

Preview: A two-week journey to happiness

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*Loving memory of my brother,
Shashikant, whose wisdom on how to
live life continues to inspire me. I am
grateful to use his thoughts within these
pages.*

*A heartfelt thank you to my grandsons,
Cameron and Sasha, whose boundless
joy transports me back to the wonder of
my childhood.*

PREVIEW: A TWO-WEEK JOURNEY TO HAPPINESS

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Why this book?

“For years, I believed that reading motivational books and seeking wisdom from spiritual guides would provide the answers I needed to acquire ever-present happiness. But the more I read and listened, the more I realized something was missing. What I truly needed was not abstract advice or broad philosophical discussions—I needed a manual, a practical, step-by-step guide to happiness. I needed something tangible that I could follow, something that would help me navigate through my everyday struggles and emotions.”

Jagat Shah, Author

A Two-Week Journey to Happiness is a practical guide for anyone seeking lasting happiness without years of struggle or complex philosophical teachings. With a straightforward approach and real-world wisdom, this book offers a guaranteed path to greater happiness, clarity, and inner peace—one that is accessible to everyone, starting today.

If you investigate a child’s heart, you will naturally see a flow of peace, joy, and happiness. A child is free from judgment, ego, and opinions, allowing them to

experience each moment with pure happiness. In contrast, if we observe our own hearts, we may find them buried under layers of emotional clutter—memories of pain, worries, and unnecessary thoughts collected over time. This buildup acts like a blockage, preventing peace and joy from flowing freely.

Yet, beneath all of this, a beautiful river of peace and joy is constantly flowing, eager to spread through every cell of our body, filling us with vibrancy and happiness. However, until we clear the obstructions, this river remains trapped.

Is there scientific proof of this inner river? Perhaps not, but every enlightened soul throughout history has experienced it.

The book cover represents this hidden river—serene, joyful, and full of life—waiting for an opening to flow freely. In this two-week journey to happiness, we will create that opening, allowing the river to emerge and marking the beginning of lasting happiness.

Acknowledgements

The purpose of this book is simple: to offer meaningful guidance in a clear, accessible way—without sounding preachy. My goal was not to write a “good” or “perfect” book, but a *useful* one—something that could open a door to happiness in the reader’s life.

I also hope this book becomes one you’ll keep on your shelf and return to from time to time—a gentle reminder to come back to the simple daily habits that nourish happiness. Even a quick reread of a chapter or two can reignite the spark when life feels heavy.

This book was shaped by many influences and inspirations:

1. **Family Inspiration:**

Some of the ideas shared here were inspired by the beautiful essays written by my late brother, which were gifted to me and remain close to my heart.

I’ve also drawn from the heartfelt letters my father wrote to me, filled with timeless wisdom and love. Their words continue to guide me, and I am deeply grateful for their presence in my life.

2. **Books and Mentors:**

Over the years, I have read more than a hundred books on happiness, joy, and personal growth. I’ve also listened to countless talks by great motivators and thinkers. Many of their messages transformed my life. While I may not quote them directly, their

influence can be felt in the spirit of these pages. This book is, in a way, a tribute to all those voices that lit a spark in me.

3. Editing and Technology Support:

I began jotting down ideas for this book several years ago and started actively composing it in March 2024. To ensure clarity and readability, I sought support from professional editors. I also used tools like Microsoft Word with its AI-based Copilot feature, which helped catch grammar and spelling errors, and suggested clearer ways to express my thoughts. Additionally, I used ChatGPT to help simplify certain dense paragraphs, suggesting simpler language without diluting the main message. These tools were helpful assistants—but the thoughts, structure, and emotions in this book are entirely my own.

1: Happiness habits

“Make each day the best day of your life”

“There is only one person who can be the richest in the world but each of us can be the happiest and joyful person in world”

In summer 2003, my life took a turn for the better. I took my ten-year-old son Neil to Boy Scout camp for four days. The campsite was hot, the sun was strong, and there was no wind. The area was swarming with large mosquitoes, and every kid was covered in bites. I was also miserable, and my life situation was far from ideal.

I was going through a difficult and uncertain phase. My wife was undergoing aggressive cancer treatment. My mother, who was staying with us in Maryland USA, was in poor health and uninsured because she wasn't an American citizen. I had to take her to the doctor every week. My nine-year-old son and twelve-year-old daughter knew their mom was sick but didn't grasp the seriousness of her condition. Moreover, the software company I found had just launched a new product, and we were unsure if customers would find the product valuable and buy it. Over fifty software engineers had worked hard and were eager to see success, but I knew that if our product didn't generate enough revenue, I might have to lay them off. The working hours were demanding. In short,

I felt trapped in the middle of a tornado. I had to be strong because everyone depended on me, and if I lost my composure, it would be disastrous. I had no choice but to remain calm and do my best. I also had to stay hopeful and keep the situation light for my family and employees.

But then, something amazing happened at camp. The scoutmaster, a fantastic leader with a great sense of humor, managed to turn even the hottest, most mosquito-filled days into a fun adventure. Despite the heat and bugs, the kids were having a blast, and I found myself enjoying the camp almost despite my troubles.

That evening, over five hundred scouts joined in a flag ceremony. During the ceremony, the scoutmaster announced that everyone was going to have the dinner of their lives. Everyone was excited. The dinner consisted of macaroni and cheese, salad, and a small piece of pastry, but after a long, hard day, it seemed like the best dinner ever. Everyone had dinner and some fun activities that night.

The second day was even harder than the first. In the evening, the scoutmaster announced that we were going to have the best dinner of our lives, and today's dinner would be better than yesterday's. Everyone was excited, and although the dinner was almost the same, we all thought it was better than the previous day.

