. DRAK - Daily Random Act of Kindness
3. Get a Starla
4. Gardening

[Go to next chapter - Warning & Disclaimer](#)

[Chapters](#)

Full version:

IV. Dangerously Happy

The more you use it consciously and deliberately, the easier it becomes.

Muscle memory

See 'We Are Gods'

Warning & Disclaimer

Short version:

[Go to next chapter - Gratitude](#)

[Chapters](#)

Full version:

14. Gratitude

Short version:

[Go to next chapter - Relativity](#)

[Chapters](#)

Full version:

Steindl-Rast (2013)

When you have a blocked up nose. You think about when you didn't have a blocked up nose, and wish that's how you were now, and that you'll never take not having a blocked up nose for granted again.

Gratitude is one of our most powerful tools for surfing our emotions.

[How To Take Full Control Of Your Mind: Prof. Steve Peters, The Chimp Paradox | E96](#)

1 min 12

[4 Science Based Habits That Make You Happy & Successful](#)

"Cultivate the habit of being grateful for every good thing that comes to you, and to give thanks continuously. And because all things have contributed to your advancement, you should include all things in your gratitude."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

For many, myself included, gratitude naturally leads onto a desire to give back, to share my good fortune.

"As a fraction of the lifespan of the universe as measured from the beginning to the evaporation of the last black hole, life as we know it is only possible for one-thousandth of a billion billion billionth, billion billion billionth, of a percent"

- Brian Cox

My mother's story in the [Introduction](#).

I just assumed all parents loved their children like our mother does.

This is mostly the case, that's why we feel so sad or angry when it isn't.

But I've also seen enough instances where that parental support is missing to

My mother's love for me is absolute

Find the relative strengths in your own life

The more you think about them, the more power you give them they are.

For 99.9999% of all humanity, I would be considered to live in a paradise:

- Guaranteed income, doesn't depend on the crops
- Safe from brigands
- Personal sovereignty
- Access to all information
- Access to any product
- Access any person, wherever they are on the planet
- Fly
- Live in a democracy

Alive.

Good health
Pete, Lee and Carl
Can play music
Loving parents
Jade
Our daughter (perhaps more to come)

Three types of gratitude

Events	
Your relative strengths	
Absolutes	Steve Peters: Grade A hits

By the time you've become even a reasonably experienced master of any one of these, it's .

If you can effortlessly turn on all three, you have a phenomenally powerful ability to disperse negative emotions.

If you stop obsessing over your own story, you'll realise we are really far up Maslow's hierarchy of needs and life is pretty good.

- Naval Ravikant

The democratisation of technology allows anyone to be a creator, entrepreneur, scientist. The future is brighter.

- Naval Ravikant

Breathing in, I smile. Breathing out, I release. Breathing in, I dwell in the present moment. Breathing out, I feel it is a wonderful moment.

- Thich Nhat Hanh

15. Reframing & Relativity

Short version:

[Go to next chapter - Living Free](#)

[Chapters](#)

Full version:

Dear mum / dad,

I'm pregnant

Relativity and Reframing are two techniques for tee-ing up your thoughts so that your Gratitude can freely flow.

16. Living Free

Short version:

[Chapters](#)

Full version:

You must develop the ability to be disliked in order to free yourself from the prison of other peoples' opinions

- Mark Manson (via Twitter)

Golden handcuffs

Escape velocity (from cancel culture, from the power of the state/business)

Acceptance of where you are + faith in the future = Free from desire / envy

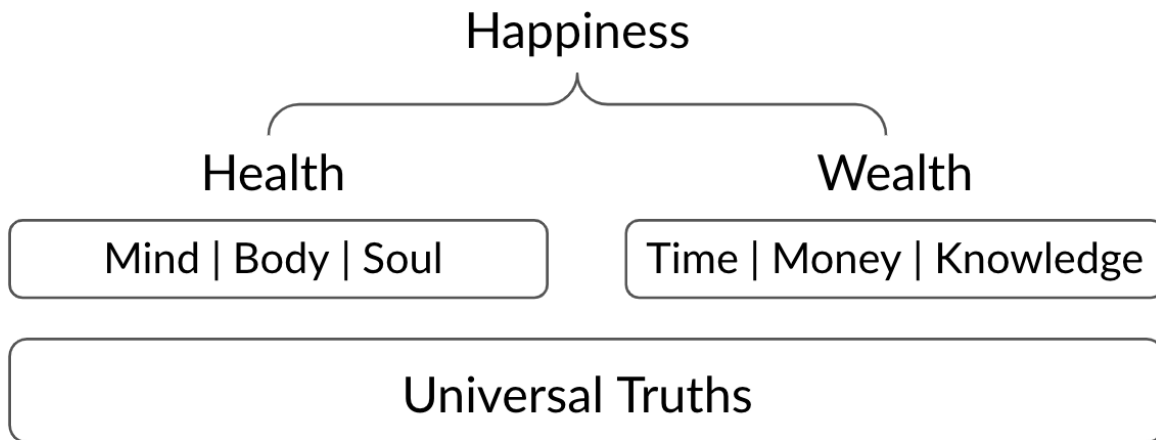
Self employed = master of your own destiny

Work when you want, where you want

Free from the opinion of others

Free from social / cultural norms

Outro



Hierarchy of happiness

I'm not saying it isn't possible to skip a stage.

Neil deGrasse Tyson - the more undecided something is, the more books there are written about it.

Consciousness, happiness

<https://positivepsychology.com/best-happiness-books/>

Tim Urban

Wishing you health, wealth and happiness

Quy

www.gltonline.me

References

[References \(DH23\)](#)