

The Universal Happiness Method

How to be Happy And Live without Stress

By

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Preface

It's exhilarating to be alive in a time of awakening consciousness.

-Adrienne Rich

Life is what we make it, always has been, always will be.

-Grandma Moses

Follow your bliss and the universe will open doors where there were only walls.

-Joseph Campbell

Michael Robert Lawrence is a professional in the field of mind therapy. A series of deeply traumatic experiences realigned his perceptions and freed him from thought and emotion. He then regained conscious control inside his mind and discovered the happiness within.

As Michael began to enjoy more happiness and peace in his life, he realized this was related to his new accepting outlook on life. This accepting outlook was clearing away heavy useless thoughts and creating a peaceful space inside his mind. This new peaceful space allowed him to notice the mind's internal dynamics on the deepest level. He realized we are not the thoughts in our minds; we are an independent consciousness that is simply viewing those thoughts and those thoughts do not control us. He also recognized that our emotions are directly connected to the thoughts in our minds and by directing our thoughts we can control our emotions. These epiphanies also provided him with a solution to mind-generated problems such as stress, suffering and unhappiness, which is to stop identifying with the thoughts in our minds as being "us". He clearly understood this was the way to experience the lasting happiness that everyone seeks.

So how can he teach others how to get to this point in a gentler way than it was for him and without being so abstract that they may never understand? And how could he provide them with a way to experience happiness and reduce stress now, while they learn to relate to themselves in this fundamentally different way? This inspired the creation of the Universal Happiness Method.

Michael enlisted the help of a wise innovator by the name of Lilia Nani Ho'alakahi. Together they quietly fine-tuned this original teaching and modern method, writing *The Universal Happiness Method: How to be Happy and Live without Stress*.

Introduction

Happiness is not a matter of events; it depends upon the tides of the mind.

-Alice Meynell

Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.

-Aristotle

It all has to come from inside, though, I guess.

-Jimi Hendrix

Every human being on earth wants to be happy, but despite our best efforts, very few of us are happy and usually we are not for very long. Why are billions of people who are all just searching for happiness still stressed out and unhappy? Because we have been completely misled by a number of false beliefs. These false beliefs have sent us on a wild goose chase looking for happiness where we can never find it. Along with these false beliefs, the vast majority of us relate to life and ourselves in such a way that it virtually guarantees our unhappiness.

Happiness is always within us. Every one of us can enjoy a happy, peaceful life, regardless of our age, race, gender, orientation, health condition, employment status, job, income, education level, political persuasion, religious beliefs, geographic location, or living situation without changing any of these things. All of us without exception can enjoy lasting happiness now by developing a new understanding of happiness, and relating to life and ourselves in a fundamentally different way.

In order for us to enjoy a happy life without stress, we must first expose the false beliefs that have led us astray. We can then replace them with the correct information that points us in the right direction. This is a relatively easy task to accomplish, and this new understanding lays the groundwork for our lasting happiness. From this point, we learn how to relate to Life (Things As They Are) and ourselves (Our Inside World: the Thoughts in our Minds, our Emotions and Viewpoints). This is a much more difficult task. For this reason, the book teaches us the actual dynamics of happiness in the simplest possible terms. At the core of this teaching is a practical method for experiencing happiness and reducing stress while we are learning this new way of relating to life and ourselves. *Lasting happiness is already here, and it is time to experience it.*

How To Use This Book

There are very few human beings who receive the truth, complete and staggering, by instant illumination. Most of them acquire it fragment by fragment, on a small scale, by successive developments.

-Anais Nin

If a person studies too much and exhausts his reflective powers, he will be confused, and will not be able to apprehend even that which had been within the power of his apprehension.

-Maimonides

To acquire knowledge, one must study; but to acquire wisdom, one must observe.

-Marilyn vos Savant

The information in this book is easy to understand and can be used by anyone who wants to allow lasting happiness into their lives. It is short and to the point by design, so it may accommodate our busy modern lifestyle. The teachings have been *simplified* to present only what is *essential* for our understanding.

We learn casually through *repetitive ideas, recurring themes, and practical examples* without excessive elaborations. There is no need or requirement to analyze, memorize, study, or otherwise intensely practice any part of this book. Doing any of these things can make the teachings and method more difficult to learn and understand. Instead, this instructional book provides *continuous opportunities* for us to learn and understand *the core ideas* through leisurely reading, experimenting with the method and simply “noticing” what happens.

This entire book is a *gentle exercise* designed to free us from the control of thought and emotion, so we may *regain conscious control* inside our minds. This conscious control allows us to manage thought and emotion rather than the norm of being controlled by them. Being free from the control of thought and emotion allows us to experience the happiness within.

Everything in this book is important. *Read everything in sequence, skip nothing, as one part builds upon another.* We should follow the book in order until we have read it once. After that we may go back and reread and experiment with the areas of the book we find most useful. Start reading without any pressure at all and just have fun.



How happy is the little Stone
That rambles in the Road alone,
And doesn't care about Careers
And Exigencies never fears –

Whose Coat of elemental Brown
A passing Universe put on,
And independent as the Sun
Associates or glows alone,
Fulfilling absolute Decree
In casual simplicity –

-Emily Dickinson

Section 1: Exposing False Beliefs About Happiness And Unhappiness

Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

-Albert Einstein

The first problem for all of us, men and women, is not to learn, but to unlearn.

-Gloria Steinem

Happiness is mental harmony; unhappiness is mental inharmony.

-James Allen

This section exposes the most common false beliefs about happiness and unhappiness. By rejecting these false beliefs, we gain a new understanding about happiness and unhappiness. This new understanding lays the groundwork for us to move forward with learning how to relate to Life (Things As They Are) and ourselves (Our Inside World) for our lasting happiness.

False Belief: The Outside World Is The Source Of Our Happiness

I wish people could achieve what they think would bring them happiness in order for them to realize that that's not really what happiness is.

-Alanis Morissette

Happiness cannot come from without. It must come from within.

-Helen Keller

Nothing can bring you happiness but yourself.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Most of us believe that The Outside World is the source of our happiness and it is not. It is impossible for The Outside World to deliver us lasting happiness. At best, it can only temporarily fool us into believing that it was the source of our happiness. Understanding this can save us a great deal of disappointment, stress, suffering, and unhappiness.

Things in The Outside World are constantly changing, coming and going all the time. When we try to line them up for our happiness, our happiness comes and goes with them. When they go away, we can experience loss, stress, suffering and unhappiness. This is clearly not the way for us to experience lasting happiness. We should accept that The Outside World cannot make us happy, or we may be on the merry-go-round of disappointment and unhappiness indefinitely.

If it is difficult for us to accept that The Outside World cannot deliver us lasting happiness, just look back at everything we have done to be happy. How successful have we been? If we are lucky, we may have experienced some happiness until things inevitably change and go away so our happiness disappears with them.

This is nothing personal, of course. No one in the history of man has ever lined up lasting happiness in The Outside World and no one ever will. The people who have the things that we chase for our happiness like popular celebrities, rich people, beautiful models, professional athletes, brilliant scientists and powerful politicians are still unhappy. So what could we find, make, buy, achieve or line up in The Outside World that would allow us to fare any better than these overachievers? Absolutely nothing. *It should be obvious that The Outside World is not the source of our lasting happiness. The source of our happiness must come from the only place that remains within ourselves (Our Inside World: the Thoughts in our Minds, our Emotions and Viewpoints).*

False Belief: The Outside World Is The Source Of Our Unhappiness

There is only one cause of unhappiness: the false beliefs you have in your head, beliefs so widespread, so commonly held, that it never occurs to you to question them.

-Anthony de Mello

You can think yourself happy or you can think yourself miserable.

-Dorothy Dix

You don't seem to realize that a poor person who is unhappy is in a better position than a rich person who is unhappy. Because the poor person has hope. He thinks money would help.

-Jean Kerr

Just as The Outside World is not the source of our lasting happiness, it is also not the source of our unhappiness. It may seem that The Outside World causes our unhappiness, but it is our *interpretation* of The Outside World that causes our unhappiness. When we understand that we are the source of our unhappiness, we can stop causing our own unhappiness and allow ourselves to be happy instead.

Our mind interprets everything in The Outside World and our interpretation of those things either allows us to be happy or causes our unhappiness. There is always an upside, benefit, or silver lining to any situation, and we are free to focus on the positives that allow us to be happy. We can also find a downside, issue or problem with the very same situation and focus on the negatives, causing ourselves to be unhappy. We should understand that our unhappy interpretation of The Outside World needs to change in order for us to experience lasting happiness.

Everything in The Outside World is always neutral and nothing more. It only becomes something good, bad or indifferent when we interpret them as such. The results of elections, sporting events or contests of any kind are useful examples. They are all just results and completely neutral in and of themselves. Although some of us may interpret them as good, some as bad, while others who could care less see them only as an event. We are always free to interpret The Outside World in a positive, negative, or neutral way.

As we can clearly see, only we can cause our unhappiness, not The Outside World. What many unhappy people have in common is their belief that The Outside World is the source of their unhappiness, not realizing that the source of their unhappiness is within themselves. Just as with happiness, our unhappiness comes from Our Inside World: the Thoughts in our Minds, our Emotions and Viewpoints.

False Belief: We Need To Find Happiness

If only we'd stop trying to be happy we'd have a pretty good time.

-Edith Wharton

One must never look for happiness: one meets it by the way.

-Isabelle Eberhardt

When the mind is pure, joy follows like a shadow that never leaves.

-Siddhartha Gautama

There is never a need to find happiness. Happiness is always within us. All we need to do is get out of our own way and allow ourselves to be happy. Trying to find happiness outside ourselves can cause useless thinking that leads to stress, suffering and unhappiness.

What many happy people have in common is the way they relate to Life (Things As They Are), themselves (Their Inside World) and The Outside World. They have an accepting outlook towards life, realize they are the source of their happiness and unhappiness, and understand The Outside World cannot make them happy or unhappy. By operating in this way, they allow themselves more happiness and peace while avoiding the useless thinking that can cause stress, suffering, and unhappiness. *By rejecting these false beliefs, we understand that the source of our happiness and unhappiness must come from the only place that is left, within ourselves. This new understanding paves the way for us to learn how to relate to Life (Things As They Are) and ourselves (Our Inside World) for our lasting happiness.*

Section 2: How To Relate To Life (Things As They Are) And Ourselves (Our Inside World) In Order To Be Happy

Any intelligent fool can make things bigger and more complex... It takes a touch of genius - and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction.

-Albert Einstein

The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak.

-Hans Hofmann

Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.

-Leonardo da Vinci

This section describes how to relate to Life (Things As They Are) and ourselves (Our Inside World), which includes the thoughts in our minds, our emotions and viewpoints in order to be happy. It also describes how our minds operate on the deepest level so we can understand our internal dynamics. Understanding this section creates the foundation for our lasting happiness.

Understanding Acceptance

If you surrender completely to the moments as they pass, you live more richly those moments.

-Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Happiness can exist only in acceptance.

-George Orwell

Arrange whatever pieces come your way.

-Virginia Woolf

The Purpose Of Acceptance

The first thing we need to do, to allow ourselves to be happy and rid ourselves of stress, suffering and unhappiness is to accept Life (Things As They Are) right now. No matter what is going on in our lives, no matter how much we dislike it or wish it were different, we should unconditionally accept it right now. This can immediately take the steam out of stress, suffering, unhappiness and the thoughts, emotions and viewpoints that are causing them. The benefits of doing this are tremendous and lasting for many reasons.

Ending The Struggle Against Life

By unconditionally accepting Life (Things as They Are), we are effectively ending the struggle against life. We cannot completely control life and struggling against life can waste our time, cause us pain, and get us nowhere. This struggle against life can *produce* the thoughts, emotions and viewpoints that cause us serious stress, suffering and unhappiness. By eliminating the struggle against life, we can remove one of the root causes of our unhappiness as well as dissolve a key obstacle to our happiness. We can only benefit ourselves by doing this.

