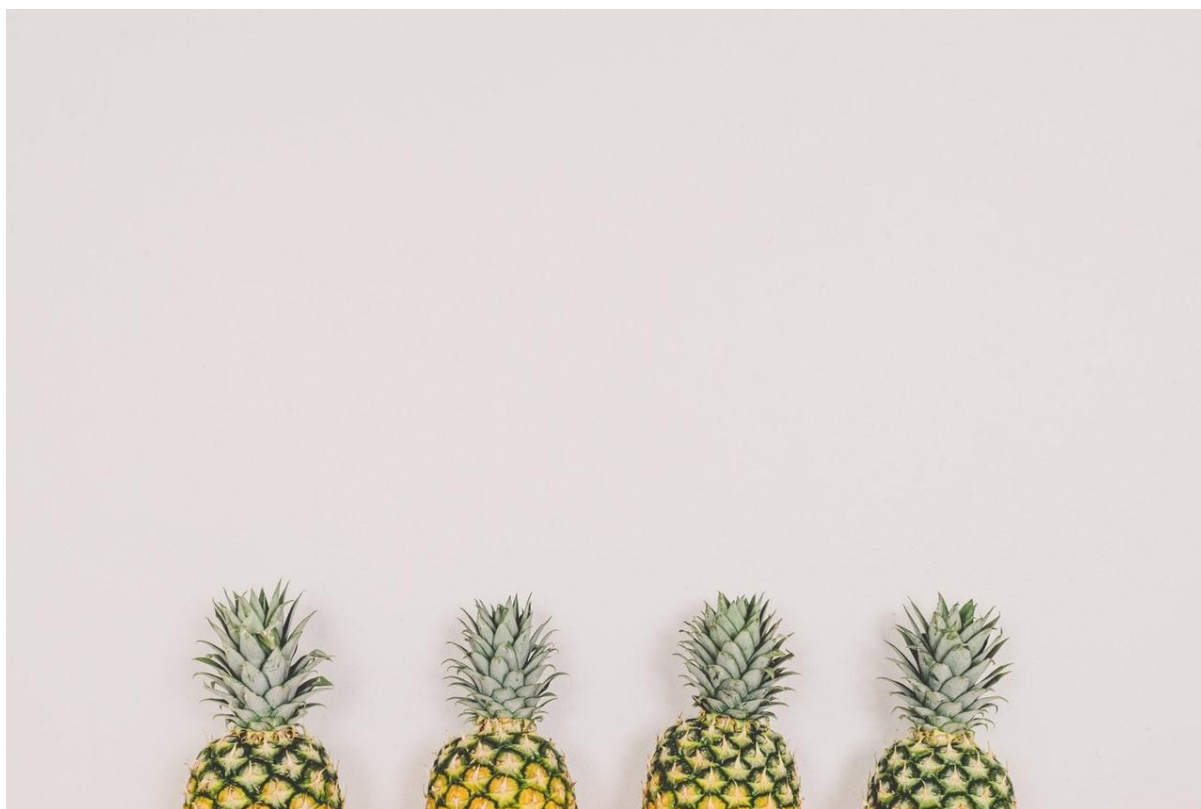


# The Happiness Revolution

## Instant Happiness Volume



by  
**Gemma McCrae**



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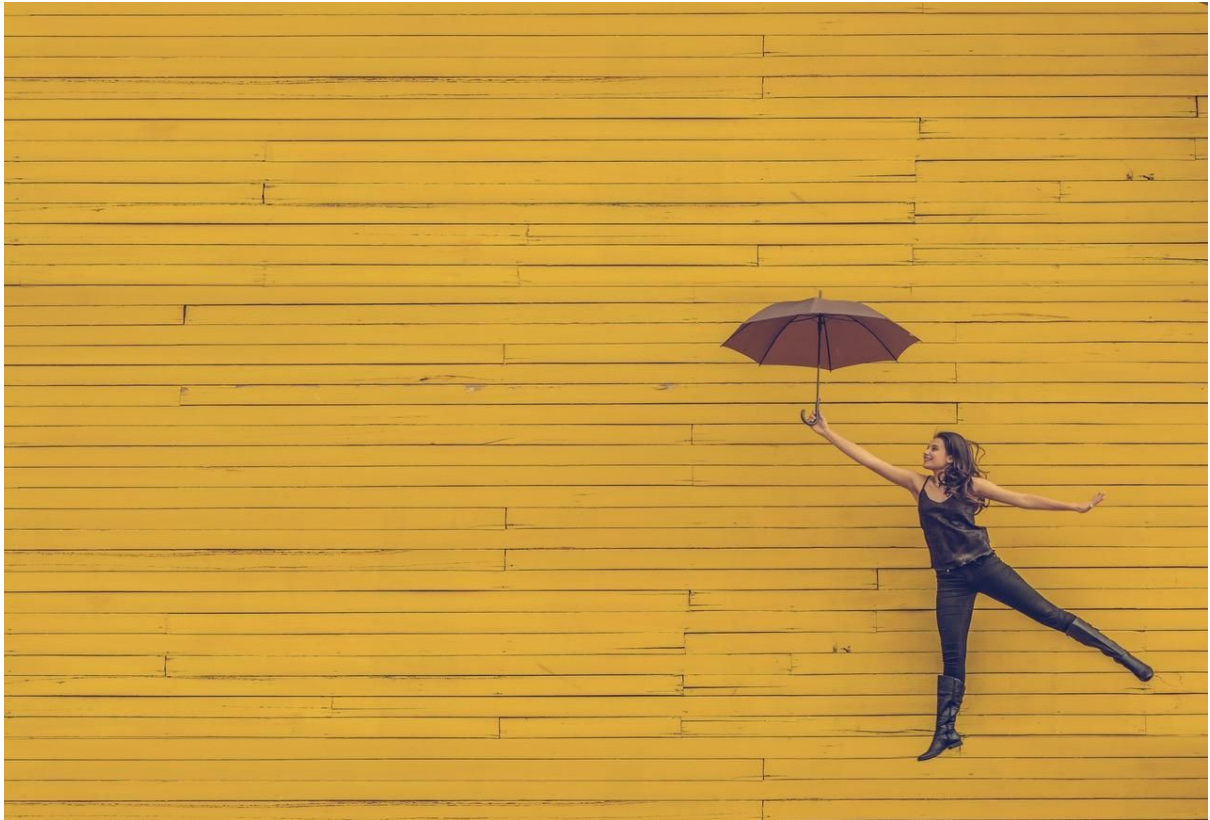
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# Introduction