For the next three days, the scoutmaster made the same announcement each evening, creating extra

expectation and excitement. The dinner was almost the same, but everyone looked forward to it.

This Boy Scout camp changed my outlook on life. Every day, I woke up and sincerely told myself that today is the best day of my life. Indeed, every day became the best day of my life. Surprisingly, my approach to different life situations changed. My internal attitude was to make today the best day of my life. Suddenly, daily rejections didn't feel like rejections. I didn't want to spoil a single moment, so my relationships with my wife, kids, and friends greatly improved and became fun. I could now enjoy friends with totally different opinions and values compared to mine. Small arguments resulted in "Sorry" and "I love you" rather than escalating into larger conflicts. Instead of using energy in arguments and fights, I diverted that energy to make each day the best day of my life. I could handle waiting in queues, rejection, insults, changes in plans, bad weather, and travel hindrances. As a result, I became a better person, husband, father, son, and friend. Professionally, I became a better coworker, team player, and often a cheerleader for my employees. I could handle business failures easily. Instead of blaming someone, we end up learning from failures and often accept the judgment of fate, recognizing that some things in life and business are beyond our control.

For the next two decades, I carried this attitude with me, and for the most part, I was successful. Of course, I have my own flaws and limitations. There were times when I lost my way—feeling upset, sad, or

irritable. Like any ordinary person, I experienced emotions such as worry, selfishness, ego, and jealousy. These feelings could have disrupted my commitment to making each day the best one yet. However, with reflection or during meditation, I would realign myself within a few hours, ensuring that I returned to my promise of embracing each day fully.

Making each day my best day required conscious effort. It often meant saying sorry, forgiving others, and letting go of someone else's bad attitude. These were difficult things to do at first, but with time, they became second nature. My ego no longer stood in the way. I learned to laugh at myself and share jokes about my own flaws with others. In fact, I encourage people to joke about me, and I laugh along with them. At the same time, I try to ensure that my words and humor never hurt anyone. And if I ever do offend someone, I take immediate action to apologize and make amends.

Let me paint a brief picture of who I was before. Like many, I spent much of my teenage years and early adulthood chasing my identity and happiness but often found disappointment, leading to greater unhappiness. I tried to hide my unhappiness by filling my time with friends, watching movies, avoiding school, and making false promises to myself. I promised myself I'd change tomorrow, only to find tomorrow was just a repeat of today. It was like trying to run on a treadmill that only went backwards. It was exhausting.

I justified my actions to myself, resulting in a misaligned priority system and outcomes that were far from my expectations. This created more worry, fear, and a sense of inferiority, which compounded my unhappiness. I blamed my upbringing, bad luck, and external circumstances rather than acknowledging my role in my condition. This inferiority complex, coupled with low self-esteem, fueled negativity, anger, and worry, isolating me further. I barely passed my first year of college, escaping reality and dwelling on negative thoughts.

I lacked the time, courage, confidence, or positivity to transform myself. I needed a simple solution to happiness, feeling as though my ship was sinking. I was angry—at the world and at myself. But since I had no one to express my frustrations to, I directed them at my mother, often lashing out at her.

I felt trapped in a cycle of self-hatred, and even my other family members seemed to keep their distance from me. I became easily offended over the smallest things. In simple terms, I was deeply unhappy.

Then, something changed—perhaps it was a miracle (as described in habit-1 Laughter). Suddenly, I started laughing at my flaws and myself. Next two weeks somehow, I laughed like a crazy man. As a result, I unexpectedly embarked on a journey to happiness. I kept on laughing and smiling every day. Within six months, I became a happier person with fewer worries, made many friends, and gained confidence. My academic performance improved, my relationships

with my family enhanced, and life became enjoyable. The only first happiness habit “Laughter” transform my life to happiness.

This is the story about me. There is nothing great about it, but this story has a happy ending for me. There is a complete transformation from my former unhappy self to my current happy self, even though the world situation has remained unchanged. This simple story motivated me to write this book to help people achieve short-term and long-lasting happiness. It is very easy and natural because being happy is our basic nature.

Happiness is not a destination; it is a journey. It is a daily commitment to choose joy, embrace growth, and nurture the practices that make life fulfilling. I invite you to join me on this journey and discover the simple, transformative power of these practices for yourself

Type of Happiness

Let’s define happiness for the purposes of this book. Happiness can be categorized into two types: short-term and long-term.

Short-term happiness is about fully living in the present moment—essentially, enjoying life as it happens. It’s about soaking up the present moment like the bliss of sinking into your couch after a long day with your favorite snack, preferably something that doesn’t come with a side of guilt!

Long-term happiness is a deeper sense of well-being that comes from a combination of satisfaction and peace of mind. This state of contentment can be achieved through various life successes, such as a fulfilling career, good health, supportive family, and financial stability.

Happiness Math formula

One of my friends defined long-term happiness as a meaningful but simple mathematical formula which makes a lot of sense.

$$\text{Happiness} = \text{Achievement} \div \text{Expectations}.$$

(Happiness is achievement divided expectation).

This formula suggests that happiness is a result of the ratio between what you achieve and what you expect. Here's a breakdown of the key components:

1. **Achievement:** This refers to the accomplishments, successes, and positive outcomes you experience in life. It can include personal goals, professional milestones, relationships, and any other areas where you feel you have made progress or attained something valuable.
2. **Expectations:** These are the standards or desires you have for yourself and your life. Expectations can be related to various aspects such as career, relationships, health, and personal growth. They represent what you hope to achieve or experience.

The formula suggests you can boost happiness by achieving more or lowering expectations. Lower expectations lead to greater overall happiness. Conversely, if your expectations are high and your achievements do not meet them, your happiness will be lower.