Going With The Flow Of Life

By unconditionally accepting Life (Things as They Are), we are going with the flow of life. We cannot completely control life, but we can control our reactions, our decisions, and the ways we navigate through it. Moving with life can save us time, bring us more peace and make our lives easier. This unconditional acceptance of life *reduces* the thoughts, emotions and viewpoints that cause us serious stress, suffering and unhappiness. As we accept life, it ceases to be an obstacle for us. There is no battle now and instead of an invincible enemy, we have the supreme ally.

Adapting To Life

By unconditionally accepting Life (Things as They Are), we are never defeated or helpless. It simply means we are adapting to life and taking action based on what life offers us instead of struggling against it. By taking action in this manner, we are traveling the path of least resistance, and that makes us more efficient and productive. This always works in our favor and makes us strong. Struggling against life makes us weaker and less effective as we try to control things that cannot be completely controlled.

When we unconditionally accept life and adapt to it, we are wise and powerful, never defeated or helpless.

The Opening For Happiness

Unconditionally accepting Life (Things As They Are) right now is the foundation that allows lasting happiness and peace to emerge. The struggle against life is a major obstacle to our lasting happiness. By eliminating this struggle, we can also eliminate many of the thoughts, emotions, and viewpoints that cause our stress, suffering and unhappiness. This reduction of useless thinking helps produce the peaceful space we require to notice how our minds operate on the deepest level. *Unconditionally accepting life removes much of what was preventing us from being happy and creates an opening for the happiness within.*

Summary Points:

1. Unconditionally accepting Life (Things As They Are) as it is right now is the very foundation of our lasting happiness and peace.
2. Struggling against life is one of the root causes of our stress, suffering and unhappiness.
3. Going with the flow of life can save us time, bring us more peace and make our lives easier.
4. By adapting to life, we are traveling the path of least resistance and that makes us powerful and wise, never defeated or helpless.
5. Unconditionally accepting life helps clear the way for us to experience happiness within.

Understanding Thoughts

Thought is the sculptor who can create the person you want to be.

-Henry David Thoreau

Tell me to what you pay attention to and I will tell you who you are.

-Jose Ortega y Gasset

I don't eat junk foods and I don't think junk thoughts.

-Peace Pilgrim

Thoughts: General Description

Another obstacle preventing our happiness is the thoughts appearing in our minds. It is, in fact, thoughts that are causing our stress, suffering and unhappiness. Understanding thoughts and how to relate to them can totally transform our lives and allow lasting happiness to emerge.

Relating To Thoughts

It is vitally important for our happiness that we relearn how to relate to the thoughts in our minds. We have deeply conditioned ourselves into believing that the thoughts in our minds are us. However, this is not the case (Flowchart 1). *The thoughts appearing in our minds are completely separate from us, and we are simply viewing them.* This is the real dynamic that we continually miss. In other words, we are not the thoughts appearing in our minds. We are a totally independent consciousness that is viewing those thoughts (Flowchart 2). *It is essential that we understand this about ourselves. This can set us free from stress, suffering, and unhappiness while allowing more peace and lasting happiness into our lives*

Flowchart 1: The INCORRECT way of Relating to Thoughts

We **Mistakenly** believe that we **Are** the thoughts in our minds, but we are **NOT**:

Independent Consciousness (Missed this.) → Viewing (Missed this.) → **The Thoughts in our Minds (Mistakenly believe this IS us)**

Flowchart 2: The CORRECT way of Relating to Thoughts

We are an **Independent** consciousness **Viewing** the thoughts in our minds:

Independent Consciousness (Realize this IS us.) → Viewing (Realize we do this.) → **The Thoughts in our Minds (Realize this is NOT us)**

Thoughts Cannot Be Controlled

We are not in control of the thoughts appearing in our minds. The thoughts in our minds are always changing. Almost any thought could appear - useful and useless, normal and strange, productive and unproductive, happy and sad, sane and insane. None of this matters, as we are not any of these thoughts. Attempting to control these thoughts is an act of futility that can bring us stress, suffering and unhappiness.

Since it is impossible for us to control the thoughts in our minds, we instead control how we react to them. We do this by controlling where our attention goes. The control we have over our attention allows us to selectively *experience* only the thoughts we desire. This makes it completely unnecessary to control the actual thoughts in our minds. Thoughts themselves are powerless over us because we control the attention they receive or do not receive. This makes us vastly more powerful than any thought.

Because we are an independent consciousness viewing the thoughts in our minds, we are in control of the thoughts we experience. Yes, we are in control of the thoughts we *experience*, and those thoughts do not control of us. We control the thoughts we *experience* with the use of our focused attention. When we focus our attention on a thought, we have “selected” that thought for our *experience* (Flowchart 3). On the flip side, when we pay no attention to a thought, we have decided not to *experience* that thought (Flowchart 4).

Understand that we are always free to accept or reject any thought that appears in our minds. We only *experience* the thoughts that we focus our attention on. We are, and have always been, in complete control of the thoughts we *experience*. Thoughts have never been in control of us, even though many times we have mistakenly believed that they were. As we notice that our attention controls the thoughts we *experience*, we understand more clearly that our happiness comes from within.

Flowchart 3 : Selecting Thoughts with Attention

We → Focus our **Attention** → on a **Thought** in our Mind → **We Experience that Thought**

Flowchart 4: Avoiding Thoughts with Lack of Attention

We → Pay **No Attention** → to a **Thought** in our Mind → **We Do Not Experience that Thought**

Attention Gives Thoughts Power

Again, it is particularly important to understand that the thoughts appearing in our minds have no power over us. Thoughts can only gain power and influence through the attention we focus on them (Flowchart 5). Attention is the only power source for a thought. It may be easier for us to consider attention as “electricity” for thoughts. When we focus our attention on a thought, we “plug” that thought into the “electricity” and allow it to become powerful. When we pay no attention to a thought, we prevent that thought from “plugging” into the “electricity” and it remains powerless (Flowchart 6). *Our ability to control where our attention goes is essential for our lasting happiness. And fortunately, it is one of the few things over which we have complete control.*

Flowchart 5: Providing Thoughts with Power through our Attention

We → Focus our **Attention** → on a **Thought** in our Mind → **that Thought becomes Powerful, and we Experience that Thought**

Flowchart 6: Preventing Thoughts from becoming Powerful through our Lack of Attention

We → Pay **No Attention** → to a **Thought** in our Mind → **that Thought remains Powerless, and we Do Not Experience that Thought**

Selecting Thoughts By Focusing Attention On Them

Until we are able to automatically relate to the thoughts in our minds as being completely separate from us, selecting the thoughts that serve us is the next best thing. While we cannot consciously control the thoughts in our minds, we can control the attention we give to thoughts. By using our attention, we can select the thoughts that serve us and *experience* those thoughts. Of course, we pay no attention to thoughts that do not serve us and avoid *experiencing* them.

If it is easier for us, we can imagine the thoughts in our minds like selections on a restaurant menu. In this analogy, we are equating meals with thoughts. We look at the menu for meals we would enjoy eating and order them. We glance over meals we would not enjoy eating and do not order them. In our mind menu, we look for the thoughts that allow us to be happy and select them using our attention. We glance over thoughts that cause us to be unhappy and do not select them by depriving them of attention.

We are already doing this, but we may have never noticed that we do. We focus our full attention on thoughts we deem important like reading the numbers on a winning lottery ticket. The thoughts we consider unimportant, like listening to a drunken fool, we let pass without focusing attention on them. *We simply relate to the thoughts in our minds as menu selections and select the ones that serve our happiness by giving them attention.*

Pay Less Attention To Thoughts

We have deeply conditioned ourselves into believing that we must pay attention to most of the thoughts that appear in our minds. This is certainly not the case and doing so can cause us stress, suffering and unhappiness, as we have no control over what thoughts arise in our minds. Paying less attention to the thoughts in our minds can make it easier for us to experience the happiness from within. This means we do not take thoughts too seriously or focus too much attention on them just because they appear in our minds.

An easy way to pay less attention to the thoughts appearing in our minds is to view them as someone else's thoughts, or better yet, the thoughts of a circus clown. Since it is much easier to view someone else's thoughts as relatively unimportant, especially if they are a clown, we can view the thoughts in our mind the same way. Viewing thoughts in this manner may seem strange at first, but it can be an effective way to prevent ourselves from automatically focusing too much attention on them.

Another way for those of us familiar with computers and surfing the Internet is to relate to the thoughts in our minds as links. When we want to view something on the Internet, we “click” on its link to view its contents. And vice versa, when we do not want to view the contents of something on the Internet; we do not “click” on its link. The thoughts in our minds are like the content on the Internet; we pay “attention” to a thought to *experience* it, just like “clicking” on a link to display its contents. The reverse is also true; to avoid *experiencing* a thought we pay it no “attention” at all, just like not “clicking” on an Internet link to avoid viewing its contents. *The thoughts in our minds are just a list of options that we may select from, and they cannot control us. This realization is vital for our lasting happiness.*

Prevent Selecting A Thought By Distraction

If we are having trouble not paying attention to thoughts that are causing us stress, suffering and unhappiness, then a distraction technique can be used.

As a thought appears in our mind that we prefer not to *experience*, we immediately focus our attention on something else. This deprives that thought of any attention. We can do this by immediately focusing our full attention on our breathing, counting backwards in our head, or singing a song to ourselves. All of these are distraction techniques and we can use any distraction technique that works. Once distracted, we shift our attention to a happy thought.

Distraction techniques are effective because they remove our attention from the thoughts we do not want to *experience*. As we know, attention plugs thoughts into the “electricity” and makes them powerful. When we remove our attention from a thought with a distraction technique, we disconnect the thought from the “electricity” rendering it powerless (Flowchart 7).

Flowchart 7: Prevent Selecting Thoughts by Distraction

We → Focus our **Attention** → on an Unhappy **Thought** in our Mind → We begin to Experience that Unhappy Thought → **Then We Begin our Distraction**

Our Distraction Begins by focusing our Full **Attention** on our Breathing (or any other Distraction Technique) → Once distracted, we Re-focus our **Attention** → on a Happy **Thought** In Our Mind → **We experience that Happy Thought instead of the Unhappy Thought**

Some thoughts can be easier than others to let slip by without much attention. There is no need to be concerned about this or become discouraged if we need to use a distraction technique often. *Simply use a distraction technique when needed until using one is no longer required. Eventually, and sooner than we expect, we can be in control of the thoughts we experience.*

Summary Points:

1. Understanding thoughts and how to relate to them can completely transform our lives and allow lasting happiness to emerge.
2. The thoughts appearing in our minds are completely separate from us and we are a totally independent consciousness that is viewing those thoughts.
3. It is impossible to control the thoughts that appear in our minds, but thoughts cannot control us either because we control our attention.
4. Our attention allows us to have complete control over how we react to any thought that appears in our minds. Because we control our attention, we are always free to accept or reject any thought that appears in our minds.
5. Our attention gives thoughts power and influence. Our lack of attention renders thoughts powerless and uninfluential.
6. Until we are able to automatically relate to the thoughts in our minds as being completely separate from us, selecting the thoughts that serve us is the next best thing.
7. When we focus our attention on a thought, we select that thought for our experience. When we do not focus our attention on a thought, we avoid experiencing that thought.
8. Automatically taking every thought that appears in our minds too seriously can lead to stress, suffering and unhappiness. When we avoid doing this, we can allow more peace and lasting happiness into our lives.
9. We can prevent ourselves from automatically taking every thought in our minds too seriously by viewing the thoughts in our minds as if they were someone else's thoughts, relating to them as if they were "internet" links, or just seeing them as selections on a restaurant menu.
10. If we are having trouble not paying attention to thoughts that are causing us stress, suffering and unhappiness, then a distraction technique can be used.

Understanding Emotions

Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotion know what it means to want to escape from these.

-Emily Dickinson

The sign of an intelligent people is their ability to control their emotions by the application of reason.-

Marya Mannes

Let's not forget that the little emotions are the great captains of our lives and we obey them without realizing it.