Happiness is every human being's ultimate destination. It's an overarching requirement we all aspire to have, but is often elusive. Never quite reached. As humans, we are constantly on a journey to our 'Happiness Location' and, in our crusade to get there, we forget to enjoy our lives. Many people sadly reach the end of their lives still searching for the elusive 'Happiness Elixir', which, if they had only looked right under their noses, was with them all the time.

From where I'm typing this book in a busy coffee shop, I'm convinced that life is becoming busier and busier, our population is becoming more stressed and, quite frankly, most people look miserable. I literally can't see one person smiling or laughing, and I don't think I have since I got here a few hours ago.

I'm not sure how an epidemic of unhappiness happened. Maybe it's always been this way and we simply romanticise the past? Or maybe it's a symptom of the modern world? Is it because the majority of people are living on a hamster wheel of paid employment, huge mortgages, credit card bills and striving to build up their pension pot?

You're probably looking back to the front cover of my book and wondering if you've downloaded the right one. It was on happiness, right?

Don't worry, you're reading the right book, and I'm shortly going to showcase 28 pages of powerful words on how to find your happiness now. Yes, now. Over these 28 pages, I've outlined the 13 'Happiness Pillars' that are going to provide almost instant happiness for you. But I couldn't launch straight into the fluffy part of my book without outlining how unbelievably unhappy today's society generally is. It's vital that I stress this to you from the outset. In fact, I'm shouting it: MOST PEOPLE ARE NOT HAPPY!

Do you know why I'm shouting this? What my frustration is about this? What the biggest secret is about happiness which, if everyone chose to embrace, would change the world?

Happiness is a choice.

Happiness is a responsibility to throw your arms around and embrace.

Happiness is an education.

Happiness is a conscious decision you make.

Over the next 28 pages I'm going to help you start your own Happiness Revolution.

I'm going to give you 13 Pillars of Happiness which will provide the foundations for you to build upon for the rest of your life. I'm excited because what you don't appreciate at this stage is how easy they are to implement. How quickly you will be able to adopt them into your everyday life.

My recommendation is to read through the book once and then go back to the beginning and implement them one by one.

So, finally, why did I start this book in such a depressing way?

Well, as I've said, most people appear to be unhappy. I'm not a scientist, and I'm not sure how an emotion can be scientifically measured anyway. But common sense tells me that, from looking at people from all walks of life, most people are not happy. The biggest shame about this is that happiness is probably one of the easiest things to attain if you give it priority. If you bother to find out what it is that truly makes you happy.

You've got an opportunity in your hands (well on your computer) right now to start your own Happiness Revolution and change your life for the better. Forever.

Do it!

***"There is no path to happiness: Happiness is the path."*** – Buddha

## Chapter 1: Smile



We've all experienced the scenario when we're having a bad day and some jackass says "Smile". What a low blow when someone says that to you!

However (and I hate to say it), they are truly on to something.

The truth is, when you're feeling unhappy, when you're feeling angry, when you're feeling frustrated, one of the most powerful things you can do to change how you feel is to smile!

Now, I'm with you if you're thinking it won't fix the problem. Full disclosure: it won't. But I promise you it will make you feel better.

Instantly.

Scientists have known for a long time that changes in our emotions cause changes in our body. For example, if you feel happy, you will smile or maybe your heart rate will increase. But the same applies the other way round. Your brain will react to your body movements as a signal to create an emotion.

It's called the Facial Feedback Hypothesis.

The most famous experimental confirmation of this hypothesis came in 1988 from Strack, Martin and Stepper. They conducted an experiment on three groups of people, with each

group being told that the experiment was for a different reason. Group 1 was given a pen to hold in their mouths in the 'Lip Position', which resulted in a frown. Group 2 was given a pen to hold in their mouths in the 'Teeth Position', which resulted in a smile. The Control Group was given a pen to hold in their non-dominant hand.

All three groups were firstly told to fill out a questionnaire and rate the difficulty involved. This was done to throw them off the scent of what the scientists wanted to find out. The real objective of the test was to get all participants in the test to rate the funniness of a cartoon that they were subsequently shown. As predicted, Group 2, the smile group, reported significantly higher amusement ratings than Group 1, the frown group. Further, more sophisticated, tests have been carried since and all of them have concluded the same: smiling results in higher amusement rates. Feeling happier.

Want further proof?

Then look no further than Botox!

I need to stress that I'm not an advocate of Botox. However, the scientific research surrounding its effect on human emotions can't be disputed. The University of Cardiff carried out research and scientifically proved that those people who've had Botox and find it hard to frown are happier than those people who haven't had Botox and can frown easily.

The research on this topic goes on and on, but, in summary, smiling is scientifically proven to make you feel happy.

So, my first Happiness Revolution tip for instant happiness is to try and smile as often as you can.

***"We shall never know all the good that a simple smile can do."*** – Saint Mother Teresa



## Chapter 2: Gratitude



The Attitude of Gratitude theory has had a huge resurgence in the past ten years. We've been encouraged to write gratitude lists, keep a gratitude diary, feel grateful and act grateful.

For a good reason.