In theory, if you had no expectations at all, you could experience infinite happiness. Truly enlightened individuals, those who have let go of nearly all expectations—often find boundless joy. However, for most of us, expectations are a natural part of our life. They create hope for progress, which is important. The key is not to eliminate expectations entirely but to reduce them significantly. By shifting our mindset to fully accept our current life conditions—while lowering expectations and embracing uncertainty, we can cultivate lasting happiness.

In contrast, some people, despite their success, wealth, and power, remain deeply unhappy. Their high expectations prevent them from finding contentment, as they constantly seek more and struggle to accept life as it is.

Happiness and Attitude

Also, many of us struggle with unhappiness because our attitude toward the present moment is flawed. We are either caught up in regrets about the past or anxieties about the future, failing to embrace now. Changing this attitude is essential for lasting happiness, but it requires a deep and often challenging transformation. Transformation is not something that

happens overnight—it demands self-awareness, years of conscious practice, and a genuine willingness to rewire deeply ingrained thought patterns.

Personal shortcomings could still lead to unhappiness if things didn't go as planned. We pressure ourselves to achieve more, seeking success, money, better health, and improved relationships. This pursuit of happiness is not new; humanity has been seeking it for thousands of years, and every religion has its own teachings on happiness and peace. True happiness often comes from following common-sense attitudes, though common sense is not always common. Many people's unhappiness stems from minor disappointments rather than intolerable life situations. They let small events—like traffic jams or minor rejections—ruin their days, weeks, or even months.

A Search for Happiness Manual

For thousands of years, countless books have been written about happiness, joy, and inner peace. Almost all of them emphasize the need to change one's attitude as the key to long-term happiness. Over the years, I have read countless self-help books, attended motivational seminars, and sought wisdom from spiritual leaders. I have met people from all walks of life, some who radiated happiness effortlessly and others who were consumed by misery. I have also gone through my own cycles of happiness and unhappiness,

sometimes feeling on top of the world and at other times drowning in despair.

Many of these books have provided me with valuable insights, and I highly recommend reading them as a source of inspiration. However, I discovered a fundamental challenge with most of them: they often suggest that to be happy, you must undergo a complete transformation into a “new” version of yourself. While this idea sounds appealing in theory, in practice, it feels nearly impossible.

For instance, many books advise against worrying. They say, “*Let go of worry, and you will be free.*” I tried. I really did. But telling myself not to worry was like telling a fish not to swim. Worry seemed to be embedded in my nature, possibly even written into my DNA. Changing such a deep-seated habit isn’t as simple as flipping a switch; it takes years of effort, and even then, it might not completely disappear.

Similarly, some well-known motivational speakers and spiritual leaders have told me to let go of expectations if I want to be happy. But how could I? I am human, and expectations are a natural part of my existence. Expecting love, success, appreciation, or meaning in life isn’t something I can just discard. I wanted to be happy precisely because, deep inside, I was unhappy.

For years, I believed that reading motivational books and seeking wisdom from spiritual guides would provide the answers I needed. But the more I read and listened, the more I realized something was missing.

What I truly needed was not abstract advice or broad philosophical discussions—I needed a *manual*, a practical, step-by-step guide to happiness. I needed something tangible that I could follow, something that would help me navigate through my everyday struggles and emotions.

That realization led me to explore happiness in a different way—one that doesn't demand an impossible transformation but instead provides practical tools to shift my mindset, even in small ways, each day.

As I seek happiness in the present moment. I need practical advice for dealing with my current situation without sacrificing long-term happiness. This book offers six practical habits to achieve short-term happiness without requiring a fundamental change in yourself. You don't need to spend years removing your flaws and transforming yourself. I tried to make a happiness guide. This is not a new miraculous formula but a common-sense approach to happiness. It has transformed my life, and I am confident it will enhance your happiness from day one. While it won't change your life situation, you will see that these practices make you happier and lighter, and this journey towards happiness will be rewarding.

Happiness is a fundamental need for all human beings and even for all living beings. It is perhaps our natural state, so why do so many people struggle with happiness? This question inspired me to write this book, "A Two-week Journey to Happiness," as a

testament to the power of simple, common-sense practices. Happiness does not require you to transform into a completely different version of yourself. Instead, it emerges from small, consistent actions that can reframe your perspective and create joy in your life.

My goal is to share daily practices that have the potential to generate happiness in your life. These are not abstract ideas but practical steps that I have incorporated into my own routine. I have witnessed the profound impact of these habits firsthand. The "unhappy me" had transformed into the "happy me." My external circumstances had not changed in this transformation; it was still the same life, the same challenges. Yet, something within me had shifted and my life improved remarkably. This book organizes these timeless practices into a daily routine, providing a straightforward path to happiness and the impact of a positive mindset. By sharing my experiences, I hope to inspire others to find strength in their struggles and embrace each day as the best day of their lives.

I have often shared my personal stories and experiences in this book—not to boast about my life, but to provide context for the ideas I discuss. I am just an ordinary person, and my experiences are not particularly remarkable. You don't need to focus on my personal journey to achieve the larger goal of happiness, and in fact, my intention is not to make this book about me. Instead, my stories serve to illustrate key concepts in a way that feels real and relatable.

I include my experiences for three main reasons:

1. **To set the context** – When discussing happiness, emotions, and personal growth, it's important to explain why these topics matter to me and how they have shaped my thinking. Without context, abstract ideas can feel disconnected from real life. By sharing my experiences, I aim to provide a foundation for the discussions that follow.
2. **To ensure authenticity** – I could have used stories of other people but interpreting someone else's experiences would always be from my perspective. There's something powerful about speaking from direct experience. When I describe my own journey, I can express my emotions more accurately and share my genuine thoughts without filtering them through secondhand accounts. This way, I can be honest and true to my feelings.
3. **To create a personal guide for myself** – This book isn't just for readers; it's also for me. Writing this book is a personal exercise in self-reflection and a way to reinforce my own commitment to happiness. I don't know what challenges or situations I will face in the future, but I want this book to serve as a guide—a reminder of the principles I believe in and the mindset I want to maintain. By documenting my thoughts and experiences, I am creating a resource I can return to whenever I need direction or reassurance.