-Vincent Van Gogh

Emotions: General Description

Emotions can dramatically intensify any thought, regardless of whether that thought serves us, or does not serve us. As a result, emotions can easily trap us in stress, suffering and unhappiness. Emotions can become a serious obstacle to our happiness if left unchecked and misunderstood. It is essential for our lasting happiness to understand emotions and how to relate to them.

Emotions Provide Super Fuel For Thoughts

Once we select a thought by focusing our attention on it, an emotion can connect with that thought. Our attention is the connection, or fuel line, by which an emotion intensifies and super fuels a thought (Flowchart 1). When a thought is super fueled by an emotion, it appears to be vitally important and urgent, regardless of whether or not it is. Herein lies the danger. Emotions cannot evaluate whether or not a thought is meaningful or meaningless, beneficial or harmful, rational or irrational, useful or useless, and so on. *Emotions can intensify any thought that we focus our attention on and make us feel that it is vitally important and that we must react to it. It is up to us (our independent consciousness) to evaluate thoughts, direct our reactions, and manage our emotions.*

Flowchart 1: Allowing an Emotion to Connect to a Thought

We → Focus our **Attention** → on a **Thought** in our Mind → that **Thought** and our **Attention** are now Connected → This also establishes a Connection between the **Thought and our Emotion**

This Connection allows an **Emotion** to Intensify that **Thought** → our **Emotion** Intensifies that **Thought** → **that Thought is Experienced Emotionally**

Imagine the thoughts in our mind as a sea of candles with tiny flames and emotions as gasoline. When we focus our attention on a thought, it is just like examining one of these tiny flames. While we look at the flame, an emotion can jump in, pour gasoline on it, and start a blazing inferno. When an emotion starts a blazing inferno we can be influenced into believing that thought is vitally important, and react to it, whether it is worthy of a reaction or not. Any thought, whether it is happy or sad, peaceful or stressful, comforting or unpleasant is equally open to be super fueled by an emotion. *It is extremely important to accept and understand that emotions can just as easily super fuel a negative, irrational thought as they would a positive, rational thought.*

Do you ever wonder why our opinions can change 180-degrees, going back and forth dozens of times a day for no apparent reason, causing us to feel confused and indecisive? This happens because we are allowing our emotions to super fuel all opinions indiscriminately and continuously. And not because of any confusion or indecision on our part. *This key dynamic about emotions is essential for us to understand. It is always up to us (our independent consciousness) to manage our emotions by controlling where our attention goes.*

Recognizing Emotional Fuel at Work

As we know, emotions can indiscriminately intensify and super fuel thoughts. Unmanaged emotions intensifying random thoughts can cause confusion, misery and unhappiness. Fortunately, emotions, just like thoughts have no power or control over us. By recognizing that emotions can artificially intensify thoughts, it becomes easier to manage them.

There is an easy way for us to stop automatically believing our emotions and reacting to them. We can relate to them as likely false alarms, until we (our independent consciousness) can further evaluate the thought that the emotion is super fueling. *It is critical for us not to automatically believe the emotions we are experiencing, as this can give our emotions control over us. Understanding this can break the cycle of emotions controlling us.*

Realizing When We Are Trapped in Thought by an Emotion

Emotions can easily trap us in a thought and render us completely unconscious if we are not careful. Once emotional super fuel is blazing on a thought, it is just like giving the “Mad Hatter” control over our feelings.

When we are angry, depressed, or anxious we become trapped in thought by emotion. Our perceptions become warped, our vision becomes clouded, and our rational capabilities dramatically reduced. Negative, toxic thoughts super fueled by emotion equal stress, suffering and unhappiness for us. When negative thoughts, super fueled by emotions, are traveling through our minds like wild fire, immediately realize that *we are in an emotional trap that is artificial*. Accept that we have just lost consciousness to emotion. This acceptance can deflate the intensity of negative thoughts connected to the emotion. By doing this right away, we begin to extinguish the emotional flames. We begin to regain our control over the emotion and become conscious again. *Understanding emotional super fuel and recognizing emotional traps is half the battle to regaining control over our emotions.*

Escaping an Emotional Trap

Once we realize we are in an emotional trap, the intensity begins to dim and die down, but we still need an escape route. Fortunately, we need not be Houdini in order to free ourselves. We know emotions intensify thoughts, and thoughts are only powerful and influential when we focus attention on them. To

release ourselves from an emotional trap, we sever the connection between the thought and our emotion by refocusing our attention on a different thought.

As soon as notice we are in an emotional trap filled with negative toxic thoughts, we can say to ourselves, “This is artificial”. Then immediately refocus our attention on a happy thought. This happy thought can be real or imaginary as long as we focus our full attention on it. By doing this, we have cut the fuel line to the emotional trap, and broke its connection to the unhappy thought. Remember thoughts are only powerful when we focus attention on them (Flowchart 2). *In order to manage our emotions effectively, we should understand how they connect to thoughts.*

Flowchart 2: Disconnecting an Emotion from a Thought

We → Remove our **Attention** → from the **Emotionally** Intensified Unhappy **Thought** in our Mind → by Recognizing “This is artificial” → the **Emotional Intensity begins Reducing**

As the **Emotional** Intensity begins Reducing, We Re-focus our Full **Attention** → on a Happy **Thought** in our Mind → thus Disconnecting the **Emotion** from the **Thought** it was Intensifying → **the Unhappy Thought is no longer Experienced Emotionally**

Escaping Emotional Traps by Distraction

The same distraction techniques we use with thoughts can be effectively used to escape emotional traps. Once we realize we are in an emotional trap, we immediately begin using a distraction technique. We can focus on our breathing, count backwards in our heads, sing a song to ourselves, or use any distraction technique that works for us. This distraction removes attention from the thought the emotion is super fueling and severs their connection. Once we become distracted from the negative, toxic thought, we refocus our attention on a happy thought (Flowchart 3). *Remember that we can use distraction when we cannot immediately make the jump to a happy thought.*

Flowchart 3: Disconnecting an Emotion from a Thought by Distraction

We → Remove our **Attention** → from the Emotionally Intensified Unhappy **Thought** in our Mind → by Recognizing "This artificial" → **Then We Begin our Distraction**

Our Distraction Begins by focusing our Full **Attention** on our Breathing (**or any other Distraction Technique**) → Once distracted, **the Emotional Intensity begins Reducing**

As the **Emotional** Intensity begins Reducing, we Re-focus our **Attention** → on a Happy **Thought** in our Mind → thus Disconnecting the **Emotion** from the Unhappy **Thought** it was Intensifying → **the Unhappy Thought is no longer experienced Emotionally**

Emotions Are Neutral and Simply Intensify Thoughts

Emotions can intensify any thought we focus our attention on, but they cannot evaluate any of those thoughts. This being the case, our emotions are neutral intensifiers of thought. *The function of emotions is to enhance our experience and they work amazingly well. Emotions are powerful and essential for our lives. It is our responsibility to direct them using our attention to serve our lasting happiness. (After finishing the next part of this section 'Understanding Viewpoints', also see the ['About Experiencing Unhappiness'](#) Chapter, page 69)*

Summary points:

1. Understanding emotions and how to relate to them is vital for our lasting happiness.
2. Our attention is the connection we create between the thoughts in our mind and our emotions.
3. Emotions are super fuel for thoughts. When a thought is super fueled by an emotion, that thought appears vitally important, regardless of whether it is or not.
4. Emotions are unable to evaluate thoughts. Because they lack this ability, it is in our best interest not to automatically believe our emotions, as this can lead to confusion, misery, and unhappiness. It is up to us (our independent consciousness) to evaluate the thoughts our emotions are fueling.
5. Once emotional super fuel is blazing on a thought we can easily lose conscious control to our emotions. By realizing this, the intensity of the emotion can immediately begin to reduce its powerful influence.
6. It is not possible for emotions to control us unless we allow them. A simple way to prevent this is to relate to them as "false alarms" until we can further evaluate the thoughts the emotions are super fueling.
7. In order to release ourselves from an emotional trap, we shift our full attention to a happy thought. Doing this severs the connection between the thought and emotion.
8. The distraction techniques we use for thoughts can be used to escape from emotional traps.
9. The function of emotions is to intensify our thoughts and enrich our experience. They are neutral intensifiers of thought, and we should direct them using our attention to serve our lasting happiness.

Understanding Viewpoints

Never, never rest contented with any circle of ideas, but always be certain that a wider one is still possible.

-Pearl Bailey

All of life is perceptual, just one's different viewpoint of life.

-Plato

Opinion has caused more trouble on this little earth than plagues or earthquakes.

-Voltaire

Viewpoints: General Description

Our viewpoints can fill our lives with happiness and peace, or can cause our own stress, suffering and unhappiness. Viewpoints are our unique perspective for experiencing life. They are our opinions and beliefs formed from a collection of thoughts. We can select viewpoints in the same way that we select thoughts. Understanding viewpoints and how to select them removes another obstacle to our lasting happiness.

There Are Limitless Valid Viewpoints On Almost Anything

There is an ocean of valid viewpoints on almost anything. We should understand that viewpoints are dependent on the infinitely different ways we can look at anything. In that regard, one viewpoint is as valid as any other. When we select an unhappy viewpoint, we cause ourselves to be unhappy. When we select a happy viewpoint, we allow ourselves to be happy. Obviously, selecting a happy viewpoint every time would be tremendously beneficial to our lasting happiness. Nevertheless, we often select an unhappy viewpoint instead. Why is that? Because we often believe the unhappy viewpoint is the most valid viewpoint and the truth. The issue regarding viewpoints is not believing that there are more than one valid viewpoint on anything. Once we understand this as a false belief, we can look at anything differently until we find a viewpoint that allows us to be happy.

It is particularly important to understand that by looking at things differently, we are not changing anything or ignoring reality in any way. We are just looking at things differently until we find a viewpoint that allows us to be happy. The glass being half-empty instead of the glass being half-full is an excellent example. Both are equally valid viewpoints. By viewing the glass as half-empty, we can experience a loss that can cause us unhappiness. Whereas, viewing the glass as half-full, we can experience gratitude for what we have and allow ourselves to be happy.

A less obvious example could be, "My car broke down." An unhappy viewpoint could be, "My car broke down. I can't go anywhere." A happy viewpoint could be, "My car broke down. Now I get to stay home and rest." The car may still need to be fixed in either case, but we can always select a viewpoint that allows us to be happy. *Understanding and accepting that there are many valid viewpoints on almost*

anything can reduce stress, suffering and unhappiness. It can also make it is easier for us to choose a viewpoint that allows us to be happy.

Always Remain Unattached To Any Particular Viewpoint

Once we understand and accept that there are limitless valid viewpoints on almost anything, then we may find it easier to detach from a particular viewpoint. Remaining overly attached to a particular viewpoint can lead to stress, suffering, and unhappiness. This happens when we lock ourselves into a single viewpoint, which gives us only one shot at this viewpoint being a happy one. More often than not, it is an unhappy viewpoint that appears in our minds. When we avoid locking ourselves into a single viewpoint, it allows us to view anything differently until we select a viewpoint that allows us to be happy. *Remaining unattached to any particular viewpoint can also dramatically reduce conflicts with others. We no longer defend our own viewpoints as vigorously, nor do we feel the need to attack viewpoints that do not agree with our own.*

Realizing When Emotions Are Super Fueling Viewpoints

As we know, we choose an unhappy viewpoint when we believe it is the most valid and truthful one. A major reason we may believe an unhappy viewpoint is that an emotion is super fueling it. As soon as emotional super fuel is blazing on an unhappy viewpoint, it falsely appears as the most valid and truthful. Remember, viewpoints are a collection of thoughts and just as thoughts can be super fueled by emotions so can viewpoints.

Here is an example, “My old car has too much rust to be repaired.”

If our day is not going well, we could easily view this as, “My old car has too much rust to be repaired. Now I have no car and must waste my hard-earned money on a new car that I cannot even afford! %\$#@!”

If our day is going well, we could easily view this as, “My old car has too much rust to be repaired. I did get many good years out of it, in any case. Besides, now I can shop around for a new and even better one, and buy it when I have the money. :)”

As the example demonstrates, emotions can easily trick us into believing one viewpoint over another.