Quite simply, by feeling grateful we can instantly change how we feel. We can instantly feel happier. Gratitude Practice improves our happiness levels in many ways. It helps us appreciate what we have now in our lives, it makes us feel more positive, it makes us feel more charitable, it stops us from focusing on the negative aspects of our lives and it helps to connect us to something larger than ourselves; be it nature, other people or even a higher power.

Gratitude to improve happiness has been scientifically proven.

Dr Robert Emmons, Professor of Psychology at the University of California, carried out three separate scientific experiments using gratitude diaries. The three studies all concluded that writing a gratitude diary increased positivity about life as a whole compared to the control group who didn't write a gratitude diary. The experiments also proved that those people

who kept a gratitude diary experienced more positive moods, and less negative moods, on a daily basis than those who didn't write a gratitude diary.

Another scientific study was conducted by Dr Martin E P Seligman, a psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania, who asked participants to write and personally deliver a letter of gratitude to someone in their lives who had never been properly thanked for their kindness. The results were astounding, and the participants experienced a huge increase in happiness which lasted for a month.

So, how can you instantly feel gratitude?

The key is to practise an Attitude of Gratitude regularly to ensure that the muscle is being exercised to become stronger and stronger.

There are various ways to cultivate gratitude on a regular basis and they are:

1. Gratitude diary – write in your diary every morning or evening.
2. Gratitude practice – every day mentally run through what you're grateful for.
3. A thank you letter to someone – write to someone who has been kind, and say thank you.
4. Saying thank you to someone in person – tell somebody in person why you're grateful to them.
5. Throw a gratitude party – invite friends and family over and celebrate what you're all grateful for.

I've identified a number of questions to help you **feel** gratitude if you're finding it tough to feel grateful about anything at the moment.

### **Gratitude Questions**

1. Who do I love in my life?
2. Why do I love them?
3. How do these people make me feel?
4. What am I proud of in my life?
5. Who has shown me kindness in my life?
6. How have they shown me kindness?
7. What or who makes me happy in my life?
8. What material possessions do I have that I'm grateful for, and why?
9. What challenges have I endured that I can now be thankful for?
10. What am I happy about right now? How does it make me feel?
11. Look through the eyes of someone else. What am I grateful for?

12. What basic needs of mine are met that millions of people don't have? For example, fresh, clean water, a hot shower, a toilet, a home, an abundance of food, medical care, health.

Aim to practise gratitude for at least one to two minutes per day.

***“Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has plenty; not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some.”*** – Charles Dickens

## Chapter 3: Exercise



Exercise is such an obvious happiness booster that I think we can overlook it. So, I'm going to re-educate you on the positive effects that exercise has on your happiness levels, instantly.

I believe that you should only do the forms of exercise you enjoy; otherwise you won't maintain a regular routine. However, as somebody who exercises regularly, I can categorically say that it's something I have to do, rather than something I want to do. So, I pick exercises that I find as enjoyable as I can, while providing the results I need. My current exercises of choice are yoga, kettle bells, skipping, cycling, trampoline and walking. No gym for me anymore.

So, if I don't overtly love exercise why do I put myself through it? Well, aside from the long list of physical benefits of exercise, which were the original motivation for me to do exercise, the number one reason for me to exercise now is because of my mental health. If I don't exercise, I become very, very, very moody. To repeat, very moody. As if by magic, when I do exercise – ideally first thing in the morning – I'm generally very, very, very happy for the rest of the day.

This is no exaggeration.

I monitor my moods closely and I can categorically confirm that, for me, it's probably the number one way to instantly boost my happiness levels. It's become a standing joke in my

house. When Cruella comes out – my bad mood alter ego – my husband will always ask me: “Have you exercised today?”

The Mental Health Foundation in the UK has produced a guide called *How to look after your mental health using exercise* as an endorsement of this. They state that even a short burst of activity such as a 10-minute walk increases mental alertness, energy and positive mood.

The science behind why we feel good after exercise is because, when we exercise, the body releases a protein called BDNF, which has protective and reparative qualities on our memory neurons to effectively reset our brains. Hence the reason why after exercising things often seem clearer for us. At the same time as releasing BDNF, the body also releases endorphins. Endorphins are known for blocking the feeling of pain and discomfort during exercise and for producing feelings of euphoria.

I don't think you need the science explanation as to why exercise can instantly boost your happiness levels. You can prove it to yourself now. Go for a quick walk around the block or go and do 50 star jumps in your lounge. How do you feel afterwards? I can almost guarantee better.

So, do this the next time you're feeling low and want a 'perk me up' exercise.

If you've not exercised before and don't know where to start then ask a friend to help you, consult a personal trainer, download an exercise App or watch a beginner's guide to exercise on YouTube.

Don't let the excuse of not knowing stop you.

***“It is exercise alone that supports the spirits and keeps the mind in vigour.”*** – Marcus Tullius Cicero

## Chapter 4: Declutter



Decluttering your home is one of the most therapeutic activities you can do. I believe that decluttering can change your life. Literally. The decluttering of just one cupboard, one room or, even better, your entire home, will start a domino effect of good things. Remember how amazing you feel after a thoroughly good clean of your home? Well, exaggerate this by one hundred and this is how amazing decluttering feels.

Decluttering has been a buzz word ever since the wonderful Marie Kondo released her book *The Life Changing Magic of Tidying*. Of course, decluttering has been around forever, but, prior to Marie Kondo, it was never in the limelight. It wasn't given centre stage and now it has.

Science has proved the positive effects of decluttering too.

In 2011, the Princeton University Neuroscience Institute published a paper in the *Journal of Neuroscience* which concluded that, if your environment is cluttered, it directly restricts your ability to focus clearly. Basically, the clutter will distract your ability to process information because the clutter is competing for your attention. This was backed up further by Christopher Peterson PhD in an article he wrote in *Psychology Today*, where he concluded that clutter can have a negative psychological effect.

