

# *A Book for Everyone*

some thoughts about life, happiness, and getting along

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## *Preface*

What's written in this book has evolved over a long period of time. Not just the time it has taken to write it and rewrite it, but most of a lifetime.

It reflects some of life's experiences, good and bad, and some positive things learned.

Many of these thoughts may sound like something your mom or dad, grandparents, or some other dear loved one might have said to you.

Influences have contributed to my thoughts on life include:

Growing up in a small town, where most people knew each other.

Having caring parents who grew up in the early 20th Century, and started their family during hard times of the Great Depression of the 1930's.

Marrying a loving, caring person and raising three wonderful children.

Having a career with NASA and working with many high quality people on exciting projects.

During these many years, making many mistakes, like we all do, and trying to make the best of them and learn from them.

This book is an effort to capture a few thoughts about happiness and enjoying life, with hope that some of these thoughts might be helpful to you.

At the beginning of each chapter, there are a few thoughts, called ‘Summary thoughts’. The intent is to highlight the focus of that chapter.

The chart is followed by ‘the discussion’ where more detail on the topics of that chapter are covered.

At the end of each chapter there are suggestions of things you might do to enjoy life more and maybe improve in some way.

This book is intentionally very short and hopefully easy reading. Perhaps you may find some things worth pondering.

There has been much written on the various aspects of happiness and improvement. Perhaps the thoughts discussed here may help you improve on things you might do to make your life and the life of those around you more enjoyable.

There is every effort in this book to not use the word, “I”, but rather to use the word, you. It’s written to hopefully be helpful to you.

By the way, if you have ideas about the subjects addressed in this book, it would be good to hear from you. Your thoughts or experiences which emphasize these themes which may be helpful to others would be welcome.

Good luck in enjoying your life, achieving your goals, helping others, and living happily.

# *Foreward*

by Mike Smith

Dave ponders life at the Grotto, which is what I call his backyard. From time to time he invites friends over to ponder with him. First met Dave a few years ago at a NASA meeting at KSC. We hit it off right away. We initially talked about things at work, covering a variety of subjects. Our sense of humor as well as zest to enjoy life were immediately compatible.

Got to know him better when sitting at the Grotto after the loss of Columbia.

It was those evenings at the Grotto that I came to understand that Dave had been pondering the deeper meaning of things like happiness, attitude, tolerance, and getting along. It was then that I realized that Dave is a philosopher.

He loves common sense and knowledge in equal measures, kinda like my grandma Wagner. She had five simple rules for happiness: Free your mind from hatred, Free your mind from worries, Live simply, Give more, Expect less.

The traditional prescriptions for achieving goals are often simplistic and impossible to implement. There is a difference between simplistic and simple. Simplistic means naive and not complete and over simplified: Not taking into account the complexity of the matter. Simple means having enough and nothing more.

What you will read here is a set of delightful, deep and truthful insights that will help anyone who enjoys reading and pondering the meaning of things required to be happy and find fulfillment in their lives.

## *Introduction*

People are as happy as they choose to be.

It seems logical that any person reading this book, and virtually everyone for that matter, wants to be happy. Happiness seems to be a common and basic human desire. The things that make each of us happy may be different, but everyone seeks happiness.

Have you ever heard someone say “life is what you make of it?”

That simple thought emphasizes that your happiness and your enjoyment of everyday life is primarily up to you.

In addition to your own happiness, it is likely that you significantly affect the happiness of those around you.

Seems it is worth striving to make your life, the life of those you love, and of those you influence, as happy as possible.

There are people who seem to be happy and upbeat almost all the time. You probably know one or more of these people. Often such people seem to radiate a sense of happiness through a great smile, a jovial attitude, or a kind nature. It is a pleasure to be around or to think about someone with the upbeat quality. It can be contagious. It might be someone you are around every day or could be someone you don't even know such as people in the public eye who seem to have that quality. Perhaps you are such a positive and happy person and have that affect on others.

There are also people who seem to be mostly unhappy and negative. You probably know some like that also.

Most of us are somewhere in between. We may not be happy all the time, but we continually strive to be happy.

Your immediate happiness often depends on what is going on in our life. Sometimes there are unfortunate things that are beyond our control and you just have to work through them.

Most of the time, we would rather feel happy and feel good about life.

Many factors in your life can affect your happiness. Some of these likely include:

*family*

*love*

*friends*

*situation at home, at work, or wherever you are*

*health*

*attitude*

*how you interact with others*

*self perception and self esteem*

*sense of humor*

*values, goals and ability to achieve them*

In the following chapter there are suggestions about self-assessment and improvement on things that affect your happiness and satisfaction in life.

# Chapter I Happiness

*Summary thoughts:*

*Everyone wants to be happy*

*What things make people happy?*

*How can you size up your happiness?*

*Actions to enhance happiness of you and others*



### *The discussion:*

Most of us find happiness by a combination of many things in our lives. We strive for happiness by being with loved ones, doing things for others, working for accomplishment, helping others to achieve, and enjoying the good things in of life.

Speeding time with family and loved ones is a source of happiness for almost everyone. The love of family is a natural instinct for most everyone. Sure there can be trying times, but your family is a lifelong commitment and should be nurtured at every opportunity.

Many people find happiness in helping or doing things for others, whether it is family, close friends or whomever we associate with. The great thing about this form of satisfaction is that it makes both you and them happy. My wife, Cindy, is a great example of a person who obtains happiness from giving. She loves to do things for others and wants nothing in return other than to see a smile on their face.

Actually, doing to help others seems to be a common source of happiness for almost all people. There are many people who spend their entire lives working in very difficult conditions, simply for the satisfaction of helping other people. This is an outstanding quality and deserves appreciation and recognition.

Almost all of us obtain happiness from personal accomplishments. We also feel happiness and satisfaction from the accomplishments of family or friends whom we have encouraged to achieve. It really provides a great feeling to encourage someone to do something and then to see them achieve their goal. The particular achievement may be common or may be unique, but it often brings satisfaction and happiness to them and to you.