Ultimately, my goal is not to tell you how to live your life but to share what has worked for me in the hope that it sparks something meaningful for you. Whether or not my experiences resonate with you, I encourage you to find your own path to happiness and create your own stories along the way.

Am I suggesting something miraculous? Not at all. The practices I follow are rooted in principles that have been known and taught for thousands of years. What I have done in this book is to organize these timeless practices into a structured, easy-to-follow daily routine. I believe you will find these practices to be an accessible and effective path to happiness. They will show you the transformative impact of a positive mindset and a commitment to daily action.

Research shows that nearly three out of four people will experience a significant negative cycle at some point in their lives. These cycles often stem from repeated challenges, emotional setbacks, or difficult life circumstances that, over time, accumulate and weigh heavily on one's mental and emotional well-being. What begins as a temporary struggle can quietly evolve into a pattern—one that shapes a person's thoughts, behaviors, and outlook on life.

It's not uncommon for individuals to find themselves feeling stuck or overwhelmed, unsure of how they ended up in a place of sustained stress or dissatisfaction. For many, this experience is personal. For others, it's something they witness in a close friend, partner, or family member. These patterns don't

always announce themselves loudly, but their impact can be profound and lasting.

At various stages of life, we all face moments that leave a mark—whether it's loss, failure, disappointment, or a gradual erosion of joy. Left unaddressed, these experiences can lead to a persistent state of unhappiness, disconnection, or even quiet resignation. Understanding that these cycles are common is the first step toward breaking them. With awareness, support, and intentional action, it is possible to shift the pattern—and rediscover clarity, resilience, and joy.

Just like many of you, I have experienced this kind of condition multiple times in my life. These moments can feel overwhelming, as though there is no way out. But I have also learned that happiness is not something elusive or unattainable. It is something we can actively cultivate, even in the face of adversity.

The intention of this book is to provide you with simple action items and practical suggestions to help turn your life around and move toward happiness more quickly. It is not about perfection or avoiding negative experiences altogether; it is about building the resilience and habits that enable you to navigate those challenges and reclaim your joy.

The first six habits outlined in this book: Laughter, Meditation, Acceptance, Reflection, Going the extra mile and Exercise—are critical for addressing your mind and inner self. These habits are foundational because they have both immediate and

long-term impacts on your happiness. From this point I will refer to the set of these six habits as the happiness habits. The more you practice these habits, the more you become an integral part of who you are. Eventually, these habits won't just be things you do—they will become part of your identity.

The Six Happiness Habits:

Habit-1 Laughter: Laughter is a natural antidote to stress and negativity. It releases endorphins, reduces stress hormones, and fosters a sense of connection with others. Making time to laugh, even in difficult situations, can shift your perspective and bring light into the darkest moments.

Habit-2 Meditation: Meditation helps you develop mindfulness and inner peace. It allows you to observe your thoughts without judgment, creating space for clarity and calmness. Regular meditation can reduce anxiety, improve focus, and help you connect with your deeper self.

Habit-3 Acceptance: Acceptance does not mean giving up or resigning to fate. It means acknowledging the reality of your situation without resistance, so you can focus your energy on what you can control. This mindset frees you from unnecessary suffering and helps you move forward with grace.

Habit-4 Reflection: Taking time to reflect on your experiences helps you gain insights and learn from the past. It allows you to identify patterns,

understand your emotions, and make intentional changes to align with your goals and values.

Habit-5 Going the Extra Mile: Effort and generosity—whether toward yourself or others—can create a sense of purpose and fulfillment. When you go beyond what is expected, you strengthen your relationships, build confidence, and enhance your sense of achievement.

Habit-6 Exercise: Caring for your body is a vital aspect of nurturing happiness. Exercise isn't just a routine—it forms the foundation of physical health and overall well-being. True happiness emerges when the mind and body are in harmony. It's not merely the sum of the two; rather, happiness is the result of their synergy, multiplying their benefits. By integrating regular exercise and meditation into your daily life, every cell in your body radiates energy and vitality. You won't just experience moments of joy, you'll feel truly alive, consistently and effortlessly.

Happiness habits are not just tools; they are pathways to a deeper, more enduring happiness. The more you integrate them into your daily life, the more they will transform your mindset and your reality. With time and consistency, you will find that happiness is not something you chase; it is something you create, nurture, and embody.

Practicing happiness habits can transform your life. You are a unique soul in this universe. You will experience happiness uniquely on your journey. These

experiences will be unique to you, with no one else feeling the same in the universe.

You are embarking on a journey toward happiness, joy, and peace. However, there are two major obstacles that can derail your progress and dilute your achievements. In contrast, there is one powerful ingredient that can enhance your happiness, a catalyst that will sustain your joy throughout your life. I have dedicated a separate chapter to each obstacle and one chapter exclusively to this happiness catalyst.

Money – The Silent Happiness Killer

Money may not buy happiness, but financial instability can certainly make it difficult to achieve. If you struggle to meet your basic needs or provide for your family, the stress and anxiety surrounding finances can overshadow any personal growth or happiness habits you cultivate.

One of the biggest pitfalls people encounter is making poor financial decisions that lead to long-term trouble. Whether it's overspending, taking on unmanageable debt, or making risky investments, financial missteps can create a cycle of stress and despair. In a desperate attempt to resolve financial problems, people sometimes make even riskier choices, only to find themselves sinking deeper into trouble.

The reality is that we live in a society where money is essential for survival and comfort. No matter how strong your happiness habits are, severe financial stress can undermine them.