So, what is clutter?

My definition of clutter is: “Those possessions that no longer serve a purpose; are no longer used; are no longer wanted; and are stored in an untidy state”.

On a practical level, the benefits are that a good decluttering will:

1. Make your home look nicer.
2. Free up valuable space.
3. Make your home look bigger.
4. Make your belongings easier to find.
5. Make your home easier to clean.
6. Identify belongings that can be potentially sold or given away.

On a ‘soul’ level, the benefits are that a good decluttering will:

1. Create an environment of peace and tranquillity, which in turn helps create a mindset of clarity, peace and tranquillity. They say that your home is a direct reflection of your mind. I believe that this works the other way round too and that your mind is a direct reflection of your home.
2. Motivate the desire to self-care by creating a relaxing and calm environment, making you more inclined to relax and meditate, for example.
3. Help you move forward and cut the ties of your past. Maybe you still have belongings from an ex or a deceased love? By removing these items from your home you’re clearly signifying to yourself and to the universe that it’s time, not to forget, but maybe to move on.
4. Generate feelings of gratitude and love by remembering your past. Decluttering can stimulate the fantastic memories you’ve maybe forgotten, appreciate the experiences you’ve had and the people you’ve spent time with. It can make you pick up an old hobby or connect with an old friend, for example.
5. Reduce stress by making your belongings easy to find. It will save you time also.
6. Remove the feeling of guilt caused by the need to declutter because it’s done!
7. Positively affect other areas of your life by providing the catalyst for change. You’ve had the courage to declutter and cleanse your home, what’s next for you?
8. Make you feel good. Decluttering not only brings a sense of achievement, it’s also seriously good exercise (a vigorous declutter can burn more than 500 kcals), creating the secretion of feel-good endorphins into your brain and nervous system.
9. Make you more house proud, which can ultimately make you more social because you will want to host more events at home.

As a professional declutterer I know how powerful decluttering is. If you think you’re going to find decluttering difficult, then please ask a friend, bring in a professional declutterer like me to help, or read to educate yourself on how to do it. Pop over to my [blog](#) on my Declutter website to look for lots of practical tips.

The hard part about decluttering is the start. Once you begin the process, the results will quickly speak for themselves and give you all the motivation you need to complete your whole house.

As I said in the chapter on exercise, you don't need science to prove that decluttering can boost your happiness. You can do it and feel the benefits yourself. I can assure you almost instant satisfaction and happiness.

***“Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful.”***  
– William Morris



## Chapter 5: Be Kind



It's been scientifically proven that being kind can make you happier. But, again, we don't need science to confirm this. Think about a time when you last helped a stranger. How did it make you feel when you walked away? At the very least, I imagine self-satisfied, useful, worthy. Definitely happier.

Acting kindly towards another will **instantly** make you feel better as a person. Just smiling at a stranger can make you feel better. Quite simply, being kind changes your mindset to a positive mode and by changing your mindset to a positive mode you will attract more positive things to you. In a nutshell: 'like attracts like'. If you feel good, you will attract more good things and feelings.

Being kind will give you a natural high.

The next time you're feeling unhappy, go and do something kind for someone to instantly boost your happiness. Need ideas? See below.

1. Pay for the coffee of the person behind you in the queue at the coffee shop.
2. Pay someone a compliment.
3. Offer to help someone in need.
4. Pull your neighbour's wheelie bin back on to their drive.

5. Give way when in traffic.
6. Make a donation to charity.
7. Write your partner a letter to tell them how much you appreciate them.
8. Tidy up after someone.
9. Help someone who is lonely. Volunteer for Silverline.
10. Make an extra portion of dinner and give it to someone in need.
11. Go and sit with a lonely elderly neighbour.
12. Write a letter to a stranger in need. A website called [More Love Letters](#) has a list of people who could benefit from your letters of encouragement.
13. Buy someone a gift for no reason and a thank you for being a great friend.
14. Give blood.
15. Support new business ventures by sharing on social media.
16. Give work to somebody who is in need or help them to find employment.
17. Teach somebody to do something.
18. Hold the door open and smile at a stranger.
19. Leave a large tip.
20. Become a RAKTIVIST – Random Acts of Kindness Activist. Visit the [Random Acts of Kindness Website](#) to find out more.

There are lots of ways to be kind and lots of reasons to be kind, but know that, when you're feeling down, a random act of kindness will go a long way to boosting your happiness.

***This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness.***  
–Dalai Lama

## Chapter 6: Happiness Person



Consciously think about all the people you know and think back to how each person makes you feel when you're in their company and afterwards. Identify those people who make you feel good about yourself. Those people who lift you up and support you when you're feeling poop. Those people who can make you laugh when you feel sad and make you see sense when all you want to do is curl up in a ball and hide under the duvet.

Who are these people? Your mum? Your wife? Your husband? Your best friend Sue? Your work colleague Mick? Write these people down in a list and then prioritise that list of people. So, your best friend Sue may be your number one person, and so on.

Now you make the number one person your 'go to' Happiness Person. You may tell them that you've selected them for this purpose or you may keep it to yourself, but, regardless, it's good for you to know that, when you're having an off day, there is someone at the end of your speed dial who is always willing to make you feel better.

Obviously, the role of Happiness Person is meant as a compliment to that person and shouldn't be a burden, so don't exhaust them with constant phone calls and moaning! It may be that you choose to be each other's Happiness Person and you agree upon a code that you can use if support is needed. You send them a WhatsApp saying: "Happiness needed" and they know that this is your need for support and can they get back to you as soon as they can?