Many people sometimes equate thoughts of happiness with material wealth. There are people who live in extreme luxury, having virtually every material desire. Often material wealth seems to be thought of as a key to happiness. Most of us have a tendency to envy people with material success and often think that such wealth would improve our happiness. It is noteworthy that many individuals with material wealth have achieved this through hard work and perseverance, which are qualities worth emulating in whatever you do.

However, wealth is not a guarantee of happiness. There are many examples of wealth not buying happiness. You may know some of them personally.

Enjoying life is not so much about material wealth, but rather about a wealth of good attitude and appreciation.

There was a recent story about people in the mountains of Tibet, who live a very simple and non-material life. The person who had visited there, made this provoking comment. These people have almost no worldly possessions, yet they are very happy people. That's worth thinking about.

Have you ever heard someone say, "that was the happiest day of my life"? When you hear that, you may ask yourself what was your happiest day, or what are your happiest memories. It is worth considering because it makes you ponder what things really make you happy. There is every opportunity for many happy days in your life.

Webster's dictionary definition of happiness includes these words:

Good fortune, good luck; a state of well-being characterized by relative permanence, by dominantly agreeable emotion ranging in value from mere contentment to deep and intense joy in living.

Of all the words in the Webster's definition, the ones that capture the essence of happiness seem to be:

*joy in living*

## ***Assessing your happiness***

You may be thinking about what things you could do to enhance your happiness. You are the only person who can answer that question.

Listed below are some suggestions that might help.

***Think about what would be your perfect day***

***Think about the things which make you happy. Maybe write them down.***

***Ask yourself why, or what about these things make you happy***

***Look for other things in your life that might have similar qualities***

***Observe what seems to make others happy***

***Talk with others about their sources of happiness***

***Based on these observations, look for opportunities in your life to enhance your happiness***

## ***Providing happiness to others***

Bringing happiness to others is often very satisfying.

You might consider the following things you can do to help others:

***Be more friendly to those around you.***

***Look for the good in people, give compliments.***

***Praise achievements of others.***

***Give encouragement.***

***Do things for others.***

***Be cooperative.***

These are all things you can do, which will almost guarantee some feeling of happiness.

## Chapter II Love and Family

*Summary thoughts:*

***Who do you love more than your family;  
for most it's no one***

***Are you giving your family your love?***

***Love your loved ones every chance you get***

*The discussion:*

When you think about happiness in life, love and family are definitely two of the most important factors.

For most everyone, love and family go hand in hand. Love for parents, spouse, and children is of paramount importance to most everyone. Love of siblings is also very important.

If you compare the love of family to anything else in your life, family naturally ranks at the top.

Have you ever heard someone say:

***Nothing is more important than my family***

That's a great thought and emphasizes the importance of love of family. It is hard to overstate this love.

The happiness of those we love is something we think about most every day. Bringing happiness to them brings happiness to you.

Many people continually strive for the good and happiness of their family. It brings a pleasure and satisfaction many times over.

Some families stay close all of their lives. Living near each other can help families do things as a family. However in this age of modern communication, and travel capability, it is very easy to keep in touch. It just has to be something you want to do. Looking for opportunities to talk with family can be an frequent source of happiness in your life. Things may always be going well, but hearing from a loved one is often a source of satisfaction.

Being there for your family in time of need is natural and very satisfying.

Love of family lasts a lifetime and more for most everyone.

On a personal note, our uncle Byron wrote a touching story at the time our grandmother passed away. It really emphasizes the importance of love of family.

## “ Our Mother

We sat there, her children, by her bedside in those last hours, on into the night...her life slowly fading with the night, until at dawn with a last sigh, she passed on.

During those hours of sorrow, I searched for the meaning of life and to what avail our human existence. At times it seems so futile. Briefly we are here, without time to gather and understanding of how or why, or even to begin to live. The fundamental nature of life so significant, yet life's span so tragically insignificant.

Our mother loved life, not so much for herself, but for the essence of life itself and what it gives. She loved and painted nature's gifts to mankind. She lived with a simple acceptance and active concern for people, regardless of station, creed or color.

Thwarted in her desire to live a full, complete life by the ravages of a dread disease, yet even towards the end, in her suffering and realization that death was imminent, she sought to console us in our grief.

Then I knew...I knew the meaning of life! She was truly a wonderful and gallant lady. She will live forever in our hearts.....Byron B. Rowland”

The thoughts expressed by Byron have been felt by many people who have lost loved ones.

His thoughts really emphasized the caring nature of his mom and how she was always thinking about the feelings and well being of her loved ones.

So, what can one say about love, and happiness. Just remember this:

***Striving for the good of your family will bring you happiness all of your life.***

## Chapter III Fairness and Sensitivity

*Summary thoughts;*

***Fairness and sensitivity are good qualities  
to embrace***

***Are you treating people with respect in  
your daily life?***

***Actions to continually enhance your  
sensitivity***



### *The discussion:*

Treating people fairly can be a definite factor in their happiness, and hopefully in yours also. There has been much written on how to treat people in the workplace and especially on how managers should treat employees. Many of the ideas in such writings apply not only to the workplace, but to the treatment of anyone you know.

A most basic thought on fairness is:

#### ***Treat people with respect and sensitivity.***

It seems very logical to use fairness when dealing with anyone, yet it is often not the case. How you treat others definitely affects their happiness.

Consider the people you interact with and ask yourself if you are treating them with sensitivity. Consider their objectives, their motives, their goals and their priorities. These factors may be different for them than for you and thus may justify their actions.

Another part of fairness is being open-minded. Listening and being receptive to the ideas of others often promotes positive feeling and results in improved cooperation. Although one approach to a task may be better than others, open discussion of various ideas almost always leads to a better outcome. This applies whether you are actually doing a job or project or just talking. Being open-minded means being willing to discuss various aspects and considerations of a subject. It is easy to say you don't agree with something, but it takes thought to offer real alternative views or options.