Escaping Unhappy Viewpoints Super Fueled By Emotions

When we have accepted an unhappy viewpoint and experienced it intensely, we have most likely been tricked by our emotional state into believing it. In recognizing this, we can use a distraction technique to deprive the unhappy viewpoint of attention. We can focus on our breathing, count backwards in our heads, sing a song to ourselves, or use any distraction technique that works for us. Once we deprive an unhappy viewpoint of attention, the emotional super fuel begins to die down, and we are free to shift our attention to a happy viewpoint. When we focus our full attention on the happy viewpoint, we have broken the emotional connection to the unhappy viewpoint.

Without the emotional fuel blazing on the unhappy viewpoint, it is much easier for us to accept any happy viewpoint. This may take a number of distraction attempts until we have become used to escaping emotional traps. *Before we know it, escaping emotional traps and accepting happy viewpoints can become second nature.*

Selecting A Happy Viewpoint

If we are unhappy with the way things appear, we simply change our viewpoint. Regardless of the situation, we can always allow ourselves to be happy by selecting a happy viewpoint.

Any situation we may find ourselves in has a benefit or advantage of some kind. We just rearrange the way we view a situation until it fits into a happy or useful viewpoint. This is extremely easy to do.

Here, is an example: An athlete sustained an injury that prevents them from participating in their sport for a few months.

This viewpoint appears, “I am in trouble. I will become hopelessly out of shape while I am unable to play. I may not even heal correctly, and I am going to miss out playing the game I love.” Adopting this viewpoint is a valid way of looking at the situation, but will likely cause stress and unhappiness. Instead of accepting this viewpoint, we look at the situation differently, searching for benefits and opportunities.

Other viewpoints could be, “While I am healing, I can study and master all the plays.” or “I needed a vacation anyway, I’ll catch up on my sleep, and finally get to watch some TV.” or “I’ll be OK after I heal up, besides I get to spend more time with my family.”

The situation still requires rest time to heal, but the way we look at that rest time can either allow us to be happy or cause our unhappiness. We can always find a happy viewpoint. So, getting comfortable with viewing things differently until we find a useful, beneficial viewpoint is crucial for our lasting happiness.

Selecting Viewpoints Helps With Relating To Thoughts

Becoming comfortable selecting our viewpoints can make it easier for us to relate to the thoughts in our minds. As we experience more happiness by selecting happy viewpoints, it becomes easier for us to believe that we can do the same with thoughts. This understanding can help us accept that the thoughts in our minds are completely separate from us.

The dynamic of selecting a viewpoint is very similar to the dynamic of selecting a thought. When we want to experience a happy viewpoint, we focus our attention on that happy viewpoint and select it for our experience. When we would prefer not to experience an unhappy viewpoint, we deprive it of attention so it remains unselected for our experience. The attention we provide or withhold is the control we have for experiencing both viewpoints and thoughts. We can experience happiness by looking at a situation until we find a happy viewpoint that relates to it, and focus our attention on it. *Selecting viewpoints can keep us happy while we learn how to relate to the thoughts in our minds as being completely separate from us.*

Summary Points:

1. Understanding viewpoints and how to select them is crucial for our lasting happiness.
2. There are limitless valid viewpoints on almost anything. When we select a happy viewpoint, we allow ourselves to be happy. When we select an unhappy viewpoint, we cause ourselves to be unhappy. It is all a matter of how we look at things, and we can always find a viewpoint that allows us to be happy.
3. We select an unhappy viewpoint when we believe it is the most valid and truthful. In order for us to select a happy viewpoint, we should understand and accept that there is more than one valid viewpoint on anything.
4. We are not changing anything or ignoring reality by selecting a happy viewpoint instead of an unhappy viewpoint.
5. We are always free to select a happy viewpoint that serves us by remaining unattached to any particular viewpoint.
6. Emotions can just as easily super fuel viewpoints as they do thoughts, and trick us into believing an unhappy viewpoint is the most valid and truthful.
7. When we have accepted an unhappy viewpoint and are experiencing it intensely, we have most likely been tricked by our emotional state into believing it. In order to escape this emotional trap, we shift our full attention to a happy viewpoint or use a distraction technique.
8. We can always find a viewpoint that allows us to be happy. It is crucial for us to become comfortable looking at things differently until we find a happy viewpoint.
9. As we become successful at selecting viewpoints for our happiness, it becomes easier for us to accept that we can do it with thoughts as well.
10. Selecting viewpoints for our happiness allows us to remain happy while we learn how to relate to the thoughts in our minds as being completely separate from us.

Section 3: The Universal Happiness Method

We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.

-Albert Einstein

We all live with the objective of being happy.

-Anne Frank

We choose our joys and sorrows long before we experience them.

-Kahlil Gibran

This section describes the purpose of The Universal Happiness Method as well as its two practical parts entitled: *General Principles To Follow For Our Lasting Happiness* and *Guidelines To Follow When We Experience Stress Or Unhappiness*.

The Purpose Of The Universal Happiness Method

Someone will live a happier life merely because we took the time to share what we had to give.

-Leo F. Buscaglia

If you have knowledge, let others light their candles with it.

-Margaret Fuller

Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.

-Lao Tzu

The Universal Happiness Method has two purposes. First, it offers us a practical way to experience more happiness and less stress and unhappiness while we are learning the book's teachings. Second, it offers us a way to gain a deeper understanding of the teachings through experience. We use the method until we automatically relate to *Life (Things As They Are)*, *Ourselves (Our Inside World)*, which includes the *Thoughts in our Minds*, *Our Emotions and Our Viewpoints*, and *The Outside World* in ways that can allow lasting happiness into our lives. Once this happens, we no longer need the method.

The Universal Happiness Method

The mind is restless and difficult to restrain, but it is subdued by practice.

-Bhagavad Gita

For a man to conquer himself is the first and noblest of all victories.

-Plato

Be happy. It's one way of being wise.

-Sidonie Gabrielle Colette

The Universal Happiness Method offers a set of General Principles and Guidelines for relating to Life (Things As They Are), Ourselves (Our Inside World) and The Outside World. We use the General Principles as the *Standard way* to relate to life, ourselves and the outside world for our lasting happiness. We use the Guidelines to *Release ourselves* from stress and unhappiness.

General Principles To Follow For Our Lasting Happiness

Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.

-Abraham Lincoln

Since everything is in our heads, we had better not lose them.

-Coco Chanel

A well-tamed mind brings happiness and an untamed mind brings sorrow and chaos. It is as simple as that. Ultimately the choice is our own.

-Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo

The Universal Happiness Method General Principles are *the standard way* we relate to Life (Things As They Are), Ourselves (Our Inside World), and The Outside World. By standard way, we mean this is our normal everyday way of relating to life, Ourselves, and The Outside World. By behaving in this way, the teachings of this book can become second nature and we understand through our experience. The experience of using the General Principles creates the peaceful space that is necessary for noticing how our minds function on the *deepest level*, which operates virtually without our notice. As we notice and experience the deepest level of our mind, we can become more and more skillful at using the General Principles. Once the General Principles have become second nature through experience, we have regained conscious control inside our minds and have conscious access to the happiness within.

The General Principles have four parts: **Relating to Acceptance**, **Relating to Thoughts**, **Relating to Emotions**, and **Relating to Viewpoints**. If we are having difficulty understanding any of these parts, we should leisurely review the section of the book that applies (each part has a link to the appropriate section for review). The teachings and the General Principles of The Method work together to bring understanding. This is not a race and we should avoid pressuring ourselves in any way. We can go back and forth reviewing the teachings and using the General Principles until we establish a *basic understanding* of the teachings. With this basic understanding, we continue using The Method to gain a *deeper understanding* of the teachings through experience.

IMPORTANT: In order to understand and use the General Principles of the Universal Happiness Method, we **MUST** have read **AND** established a basic understanding of the **TEACHINGS** from the Preface to this page. If we experience any confusion or resistance with the General Principles, we should go back and **REVIEW** the sections of the teachings that apply.

General Principles relating to happiness

- Whatever is happening in our lives, no matter what it is, we unconditionally **ACCEPT** it.
- We **REMIN**D ourselves that **NOTHING** outside of us can cause us to be happy or unhappy.
- We **REMIN**D ourselves that **WE** are always in **CONTROL** of our happiness or unhappiness.

Remember: Unconditionally accepting Life (Things As They Are) can allow us to experience more peace and lasting happiness, and makes us stronger. Resisting whatever is happening in our lives can cause us to experience stress, suffering, and unhappiness and makes us weaker (for more detailed information, see '[Understanding Acceptance](#)' Chapter). The Outside World is not the source of our happiness and unhappiness (for more detailed information, see '[Section 1: Exposing False Beliefs About Happiness And Unhappiness](#)' Chapters).

Relating to THOUGHTS:

- We consciously **CONTROL** our attention instead of reacting to every thought that appears in our minds.
- We focus our **ATTENTION ONLY** on peaceful, productive, and happy thoughts that serve us.
- We pay **NO ATTENTION** to stressful, unproductive, and unhappy thoughts that do not serve us.

Remember: Our attention gives thoughts power and influence, and allows us to experience them. Our lack of attention renders thoughts powerless and uninfluential, and prevents us from experiencing them. We relate to the thoughts in our minds as a menu of selections until we can automatically relate to them as being completely separate from us (for more detailed information, see '[Understanding Thoughts](#)' Chapter).

Relating to EMOTIONS:

-We **REMIN**D ourselves that emotions can **ARTIFICIALLY** intensify and super fuel any thought or viewpoint whether it is important or not.

-We **VIEW** our emotions initially as **FALSE ALARMS** and avoid reacting to them until we can further evaluate the thoughts or viewpoints they are intensifying and super fueling.

-We **REMIN**D ourselves that because we **CONTROL** our attention, we can select the thoughts or viewpoints we experience and thus **CONTROL** our emotions.

***Remember:** Emotions are unable to evaluate thoughts/viewpoints, and do not know which thoughts/viewpoints are important or unimportant. Automatically believing our emotions can lead to confusion, misery, and unhappiness. It is up to us (our independent consciousness) to evaluate the importance of thoughts/viewpoints, not our emotions. By relating to emotions in this way, we have gained control over them, instead of them controlling us (for more detailed information, see [‘Understanding Emotions’](#) Chapter).*

Relating to VIEWPOINTS:

-We **REMIN**D ourselves that there are **LIMITLESS** valid viewpoints on **ALMOST** anything.

-We **ALWAYS** remain **UNATTACHED** to any particular viewpoint.

-We **REMIN**D ourselves to look at any situation **DIFFERENTLY** until we **FIND** a viewpoint that **ALLOWS** us to be happy, and **FOCUS** our full attention on that viewpoint.

***Remember:** Viewpoints are just a collection of thoughts. Our attention gives viewpoints power and influence, and allows us to experience them. Our lack of attention renders viewpoints powerless and uninfluential, and prevents us from experiencing them. When we select a happy viewpoint instead of an unhappy viewpoint, we are not changing anything or ignoring reality (for more detailed information, see [‘Understanding Viewpoints’](#) Chapter).*

Guidelines To Follow When We Experience Stress Or Unhappiness

The greatest happiness is to know the source of unhappiness.

-Fyodor Dostoyevsky

A man is but the product of his thoughts; what he thinks, he becomes.

-Mohandas Gandhi

If you realized how powerful your thoughts are, you would never think a negative thought.

-Peace Pilgrim

The Universal Happiness Method Guidelines are used when we are experiencing Stress or Unhappiness related to Life (Things As They Are), Ourselves (Our Inside World), and The Outside World. These Guidelines are used to *release* ourselves from the useless thinking we allowed to cause us stress and unhappiness. By using these guidelines, the teachings of this book can become second nature and we understand through our experience. As we become more skillful at using the Guidelines, the more we understand how to prevent useless thinking. The more we understand how to prevent useless thinking, the less we require the Guidelines, until the Guidelines are no longer necessary.