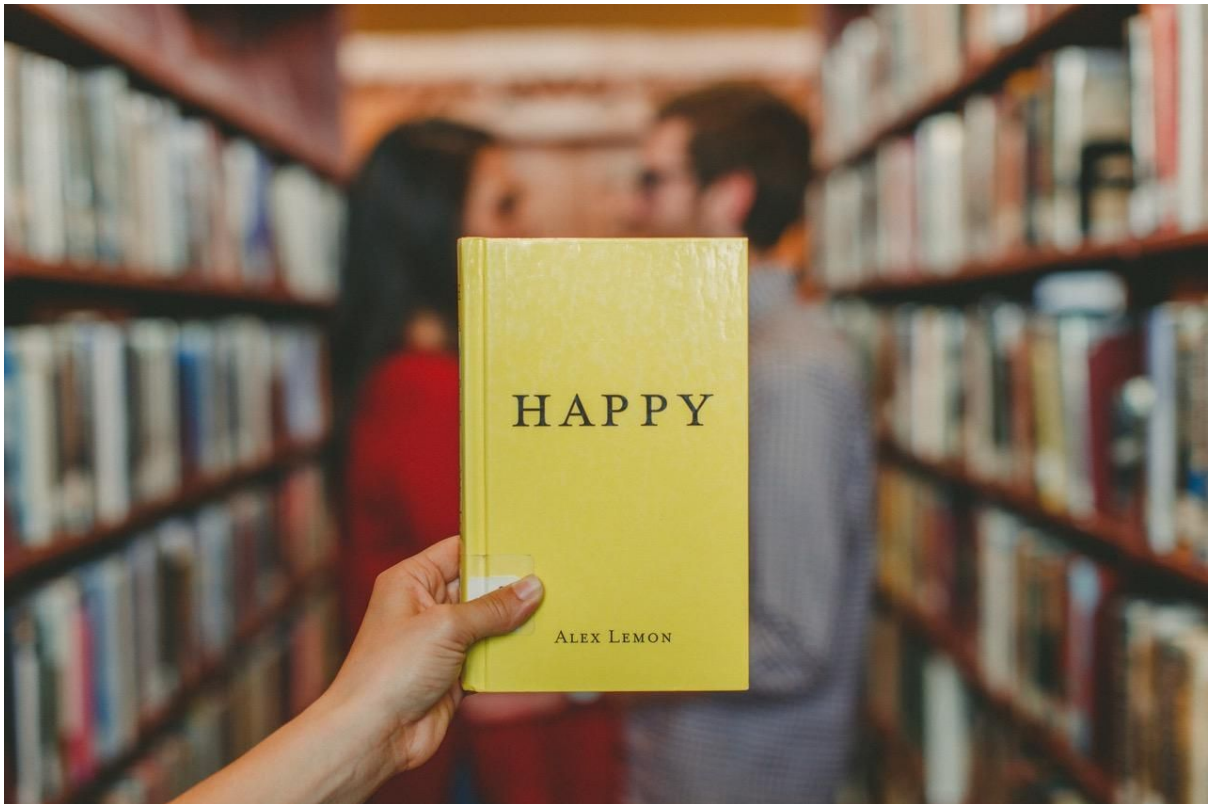
I personally recommend that, once you've identified this person, you ask them if they'd be willing to accept the role as your Happiness Person. This then gives them the option as to whether they wish to be involved or not. It could be that they simply don't want to do it or perhaps they've got things going on in their life at the moment and don't feel able to give this support when you may need it.

In terms of how you ask them, I would use the following script:

"You're the most positive person I know. You always make me feel good after seeing you and I would like to ask you a favour. Would you consider taking on the role as my Happiness Person? I know it may sound ridiculous but I'm doing lots of personal development work on myself and I would like to have a 'go to' person who I can contact when I'm feeling down in the dumps. It's not onerous! I promise I won't call you every day. It's more about knowing I can contact you to hear some words of wisdom when I'm feeling down."

***"We can't help everyone, but everyone can help someone."*** – Ronald Regan

## Chapter 7: Read



The power of the written word never fails to surprise me. How a particular book, quote or poem can instantly flip my thinking from negative to positive. I'm a big fan of uplifting quotes being littered around my house and office to provide me with important lessons, wise words or something funny every single day.

I encourage you to actively search for those pieces of writing that inspire you and put them somewhere where you can refer to them when needed. Maybe cut them out and glue them into this book, put them on your fridge door or pin them to your cubicle wall at work!

I personally like the following:

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world." – Mahatma Ghandi

"It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all, in which case you have failed by default." – J K Rowling

"I choose to make the rest of my life the best of my life." – Louise Hay

"You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along'." – Eleanor Roosevelt

"It always seems impossible until it's done." – Nelson Mandela

"You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection."  
– Buddha

"There is no way to happiness. Happiness is the way." – Thich Nhat Hanh

"Holding on to anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die." –  
Buddha

"Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened." – Dr Suess

"It's always darkest just before the dawn." – Thomas Fuller

"Fortune favours the bold." – Proverb

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by  
the ones you did do." – Mark Twain

"Imagination is more important than knowledge." – Albert Einstein

"Everything you ever wanted is on the other side of fear." – George Addair

"If you have everything under control you're not moving fast enough." – Mario Andretti

"Believe you can and you're halfway there." – Theodore Roosevelt

"A year from now, you may wish you had started today." – Karen Lamb

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." – Lao Tzu

"Tough times never last but people do." – Dr Robert Schuller

"Do one thing every day that scares you." – Eleanor Roosevelt

"Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly." – Robert F Kennedy

"Success is stumbling from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm." – Winston Churchill

"When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be." – Lao Tzu

"There is only one way to avoid criticism: do nothing, say nothing and be nothing." –  
Aristotle.