Fair treatment does not always mean treating everyone the same. Being sensitive to a person's culture, their religion, or other aspects of their background is important. Today, many countries have citizens who were born in other parts of the world. We all desire happiness, regardless of our background, but we often have different values.

Remember, sensitivity to the values and culture of others almost always affects their happiness and may affect yours.

Sometimes others will treat you unfairly. In general, discussing it with them can be productive. Be sure to treat them the way you would like to be

treated. There is generally no value to treating them poorly in response to their unfair action.

There should be special emphasis on fair treatment of people regardless of whether they are female or male. Throughout much of history and still in many places today, women are treated in a substandard manner. There is absolutely no justification for this. Strive to treat all people with fairness and sensitivity, regardless of their gender.

## ***Taking action on fairness***

What can you do relative to fairness?

***Treat people with respect and sensitivity***

***Listen.***

***Give positive feedback.***

***Be open-minded.***

***Treat others as you would like to be treated.***

## **Chapter IV Encouragement and Praise**

*Summary thoughts:*

***Encouragement and praise provides satisfaction for the receiver and the giver***

***How often do you give encouragement?***

***Are you sensitive to goals of others?***

***Actions for giving more encouraging***

### *The discussion:*

Providing encouragement to your family, your friends, or anyone you interact with can directly affect their happiness. Every person has their own feelings, their own talents, as well as goals which they would like to achieve.

#### ***Encouragement and support from others can make the difference in whether someone achieves happiness and attains goals***

Encouragement affects the way a person feels about what they are doing or what they have achieved.

It is very natural for any of us to want encouragement and approval from our family, whether it is parents, spouses, children, sisters, brothers, or whomever. Achievement by anyone is certainly enhanced by positive feedback or praise from others. Praise and positive feedback is also important at work, or school, or wherever you spend time.

Often it is much easier to give encouragement or praise to someone who is striving for a goal that you think is good. Parents emphasizing education is a good example. Virtually all parents want their children to do well and to be happy, and thus encourage them to obtain formal education or other types of training. The chapter on education strongly emphasizes that path to improvement.

However, it takes more thoughtfulness and sensitivity to give encouragement when someone's objectives or path for advancement are different from what you consider important. If a person believes in what they are trying to achieve and it provides them self improvement or self satisfaction, then encouragement and praise can be helpful. Also, you don't want to encourage someone along a path in which they won't be happy or which can be detrimental to them. Be open-minded about someone's objectives when giving them encouragement.

There is a difference between encouraging someone to achieve and demanding that they achieve. It is certainly good to give encouragement. However, demanding that someone achieve at all costs and without consideration to their desires or their own goals is not true encouragement. Encourage with sensitivity.

Praise and encouragement to anyone you interact with, whether at work or play, provides a positive feeling to them and also to you. Think about occasions when someone has complimented you on something you have done. Think about how good it made you feel, how it made your day. Your encouragement to others can provide that same positive feeling to you.

It is worthwhile to encourage anyone to strive for their best in whatever they do. You often hear people say to their family or friends,

*do your best*

*be the best you can be*

These thoughts capture the essence of encouragement. It is a very encouraging six words which you can say to anyone striving for accomplishment or self improvement. It is also a good thought to keep in your own mind when you are working toward any goal. The emphasis is on encouragement to do well at whatever you are doing.

The following is a personal experience on encouragement which affected me significantly. During my senior year in high school, there was a scholarship offered, for the first time, by the Civic League of our hometown, Foley Alabama. Our counselor and teacher, Lorraine DeMarlo, caught up with me on the last day for application of the scholarship. She encouraged me, or better, she insisted on me applying. My grades were good, but my family was not financially able to send me to college. Without financial aid, college was not likely. Based on her encouragement, I did apply and was selected for the scholarship. Even though it was for only one year and was not a large amount, it enabled me to get started in college and to make it the rest of the way.

It's a pleasure to say this about Lorraine DeMarlo; "she changed the rest of my life" because of her encouragement.

Many of you probably have similar stories where the encouragement by someone who cared helped you along the way. Encouragement can be helpful to others and very satisfying to you.

## ***Taking action on encouragement***

What things might you do relative to encouragement?

***Praise others for their efforts and accomplishments.***

***Encourage people to strive to achieve their goals.***

***Suggest options of ways to achieve and improve.***

***Look for the good qualities in others and compliment them.***

***Give encouragement whenever you can - it's positive and satisfying.***

# Chapter V Tolerance

*Summary thoughts:*

*The golden rule seems a common value to many people in the world*

*Prejudice has no value*

*Assessing you prejudices*

*Taking action to improve your tolerance*



*The discussion:*

The tolerance that we demonstrate for the heritage and for the beliefs of others often affects their happiness and also ours. There is a line from an old song which has a line:

***what the world needs now is love, sweet love...***

Perhaps what the world needs also needs now is more tolerance. Lack of tolerance and too much prejudice is the source of much unhappiness throughout the world.

Most people embrace the ideal of happiness and well being for others. This ideal is fostered by religious faiths throughout the world.

Unfortunately, there is also a significant amount of intolerance and prejudice in many people. Two of the most common types of prejudice seem to be associated with race and religion.

Religious prejudice is an incredible irony across humanity. A common thread of all religions is emphasis on treating others with dignity, respect, understanding, and love. That is a golden rule type of thinking and seems to be a cornerstone to all religions. The writings of virtually every religion include verses which have a theme along this line:

***do unto others as you would have them do unto you.***

Ironically, many who profess to follow their particular beliefs have little tolerance for the beliefs of others. Even within different groups, sects, or denominations of a single religion, there is often this lack of tolerance or understanding for other beliefs.

It does not seem that the Supreme Being, Almighty Power, or whatever Entity is the foundation of religion, would intend for people to treat others badly because of their beliefs. Rather, it seems logical that emphasis on treating others with a golden rule approach is embedded in the foundation of every religion and is of paramount importance.

