Introduction: The Myths of Happiness


PART I: CONNECTIONS

Chapter 1: I’ll Be Happy When… I’m Married To the Right Person

14 I apologize in advance for using only heterosexual examples in the parts of the book focusing on marriages or committed relationships. My defense is that the far majority of research has been conducted on heterosexual couples. However, I believe that most, if not all, my recommendations apply to gay and lesbian couples. In addition, the ideas and advice are just as relevant to committed (unmarried) couples as it is to married ones.

15 For a review, see Lyubomirsky, S. (2011). Hedonic adaptation to positive and negative experiences. In S. Folkman (Ed.), The Oxford handbook of stress, health, and coping (pp. 200-224). New York: Oxford University Press. Note that all my papers can be
downloaded for free from my academic website (www.faculty.ucr.edu/~sonja/papers.html), which is linked to the book’s website (www.themythsofhappiness.org).


17 The phrase comes from Elizabeth Kolbert.


In stop-and-start relationships (i.e., you repeatedly break up and get back together) and in highly unstable, conflictual, abusive, and even battering relationships, passionate love can sometimes be sustained – at an immense cost.


Names, identifying information, and details about interviews have been changed for some of the examples offered in this book.


Ibid.


210

Sheldon et al. (in press), op. cit. See ch. 1, note 27.


Wilson & Gilbert (2008), op. cit. See ch. 1, note 16.


Nelson, Meyvis, & Galak (2008), ibid.

James, W. (1899). *Talks to teachers on psychology: And to students on some of life's ideals*. Boston: George H. Ellis. (p. 105)


60 For a revealing study of the reasons that married women believe that they have lost sexual desire in their marriages, see this paper describing women’s responses to open-ended interviews: Sims, K. E., & Meana, M. (2010). Why did passion wane? A qualitative study of married women’s attributions for declines in sexual desire. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, 36*, 360-380. In short, three major themes emerged in these in-depth interviews. First, the married women blamed the formal act of getting married for stripping sex of its sense of sexiness and transgression, and turning it into an obligation. Second, they blamed “overfamiliarity,” and the transformation of sex into something relatively more mechanical, scripted, and results-oriented. Finally, the married women complained in their interviews that their roles after marriage – as mothers, homemakers, or career women – made it difficult for them to perceive themselves as sexual when in the bedroom.


Chapter 2: I Can’t Be Happy When…My Relationship Has Fallen Apart


(1) Gottman (1994), op. cit. (See ch. 2, note 102). For a critique of this work, however, see Abraham, L. (2010, March 8). Can you really predict the success of a marriage in 15 minutes? Slate.


(1) Ayduk & Kross (2010), op. cit. (See ch. 2, note 122). (2) Kross et al. (2005), op. cit. (See ch. 2, note 123).


(1) In the published studies, participants chose from a variety of deep regrets or hurts to think about, or else were instructed to mull over a news story of a baby’s tragic death.


Karremans et al. (2005), op. cit. See ch. 2, note 131.


This story comes from Michael Neill (www.geniuscatalyst.com).


In a pioneering paper, psychologist Jennifer Crocker quotes a group of researchers, led by Roy Baumeister, who assert that the most recent findings “do not support continued widespread efforts to boost self-esteem” (p. 395). Countering their conclusion, Crocker’s research suggests that a counterintuitive way to raise self-esteem is by supporting others rather than by controlling one’s self-image. Pursuing compassionate goals leads a person to become more responsive to others, which leads others to view her more positively, which, in turn, bolsters her own self-esteem. See Crocker, J. (2011). Presidential address: Self-image and compassionate goals and construction of the social self: Implications for social and personality psychology. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 15*, 394-407.


Gilbert et al. (1998), op. cit. See introduction, note 5.

(1) Gilbert et al. (2002), op. cit. (See introduction, note 1). (2) Gilbert et al. (1998), op. cit. (See introduction, note 5).

Wilson et al. (2000), op. cit. See introduction, note 5.


162 Timothy B. Smith.

Chapter 3: I’ll Be Happy When...I Have Kids

163 Luhmann et al. (2012), op. cit. See introduction, note 6.


168 Kahneman, D., et al. (2004). A survey method for characterizing daily life experience: The day reconstruction method. *Science, 306*, 1776–1780. However, we recently failed to replicate this result, finding that parents, and especially dads, actually experience more happiness when interacting with their children during the day and more daily positive emotions in general: Nelson et al. (in press), op. cit. (See ch. 3, note 166).


Nelson et al. (in press), op. cit. See ch. 3, note 166.


Gilbert et al. (2004), op. cit. See introduction, note 5.

Bosson et al. (2009), op. cit., p. 34. See ch. 3, note 180.

Gilbert et al. (2004), op. cit. See introduction, note 5.