"I am thankful to all those people who said no. It's because of them I did it myself." – Albert  
Einstein



“Whether you think you can or you think you can’t, you’re right.” – Henry Ford

“If opportunity doesn’t knock, build a door.” – Milton Berle

“You will face your greatest opposition when you’re closest to your biggest miracle.” – Shannon L Alder

“Always remember that striving and struggle precede success, even in the dictionary.” – Sarah Ban Breathnach

“Fear is the disease. Hustle is the antidote.” – Travis Kalanick

“The people who think they are crazy enough to change the world are the ones who do.” – Steve Jobs

I also advise you to write a personal mission statement exactly as companies do. A mission statement is a vital document that outlines the ethos of who you are and who you are aspiring to be. It’s a statement that you can refer to it in the bad times to provide you with the encouragement needed to stay positive.

To help you, I’ve outlined mine below.

*“I, Gemma McCrae, do vow to live my life as if my 90-year-old self would want me to do. This mission statement outlines the key principles of how I will live my life going forward.*

*I will ensure that I treat all people as I would want to be treated. With kindness. I will be kind and considerate and, more importantly, compassionate. I will endeavour to leave every person I encounter feeling happier for being with me.*

*Worry less. It makes me old and irritable. Take each day as it comes and enjoy every day to the maximum that I can that day. End of. Do not plan your life ahead. Relax and enjoy what unfolds. The plan is to have no plan. Let the magic of uncertainty guide you.*

*Choose my reaction, count to ten always. Try and smile and be nice. You will look the better for it. But remember, remember, remember, you’re only human. Some people need to be Gemma educated.*

*Never forget what a wonderfully complex person I am. Embrace it, don’t fight it. I am who I am and that’s it. I choose to love myself. As such, I vow to treat myself with love and kindness. And, most importantly, I choose to be happy. Gut belly laughter happy. Every day.”*

**“Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body.”** – Richard Steele

## Chapter 8: Online



I bet you didn't think that this one would show up in a happiness book, did you? Well, I'm a massive fan of the Internet and still to this day get truly excited over the endless possibilities that the Internet can present to us while sitting at home in our armchairs.

This happiness book is written from personal experience, but, while recently carrying out endless hours of research for my Life Coaching Practice, I came across a number of happiness resources on the Internet that I never knew existed, and they are brilliant! I'm excited to share them with you here.

If you're waking up and feeling sad, pop on to your computer and have a look at these sites to cheer you up!

1. **The Nicest Place on the Internet:** Need a virtual hug? Want a pick-me-up? Go to this website and sit back while strangers hug you down your computer screen accompanied by huge smiles and lovely music. Sounds ridiculous, but it's fab! Makes me smile every time.
2. **Happier:** A website and an App created to provide you with an instant happiness boost. Log on to the website and pick from hundreds of articles on how to find happiness. Download the App to share your moments with the Happier community for support and encouragement.



3. **Pinterest:** Search for 'happiness' and find hundreds of boards dedicated to happiness. Filled with positive quotes, pictures and photos, it's a quick way to get a boost of happiness.
4. **Action for Happiness:** A brilliant website that is a non-profit organisation. Frequently recommended by health professionals to their patients, Action for Happiness brings together professionals in the Happiness arena and provides free information on all things to help you become happier. From courses, cafes, events and actions, this really is a goldmine of information.
5. **Happify:** There is a free version and a paid-for version of Happify. It's a programme of exercises designed to firstly assess your happiness levels and then help you become happier. It also hosts various articles on happiness.
6. **YouTube:** Okay, a massive search engine I know, but I truly love YouTube. Type in 'happiness' and you will be inundated with millions of videos all dedicated to making you happy.
7. **1000 Awesome Things:** A website that went viral in 2008. The site documented 1,000 awesome things that a guy called Neil Pasricha documented to help him following the collapse of his marriage and the death of a friend. The website displays the 1,000 awesome things and so much more. It's well worth a look.

*"The Internet is becoming the town square for the global village of tomorrow."* – Bill Gates

## Chapter 9: Meditate



Firstly, what is meditation? Meditation in the strictest sense is where a person, although awake and conscious, has a clear mind, is relaxed and is aware. The ultimate form of meditation is to get to a place whereby the mind is totally emptied of thoughts. In other words, you're not thinking, the self-talk stops.

As easy as this sounds, it's absolutely not. Also, meditation is not something that can be measured externally. Therefore, how do you know if you're doing it right?

Basically, you don't. It's a continual learning curve and at times incredibly hard to do, but worth all the effort. There has been a meditation revolution over the past 15 years and its health benefits are now widely accepted, yet there is still a vagueness as to exactly what it is and the perfect way to do it.

Why is this relevant to happiness I hear you ask?

As a mere amateur at meditation practice, I felt on shaky ground writing about meditation with absolute authority, but, having done hours of research for this chapter, I realised that there is no absolute authority on meditation because there are no strict rules. Meditation is personal to you and, if practised regularly, it will change your life. It isn't a fad that has been exploited for a quick buck by someone in Hollywood. It's a genuine practice that has been around since the fourth and fifth centuries in India and China.

If I'm having a bad day, I will always stop to take time out and meditate. I always come out the other side of a meditation feeling calmer, energised and definitely happier, and, trust me, I'm no expert! If it works for me it will definitely work for you.

A neuroscientist called Sara Lazar has confirmed that meditation shrinks the amygdala: the part of the brain that controls anxiety and fear. A study by U C Davis proved that meditation reduces the amount of cortisol in the body which causes stress. Lastly, a study carried out by the University of Wisconsin found that a group of stressed employees who took part in an eight-week meditation programme had more activity in their prefrontal cortex – the happy part of the brain – than the control group.

There are other studies out there to prove that meditation makes you happier. The following are just a few, but you get the idea.