The discussion on religious tolerance is included in this book is because most people are significantly influenced by their religious beliefs and

training. Since tolerance is a fundamental of religion, and happiness is often affected by tolerance, it is definitely worth a strong emphasis.

Racial tolerance is equally important to the happiness of many people. It seems racial prejudice has existed throughout history and is still prevalent. Consider this thought:

***There is no value, no merit, and no worth in being prejudice toward anyone because of their race.***

If someone is encouraging you to a prejudiced way of thinking, then they are giving you poor advice. Prejudice is in direct conflict with a golden rule philosophy. Consider this thought when dealing with anyone:

***If you treat others the same as you would like to be treated, you might improve your tolerance***

There are numerous people throughout history who have spoken out strongly against prejudice and intolerance. Many have worked throughout their lives to assure fairness to all.

There is also sometimes a lack of tolerance for the physical characteristics of individuals. Some people are tall, others short, some heavy and some thin, and some have other physical differences. These types of differences are the way people are and many physical characteristics cannot be changed. Even for those physical characteristics that can be changed, it is the individuals choice to do so.

***Accept people for what they are. You will feel better about them and yourself.***

Throughout history, various groups of peoples have treated certain other groups with disdain, hatred and violence. Whatever has happened in the past relative to unfair treatment of one group or nation by another can never be changed. There is no value to retaining hate or intolerance due to the past.

Your focus on tolerance and understanding is a key factor in getting along with people

## ***Taking action to enhance your tolerance***

What might you do to enhance your tolerance?

***Examine you own areas of intolerance - ask yourself why you have such feelings.***

***Treat others like you would like to be treated.***

***Be tolerant of the views of others - try to look at their side.***

***Encourage tolerance in others.***

***Strive to eliminate intolerance from your daily life.***

## Chapter VI Patience

*Summary thoughts;*

***Patience is a virtue***

***Who is the person you consider most patient?***

***Why does age often improve patience?***

***What can you do to enhance your patience?***

### *The discussion:*

Patience is definitely something that can affect your every day happiness and the happiness of others.

Consider some of the times that you feel very impatient. It generally causes tenseness or discomfort of some sort. People are not typically smiling and happy when they are tense.

The quality of patience seems to be something that is often developed over a long period of time. For some, it takes much longer than for others. Older people often seem to have patience. Maybe it's from their many experiences in life, both positive and negative, and learning to make the best of both.

Maybe there's a connection of happiness and patience. If you are a happy and upbeat person, maybe you are a patient person. Not necessarily, but probably often the case. Or, conversely, if you are a generally unhappy person, maybe impatience is a contributor.

Patience can you affect happiness of the moment. It also can affect the happiness of those around you. If you are short tempered and abrupt, those around you most often feel uncomfortable.

## *Taking action on your patience*

What can you do to improve your patience? Start by considering things that really try your patience. The easiest solution is often just to avoid situations that test your patience. For most of us, that is not a practical solution, since we sometimes cannot avoid certain situations. Avoidance does not really address the issue of impatience.

More practically, you might make a list of some situations that make you impatient. Maybe write them down in order of most annoying. Try to list the things about each one that you dislike most. Also think about the circumstances in which they occur. You might find a common thread among them or maybe not. Perhaps being stuck in traffic does not relate well to the other tense situations, but how you handle it might.

As discussed in positive attitude, you might try to adjust your attitude or perception of the particular trying situations and may be able to handle them better.

Think about a good natured grandparent, who has learned to minimize their impatience by “going with the flow” and not getting uptight. Parents often learn patience from dealing with the many stages of child rearing, from infant children, youngsters, preteens, teenagers, and adult kids. Lot’s of opportunities to evolve patience in raising children.

Looking at another side, young people may often feel impatient with their parents. If you have that feeling, just remember that almost all parents are trying to do give good advice their children.

Whether you are older or younger, trying to understand the point of view of someone with whom you feel impatient might help ease your tension.

Another thing that might help enhance your patience is to talk with a friend or family member who you consider to be most patient. Perhaps they can give you some good tips.

Don’t let impatience interfere with your every day enjoyment of life.

## Chapter VII Humility

*Summary thoughts:*

*Humility can create a positive feeling*

*Have you ever felt 'above' certain people?*

*There is no value in being aloof or  
arrogant*

*Everyone is a human being trying to enjoy  
life*

*The discussion:*

Just a few brief words about humility.

It's difficult to capture the affect on humility on the happiness we enjoy in our daily interaction with others. However, humility versus arrogance is an obvious distinction on whether you like being around someone.

People who are humble and kind are often a pleasure to be around. Many people associate those qualities with their loved ones.

In contrast, being around someone who is aloof is most often uncomfortable.

As much as happiness is a common desire everyone, a feeling of being 'better than' certain others is something that sometimes occurs in all of us. Hard to explain, but you can probably relate to the thought.

What is the value of feeling aloof? Perhaps it provides some persons a temporary source of satisfaction. If that feeling is at the expense of others, which it most often is, then it seems the wrong attitude.



## **What might you do to enhance your humility?**

A start might be to ponder the occasions when you have a feeling that you are better than others. Then ask yourself what is the real reason for that feeling. Most often you will realize it is frivolous and actually hurts your interaction with others. Be aware of when such feelings arise.

When dealing with others, strive to treat them as another human being who is trying to enjoy life just as much as you.

If you can achieve that approach on a regular basis, you will feel better about yourself and others will enjoy your company.

## Chapter VIII Humor

*Summary thoughts:*

***Laughing can provide a good feeling for the moment***

***What makes you laugh?***

***Can you laugh at yourself ?***

***Search for the humor in everyday life***

### *The discussion:*

Humor can be a significant part of happiness of the moment. Laughing seems to be another of those basic human instincts. Although some have far more of a sense of humor than others, it is there in all of us. We all have certain things that make us laugh. A great thing about humor is that you can recall something that made you laugh and you can often laugh about it again.