Many of these studies are reviewed in the following excellent article, by one of my former students and collaborators: Frattaroli (2006), op. cit. See ch. 3, note 186.


It’s worth mentioning that my mom is no parenting slacker, but the epitome of the sacrificial parent.

This quote is from Brandi Snyder.

Chapter 4: I Can’t Be Happy…When I Don’t Have a Partner

This reader had been using a Smartphone application that tracks users’ well-being and prompts them to do eight different exercises designed to make them happier. The application, designed for the iPhone, is called Live Happy (www.livehappyapp.com). I don’t have a financial interest in it, but it generates fascinating research data for my lab about how people pursue happiness in the real world, and what is most successful. See Parks, A., Della Porta, M. D., Pierce, R. S., Zilca, R., & Lyubomirsy, S. (in press). Pursuing happiness in everyday life: A naturalistic investigation of online happiness seekers. Emotion.


Lucas et al. (2003), op. cit. See ch. 1, note 18.


Ibid.


Winston Churchill said, “A pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. But an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”


Part II: WORK AND MONEY
Chapter 5: I’ll Be Happy When… I Find the Right Job


Sigmund Freud reportedly once stated in a conversation with Carl Jung that lieben und arbeiten – to love and to work – are what a “normal” person should be able to perform well.


As the philosopher Aristotle advised, “Bring your desires down to your present means. Increase them only when your increased means permit.”


Like the Live Happy application for the iPhone (www.livehappyapp.com) based on my book, The How of Happiness (Penguin Press), or the many others springing up every month.


This notion stems from a quote attributed to a fantastically well-compensated Wall Street bond salesman: “You don’t get rich in this business. You only attain new levels of relative poverty.” From Lewis, M. (1989). *Liar’s poker: Rising through the wreckage on Wall Street*. New York: W. W. Norton. (p. 251)

Lyubomirsky & Ross (1997), op. cit. See ch. 5, note 246.


Because unfavorable comparisons are more painful than favorable comparisons are pleasurable, even if half our friends are better off and half are worse off, we will generally suffer when comparing with others. See Chapter 2 (“Aim for a three-to-one ratio”), as well as the following: (1) Baumeister, Bratslavsky, et al. (2001), op. cit. (See ch. 3, note 176). (2) Senik, C. (2009). Direct evidence on income comparisons and their welfare effects. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, 72*, 408-424.


To be more precise, the first type of motivation (i.e., striving towards a goal because it is fundamentally engaging and enjoyable) is called “intrinsic,” and the second type of motivation (i.e., working towards a goal that expresses our deepest values) is called “identified.” For simplicity, I use the term intrinsic to refer to both. (1) Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry, 4*, 227-268. (2) Sheldon & Elliot (1999), op. cit. (See ch. 5, note 251). (3) Sheldon, K. M., & Kasser, T. (1995). Coherence and congruence: Two aspects of personality integration. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 68*, 531-543.

Chapter 6: I Can’t Be Happy When…I’m Broke


Baumeister, Bratslavsky, et al. (2001), op. cit. see ch. 3, note 176.


284 Carter & Gilovich (2010), op. cit. See ch. 6, note 283.


292 Zhong & Mitchell (2010), op. cit. See ch. 6, note 290.

293 This research was done by Richard Tunney (University of Nottingham).


Chapter 7: I’ll Be Happy When…I’m Rich

302 Important identifying information has been changed. I am deeply grateful to Thomas Martin.


See, for example, Krueger et al. (2009), op. cit. See ch. 4, note 200.


Ibid.

Brown & Kasser (2005), op. cit. (See ch. 7, note 318). (2) Richins & Dawson (1992), op. cit. (See ch. 6, note 288).


On the other hand, my other favorite quote, from Bo Derek, is “Those who say money can’t buy happiness just don’t know where to shop.” I discovered that at least four of these six principles are also described in the following eloquent and persuasive paper: Dunn, E. W., Gilbert, D. T., & Wilson, T. D. (2011). If money doesn’t make you happy then you probably aren’t spending it right. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 21*, 115-125. My graduate student Joe Chancellor’s and my response to these ideas is contained in Chancellor, J., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2011). Happiness and thrift: When (spending) less is (hedonically) more. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 21*, 131-138.


Dunn et al. (2008), op. cit. See ch. 1, note 84.


A chapter devoted to the subject of why acts of kindness make us happy and how to practice them is in Lyubomirsky (2008), op. cit. See introduction, note 32.

(1) Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, et al. (2005), op. cit. (See ch. 1, note 16). (2) Sheldon et al. (in press), op. cit. (See ch. 1, note 27).


Mitchell et al. (1997), op. cit. See ch. 6, note 285.


The chef was Thomas Keller of the French Laundry, and despite the fact that we ended up having that unlikely future child (Isabella), we bailed on the pledge.