To quote Buddhist Nun, Gen-la Kelsang Dekyong, when she asks her audience why do we need to practise meditation she says:

*“Meditation is a method to make our minds calm and peaceful. If our mind is calm and peaceful we are happy. So, the simple reason why we need to meditate is because we want to be happy. The function of meditation is to make your mind peaceful and calm. If your mind is peaceful and calm, I will be happy. The experience of a peaceful calm mind is happy feelings. When your mind is peaceful and calm happy feelings come naturally from within our mind. It doesn't come from two chocolate eclairs and a café latte mocha with sprinkles. If you have a chocolate éclair or café latte with a peaceful mind you'll be happy. But a café latte and chocolate éclair can't make you happy from their side.*

*When we have peace of mind all the time, we're happy all of the time, whether we are in good or bad circumstances. It's not the circumstances making us happy or unhappy, it's our mind. If you've a peaceful mind in good circumstances, so let's say I'm driving in my Ferrari, if we've peace of mind, we'll have a happy feeling. If we're sick, if we've a broken relationship, if we've lost our job, we'll be happy if we've peace of mind. This is such an important teaching because it's directly related as to why we need to practise meditation.*

*So, if we understand happiness comes from peace of mind, we're talking about your happiness. Your happiness depends on your peace of mind. The more peaceful your mind becomes, the happier you become. Ferrari or no Ferrari, job or no job, health or no good health, partner or no partner. Aging, even death. If we have a peaceful mind as we're dying, we'll be happy. Amazing. Not afraid, not worried, not regretful.*

*So, what is the source of a peaceful mind? Meditation. That is the function of meditation, to make our mind calm and peaceful.”*

So, how can you meditate?

There are various forms of meditation out there and I recommend that you research which type suits you the best. I haven't gone into the details here simply because I'm not an expert in this field. My overarching advice on this topic is to get a meditation teacher or investigate local meditation classes. I believe that meditation, although a truly personal journey, can be

made easier (and save you a lot of time) if practised under the watchful eye of a Meditation Master.

*“To understand the immeasurable, the mind must be extraordinarily quiet, still.”* – Jiddu Krishnamurti

## Chapter 10: Do Something You've Been Putting Off



I must admit, when you're feeling in the depths of despair, the last thing you will want to do is the one thing you've been putting off for a long while. However, it's a truly powerful thing to do. Push through the resistance or the procrastination and just get on with it!

It could be calling an elderly relative or tidying the garden. It could be clearing out the loft. It could be facing up to a mounting debt and tackling how to pay it off. Whatever that niggly job may be, do it.

My advice is to write down all those jobs that you need to do. Everything. Dump them into your notebook until you feel your mind is clear. It helps me to walk around my house because it provides prompts of the things I need to get done.

It may take a few days to properly draw up your list. Don't rush it, because it needs to be done properly. But, once you feel your list is complete, sit down and prioritise the list, starting with your most dreaded task all the way down to your least dreaded task.

All I would like you to do going forward is to start on each job during a 'Power Hour' every week. How easy and manageable is that? So, to be clear, every week, allocate one hour to do the jobs on the To Do List. Start at number one and work down the list, but you don't start on a new item until the item above it has been completed.

In reality, the jobs we put off that cause us mental distress and anxiety are normally, once begun, so easy to complete. Generally leaving us thinking: why didn't I tackle this sooner?

So, to repeat: the act of compiling a To Do List and then proactively doing the tasks one by one during the Power Hour every week will result in a surge of satisfaction, calmness and happiness.

What you may find is that the dedicated Power Hour will probably end up being longer than one hour. This is because once you 'get going' you will find yourself in the flow and keen to get the job done, maybe even enjoying it. This is absolutely fine.

Look at this another way: the jobs that you've been putting off will have to be done at some point, so why wait until that time when they have to be done? Take back the control (also making you feel happier) and proactively get them done. The feelings of satisfaction will be huge.

***"My advice is never to do tomorrow what you can do today. Procrastination is the thief of time."*** – Charles Dickens



## Chapter II: Stop, Watch and Listen



Some days, when the big fat blues take over, I will stop what I'm doing and I will indulge myself in the pure bliss of innocent TV or movie watching. I will turn off my phone, I will pull down the shutters, get comfy and dust off my *Poirot* or *Miss Marple* DVDs.

I know, I know. Probably every piece of advice you've heard relating to watching a television is to turn it off! I'm one of those people that gives that advice and I purposely limit my television watching. However, sometimes, it does us the world of good to indulge in our favourite TV programmes and completely switch off.

I can't tell you why murder and sinister plots make me happy! In all honesty, I don't think they do. I think what makes me happy is being thrown back into the romantic period of the 1920s and 1930s, English villages and the general glamour and innocence of life 'back in the old days'. I can literally lay back and watch them for hours on end; switching myself off from whatever is causing me upset and always making me feel better somehow.

*Poirot* and *Marple* are definitely my favourites, but I've other box sets and films I like to watch: *Carry On* films, *Darling Buds of May*, *Harry Potter*, *Bride and Prejudice*, Audrey Hepburn, Doris Day, *Meet the Parents* trilogy.

The list goes on and on.

My point is: identify those movies or perhaps YouTube videos that make you laugh or happy. Whatever they may be, ensure that you have a personal armoury of 'happiness watching' ready, for you need that pick-me-up.

If watching TV doesn't do it for you, then identify what you like to listen to instead. Is it an audio book? A playlist on iTunes? Classic FM? Proactively find what soothes you. Find what makes you happy to fall back on when in need and help you to the happiness switch!

***"I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into another room and read a book."*** – Groucho Marx



## Chapter 12: Nature



It's very easy when we're feeling unhappy to become 'blinkered' into only fixating in our own world. But, if I'm feeling sad and in need of a happiness boost, I fall back on the saying: "Take time out to smell the roses."

Literally.

In a world where we are glued to technology, and life progresses without a need to step outside the office or home, it's absolutely vital that we make a conscious effort to get out into nature.

This has been proven by a 2016 scientific report from the University of Exeter, which concluded that, from a study of 270 people, a reduction in stress levels, anxiety and

depression correlated directly with the amount of exposure they had to nature in their lives. Specifically, how many birds they'd seen. There are several other studies that back this up.