Laughter can take away tension or irritation and improve your mood. Even if it's just a temporary moment of levity, it can be very positive.

There are many humorous things in everyday life, if you just look for them. Even though the sense of humor is stronger in some, almost everyone enjoys laughing. If you have a strong sense of humor you generally don't need encouragement to laugh. If you're not one of those people, you surely know someone who is. However, if your humor is more subdued, perhaps you can enhance it.

Look for things to laugh about. Don't be afraid to laugh at yourself, or at something you've done. Often this provides relief of negative pressure you may be feeling. We all make mistakes in everyday life. You can't change what you've done, but you may be able to laugh about it.

A friend from work kept a good quote above his desk to remind him about being too serious. It said:

***Remember, search for the humor.***

Humor is often a good way to break the ice in a tense situation. Many public speakers open their talks with a joke or some form of humor. It often makes the speaker and the audience more relaxed and more receptive to each other.

It is noteworthy that humor can be negative. People are generally offended by being laughed at. We may think something is funny at the same time someone else does not. We should be sensitive to the effect of things we might consider humor on those around us.

## ***Taking action relative to humor***

So, what might you do to enhance your humor?

***Look for humor in everyday life, it's there.***

***Laugh at yourself when appropriate.***

***Laugh when an opportunity arises.***

## **Chapter IX Attitude Affects Happiness**

*Summary thoughts;*

***Positive attitude can be a real plus in your life***

***Your attitude is all yours***

***Have you assessed the positives and negatives of your attitude?***

***Taking action to think positive***

*The discussion:*

Positive attitude and happiness often seen to go hand-in-hand. That is another of those statements which is simple, but still worth reemphasizing. It makes sense. Positive thinking helps in enjoying life. Another way of saying this:

***the more positive your attitude, the happier you will be.***

This sounds simple or trivial, but it is so true. Attitude is very much self-fulfilling.

If you have a positive attitude you will generally feel happy.

It is a pleasure to be around a person with a positive attitude. It produces a positive feeling. It can be a contagious condition and is worth catching. Most of us know some positive attitude people and enjoy being around them. Our friend, Bill, is one of these people. He encourages others, often has a smile, gives motivational input, and is almost always positive. These are great qualities which are worth admiration and emulation.

There are many people in the public eye who seem to have positive people, even though we have never met them. It's likely their positive attitude has contributed to their success. Which famous person appeals to you depends on your values and perceptions. Whether it is someone you know personally or someone you would just like to know, their positive attitude can be inspiring.

***The great thing about positive attitude is that it's totally under your control.***

This thought is worth repeating every day.

## *You control you attitude*

You can't control everything in your life, but you definitely control your attitude toward everything that happens. Your attitude may be influenced by others, but ultimately, you are the master of your attitude.

You cannot control things that happen by chance, although you can improve your chances on some things. However, you can control many things in your life. We all have habits which we develop and which are often difficult to change. You can change them if you were determined!

You are in control of your actions!

People around you often have input to what you do. Certain people in our lives provide a big input. Parents generally provide significant influence to their children. Some people accept the input of parents, loved ones or friends; others reject it. It seems that such advice is almost always well intended. However, you must make your final decisions. Some advice may not be right for you, but its often worth considering. Don't reject advice of others without giving it consideration. Your loved ones almost always have your well being in mind when they give you advice.

You may be thinking that you want to be in control, to have a positive attitude, to be happy. But you may also be asking yourself, what can you do in your everyday life to achieve these things? Your attitude about these things is the key! Your attitude is directly related to perception. How you perceive the events and conditions in your life is of primary importance in how you enjoy your life and how happy you are.

If you focus on the bad or negative things in you life, you will likely feel unhappy.

Everyone experiences moments of unhappiness through disappointments in everyday life through personal events which cause much sorrow. Unfortunately, this is part of life and we have to work through those times. In spite of the such times of sorrow, for most of us, the majority of the time the door is open for positive thinking.

If you focus on the good things, you will likely be happy and positive.

## ***Assessing your attitude***

A possible way to evaluate your personal attitude, is to think about the various aspects of your life and how you perceive them. Ask yourself a few questions

***which things do you perceive in a positive way and which in a negative way?***

***why do you think they are positive or negative?***

***are these things controlled by you or your actions, your habits?***

We frequently think that many of the positive things in our lives are the results of our own efforts. This is often true and really makes the point for having a positive attitude. If you approach things with a positive attitude, good results often happen.

How often do you see an interview with someone who has achieved a goal, and hear them say that they maintained a positive attitude and didn't give up? Most successful people achieved their results or success with a positive attitude. The correlation between positive attitude and achievement is generally not a coincidence.

Conversely, we often consider negative situations in our life as beyond our control, and thus believe we cannot do anything about them. There are certainly some things we can't do anything about. However, there may be some things which we think of as negative simply because we perceive them that way. Examine a negative thing in your life and ask yourself why you perceive it as negative. Try to determine if there are positive aspects of this problem. Consider both sides of the situations. Ask yourself what you might do to improve the condition. If you think the condition is controlled by someone else, perhaps you should discuss it with them. Remember, your perceptions and your actions are totally in your control!

You have to want to think positive to do so!



Many motivational speakers emphasize a common theme that you can't control all the situations in your life, but you do control how you handle them.

This thought emphasizes importance of positive attitude and its effect. You can think and act positively on many things in your life, or you can do the opposite. The choice is yours!

Positive thinking is the opposite of pessimistic thinking.

There is no logic in approaching things with anything other than positive attitude. However, almost all of us do some tasks or some activities which we perceive in a negative way. If you have such a task or situation, ask yourself if the task would be easier if you looked at it in a positive sense. Completing the task will almost always be better if done with a positive attitude.

You may not always achieve every goal, but positive attitude greatly increases your chance of success.

Positive attitude may not always result in complete achievement of your goal, but it can only help. If you believe you can do something, you probably can. It's not guaranteed, but definitely a helpful attitude.