In this chapter, I will share insights on how to navigate financial challenges and avoid common mistakes that can derail your happiness. By developing financial literacy and making informed choices, you can create a stable foundation that supports—not hinders—your pursuit of happiness.

Depression – The Hidden Battle

Depression is not just a temporary feeling of sadness—it is a real and serious illness that requires attention and treatment. While positive habits can help alleviate some symptoms, they are **not** a cure for clinical depression. Just as you wouldn't ignore a physical illness like diabetes or heart disease, mental health struggles require proper care and intervention.

One of the biggest mistakes people make is blaming themselves for their depression. It is **not** a sign of weakness or personal failure. Depression is a medical condition. The good news is that depression is treatable. Modern mental healthcare offers numerous tools and approaches.

In this chapter, I share my own struggle with depression. Despite practicing happiness-enhancing habits for years, I have experienced multiple episodes

of major depression in the last forty years. During those dark times, these happiness habits helped me immensely, but they were not enough on their own. Seeking professional help was the turning point in my journey.

Happiness habits can **complement** treatment but should never replace it. The key is to recognize when professional help is needed and to seek it without hesitation. In this chapter, I will discuss practical steps to managing depression, breaking the stigma around mental health, and integrating happiness habits in a way that supports your overall well-being.

One Powerful Catalyst: Faith

Faith has been extensively studied by researchers from renowned universities, and the findings are clear—there is an overwhelming correlation between faith and increased happiness. While faith, religion, and belief in a higher power are deeply personal choices, those who embrace faith often experience a profound and lasting sense of joy and contentment.

When combined with happiness habits, faith becomes a **powerful catalyst** that makes it incredibly difficult to be derailed from your journey toward happiness. It creates an inner source of peace and resilience, generating an abundance of joy that not only uplifts you but also radiates outward, positively impacting those around you.

However, faith does not have to be tied to a specific religion. If you are like me and do not have a strong affiliation with any religious tradition, faith can take another form—the belief in the **mystery of the universe**, the balance that governs existence, or the idea of a greater force at play. Even without religious ties, contemplating the vastness and harmony of the universe can instill a sense of wonder, gratitude, and deep connection to something beyond us. This, too, is a form of faith—one that can anchor you in moments of doubt and bring immense peace.

I truly hope that the happiness habits shared in this book will help you cultivate long-term joy. The beauty of these habits is that they are simple to practice—because happiness itself is simple. By embracing these habits and allowing faith (in any form) to be your catalyst, you will not only create happiness within yourself but also spread joy to those around you.

2: Laugh (Habit-1)

“Laugh with your friends and family. Laugh when you're alone. Laugh for no reason at all. Laugh even when you're sad. Laugh like a madman—because laughter is the most contagious disease of all, spreading joy and happiness within you and wherever it goes”

I once had a friend, who I'll refer to as Tony, though that's not his real name. Tony and I started our business around the same time. While I experienced a fair amount of success, Tony's success was extraordinary. In just a few years, he built a multi-million-dollar company with an impressive customer base. On paper, he had achieved the American Dream. But Tony's life wasn't as glamorous as his financial statements suggested. By the time he was 45 he had many health issues, including a heart attack

Instead of relishing his achievements, Tony became increasingly consumed by his own ambition. It was as if every success led to a new dissatisfaction. He was constantly frustrated—angry at his employees for not meeting his standards, upset with government policies that he believed stifled business, and perpetually agitated by life in general. He rarely smiled, and laughter seemed foreign to him. Despite his remarkable financial success, Tony was deeply

unhappy. His relationships, both personal and professional, deteriorated as he became more engrossed in his work. The joy that success should have brought him seemed to slip further and further away, leaving a void that no amount of money or accolades could fill.

In stark contrast, there's Pandit, a childhood friend of mine from primary school in India. While I ventured abroad for my studies, Pandit remained in our village and eventually became a bus driver. On a visit back to India after 35 years, I reconnected with Pandit, who had just retired. Despite his modest retirement income of \$300 a month, Pandit was one of the happiest people I had ever met. He lived in a small, one-room apartment, with just enough to meet his basic needs. When I offered to help him financially, he declined with a smile, insisting he had everything he needed. Out of the \$300 he receives every month; he gives \$100 to support his elderly mother and donates \$50 to the local temple. He jokingly admitted he had trouble figuring out how to spend the remaining \$150 on himself. His laughter was frequent and genuine, a reflection of his contentment with life.

Spending time with Pandit, I saw that his joy wasn't tied to material wealth or success, as many of us are conditioned to believe. He embodied simplicity, generosity, and gratitude. Despite having so little by conventional standards, Pandit had an abundance of what Tony lacked—happiness. Over the days we spent together, I realized that true happiness has little to do

with external success and everything to do with internal peace and perspective.

Those few days with Pandit were some of the best investments of my life. I didn't leave with any new business insights or strategies, but I did leave with a renewed understanding of what it means to be truly happy. Pandit's laughter wasn't just a sound; it was a philosophy, a way of approaching life that brought him peace and fulfillment. His joy was contagious, and for those few days, I caught it too.

Reflecting on Tony and Pandit's lives, it's clear that wealth and success don't guarantee happiness. Tony had everything most people dream of—money, power, prestige—but he was imprisoned by his own mind. Pandit, on the other hand, had very little, yet lived with the kind of lightness and laughter most of us spend our lives chasing.