Why nature makes us happy is probably up for debate, and I imagine there are various reasons. However, we don't necessarily need to go into it. The fact is: it works.

Look outside your window at the beauty that is Mother Nature. I know that this may sound cringy, but, I promise you, I don't include anything in this book that I don't personally believe works and use myself. I'm not the happiest person by nature anyway, so, trust me, anything that can make me feel better will almost certainly make you feel better. This is my assurance.

So, I'm asking you, the next time you want to increase your happiness, come rain or shine, pull on your walking boots and get yourself out into nature. Give yourself one hour and allow yourself the luxury of leaving everything behind. Give yourself permission to forget whatever may be worrying you, forget your phone, be on your own and get yourself out into nature. A brisk walk if you're rushed for time will do, but the longer you're able to luxuriate the better.

Absorb your surroundings, the leaves on the trees, the flowers, the sound of the wind, the sound of the rain. Take in the smells, listen to the sounds of nature.

Stop if you can, sit with your face up the sun. Make a conscious effort to be aware of the sounds, sights and smells as you walk in nature.

***Look deep into nature and then you will understand everything better.*** – Albert Einstein

## Chapter 13: Happiness List



Have you ever sat down and given some thought as to when you last felt happy? For most people, when asked what makes them happy they don't know. They've become so bogged down with 'life', they've lost track of the most important thing: happiness.

I deliberately changed my life a few years ago to choose happiness over everything else.

Now, you don't have to go through a massive life change like I did, but a small practice of **intentionally** doing something that makes you happy **every day** can have a huge impact on your life.

Below I've listed a set of life coaching questions that I ask my clients to help them try to identify the small things they can do to make them happy.

Here you go:

1. Think of a time when you were last happy.
2. What were you doing?
3. Who were you with?
4. When did you last laugh out loud?
5. What were you doing?
6. Who were you with?
7. What is going to make you feel good?
8. Who makes you feel good?
9. What do you need to do to get it?

10. When did you last feel satisfied?
11. What were you doing?
12. What did you enjoy doing as a child?
13. What do you enjoy doing now?
14. What do you like to research on the Internet?
15. What was the last thing you really looked forward to?
16. Why were you looking forward to it?
17. What relaxes you?
18. Think of indulgent things you like to do but rarely do.
19. What's does your ideal day look like?
20. What does your ideal evening look like?
21. What does your ideal weekend look like?

Now, take the answers to the 21 questions and analyse them. Analyse them properly.

Using the answers to the 21 questions, write a list of the small things you can do every single day to bring yourself happiness. For example:

Can you allocate 30 minutes a couple of evenings a week for a bath?  
Can you dig out your favourite body lotion and use it a couple of times a week?  
Can you commit to 10 minutes of meditation a day?

Write a list and then intentionally commit to doing something that makes you happy at least once every day.

If it helps, here is a sample (my list is really long) of the small things that bring me happiness every day:

1. My husband
2. Rugby tackling husband.
3. Playing with my niece.
4. Wearing Chanel No 5.
5. Yoga.
6. Meditating.
7. Spending time with my friends.
8. Watching *Carry On* films.
9. Watching *Poirot*.
10. Watching *Miss Marple*.
11. Watching *Harry Potter*.
12. Reading.
13. Going to the cinema on my own.
14. Having a tidy house.
15. Watching box sets.
16. Helping someone.
17. Gardening.
18. Going to bed really, really early to read.
19. Having a blank diary.
20. Drinking nice coffee

Every day, I try to ensure that I do something indulgent for me. Something that makes me happy.

***“Happiness is not something ready-made. It comes from your own action.”*** – Dalai Lama



## Conclusion



We focus on happiness as being a 'place', a destination and something we are trying to achieve. But my fear is that, along the way, we ignore what's truly important in life: the journey to get there.

I'm controversial in my view in that I do believe that true happiness is a destination. It's a place in time when all the boxes of your life are ticked. I know that this isn't what I'm meant to say, but unfortunately, it's what I truly believe.

Am I contradicting myself then? I'm saying happiness is a place and a journey?

Well, yes and no.

Unlike most guides on this topic, as I say above, I believe that you will have a 'True Happiness Place'. When you reach this place, you will think: I've done it. I'm here. The rest of my life is the icing on the cake. This could happen tomorrow or it could happen in 50 years' time. Who knows? You will get there and, once you're there, you will know you've reached it.

However, I'm a firm believer in the journey also. The journey is just as important as the destination because, if the journey goes wrong or you get lost, it will take you longer to

reach your True Happiness Place. This book is about the journey and it's about finding out what is going to make the journey a good one because if you're not feeling happy on the journey you won't make it to the True Happiness Place.

Let me also be honest. Life can be tough – really tough – but there is a choice as to how you handle that. Happiness is a choice you need to make right now and throw your arms around it and never let go.

Follow what makes you happy and I can assure you everything will work out perfectly.

Gemma x

## Biography



Gemma is a Life Coach, Business Coach, Declutter Expert, Blogger, Author, Podcaster and the owner of Prosperity Kitchen.

Formerly in Real Estate, Gemma embarked on a career change at 35 to pursue her dream of opening her own business and to help people lead a happier, healthier and more prosperous life.

Gemma has a BSc (Hons) in Estate Management, is a Chartered Surveyor, an Accredited Life Coach, a Member of the APDO, a Blogger, Author and Podcaster.

Regularly featured in the national press, Gemma is the 'go to' person on Life Coaching, Business Coaching and Decluttering topics.

Gemma's company, Prosperity Kitchen, currently encompasses Life Coaching, Business Coaching, Decluttering and the Prosperity Kitchen Podcast.

Gemma lives in Newbury, England, with her husband, Jason.

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