But the remaining three – wrath, pride, and envy – aren’t far behind.


Part III: LOOKING BACK

Chapter 8: I Can’t Be Happy When…The Test Results Were Positive


Ibid. (p. 141)

One of my best friends from college, Sarah Stroud, is now a professor of philosophy at McGill University in Montreal and, when I visited her a while back, her philosophy antennae picked up on the leap in logic that I am making here. If we accept as true that
our experience is what we agree to attend to, this statement does not inexorably lead to the conclusion that we can control what we attend to. I admit to the lapse, but argue that research supports the notion that we have power over much of our attention and thought processes.

William James was credited with the statement that “man can alter his life simply by altering his attitude of mind.”


It’s worth noting that psychological scientists from William James to the present day have presented evidence for two kinds of attention – voluntary attention (the kind that I am talking about in this section and the kind we can control) and involuntary attention (the kind that is “captured” by important or exciting events or objects in our environments, like the sound of a gunshot or a beautiful sunset). Not only is voluntary (i.e., directed) and involuntary (i.e., effortless) attention experienced differently, but these two types of attention appear to rely on different parts of the brain. To learn more, see Kaplan, S., & Berman, M. G. (2010). Directed attention as a common resource for executive function and self-regulation. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 5*, 43-57.


Kaplan & Berman (2010), op. cit. See ch. 8, note 350.


Mochon et al. (2008), op. cit. See ch. 6, note 294.

I borrowed this lovely story from Edwards (2009), op. cit. See ch. 8, note 343.


This quote comes from the wisdom of David Myers.

Allen, K., Blascovich, J., & Mendes, W. B. (2002). Cardiovascular reactivity in the presence of pets, friends, and spouses: The truth about cats and dogs. Psychosomatic Medicine, 64, 727-739.


Ibid.

http://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2011/05/18/girl-spreads-joy-to-others-while-battling-cancer/


Chapter 9: I Can’t Be Happy When...I Know I’ll Never Play Shortstop For the Yankees


Ibid.

King & Hicks (2007), op. cit., p. 626. See ch. 9, note 383.

King & Hicks (2007), op. cit., p. 630. See ch. 9, note 383.


For exhaustive and excellent advice, see Nolen-Hoeksema (2003), op. cit. See ch. 2, note 120.

Stewart & Vandewater (1999), op. cit. See ch. 9, note 384.

My apologies for paraphrasing William Shakespeare’s Hamlet, who famously said, “Nothing is good or bad but thinking makes it so.”


Kray, L. J., et al. (2010). From what might have been to what must have been: Counterfactual thinking creates meaning. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 98*, 106-118.

Ibid. (p. 109)

I am grateful to Landau, Greenberg, and Sullivan (2009) for this example.


Carlson (1997), op. cit. See ch. 2, note 120.


407 Lyubomirsky & Ross (1997), op. cit. See ch. 5, note 246.
408 An excellent book that advocates time diaries is Vanderkam, L. (2010). *168 hours: You have more time than you think*. New York: Portfolio.

Chapter 10: I Can’t Be Happy When…The Best Years of My Life Are Over

409 Mitchell et al. (1997), op. cit. See ch. 6, note 285.
410 Humphrey Bogart (as Rick Blaine) to Ingrid Bergman (as Ilsa Lund) in the film *Casablanca*.
411 To read the full paper, see this: Liberman et al. (2009), op. cit. See ch. 5, note 231.
412 This distinction was first described by the late Amos Tversky, a brilliant scientist who collaborated with Daniel Kahneman on groundbreaking work in the field of judgment and decision making. In 2002, four years after Tversky’s untimely death from cancer, Kahneman won the Nobel Prize in Economics for that work. Nobel Prizes are not awarded posthumously. The ideas I describe here were first published in a chapter: Tversky, A., & Griffin, D. (1991). Endowment and contrast in judgments of well-being. In Strack, Argyle, & Schwarz (Eds.), op. cit. (See ch. 6, note 289).
413 Interestingly, just this one finding was only evident among the Americans surveyed, not the Israelis.
414 Lacey et al. (2006), op. cit. See ch. 2, note 144.
415 However, as my husband puts it, our *first* chance at happiness is apparently being born to royalty!
419 For a review, see Ryan & Deci (2000), op. cit. See ch. 7, note 326.
421 For example, see Kasser & Ryan (1996). op. cit. See chapter 5, note 251.


Conclusion: Exploding the Myth of Happiness

See the references in the Introduction, as well as these reviews – the first brief and readable, the second brilliant and comprehensive: (1) Wilson & Gilbert (2005), op. cit. (See ch. 1, note 5). (2) Gilbert et al. (2002), op. cit. (See introduction, note 1).