The Guidelines have four steps: **Our FIRST STEP**, Step if a **THOUGHT** is the cause, Step if an **EMOTION** is the cause, and Step if a **VIEWPOINT** is the cause. If we are having difficulty understanding any of these steps, we should leisurely review the section of the book that applies (each step has a link to the appropriate chapters for review). The teachings and the Guidelines of The Method work together to bring understanding. We are not being timed, there is no pressure here. We can go back and forth reviewing the teachings and using the Guidelines until we establish a *basic understanding* of the teachings. With this basic understanding, we continue using The Method to gain a *deeper understanding* of the teachings through experience.

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY: After *PERFORMING* the First Step, avoid becoming overly concerned with identifying which Step comes next. *ALL* Subsequent steps are about recognizing when we have lost control, and releasing ourselves by re-focusing our *FULL ATTENTION* on something happy or using a distraction technique. The release is ultimately the same in every case; we focus our *FULL ATTENTION* on a happy thought or happy viewpoint. This is *NOT* complicated and becomes easier after we do it a while.

IMPORTANT: In order to understand and use the Guidelines of the Universal Happiness Method, we **MUST** have read **AND** established a basic understanding of the **TEACHINGS** from the Preface to this page. If we experience any confusion or resistance with the Guidelines, we should go back and **REVIEW** the sections of the teachings that apply.

GUIDELINES

This is ALWAYS Our FIRST Step:

-We immediately unconditionally **ACCEPT** whatever is triggering our stress or unhappiness right now.

-**NEXT**, we remind ourselves that **WE** are the **SOURCE** of our stress and unhappiness, and **NOTHING** outside of us can cause us stress and unhappiness.

Remember: When we unconditionally accept whatever is triggering our stress and unhappiness, we are not resisting it. By doing this we can take the steam out of stress and unhappiness (for more detailed information, see '[Section 1: Exposing False Beliefs About Happiness And Unhappiness](#)' Chapters and the '[Understanding Acceptance](#)' Chapter).

NEXT Step for Release from a THOUGHT:

-We **RECOGNIZE** we have **SELECTED** a stressful or unhappy thought.

-**NEXT**, we **SHIFT** our attention **AWAY** from the stressful or unhappy thought by **LOOKING** for a happy thought. Once we find it, we **RE-FOCUS** our full attention on that happy thought.

-**IF** looking for a happy thought is too difficult for us right now, we use a **DISTRACTION** technique. Once distracted, we begin **LOOKING** for a happy thought. Once we find it, we **RE-FOCUS** our full attention on that happy thought.

Remember: We are always free to select our thoughts. We can escape experiencing a stressful or unhappy thought by depriving it of our attention. We can deprive a stressful or unhappy thought of attention by focusing our full attention on a happy thought or by using a distraction technique (for more detailed information, see '[Understanding Thoughts](#)' Chapter)

NEXT Step for Release from an EMOTION:

- We **RECOGNIZE** we have lost **CONTROL** to an emotion that we allowed to super fuel a stressful or unhappy thought or viewpoint.
- NEXT** we **SHIFT** our attention **AWAY** from the stressful or unhappy thought or viewpoint the emotion is super fueling by **RECOGNIZING** “This is **ARTIFICIAL**”.
- NEXT**, We begin **LOOKING** for a happy thought or viewpoint. Once we find it, we **RE-FOCUS** our full attention on that happy thought or viewpoint.
- IF** looking for a happy thought or viewpoint is too difficult for us right now, we use a **DISTRACTION** technique. Once distracted, we begin **LOOKING** for a happy thought or viewpoint. Once we find it, we **RE-FOCUS** our full attention on that happy thought or viewpoint.

***Remember:** Emotions can intensify and super fuel any thought/viewpoint we focus our attention on and cannot evaluate them. We can release ourselves from emotional traps by severing the connection between the unhappy thought/unhappy viewpoint and emotion. Our attention is the connection we create between thoughts/viewpoints and emotions. By focusing our full attention on a happy thought/happy viewpoint or using a distraction technique, we can sever the emotional connection to the stressful or unhappy thought/unhappy viewpoint. Once we are free of emotion, we (our independent consciousness) can evaluate the thought/viewpoint it was intensifying and super fueling (for more detailed information, see [‘Understanding Emotions’](#) Chapter).*

NEXT Step for Release from a VIEWPOINT:

- We **RECOGNIZE** we have **SELECTED** a stressful or unhappy viewpoint.
- NEXT**, we **SHIFT** our attention **AWAY** from the stressful or unhappy viewpoint by reminding ourselves that there are **LIMITLESS** valid viewpoints on **ALMOST** anything.

-**NEXT**, we begin **LOOKING** at the present situation **DIFFERENTLY** until we **FIND** a viewpoint that **ALLOWS** us to be happy. Once we find it, we **RE-FOCUS** our full attention on that happy viewpoint.

-**IF** finding a happy viewpoint is too difficult for us right now, we use a **DISTRACTION** technique. Once distracted, we begin **LOOKING** for a happy viewpoint. Once we find it, we **RE-FOCUS** our full attention on that happy viewpoint.

***Remember:** We are always in control of the viewpoint we select. We can release ourselves from experiencing a stressful or unhappy viewpoint by depriving it of our attention. We can deprive a stressful or unhappy viewpoint of attention by focusing our full attention on a happy viewpoint or by using a distraction technique (for more detailed information, see '[Understanding Viewpoints](#)' Chapter).*

Section 4: Examples of Viewpoints

I have learned from experience that the greater part of our happiness or misery depends on our dispositions and not on our circumstances.

-Martha Washington

The universe is made up of stories, not atoms.

-Muriel Rukeyser

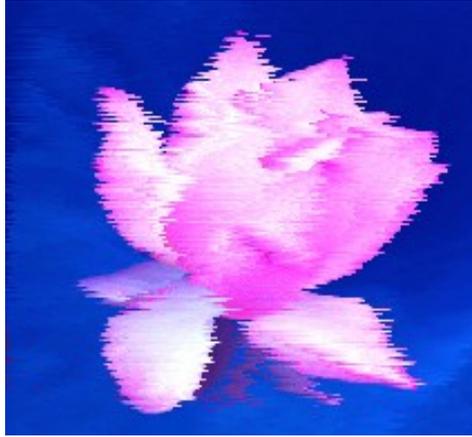
In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's mind there are few.

-Shunryu Suzuki

This section presents examples of viewpoints; viewpoints that can cause unhappiness and viewpoints that allow happiness. These sample viewpoints highlight some of the reasons, but not all, for us to reject or accept them, according to the teachings in this book.

We should understand that thinking about these viewpoints too deeply could cause useless thinking and that is not to our advantage. Instead, we can leisurely read these viewpoints without deep analysis and without time constraints for understanding. The example viewpoints in this section are presented in order for us to learn about viewpoints *only* and there is no pressure to accept or reject them.

PART 1



I was thirsty.
I drank some water.
And the thirst was gone.

I was hungry.
I ate some food.
And the hunger was gone.

I was cold.
I put on warm clothes.
And the cold was gone.

I was covered in mud.
I took a bath.
And the mud was gone.

I was filled with unhappiness.
I focused my attention on happy thoughts.
And the unhappiness was gone.

-Michael Robert Lawrence

Part 1: Rejecting Viewpoints That Can Cause Unhappiness

By becoming unhappy, we sometimes learn how to be less so.

-Anne Sophie Swetchine

It isn't what you have, or who you are, or where you are, or what you are doing that makes you happy or unhappy. It is what you think about.

-Dale Carnegie

The truth you believe and cling to makes you unavailable to hear anything new.

-Pema Chodron

This section presents example viewpoints, in no particular order of importance that can cause us considerable stress, suffering and unhappiness. Viewpoints such as these can produce a thick blanket of useless thinking that can prevent us from being happy and peaceful. This thick blanket of useless thinking can also prevent us from noticing the internal dynamics of our minds.

By rejecting these types of viewpoints, we can prevent useless thinking and allow more happiness and peace into our lives. Remember, there are limitless valid viewpoints on almost anything. Everything in this section is just a point of view, a way of perceiving things. We are always free to accept or reject any viewpoint. The example viewpoints in the following chapters are simply a means for us to learn and nothing more.

Needing to Be Right

You can argue yourself blue in the face, and you're not going to change each other's minds. It's a waste of your time and my time.

-Barbara Bush

Intelligence has no attachment to the opinion it has formed, but only to the truth it may contain; and, knowing that error insinuates itself under the guise of truth.

-Lady Mary Worley Montagu

I learned to make my mind large, as the universe is large, so that there is room for contradictions.

-Maxine Hong Kingston

The need to be right does not serve our happiness, and can increase conflict with others. Being right is, in fact, an illusion. If we need to be right in order to feel good about ourselves or be happy, we are causing our own unhappiness.

Every person has a unique life experience and a different set of ever-changing thoughts in their minds. Because of this, everyone views our ever-changing world differently and holds their own unique viewpoints on anything. This means that being right or wrong is just a point of view. This being the case, how can we expect our viewpoints to line-up perfectly with other people's viewpoints all of the time? This is clearly not possible. It is only an attempt to prove our version of reality and nothing more.

Nevertheless, we often rest our self-worth and happiness on being right, or conversely, not being wrong. This way of thinking is clearly insane and can cause us serious stress, suffering and unhappiness. It can also be a major source of conflict with others, and resolves nothing. When we realize that there are many valid viewpoints on almost anything, we no longer invest our self-worth and happiness with being right or wrong. We also no longer vigorously defend our viewpoints, or viciously attack viewpoints that do not agree with our own. *Rejecting the need to be right allows us to be more peaceful and happy, regardless of our viewpoint or the viewpoint of others.*

Taking Things Personally

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.

-Eleanor Roosevelt

We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are.

-Anais Nin

We must not allow other people's limited perceptions to define us.

-Virginia Satir

Nothing is ever personal, yet many of us live our lives as if this were true. Everyone has a unique point of view and vastly different life experiences. Because of this, no one sees anything in exactly the same way. We behave the way we do because of this unique perspective and for no other reason.

Since all of us perceive things differently, how can we take anything that others do personally? This clearly defies logic and we can cause ourselves significant stress, suffering and unhappiness by believing this. Taking things personally is an enormous source of conflict with others. This is the case because we are not the only ones taking things personally; others are as well. Attempting to completely align our thoughts and viewpoints with anyone else's is not only impossible; it sets the stage for impending conflict.

Things deteriorate further when we believe our unique viewpoint is the most valid and truthful. With this frame of mind, resolving things to everyone's satisfaction is virtually impossible. Instead of swimming in this pool of conflict and unhappiness, we accept that it is not possible to take anything personally. *By accepting this, not only do we eliminate a leading cause for conflict with others, we allow ourselves to be happy and at peace, no matter how others behave.*

Needing to Be In Complete Control

You cannot control what happens to you, but you can control your attitude toward what happens to you.

-Brian Tracy

When you relinquish the desire to control your future, you can have more happiness.

-Nicole Kidman

Except our own thoughts, there is nothing in our power.

-Rene Descartes

It is impossible for us to completely control Life (Things As They Are), all we can do is control ourselves and how we react to life. When we need to be in complete control, we are actually trying to line-up things outside ourselves in order to be happy. Doing this can cause us enormous frustration, stress, suffering and unhappiness. Since, we cannot completely control life, any attempt to do so is resisting life, and resisting life makes us weaker.

Once we realize the folly of trying to control the uncontrollable, we can focus on controlling ourselves. Remember that we can view anything differently until we find a point of view that allows happiness, without changing anything outside ourselves. Doing this is much easier than trying to control life and it always allows us to be happy. We can remain peaceful, happy and strong by adapting to Life (Things As They Are), regardless of how life lines up. *When we try to control things outside ourselves, we open the door to unhappiness. When we control ourselves and adapt to life, we open the door to happiness.*

Fighting life (Things As They Are)

We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails.

-Dolly Parton

If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude.

-Maya Angelou

Mental fight means thinking against the current, not with it.

-Virginia Woolf

Whenever we fight Life (Things As They Are), we fight a battle that cannot be won as life is uncontrollable. When we do this, it is like constantly swimming against the current or running uphill. This is exhausting, makes us weaker and can cause us major stress, suffering and unhappiness. And this could very well continue without end, as life moves on undeterred by our actions.