This motivating thought emphasizes believing in yourself to accomplish a goal, to complete a task, to achieve anything of value. This is what positive thinking is all about, when it comes to achieving. If you start any task thinking you cannot do it, you probably will not succeed. Please think about that. You must believe you can do it. Also, when striving to achieve anything, setbacks or disappointments often occur. You must not let them stop you from striving toward your objective. Thinking you can't do something is often self-fulfilling. If you strongly believe you can do something, you have a much, much better chance at success.

Consider these thoughts about attitude:

***your attitude directly affects your happiness***

***you control your attitude***

*you can improve your attitude*

*happiness and achievement often result from positive attitude*

## ***Taking action on a positive attitude***

The following few ideas may help create a positive attitude:

***Ask yourself if you are a positive person.***

***If your answer is no, then ask yourself why.***

If your answer is yes, then you can look for ways to further enhance your positive thinking.

***Write down the positive and negative things in your life.***

***Look for ways to change or minimize the negatives.***

***Ask someone close to you what they think about your attitude.***

If their answer is different than your perception, then you ask why, perhaps discuss it with them.

Focus on the positive things in your life.

Remember, you control your attitude!

# Chapter X Self Improvement

*Summary thoughts;*

***Improvement is an individual challenge***

***Do you have anything you would like to improve?***

***Are you really working on your goals?***

***Actions to help improve***

## *The discussion;*

Self improvement is certainly a method of enhancing the level of happiness in your life. It goes hand in hand with improving self image. There are many things each of us can do to improve. We all have some areas which we want to improve and they are often in our thoughts, but sometime we just don't get them done. Remember:

***taking action to improve is what self improvement is all about.***

Only you can decide what you want to improve. The key is that you strongly want to achieve the improvement. Dedication and hard work are required to achieve anything. Difficulties are often encountered. You must believe in yourself and maintain your commitment and determination. This is essential and cannot be overstated. There are many great quotes when it comes to improvement and determination. There is a commonly used phrase:

***no pain, no gain***

Many people may associate that saying to athletics, but it has been said far back in history by people from many walks of life. The thought emphasizes hard work and commitment as cornerstones of improvement. You can have high expectations and still not necessarily achieve everything you strive for. However, to achieve most things, it is helpful to have high expectations. Most people who ever achieved anything of significance had high expectations and determination. If you have these qualities, you will achieve many things.

Have you ever heard the saying:

***the harder you work, the luckier you get.***

The emphasis is on work, not luck. The fact is that those who work hard often make good things happen because of their efforts. It's generally not luck, but rather the results of their determination.

Certainly there are some things in life that are luck. Winning a lottery is a good example. What a great feeling it must be to look at your lottery numbers and realize that they match those drawn. Hearing someone describe

their initial impression of disbelief followed by extreme jubilation is exciting and enviable. However remember this:

***you cannot count on luck to achieve your goals and aspirations.***

You often make your own breaks by hard work and perseverance. You cannot control luck, but you are in control of how hard you work on anything you do. We often tend to look for excuses when striving to achieve. It seems to be human nature. Don't let discouraging events stop or erode your determination. Keep focused on your objective. We all experience setbacks in almost everything we attempt. However, the key to success, to achievement is to stick with it, remain positive and determined! You can do it.

Self improvement and attitude are directly related. A positive attitude about improving is essential to improvement. Your attitude can be self fulfilling relative to improvement.

Encouraging people to be their best and to strive for their goal is very positive. You can apply this attitude to your everyday life, your work, your education, your personal projects, or whatever you do.

While striving to achieve, to improve, you can expect setbacks. Still, it's much better to keep striving rather than just sitting back. It certainly helps to be enthusiastic if you want to improve.

Hard work is required for success. Some people find happiness in continually striving for more or higher successes rather than simply stopping at some level. This is fine. Working toward a goal can be very rewarding and satisfying.

It's worth noting that many people choose not to strive for further improvement because they are content with their situation, because they are not adequately motivated for further achievement, or because they don't think they can improve in their current situation. That's okay. It is your choice.

You must decide what is important or satisfying to you. You are the only one who can take the action to improve yourself. Please consider this thought:

Self improvement or achievement of any goal takes the will and determination that you provide. You can do it!

## ***Taking action to improve***

So, how could you improve certain aspects of your life? Consider these suggestions:

Write down what things you think need improving

***Think about ways you can improve these things.***

***Determine what things you can do to improve.***

***Consider inputs and ideas from others.***

***Decide that you are going to improve.***

***Don't let procrastination stop you from improving.***

***Take action - it's the key to improvement.***

***When you give your best, that's all you can do.***

If you think you can't seem to improve on a specific goal, you might try this approach:

***Envision yourself achieving the goal in your mind***

***Envision it over and over until it seems easily attainable or routine***

***This combination of envisioning it as real may help make achieving it more attainable***

Just a final thought about improving, act now, don't waste chances by thinking there are plenty of more opportunities.



# Chapter XI Self Image

*Summary thoughts;*

***Do you feel good about yourself?***

***What affects those feelings, good and bad?***

***How can you change those things you want to change?***

***Taking action to feel good about yourself***

*The discussion:*

It has been said that you are what you perceive yourself to be. It's often true.

Your happiness may very likely be affected by your self image. Every person has certain positive qualities and capabilities which makes them special. That definitely includes you! That may sound like something you've heard from your mom or dad or friends, but it's still true. You can think of good qualities of your loved ones or friends. If they have those qualities, then you can may have them too.

Previous chapters have addressed self improvement and positive attitude. There are many individuals who have improved much in their life and in general have a positive attitude, but still do not have a positive self image. Most of us seem to have some aspect of ourselves and our self image which we are not happy with. We also have some moments when our esteem is lower. It's natural. Our perceptions certainly affect our happiness.