Personal Transformation

I often think about my own journey in this context. At 17, I was deeply unhappy—angry, insecure, and socially isolated. Life felt heavy and burdensome. I had no friends. I had trouble with my family. My family wanted to help me, but I was not able to receive any help. Something was missing in life. I spent all my time watching TV, going to the market, sitting outside the college campus. My brother insisted and registered me to one week motivation camp at Mount Abu in India. I was very nervous and worried. I was with a group of college classmates, most of whom I didn't know. We were asked to introduce ourselves, and to break the ice,

I made light of my flaws. To my surprise, everyone laughed—not at me, but with me. That laughter was like a key that unlocked something inside me. Over the next 10 days, I laughed more than I had in years. I became the joker of the group, and in return, I found connection and belonging.

When I returned from that trip, I was a different person. Laughter had transformed me from someone who felt out of place into someone who felt deeply connected to those around him. I realized then that laughter wasn't just a social tool, it was a personal one, too. It changed how I saw myself and my place in the world.

Choosing Laughter Every Day

Over the years, I've come to see laughter as one of the most powerful habits anyone can cultivate. You don't need a radical transformation or years of therapy to unlock its benefits. You can start today, even during difficult times. Laughter doesn't erase the hardships of life, but it helps us approach them with resilience and grace. When you laugh, your brain chemistry shifts. Endorphins—the body's natural feel-good chemicals—are released, creating a momentary pause in your stress and worries. If you can laugh 40 times a day, even when life isn't going your way, you're already ahead of the game.

Laughter is common sense, but as the saying goes, common sense is often uncommon. Our egos and daily preoccupations make it seem difficult to laugh freely. We take ourselves far too seriously. But think

about children, they laugh over 200 times a day. As we grow older, we lose this natural ability to find joy in the simple moments.

If you look closely, humor is all around us, even in mundane situations. I've had days when my schedule was packed with meetings, but only one or two people smiled, and almost no one laughed. It's strange, isn't it? We get so caught up in the "seriousness" of life that we forget to enjoy it. But laughter is the antidote. It's more contagious than any virus and spreads joy wherever it goes. It creates a protective shield around our minds, guarding us against negativity, frustration, and anger.

A Healing Force

Laughter doesn't just have a place in happy moments; it can bring comfort in times of grief. In 1996, my brother-in-law passed away suddenly in a car accident. It was a heart-wrenching loss for the family. We were devastated and overcome with sadness. But as we gathered to share memories, something unexpected happened. We began to recall the funny things he used to say and do. Soon, we were laughing through our tears. In that moment, laughter became a bridge between our grief and the healing process. It didn't erase our pain, but it brought a sense of peace and lightness during overwhelming sorrow.

The truth is laughter doesn't change who you are, it changes how you experience life. You can choose to laugh more every day, and in just 15 days, you'll notice a shift. It slowly becomes a habit, an effortless

part of who you are. As the Dalai Lama once said, he's a "professional laughter." Despite the immense challenges he's faced, he continues to laugh and spread joy.

Start today. Laugh when you're alone. Laugh with friends. Laugh at your mistakes. Laugh for no reason at all. The world is in dire need of more laughter, and by cultivating this habit, you're not only transforming your own life but also making the world a lighter, more joyful place.

Benefits of Laughter

Laughter is a universal language, transcending cultural and linguistic barriers. Its infectious nature can lighten moods and forge connections between people. But beyond its social implications, laughter serves as a powerful tool for enhancing happiness and overall well-being. Let's explore the psychological, physiological, and social benefits of laughter, elucidating how it contributes to increased happiness.

The Psychological Impact of Laughter

Laughter triggers a range of psychological responses that promote happiness. When we laugh, our brains release endorphins, often referred to as "feel-good" hormones. These neurochemicals are responsible for creating feelings of pleasure and reducing stress. A study published in the journal *Psychological Science* found that individuals who were engaged in laughter reported lower levels of stress and higher levels of overall life satisfaction.

Moreover, laughter acts as a natural antidote to negative emotions. It can diffuse tension and provide a temporary escape from the challenges of daily life. When people laugh, they often shift their perspective on stressors, finding humor in situations that may otherwise feel overwhelming. This cognitive reframing helps to cultivate resilience, enabling individuals to cope with adversity more effectively.

Physiological Benefits of Laughter

The physical effects of laughter are equally compelling. When we laugh, several physiological changes occur in our bodies. First, laughter stimulates the cardiovascular system. It increases heart rate and promotes blood circulation, which can lead to a healthy cardiovascular system. According to a study conducted by researchers at the University of Maryland, laughter can improve blood vessel function, enhancing circulation and reducing the risk of heart disease.

Additionally, laughter serves as a natural pain reliever. The release of endorphins during laughter can lead to decreased pain perception, making it easier to cope with physical discomfort. This phenomenon is particularly significant for individuals dealing with chronic pain, as laughter can serve as an effective complementary treatment.

Furthermore, laughter strengthens the immune system. Research has shown that laughter can boost the production of antibodies and activate immune cells, improving our ability to fend off illness. A robust immune system contributes to overall well-being,

allowing individuals to experience life more fully and joyfully.

Social Connections Through Laughter

The following quotes demonstrate the significant role of laughter in social connections.

“Laughter is the shortest distance between two people.” – Victor Borge

"Trust is built in the space where laughter lives—each shared smile and burst of joy deepens our bond, making our connections unbreakable."- Unknown

Laughter is inherently social, fostering connections and enhancing relationships. When we share a laugh, we create bonds with others, reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness. Laughter serves as a social signal, communicating safety and openness in social interactions. This aspect of laughter is vital, as social connections are key contributors to happiness.

Shared laughter can also improve teamwork and collaboration. In professional settings, laughter can ease tensions, facilitate communication, and enhance creativity. A light-hearted atmosphere encourages risk-taking and innovation, which can lead to greater job satisfaction and fulfillment. Research from the University of Oxford found that teams who laugh together not only perform better but also report higher levels of job satisfaction.