We do not serve our happiness or ourselves by fighting life. Instead of wasting our time and energy on an act of futility, we accept what life offers us, and adapt to it. Accepting life and adapting to it allows us to be peaceful, happy, and makes us stronger.

This accepting and adapting point of view does not mean we are accepting defeat in any way. It only means that we accept whatever life offers us and adapt our actions accordingly, and nothing else. *By accepting and adapting to life, we can avoid the stress, suffering and unhappiness of fighting life. We are also allowing ourselves to be more peaceful and happy no matter what life brings to us.*

Dwelling On The Past

What lies behind us and what lies ahead of us are tiny matters compared to what lives within us.

-Henry David Thoreau

Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin.

-Mother Theresa

Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment.

-Siddhartha Gautama

Few things surpass the uselessness of dwelling on the past. Dwelling on the past is not only illogical because the past no longer exists; it also produces useless thinking that can cause us stress, suffering, and unhappiness. Of course, this is a double loss for us as it also prevents us from enjoying ourselves and being happy in the present.

It is utter madness to allow something we cannot change to cause us unhappiness, regardless of how much we wish it were different. The way we see the past is just a viewpoint, and we can change our point of view at anytime to be happy. We simply look at it for any advantages or benefits that came from the event and focus on them, instead of the unhappy viewpoint.

Everything that happens has advantages and disadvantages, and it is simply a matter of being open to seeing them. Once we create a useful, happy viewpoint for the past event, we let it go. *By not dwelling on the past, we are free to be productive, happy and enjoy ourselves in the present. We should realize that we learn from the past, but we do not live there.*

Worrying About The Future

Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength.

-Cornelia "Corrie" Ten Boom

Fear of the future is worse than one's present fortune.

-Marcus Fabius Quintilian

Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood.

-Marie Curie

Worrying about the future is a never-ending mental trap. This is a mental trap of useless thinking because the future never arrives, and there is always something else that can cause us concern. All of the "What ifs" of useless thinking can cause us severe stress, suffering, and unhappiness. Moreover, we cannot predict what Life (Things As They Are) is going to offer us. Therefore, all of this worrying we do is in vain.

When we worry about the future, we do so because we are attempting to find some measure of control over it. As we know, controlling life is impossible, and trying to do so only sends us down the road to stress, suffering, and unhappiness. This mental trap can also clog our minds with useless thoughts that effectively prevent us from being happy and peaceful. Again, this is a mental trap because all of this useless thinking is tied to the future that goes on forever.

Instead of worrying about the future and what life may offer us, we adapt to what is happening in the present. *Adapting to life reduces stress and unhappiness and negates the need to worry about the future. By replacing our worry about the future with adapting to life, we allow ourselves to be more peaceful and happy in the present.*

Seeing Things As Problems

If human beings are perceived as potentials rather than problems, as possessing strengths instead of weaknesses, as unlimited rather than dull and unresponsive, then they thrive and grow to their capabilities.

-Barbara Bush

We do not know what is really good or bad fortune.

-Jean Jacques Rousseau

There are two ways of meeting difficulties. You alter the difficulties or you alter yourself to meet them.

-Phyllis Bottome

Life (Things As They Are) creates situations for us that we may have to navigate through or deal with on some level, and there is nothing beyond this. All situations in life are neutral. They are neither good nor bad, blessing nor curse, lucky nor unlucky, favorable nor unfavorable, and so on. When we view things as problems, we can cause ourselves significant stress, suffering and unhappiness for no reason. The solution to problems is to view them only as situations, not as problems.

Life offers us no problems; we create problems by the way we view what life offers us. Nothing is ever a problem until we see it as a problem. We should recognize that our happiness or unhappiness lies in how we view our life situations, and nothing to do with the situations themselves.

We can avoid stress, suffering and unhappiness when we view problems only as circumstances, conditions, or situations. This is not ignoring reality because it does not change our ability to evaluate any situation and to take effective action. It merely allows us to do so without all the stress, suffering and unhappiness that can accompany viewing things as problems. *By understanding that problems exist only in our minds, we allow ourselves to be more peaceful and happy, regardless of the situation.*

Needing Acceptance And Approval From Others

I'm on the patch right now. Where it releases small dosages of approval until I no longer crave it, and then I'm gonna rip it off.

-Ellen DeGeneres

If you tell people your ambitions, they usually laugh at you. When I told my girlfriends when I was 12 that I was going to Hollywood, they all laughed. And here I am!

-Helen Reddy

If you really want to be happy, nobody can stop you.

-Sister Mary Tricky

When we seek the acceptance and approval of others for our happiness, we are effectively causing ourselves stress, suffering, and unhappiness. We all have an ever-changing collection of thoughts in our minds with entirely different life experiences that cause us to perceive life quite uniquely. It is simply impossible for everyone to see things in exactly the same way. Because of this, expecting others to accept and approve of us, and the things we do, we set ourselves up for disappointment and frustration.

Instead of putting our happiness in the control of others, we accept that only we know what is best for us, and use our viewpoints to guide us. By doing this, we no longer allow the opinions of others to cause us disappointment, frustration, and unhappiness. We have taken our happiness back into our own hands where it belongs. *Rejecting the need for acceptance and approval from others lets us decide what is in our best interest. This also allows us more peace and happiness while we experience life.*

Never Being Satisfied

I remember one day sitting at the pool and suddenly the tears were streaming down my cheeks. Why was I so unhappy? I had success. I had security. But it wasn't enough. I was exploding inside.

-Ingrid Bergman

Rejoice in the way things are. When you realize there is nothing lacking, the whole world belongs to you.

-Lao Tzu

If you want true Peace, Happiness and Joy, you need to realize that Happiness and Satisfaction comes from within you and stop searching so fanatically outside. You can never find Real Happiness out there. Whoever has?

-Robina Courtin

When we always want something different or something more, we place ourselves in a never-ending mental trap of suffering and unhappiness. This never ends because we are never able to satisfy ourselves for very long. In this trap our perceptions are distorted; enough is never enough, the grass is always greener somewhere else, whatever we have we do not want, but once it is gone we need it back, and so on. It is about how we are perceiving the things we want and not the things themselves.

This outlook places us on a never-ending hunt for new things, different things, or more things because we falsely believe they can satisfy us or make us happy. This is the path to disappointment, suffering, and unhappiness. There is nothing outside ourselves that is capable of satisfying us or making us happy. Once we realize this, we can avoid this mental trap, and stop chasing after things that can never satisfy us.

The only way we can ever satisfy ourselves or be happy is to change how we look at things. By seeing things differently, we can enjoy the things we already possess and allow ourselves to be satisfied. This is always possible and solely up to us. *Our satisfaction can only come from within us and never from anything outside of us. Understanding that allows us to be happy regardless of what we have or do not have.*

Requiring The Fulfillment Of Our Desires

Expect nothing, live frugally on surprise.

-Alice Malsenior Walker

Find ecstasy in life; the mere sense of living is joy enough.

-Emily Dickinson

They who overcome their desires once can overcome them always.

-Pierre Corneille

There is nothing wrong with having desires. Desires are, actually, quite useful in guiding our life direction and experience. However, if we require our desires to be *fulfilled* in order to be happy, this is an entirely different story. In this scenario, when we cannot *fulfill* our desires, we can cause ourselves serious stress, suffering, and unhappiness in the form of disappointment, frustration, and even depression.

Our requirement to have our desires *fulfilled* is where we cause our own suffering. This has absolutely nothing to do with our desires themselves. We can eliminate this by accepting that we may, or may not *fulfill* our desires. This acceptance does not mean we stop working towards fulfilling our desires. We simply pursue our desires without being concerned about fulfilling them or not. We should also remember that all of life is temporary, and if we cannot fulfill our desires immediately, there can be many other opportunities to fulfill them.

By accepting that our desires may, or may not, be fulfilled. We can avoid the stress, suffering and unhappiness of requiring them to be fulfilled. We can also allow ourselves to be happy regardless of the outcome.

PART 2



There are no coincidences,
Life unfolds as it should.

Everything serves a purpose
and understanding is not necessary.

Accept this completely,
and happiness will find you.

-Michael Robert Lawrence

Part 2: Accepting Viewpoints That Allow More Happiness

A man is happy so long as he chooses to be happy and nothing can stop him.

-Alexander Solzenitsyn

So much of love her spirit had, she found an ever-flowing spring of happiness in everything.

-Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Happiness is an inside job.

-William Arthur Ward

This section presents examples of viewpoints, in no particular order of importance that allow us to experience more happiness and peace. These and similar viewpoints create the peaceful space we require to notice the internal dynamics of our minds. They also do not produce the thick blanket of useless thinking that can prevent happiness.

By accepting these types of viewpoints, we allow more happiness and peace into our lives. Remember, there are limitless valid viewpoints on almost anything. Everything in this section is just a point of view, a way of perceiving things. We are always free to accept or reject any viewpoint. The example viewpoints in the following chapters are simply a means for us to learn and nothing more.

Everything is Always Temporary

Learn to hold loosely all that is not eternal.

-Agnes Maude Royden

life is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it, without knowing what's going to happen next.

-Gilda Radner

Remember that there is nothing stable in human affairs; therefore avoid undue elation in prosperity, or undue depression in adversity.

-Socrates

All of Life (Things As They Are) is temporary in nature. Life is always changing, everything comes and goes, and never lining up in exactly the same way again. When we accept that everything is temporary and nothing is permanent, we can avoid overly attaching ourselves to things. By not overly attaching ourselves to things, we can avoid experiencing any loss and unhappiness when things do change.

When we stop expecting things to stay the same, we can reduce the stress of trying to keep everything in place. We experience more peace and happiness as we are not causing all the suffering and unhappiness that goes with struggling against life's changes. When we find ourselves in situations or circumstances that we do not like, we do not fret or worry much as we know things are always changing.

On the other hand, when we find ourselves in situations or circumstances that we do like, we accept that they change as well. With this acceptance our disappointments, if they occur, are small and short-lived. *Accepting that everything is always temporary allows us to be peaceful and happy as life inevitably changes.*

Always Adapt to Life (Things As They Are)

Nature is just enough; but men and women must comprehend and accept her suggestions.

-Antoinette Brown Blackwell

They must often change, who would be constant in happiness or wisdom.

-Confucius

Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change.

-Stephen Hawking

All of Life (Things As They Are) is in a constant state of change, regardless of whether we want it to or not. Since it is impossible for us to prevent life from changing, any attempt to do so is just struggling against life. Struggling against life can cause us to suffer, experience unhappiness, and makes us weaker. Instead of wasting our energy and causing our own unhappiness, we can adapt to life. By adapting to our ever-changing lives, we follow the path of least resistance that allows us to experience more peace and happiness, and make us stronger.

Life always provides us with opportunities and direction if we are willing to adapt and maneuver with it. Accepting that we should adapt to what life offers us establishes a relationship of cooperation between life and ourselves. With this relationship, life becomes quite supportive and no longer an obstacle for us.

When we adapt to life, we can avoid producing the stressful useless thinking that occurs when we struggle against life's constant changes. *This adapting relationship can allow us to be happy and at peace while life changes.*

Assumptions Are Not The Truth

We live in a fantasy world, a world of illusion. The great task in life is to find reality.

-Iris Murdoch

If we all worked on the assumption that what is accepted as true is really true, there would be little hope of advance.

-Orville Wright

Imagination and fiction make up more than three-quarters of our real life.

-Simone Weil

We make assumptions concerning many things on a regular basis. When we understand that these assumptions are not the absolute truth, we can avoid the trouble they can cause us. Assumptions can become troublesome for us when we believe them to be completely accurate and truthful. When we believe our assumptions to be the only truth, we can either react to them strongly or vigorously defend them. We should realize that assumptions are a fiction we create in our minds. Because everyone has a unique set of thoughts and experiences, we all perceive reality differently. This changes reality from what it is to our flavor of reality, and not reality itself.