## *What affects your self image*

There are definite factors that can affect your self image. Some of them may involve:

*your attitude*

*how you interact with others*

*your personal characteristics*

One way of improving your self image may be to improve the way you interact with others. Smiling and laughing more, being helpful, and giving compliments can help. It is difficult to feel negative when you are sincerely smiling. We all know some people with a great smile. Recalling them smiling often gives a happy feeling. Think about your favorite smiling people. Whether you know them personally or see them on television or wherever makes no difference. Just thinking about their happy smile is likely to give you some pleasure and may entice you to smile more.

Many associate self image with appearance. Two factors that often affect how we look at ourselves, and how others perceive us are our physical fitness and our appearance. Both are things you can change. Improving your physical fitness can often improve your self image.

You may choose to enhance your appearance by using a variety of approaches including clothing, hair style, cosmetics, etc. If you have difficulty with achieving these types of improvements, you may decide to ask help from family, friends or professionals. If you don't care for the opinion of one, try others. Just remember that you decide what you like. Some may consider improving personal appearance as vanity, but it is very normal and if it makes you feel better about yourself, then it is worthwhile. The importance of this factor on your happiness is entirely up to you.

Another consideration on improving your self image involves perception. You may not need to change anything about the way you are, but rather only change your opinion or perception of it. When thinking about personal aspects which you would like to change, ask yourself if it is really a

problem, or is it just your perception that's the problem? You may ask a friend or family member their opinion. You don't want to change a good quality!

*To change and to change for the better may be two different things.*

## ***Taking action on self image***

So, what might you do to improve your self image? Consider the following thoughts on perception. Actually this list can apply to more than improving your self image. It can apply to anything you want to achieve.

***What is it about your self image that you like, and what do you dislike.***

***Think about what you would like to improve.***

***Think about, read, and talk to others about ways to improve self image.***

***Take action on improving something, if it doesn't work try another way.***

***Stick with it.***

***Strive to maintain or improve your self esteem - that's the bottom line.***

Just remember, you totally in control what you think of yourself.

## Chapter XII Health and Happiness

*Summary thoughts;*

***Good health is good; no doubt about it***

***How are you treating your body?***

***Are there things you want to do better?***

***Lot's of ways and help to live healthy***

### *The discussion:*

Just a few brief words about health.

Having good health is also definitely something that may help you be positive and happy. As discussed earlier, good luck and good fortune is often associated with material possessions. However, all of the material possessions you can imagine would seem small if your health has failed.

A good friend from high school recently said, “if you don’t have your health, you don’t have anything”. That may not be totally true, but it makes the point of striving for good health.

You might be thinking that it is difficult to fulfill your happiness just because you are healthy. That’s probably true. When you are feeling down, it’s hard to just say “oh, well. I’m healthy” and then feel better.

However, it is worth thinking about the many things you can do that can affect your health: the food you eat, what you drink, exercise, how you handle your everyday stress, and much more.

You may be thinking that you already take good care of your health and live and eat healthy most every day. That’s good. Still, good health has a matter of chance. Sometimes health problems occur despite all your best efforts, but striving to live healthy is a good goal.

There are individuals, and you probably know some, who do many things to promote their good health and yet suffer some debilitating disease or accident that damages their health. That does not mean you should not strive to be healthy. It just means that being healthy can also be considered good fortune. Consider those you know whose health has suffered. It often makes their day to day happiness much more of a challenge.

## **What can you do to take care of your health?**

There is much written on the subjects of eating well and exercising to improve physical condition, and there are different opinions on the benefit of these. Consider this observation: Eating well and exercise are ways to improve the way you feel physically and the way you perceive yourself. It's might improve your prospects for a longer life but just as significantly, it improves the way you feel now. Exercise is almost always a good way to improve physical fitness. It seems to have a positive effect on almost everyone who is involved in it. You can try walking, aerobics, bicycling, swimming, running, team sports or whatever suits you. Education or training on exercise is a good idea if you plan to pursue this method of improvement. You can talk to others who exercise regularly. Those who do the type of exercise which you are interested in can be very helpful. Also you can participate in training classes, groups, or clubs. These can help you in learning more about the subject and may provide you with motivation and enthusiasm when the going gets tough.

It takes effort and determination to be more physically fit, as does any accomplishment, but it is worth the effort.

You have to decide if you what to address health and fitness as part of your happiness in life.



## **Chapter XIII Education and Learning**

*Summary thoughts:*

***Learning is a lifelong activity***

***You can learn something most every day***

***Formal education opens door***

***Dedication and effort are essential to learning***

*The discussion:*

The old saying “learn something every day” can be a good attitude during your entire life. Being happy and to enjoying life is the focus of this book. Maybe you don’t learn something new every day, but there are frequent opportunities to learn thought life.

We have many sources of learning - home, job, friends, associates, schools. Basically, our whole environment provides for learning in a variety of ways.

Learning through formal education is widely embraced as a method of self improvement, and is a way to enhance the happiness in your life. Education has been emphasized by leaders, philosophers, educators, and people from all walks of life, throughout history.

The Webster dictionary has a lengthy definition of education, the essence of which is:

The act of providing knowledge, skill, competence....by a course of formal study, instruction, training...

This definition refers to formal training which most of us associate with education and learning. Formal education is an approach of self improvement worth encouraging. Three benefits of education are:

*it significantly increases your career options*

*it raises your general knowledge to a broader level*

*it provides a lifelong sense of accomplishment*

One thought on learning and education which has been expressed by many people throughout history is:

*Learning is important to you because it significantly affects what you are able to do with the rest of your life.*

This is true whether you are in an education program, learning on the job or at home or wherever you are, and learning about life.

Relative to formal education, you must determine what type of education/training and career path is right for you. It is generally a tough choice. Some individuals seem to know from an early age what they want to do, but most people have to do a lot of thinking about it.

## ***Assessing an education for a career path***

You may ask how to select an education or career. Ask yourself a few questions:

***what kind of things do you like to do?***

***what are your wants, your expectations?***

***what are your abilities, aptitude, intelligence?***

***what are your resources?***

***does your goal go with your personality?***

All of the above should be considered in selecting the path you take. Write down your answers. Think about them!