Moreover, laughter can act as a social lubricant. In unfamiliar situations, laughter can break the ice and

ease anxieties. It fosters a sense of belonging, allowing individuals to feel more comfortable and accepted in social environments. This sense of community is crucial for mental health and happiness.

Laughter and Mental Health

The connection between laughter and mental health cannot be overstated. Individuals who engage in laughter regularly report lower levels of anxiety and depression. This is partly because laughter promotes a positive mindset, making it easier to focus on the brighter side of life. It encourages a sense of hope and optimism, essential components of mental well-being.

Furthermore, laughter therapy has gained traction as a therapeutic approach in clinical settings. Laughter yoga, for example, combines laughter exercises with yogic breathing, leading to both psychological and physical benefits. Participants often report feeling more relaxed, happier, and more connected to others after engaging in laughter therapy sessions.

Laughter as a Daily Practice

Incorporating laughter into daily life can significantly enhance happiness. This can be achieved through various means, such as watching comedies, sharing jokes with friends, or even participating in laughter yoga. Making a conscious effort to seek out humor can create a ripple effect, influencing both individual happiness and the happiness of those around us.

It's essential to recognize the moments in life where laughter can emerge organically. Everyday situations, whether humorous or absurd, can provide opportunities for laughter. Developing an attitude that embraces the lighter side of life can foster resilience, enabling individuals to navigate challenges with grace and humor.

How I Integrated Laughter into My Life

I started practicing conscious laughter about 40 years ago, and within just 15 days, it changed my life. Back then, I was an average teenager, unsure of myself, often feeling disconnected from the world. I used to think, "*Why me?*" Then I realized, "*Why not me?*" Today, I laugh 30 to 40 times a day without much effort, and it has become me. I find humor in everyday life, make jokes about myself, and even welcome others to do the same—sometimes at my own expense!

How do I laugh at least 30 times each day?

- **5 Laughs:** I laugh with my wife and family for no reason at all. They may get annoyed, but that's not my problem!
- **5 Laughs:** I watch comedy shows and laugh out loud—sometimes louder than necessary!
- **5 Laughs:** I call a friend just to chat and always find a way to make us both laugh.
- **5 Laughs:** Playing with my grandkids guarantees laughter, they always come up with something funny!

- **5 Laughs:** I answer spam or cold calls just to tell the caller a joke instead of listening to them. I also try to strike up funny conversations with strangers.
- **10 Laughs:** Whether it's pickleball, tennis, hanging out with friends and coworkers, we always end up laughing about something.
- **5 Laughs:** My wife has banned me from singing or dancing at home because I'm *that* bad. So, I take full advantage of the bathroom—cold showers, singing, dancing, and laughing all at once!

Also, I've learned to laugh at my mistakes and embarrassing moments. Once, during my very first corporate board meeting, I was wearing a khaki suit. In the middle of the meeting, I excused myself to use the restroom, and somehow, while distracted, I ended up wetting my pants completely. When I returned, it was clear what had happened. Unsure of how to rejoin the board meeting, I simply shared the mishap with everyone. What started as a serious annual board meeting soon transformed into an impromptu comedy club, with each board member recounting their own embarrassing experiences. In that moment, the usual seriousness faded away, replaced by hearty laughter and shared understanding. But it's not just about the funny moments—laughter has become my survival tool.

Through laughter, I've built strong friendships and a wonderful family. I've learned that sometimes

the best way to diffuse a tough situation is with a joke. For instance, my wife and I once had a heated argument over whose turn it was to do the dishes. That's when I realized—losing an argument with my wife is a big win for me, and the best part? She doesn't even realize it! You can use this same technique repeatedly hundreds of times and it works a charm

Now, whenever we argue, I make funny faces, make a joke out of it, pretend to cry, and try to give her a hug (which she always refuses at first). Then, I let her win the argument. The rest of the day? She treats me extra nicely. So, in the end, by losing to her, I always win!

I've also become much more comfortable admitting when I'm wrong. It's much easier to say, *"I told you so"* when you're right, but I've learned that being wrong is often more humorous. Now, when I'm wrong (which is more often than I'd like to admit), I say, *"Well, at least I'm consistent!"* That usually gets a smile, and we move on.

Even in challenging times, whether financial struggles, relationship issues, or periods of depression, laughter has given me the courage to carry on. It hasn't always been easy. Running a business for over 30 years, I've had my fair share of ups and downs. Once, during a particularly tough financial year, I joked with my team, *"Well, we're not broke... we're just pre-rich!"* They laughed, and it lifted the entire mood of the office. Humor was the glue that kept us together during the hard times.

All employees of my software company grew close because we didn't take ourselves too seriously. We'd have meetings that started with updates and ended with someone sharing a funny story or a ridiculous meme. We even had an unofficial "Joke of the Week" competition. One time, a colleague said, *"We may not have enough money for bonuses this year, but at least we've got plenty of free coffee!"* It sounds silly, but those small moments of humor helped us through the rough patches. Our customers, too, became like family. The joy we shared at work led to strong, lasting relationships with them. They forgave our missteps because they knew we were always trying to improve—and maybe because we made them laugh along the way.

Of course, life isn't all sunshine and rainbows. I've struggled with clinical depression for over 40 years, experiencing several intense episodes that lasted months at a time. During those dark periods, laughter didn't cure my depression, but it did give me moments of relief and hope. Sometimes, when everything felt heavy, I would watch a comedy special, and for a little while, I could escape into the joy of laughter. One of my favorites was George Carlin, who once said, *"Just when I discovered the meaning of life, they changed it."* That always made me laugh because it reminded me that life is unpredictable, and sometimes, the best thing we can do is laugh at the absurdity of it all.

Laughter helped me stay connected with friends and family during those difficult times. Even when I didn't feel like laughing, I would make the effort to share a joke or a funny story with someone close to me. I

learned that laughter is a way of saying, *"I'm still here, I'm still fighting."* It's a reminder that even when things are tough, there's still light to be found.