When we react negatively from our assumptions, we can cause ourselves stress, suffering, and unhappiness. Acting on our assumptions as if they were the only truth often generates conflicts with others. We generate this conflict because our fictional assumptions are rarely in line with the fictional assumptions of others.

This is a major reason people fight and cause so much suffering for each other. We do this without ever realizing that we are fighting over a figment of our imagination. Until we have all the facts, we should accept that our assumptions and the assumptions of others cannot be entirely accurate and truthful. This reduces conflict, stress, suffering, and unhappiness for ourselves and others. When we accept that assumptions are just a fiction we create in our minds, we avoid taking them too seriously, and allow ourselves more peace and happiness.

Success and Failure Are Just Viewpoints

There are no mistakes, no coincidences. All events are blessings given to us to learn from.

-Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.

-Shakespeare

life is but a thought.

-Sara Teasdale

When we view something as a success, we can allow ourselves to be happy. When we view something as a failure, we can cause ourselves to be unhappy. When we view something as neither a success nor a failure, just an outcome or result, we can allow ourselves to be peaceful and relatively unaffected by it. We should understand that when we label anything that happens as either a success or failure, it has nothing to do with the actual event.

All outcomes and results are neutral until our minds label them otherwise and create our own viewpoint. We can always select a viewpoint that serves us at any time. Success and failure are simply how we view outcomes and results. *By remaining impartial and viewing events as only outcomes or results, we remove the useless thoughts that can cause us disappointment, stress, and unhappiness. Recognizing this frees us to look at anything differently until we find and select a viewpoint that can allow us to be happy.*

Can't Force Positive Thinking Or Stop Negative Thinking

I don't think of all the misery, but of all the beauty that still remains.

-Anne Frank

No one else can do it for you. Take the power to make your life happy.

-Susan Polis Schutz

I believe in the old Cherokee injunction to 'be of a good mind.' Today it's called positive thinking.

-Wilma Mankiller

We cannot control the thoughts in our minds. When we attempt to force ourselves to think positively or stop thinking negatively, we can cause ourselves serious frustration, stress, suffering and unhappiness. Fortunately this is unnecessary because we can control the attention we give to thoughts. Our attention can control the thoughts we *experience*. Instead of riding the train to unhappiness by attempting to control the thoughts in our minds, we use our attention to control the thoughts we *experience*.

We can avoid *experiencing* thoughts by depriving them of our attention. So rather than attempting to force positive thinking, we focus our full attention on only positive, happy thoughts. On the flip side, instead of trying to stop negative thinking, we pay no attention to negative, unhappy thoughts. *Accepting that we cannot force positive thinking or stop negative thinking frees us from frustration, stress, suffering and unhappiness that we can cause ourselves by trying to control the thoughts in our minds. This also allows us to be more peaceful while we use our attention to select happy thoughts for our experience. (See '[Understanding Thoughts](#)' Chapter for more detailed information)*

Be Comfortable Not Knowing and Live Without Concrete Expectations

He that knew all that learning ever writ, Knew only this - that he knew nothing yet.

-Aphra Behn

Nothing exists except atoms and empty space; everything else is opinion.

-Democritus

Wherever fate demands me... I will go.

-Gertudis Gomez de Avellaneda

Life (Things As They Are) is always changing and we cannot control it. Because we cannot control life, we also cannot accurately predict it. Therefore, if we are uncomfortable not knowing what life will offer us or living without concrete expectations, we can cause ourselves stress, suffering, and unhappiness.

We should recognize that worrying about the unknown is a merry-go-round that may never end because there will always be things that we do not know. When we have concrete expectations, we can set ourselves up for disappointment because it is impossible for us to predict accurately what life will offer us. Instead of needing to know and having concrete expectations, we simply have possible ideas of what may or may not occur. This allows us the freedom to be surprised without any significant disappointments and keeps us in touch with the natural flow of life, and makes us stronger. This accepting outlook on life also reduces the useless thinking that can accompany worrying about the unknown and struggling against life. *Being comfortable not knowing and living without concrete expectations can allow more peace and happiness into our lives.*

Take Action And Forget About It

I'm a woman of very few words, but lots of action

-Mae West

I never worry about action, but only inaction.

-Winston Churchill

Flow with whatever may happen and let your mind be free. Stay centered by accepting whatever you are doing. This is the ultimate.

-Zhuangzi

Life requires us to take action at various times, and once we do, we cannot take it back. When we worry about our past actions, we can cause ourselves to suffer and be unhappy without changing anything. Not only can we cause our own suffering, this suffering can prevent us from being happy and enjoying life.

Second-guessing our actions can be even more troublesome than just worrying. Second-guessing can cause us to fester on imaginary scenarios for long periods and clog our minds with even deeper, more drawn out useless thinking than simply worrying. We should recognize that there are many ways of doing things. These different ways can create many more scenarios for us to second-guess. Our second-guessing is a mental trap that may not end, unless we put a stop to it.

It is in our best interest to accept that once action is taken, it cannot be changed. This can free our mind for something enjoyable or productive and can allow us to be more peaceful and happy. We should also understand that without second-guessing we can still take additional action or different actions in the future. *Taking action and forgetting about it can reduce our stress, suffering and unhappiness, while allowing more peace and happiness into our lives.*

Never Be Discouraged

Whatever color you are, wherever you come from, anything and everything is possible. And I'm living proof.

-George Lopez

While they were saying among themselves it cannot be done, it was done.

-Helen Keller

It always seems impossible until it's done.

-Nelson Mandela

Things should never be discouraging for us. When we are unable to achieve something, it may just be that it was not possible at that time. Life (Things As They Are) moves the way it needs to, and it may not line up in a way that allows us to succeed every time. *This is not a reflection on us*, as we cannot completely control life. This being the case, discouragement can cause us needless frustration, stress, suffering and unhappiness.

All things in life are temporary in nature. There will always be other times when life lines up differently that can allow us to achieve our goals. Furthermore, not achieving our goals can open doors to new opportunities. These new opportunities may be even more beneficial to us than our original goal. Be aware that all situations have advantages if we look at them more closely. It is quite possible that what we are labeling a failure can turn out to be the best thing for us, a hidden success waiting for us to discover.

We can also avoid useless thinking caused by discouragement by remembering a few things: We cannot completely control life or force a particular outcome. *All outcomes have advantages and can create beneficial opportunities that would not have been possible otherwise. By relating to our actions in this way, we can allow ourselves to be more peaceful and happy, regardless of how things turn out.*

Our Best Is Good Enough

When you're ready to quit, you're closer than you think.

-Bob Parsons

Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.

-Harriet Tubman

You have to have confidence in your ability, and then be tough enough to follow through.

-Rosalynn Carter

When we give 100% of what we have to offer, our best is always good enough. We should understand that no matter what we are doing, giving it our all is all we can do. This is the case whether or not we achieve what we set out to accomplish. It is essential for us to accept that we can only do what is possible, given our circumstances at any given time.

What we can or cannot do changes all the time depending on many factors. Some of these factors are the state of our health, our environment or situation, our time constraints, or the rules we may have to follow. Therefore, even our best efforts may not be enough for us to achieve the results we desire. *This is not a reflection on us.* Questioning our efforts, beating ourselves up for missing our goals, or working ourselves to the bone trying to accomplish the impossible, does not serve us. It can produce useless thinking that can cause stress, suffering and unhappiness for us, and does not change the results.

All we can do is use our maximum effort and accept that is all we can ever do. *Of course, this is not accepting defeat as we can continue to take action to reach our goals. Recognizing that our best is always good enough can allow us to be more peaceful and happy, regardless of the outcome.*

Life (Things As They Are) Has No Rules

Take the course opposite to custom and you will almost always do well.

-Jean Jacques Rousseau

If I'd observed all the rules, I'd never have got anywhere.

-Marilyn Monroe

Hell, there are no rules here - we're trying to accomplish something.

-Thomas A. Edison

Life (Things As They Are) imposes no rules for behavior or structure on us. It is the thoughts and viewpoints in our minds, and the minds of others, that impose strict rules and rigid structure on us. As we know, life is fluid and constantly changing, as are the thoughts in our minds and our viewpoints. When we try to live by a specific set of rules, or follow a particular structure, we can easily cause ourselves stress, suffering, and unhappiness.

The reasons for this are simple. When we impose strict rules and rigid structure on ourselves, we have little room to adapt and maneuver in an ever-changing life. Applying a strict set of rules or rigid structure upon ourselves is really an attempt to completely control life, which is not possible. By living this way we can set ourselves up for misery. Instead, it would be wise to allow ourselves the flexibility to adapt as nature does.

Of course, adapting to life allows us to move with it, instead of struggling against it, and can increase our chances of succeeding at anything we do. Understanding that our lives are flexible and not bound by any set of rules or structure can provide us with more peace of mind and allow us to experience more happiness.

Follow The Beat Of Our Own Drums

The wisest follow their own direction.

-Euripides

I prefer to be true to myself, even at the hazard of incurring the ridicule of others, rather than to be false, and to incur my own abhorrence.

-Frederick Douglass

You were once wild here. Don't let them tame you.

-Isadora Duncan

Everyone perceives Life (Things As They Are) differently and no one has the same life experiences. Because of this, no one fits into the same mold as anyone else. Clearly, only we can accurately know what is best for us, even though others believe they know better.

We should understand that advice from others is simply their unique viewpoint on life, created from their own unique set of thoughts and life experiences. Any advice they give us can never be as useful as our own viewpoint about ourselves. Assuming other people's advice for us is better than our own can cause us confusion, stress, suffering and unhappiness.

It would be wise for us to take any advice or suggestions that others give to us with a grain of salt and decide for ourselves what is best. *Realizing that, ultimately, only we know what is best for us. Following our own path in life can be a way to allow more peace and happiness into our lives.*

Section 5: Conclusion

Emancipate yourself from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our mind.

-Bob Marley

The greatest discovery you'll ever make, is the potential of your own mind.

-Jose Silva

I think liberation must come from within.

-Sandra Cisneros

This section pulls the entire teaching and method together. It shows us in detail how we can cause our own unhappiness and reminds us how we can avoid doing so. Also included are ways for us to verify that we understand the teachings and method.

About Experiencing Unhappiness

I have been very happy, very rich, very beautiful much adulated, very famous and very unhappy.

-Brigitte Bardot

A wounded deer leaps the highest.

-Emily Dickinson

Sadness is but a wall between two gardens.

-Kahlil Gibran

The poem on the next page is an example of what can happen when we have allowed our minds to be taken over by negative, toxic thoughts super fueled by uncontrolled emotions. Michael wrote this poem in the middle of experiencing deep trauma and extreme mental anguish. Life appeared horrific to him in every direction. He did not understand that he was choosing these viewpoints and could have chosen a peaceful, happy one from many other valid viewpoints relating to his situation. Michael was lost in suffering because he falsely believed that his viewpoints were the most valid and truthful. The severe mental pain that Michael was unknowing causing himself triggered several suicide attempts. He was in a terrible self-inflicted hell just trying to escape without knowing how.

After Michael pulled himself out of this mental trap of agony, he became self-aware. He realized how he released himself from the severe stress, suffering, and unhappiness he was experiencing and understood how to prevent it from happening. Michael's new self-awareness made it possible for him to understand our mind's internal dynamics. He realized, he could have just as easily allowed himself to peaceful and happy instead of choosing to intensely suffer.

Whatever we are going through, no matter what it is, we CAN overcome it by regaining conscious control of our minds. The teachings and method in this book can set us free from the pain, suffering and unhappiness we cause ourselves. If Michael can become self-aware and happy, anyone can, our minds all operate in the same way. *Happiness is NOT an unattainable dream; it is our reality when we choose to be happy. Lasting Happiness has always been within us, just waiting for us to embrace it.*



When a heart is broken
The mighty are a mere token

Once the will is gone
The heart is ending just like a song

A life filled with heartfelt bliss
All that is remembered is all that was missed.

With one gaze in the eyes
A heart screams and cries

A body so tired begins to drop
As a heart slowly begins to stop

A heart knows when it's paid life's fees
It's time for a soul to be set free

-Michael Robert Lawrence

Why We Are Not Happy

The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.