A systematic selection and evaluation of your education path may be very important to your happiness in life. Many people don't like their jobs despite considerable education or training. This may be for a variety of reasons, but if the wrong education is the reason, it is more difficult to change. Having training which enables you to do a job you enjoy is a great achievement and the source of much happiness.

When selecting a career path, think about the rewards of that occupation to determine if they seem sufficient to you. Monetary compensation is often the focus or measurement of reward which is discussed. However, personal satisfaction is extremely important and prestige may also be significant to you. In deciding on an education path, you should consider positives and negatives of various options, assess your self direction and desires, then decide.

Some people may believe that they don't have enough intelligence to achieve a formal education. It is easy to think that others are smarter and that's why they get an education. Thomas Edison emphasized that hard work, not

brilliance, was his key to improving. With this type attitude, most people can achieve their educational goals.

When pursuing education, or any goal for that matter, don't forget:

***There are no shortcuts to any place worth going.***

## ***Taking action on learning and education:***

Pick a path and give it your best

Be determined and enthusiastic.

Don't let setbacks deter you

Also, remember, you are never too old to learn.

## **Chapter XIV Enjoying Life**

*Summary thoughts:*

*There is a lot in life to enjoy*

*How do people enjoy life?*

*Assessing what you think about your life*

*Actions to enjoy life more*

*The discussion:*

You probably have heard someone say:

***Make the best of every day of your life***

How each of us enjoys life is very much a personal decision or characteristic. It is a function of how we respond to the happenings in our lives.

It seems important to strive to enjoy life on a daily basis. Actually, this seems to be very important. Many people ask if there is a secret to happiness. Life is complex and affected by many factors. However, if there is a key factor to happiness it may be to:

***Enjoy life as often as possible.***

Try to emphasize an attitude of being high on life. Having the opportunity to do enjoyable things each day is good. If you look for more things in life to enjoy, you will find them. One favorite thought is:

***It's another great day to be alive.***

This type of attitude about each day can definitely help focus on enjoying daily life.

Sometimes people say that they wish they were finished with some task they are doing, or with some phase of their life. Young people may sometimes wish to be through with a grade level in school or be out of high school or college. Yet, after they have completed these phases of life, they often look back with fond memories and may even wish they could go back and savor those times. A simple thought on this is:

***Don't wish your life away; enjoy the present.***

There are things that happen in life that are difficult or which bring pain or sorrow. We all have these. There is no way to escape some of them. However, there are many things to enjoy each day including your family, your friends, people you interact with, your achievements, your health, your material pleasures, or whatever. How you perceive your surroundings and



your situation directly affects how you enjoy each day. Many of us have much in our lives to enjoy.

You can put this in perspective when you consider the situation of some people in the world who live in very adverse conditions. There are many who would be happy by simply having food to eat. It is worthwhile to keep the perspective that whatever problems occur in everyday life, they are trivial compared to the basic concern for survival. If you can keep this in mind, it can help you appreciate the positive things you have to enjoy each day.

Another source of pleasure in life is in the beauties of nature. There is beauty of nature in every country of the world. You may not travel to most of these places, but there are enjoyable natural things right where you are.

Almost everyone has something in nature's beauty or phenomena that they particularly enjoy. It might be simple things like sunrises, sunsets, flowers, oceans, hills, mountains or whatever natural wonders exist on Earth or in the universe.

In this book there is emphasis on self improvement and encouragement. These are important. At the same time it is important to enjoy yourself while you are growing, accomplishing, and improving. It is good to continually strive to improve but the old saying which has definite merit is:

***Don't forget to stop and smell the roses.***

There is time for work and for leisure. You have to balance the two and this balance is unique to each person.

The saying makes the point that you need to enjoy your accomplishments along the way to whatever you are striving toward. This thought is also applicable to encouraging others toward achievement. Emphasis on enjoyment of life along the way to whatever you become is important.

A key factor in enjoying life involves your attitude. In another chapter, there is emphasis on the importance of positive attitude in happiness. You can enhance the enjoyment you have in life by adjusting the attitude you have towards everyday things around you. If you concentrate on the positive aspects of things which are beyond your control, you will be more happy

than if you focus on the negative. Something as simple as the weather seems to be a good example. You can't change it, but you can perceive it in whatever way you want.

Another example of attitude affecting happiness involves enjoying your everyday surroundings. It seems common to hear people say that they wished they lived somewhere else, whether it be in another neighborhood or in another part of the country. There is nothing wrong with trying to obtain something better. This book emphasizes that idea. However it is important to enjoy what you have now. Many factors may affect what you have and where you live. These include family, job, schools, health, and others. We try to balance all of these factors to get the most from our everyday happiness. Focus on the factors you consider most positive if you want to enjoy each day.

## ***Taking action on enjoying life***

What things you can do to enjoy life more:

***Focus on the positive events, and surroundings in your life.***

***Identify and strive to change the things in your life which adversely affect your happiness.***

***Try new things at work or as hobbies - if they don't work out, try something else.***

***Enjoy something about each day.***

***Appreciate what you have.***

Your attitude towards your everyday life is very significant when it comes enjoying life.

## **Chapter XV A Summary of Key Thoughts**

- **You can be as happy as you choose to be**
- **Love you loved ones every chance you get**
- **Treat people with respect and sensitivity**
- **Encouragement and praise provide positive affect**
- **Tolerance is a great quality**
- **Patience is a virtue**
- **Humility can create positive feeling**
- **Look for the humor every day**
- **Having a positive attitude is all up to you**
- **You have to take action for self improvement**
- **Your self image is totally controlled by you**
- **Good health is good, no doubt about it**
- **Learning is lifelong, education opens doors**
- **Enjoy the good things in your life**
- **All of the above can affect your happiness and happiness of those around you**