So, laughter didn't fix everything, but it helped me get through everything. In fact, my therapist once said, *"You're one of the funniest depressed people I've ever met."* I took that as a compliment—after all, if you can laugh during pain, you're already halfway to healing.

In a separate chapter, I'll discuss how to maintain the habit of laughter even during depression and dark times. With my experience, I hope to offer insights that might help you, too. But for now, remember: Laughter won't solve all your problems, but it sure makes them easier to bear. So, why not start today? After all, as Charlie Chaplin once said, *"A Day without laughter is a day wasted."*

Exercise for Laughter

Today: Experience your Laugh

Open the internet browser and search for the top ten best jokes in the language you prefer. You may have heard these jokes before but let yourself laugh at each one as if it's the first time. Go on, give yourself a chance to laugh! You don't need a huge reason or a brand-new joke to enjoy a good laugh. There are countless little moments each day that could bring a smile to your face, but too often we overlook them. So, take this as a reminder to savor these small, beautiful moments of laughter that are always around you.

Day 1: Start with a Smile

Begin your laughter journey by simply smiling. It's easy and can be done in an instant. Make a conscious decision to smile at everyone close to you, your kids, family, neighbors, and friends. Make eye contact and greet them with a smile when you see them. While this may not immediately change your situation, it's a great first step on the path to happiness.

Wear something colorful and look in the mirror with a smile on your face. Release all the tension in your facial muscles and notice how much more relaxed and uplifted you feel. Reflect on yesterday—how many times did you laugh? How many hours passed without a single laugh?

Day 2: Embrace the Change

Today, you'll focus on laughing more, naturally and freely. Even if you tend to be serious, or you worry about what others may think, it's time to break those habits. You might believe your life circumstances don't allow room for laughter, maybe you've been insulted, had a bad day, or are dealing with tough situations. While these are real and valid reasons, you can still laugh.

Commit yourself to loud hearty laughs fully five times today, spread these loud laughs throughout the day. Also watch our favorite comedy shows and laugh out loud at least five more times. Recall happy or funny moments from your life and allow yourself to laugh freely.

Day 3: Add More Laughter Reflect on how much you laughed on Day 2 and aim to laugh five more times today. Today, consider engaging in a "simulated laugh" exercise—laugh audibly even if it initially feels forced or unnatural. It may seem strange at first, but it's effective exercise. You can laugh while driving or in the bathroom, or when you're alone. Although people often feel laughing for no reason is unusual, it's a great way to release stress. Maintain a log, how many times you laughed today.

Days 4 to 15: Expand Your Laughter Network Call a friend you haven't spoken to in a while and find ways to laugh at least five times during the conversation. Add five more laughs compared to the previous day. Laugh at small, everyday moments, even

when alone. If you're having a day with less social interaction, set an hourly reminder. Every hour, check if you've laughed—if not, go to a private space and laugh.

Day 15: The Goal By this point, your goal is to laugh 30 to 40 times a day. It will take conscious effort but keep aiming for this goal.

Day 16 and Beyond: Make Laughter a Habit: Laughter should now become second nature, an effortless habit. Over time, you'll see its transformative effects. You'll experience better relationships, make new friends, gain respect, and create joy around you. Laughter is infectious and has the power to reduce stress, improve sleep, and help you handle life's challenges with grace.

- watching **roughly 3 hours of TV** and spending around **2 hours and 16 minutes on social media** daily.
- Data reveals that only **12.2% of American adults** are metabolically healthy.

One Final Request

If you can genuinely laugh for 20 to 30 days—even when things aren't going well—you're already creating happiness and joy from within. Every other habit in this book will naturally start to follow, often without you even realizing it. At that point, you may not need to read further or seek out any new spiritual teachings to feel happy. What you *do* need is to radiate that happiness—to yourself, and to everyone you come into contact with.

That said, most people will find value in reading and practicing the full book to discover a deeper and more lasting sense of joy.

If this sample touched you—even in a small way—please pass it along to a friend or loved one who might also benefit from it.

Because happiness isn't meant to be hoarded, it's meant to be shared. Every person you inspire creates a ripple effect of joy that reaches far beyond you. One laugh, one smile, one kind word can transform someone's entire day. This book is just the beginning; you are the real messenger of happiness. Let's build a world where joy is the norm, not the exception.

Even if you decide not to get the full book, if this preview touched you—even in a small way—please consider leaving a short review on my website:

www.jagatshah.com. Your words can inspire someone else to begin their own journey to happiness.

Thank you for reading. Thank you for caring. Most of all, thank you for choosing happiness—not just for yourself, but for others. Together, we can start a ripple of joy that reaches far beyond these pages.

About Author



Jagat Shah was born in India and later moved to the United States for higher studies. He earned a master's degree in computer science from Boston University and went on to become a successful entrepreneur in software engineering.

For a long time, Jagat wasn't sure if he was truly happy. He was making progress in life but felt something was missing. He often found himself controlled by his emotions, constantly reacting rather than living with a sense of joy. Determined to find lasting happiness, he delved into books on the subject, only to discover that many approaches required a lifelong transformation, something that felt overwhelming and impractical.

Instead, Jagat sought a simpler, more immediate path to happiness. He realized that people don't need complex philosophical theories; they need a practical guide to help them feel happy now, not in some distant future. Through his own journey, he identified six common-sense happiness habits—timeless practices that have been proven for thousands of years. These habits transformed his life, and now, through this book, he shares them with others.

This book isn't about abstract ideas; it's about real, actionable steps. And yes, Jagat confidently guarantees that these habits will help anyone searching for happiness—because they are rooted in wisdom that has stood the test of time.