John Milton

Your life is the fruit of your own doing. You have no one to blame but yourself.

-Joseph Campbell

The greatest griefs are those we cause ourselves.

-Sophocles

Reasons For Our Unhappiness

Why are we not happy? There are a number of reasons, and we are in control of all of them. This all becomes obvious as we explore unhappiness further.

Unhappiness And The Outside World

The Outside World is in a constant state of flux, always changing, never remaining exactly the same. When we become overly attached to things in The Outside World for our happiness, we can cause our stress, suffering, and unhappiness when they go away. Of course, nothing outside ourselves can cause us to be unhappy. It is only our unhappy interpretation that causes us to be unhappy. (See '[False Belief: The Outside World Is The Source Of Our Happiness](#)' Chapter and '[False Belief: The Outside World Is The Source Of Our Unhappiness](#)' Chapter)

***Solution:** We understand that things in The Outside World change, and avoid becoming overly attached to them. We also understand that we are free to interpret anything that happens in a happy way instead of an unhappy way.*

Unhappiness And Acceptance

Life does what it needs to do and we cannot control it. When we do not accept Life (Things As They Are) unconditionally, and attempt to control it, we can cause ourselves stress, suffering and unhappiness. (See '[Understanding Acceptance](#)' Chapter)

***Solution:** We unconditionally accept whatever life is offering us, regardless of whether we like it or not. We give up trying to completely control Life (Things As They Are). We instead cooperate with life by basing our decisions and actions on the way things are, not the way we wish things should be. By relating to life in this way, we allow ourselves to experience more peace and lasting happiness.*

Unhappiness And Thoughts

All of us have an entirely different set of thoughts moving through our minds, and these thoughts are not us. No two people have the same set of thoughts which are vast and constantly changing. As we know, thoughts cannot be controlled and virtually any thought may appear. When we believe the thoughts in our minds are us, we may react to most of them. By reacting to most of them, we can cause ourselves to experience stress, suffering and unhappiness. Furthermore, when we try to achieve the impossible in controlling these thoughts, we can cause ourselves frustration, disappointment and even more unhappiness. (See '[Understanding Thoughts](#)' Chapter)

***Solution:** We understand that the thoughts in our minds are NOT us. We accept that the thoughts in our minds cannot be controlled. We use our attention to experience only the thoughts that serve our happiness, and avoid giving our attention to thoughts that do not serve our happiness.*

Unhappiness and Emotions

Our emotions can intensify thoughts to provide us with a richer life experience. Emotions have no capacity to evaluate, assess or judge thoughts. They can just as well intensify an unhappy, unproductive, useless thought as they would a happy, productive, useful thought. When an emotion intensifies a thought, we can be tricked into believing that thought is vitally important and react to it. Automatically believing our emotions can cause us confusion, stress, suffering, and unhappiness. (See '[Understanding Emotions](#)' Chapter)

***Solution:** We accept that our emotions can intensify thoughts artificially and cannot evaluate thoughts. We can avoid automatically believing our emotions by relating to them as “False Alarms” until we can evaluate the thoughts they are intensifying. This way we are free to direct our emotions to serve our lasting happiness.*

Unhappiness and Viewpoints

Our viewpoints are the way we perceive Life (Things As They Are). They are a unique collection of thoughts and influenced by our different life experiences. We create viewpoints through the almost limitless ways we can look at anything, which makes them simply opinions. This being the case, they are all just as valid as any other is. Believing only one viewpoint is the most valid and truthful can cause us stress, suffering, unhappiness, and increases conflict with others. (See '[Understanding Viewpoints](#)' Chapter)

***Solution:** We accept that there are limitless valid viewpoints on almost anything. We remain unattached to any particular viewpoint and look at things differently until we find and select a viewpoint that serves our lasting happiness.*

Unhappiness: Our Standard Mode of Operation

Almost every person on the planet unknowingly behaves in most of the ways that virtually guarantees their unhappiness. Let us look at how we have overwhelmingly stacked the deck against ourselves:

- We become overly attached to things in The Outside World, which **CAUSES** unhappiness.
- We interpret things in The Outside World in an unhappy way, which **CAUSES** unhappiness.
- We are not unconditionally accepting Life (Things As They Are), which **CAUSES** unhappiness.
- We try to control Life (Things As They Are), which **CAUSES** unhappiness
- We believe the thoughts in our minds are us, which **CAUSES** unhappiness.
- We react to most of the thoughts in our minds, which **CAUSES** unhappiness.
- We try to control the thoughts in our minds, which **CAUSES** unhappiness
- We automatically believe our emotions, which **CAUSES** unhappiness.
- We believe only one viewpoint is the most valid and truthful, which **CAUSES** unhappiness **AND** conflict with others.

Conclusion

The normal way we relate to The Outside World, Life (Things As They Are), and ourselves almost assures us of being unhappy. It is clearly impossible for us to experience lasting happiness behaving in this manner. We must change how we normally operate if we are to experience the lasting happiness we all desire.

We Are All The Same

Do not think you will necessarily be aware of your own enlightenment.

-Dogen

Enlightenment must come little by little-otherwise it would overwhelm.

-Idries Shah

If you don't understand yourself you don't understand anybody else.

-Nikki Giovanni

There is no such thing as an enlightened master. There are just people who are more aware of how our minds actually operate on the deepest level. We are all the same, no one has anything over anyone else, and there is nothing to master. We all have the same potential, the same capabilities, and our minds operate in the same manner. There are only levels of self-awareness. *Self-awareness is just noticing the internal dynamics of our minds and realizing how to relate ourselves in order to be in conscious control. With this conscious control, we can allow lasting happiness into our lives.*

People have this idea that Enlightenment and realization is something in a distance –
a very fantastic and magnificent happening
which will transform everything once and for always.

But it's not like that at all.

It's something which is so simple you hardly see it.
Its right in front of us, so close we don't notice it.
And it's something which can happen at any moment.

And the moment we see it, there it is.

It's been there all the time, but we've had our inner eye closed.

-Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo

Noticing The Changes

Things do not change; we change.

-Henry David Thoreau

A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions.

-Oliver Wendell Holmes

You need not aspire for or get any new state. Get rid of your present thoughts, that is all.

-Ramana Maharshi

Without any expectation, we can casually notice the changes within ourselves as we progress with the teachings and method. Our Inside World begins to shift and change in many beneficial ways. Some of the things we begin to notice are the ways we respond differently to situations we previously found unpleasant or stressful. For example:

- We remain more calm and stable regardless of what is going on around us.
- Things that had deeply upset us no longer upset us as much or for as long.
- Becoming angry, frustrated, stressed, sad, and depressed is more difficult, and when we do, we do not remain so as long.

We have more pleasant experiences. For example:

- We enjoy more peace for longer periods even though things around us have remained relatively unchanged.
- We experience bouts of happiness for no apparent reason.
- We laugh and smile more often.
- We experience a much deeper joy than ever before.
- Our experiences are more enjoyable in general.

Our attitude changes. For example:

- We become less reactive and impulsive towards everything.
- Things that we thought we could not live without become less important.
- We are more appreciative and grateful for things in our lives.
- We are less interested in the past and less concerned about the future.
- We have become present
- Mundane tasks have become more fulfilling for no apparent reason.

Our Inside World starts to shift in a positive manner as we relate to ourselves differently.

The Outside World begins to appear differently in many ways. Our senses change. For example:

- Food becomes tastier and more satisfying to us.
- Music sounds crisper and we appreciate it more.
- Colors become more vibrant.
- The warmth of the sun feels comforting like never before.
- Water feels more soothing and refreshing

We see much more detail in the same old things, and notice new things that we had completely missed. For example:

- We notice the landscapes are now overflowing with beauty.
- We notice natural sounds that we usually tune out, such as birds and other wildlife.
- We notice subtle shifts in the wind.
- We notice the intricate design of architecture.
- We notice how the rain splashes and beads down our windows.

This is just the beginning of how differently we experience The Outside World.

The more we understand the teachings and apply the method, the more we notice these changes. These changes occur, in large part, due to a reduction in useless thinking. This reduction in useless thinking quiets the mind and allows us to experience more peace and lasting happiness. There is no need for concern with how quickly we experience these changes. Being concerned about this could very well generate useless thinking that can cause us stress, suffering, and unhappiness. *The fastest way to experience these wonderful changes is by just having fun using the teachings and method.*

Happiness Comes From Within Us

Happiness is not a possession to be prized, it is a quality of thought, a state of mind.

-Daphne Du Maurier

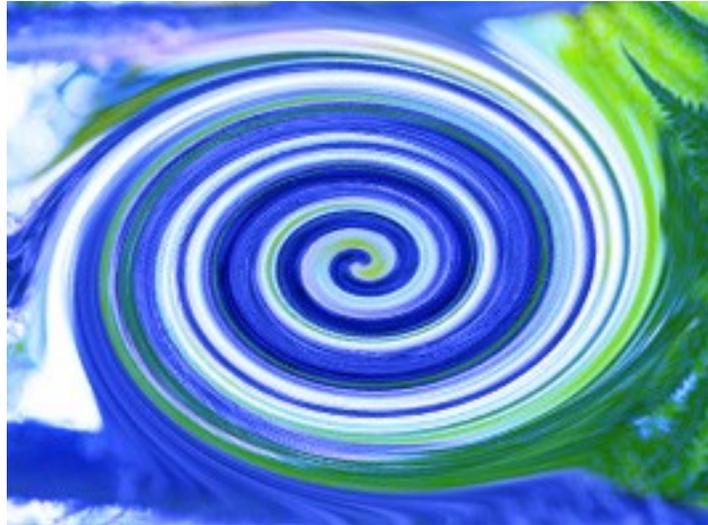
Life is moments going by, but if you don't grab them, they're gone. For a long time, the only moments that were available were bad ones. So now I make sure to grab the good ones.

-George Lopez

I finally figured out the only reason to be alive is to enjoy it.

-Rita Mae Brown

Our happiness or unhappiness comes from within us and not anything outside ourselves. Happiness is always within us; there is no reason to seek it. The key to being happy lies in the ways in which we relate to Life (Things As They Are), the thoughts in our minds, our emotions and viewpoints (Our Inside World), and The Outside World. We can choose to relate to them in ways that either serve our happiness or cause our unhappiness. *With this new understanding, we can live the happy peaceful life we never thought possible. The time for happiness is now!*



Awakened, he will
Laugh to think what troublous dreams he had.
And wonder how his happy state of being
He could forget, and not perceive that all
Those pains and sorrows were the effect of sleep
And guile and vain illusion.

So this world
Seems lasting, though 'tis but the sleepers' dream;
Who, when the appointed Day shall dawn, escapes
From dark imaginings that haunted him,
And turns with laughter on his phantom griefs
When he beholds his everlasting home.

-Rumi

About The Authors

All serious daring starts from within.

-Joan Baez

We become happier, much happier, when we realize that life is an opportunity rather than an obligation.

-Mary Augustine

Be happy for this moment. This moment is your life.

-Omar Khayyam

Lilia Nani Ho'alahahi

Lilia is from a small island nation in the southwest Pacific, and currently residing in sunny California. Practicing qigong meditation and holistic wellness for many years has allowed Lilia to share her experience of living in harmony with oneself and with others. Lilia is also a writer, poet and artist, always enjoying herself with a number of projects. Her love of theatre and dance including Hawai'ian hula and chant have taken her around the world - mainland US, Hawai'i, West Indies, Phillipines, Hong Kong and Micronesia.

Michael Robert Lawrence

Michael is a counselor, speaker, and writer living in the Green Mountains of Vermont. A series of deeply traumatic experiences realigned his perceptions, freed him from thought and emotion, and he regained conscious control inside his mind. Michael has spent several years using this conscious control to notice, understand and experiment with the deepest layers of the mind. Before writing this book, Michael developed a new mind therapy based on 30 years of experience and a modified blend of Clinical Hypnotherapy, Meditation, Super Learning and Brain Wave Entrainment.

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