

HAPPINESS IS A HABIT



DISCOVER HOW TO BE HAPPY
AND LIVE A BALANCED LIFE

EDWARD R. MUÑOZ

Happiness Is a Habit

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For permissions requests, contact:
Champion Development Enterprises, Inc.

Edward R. Muñoz
Phone: [1- 877-440-5299](tel:1-877-440-5299)
info@edwardmunoz.com

Happiness Is a Habit

By Edward Munoz

Happiness – everybody wants it. Some people just seem to be born with it, right? You know those folks I’m talking about who always seem to be in a good mood and are always smiling. Do they know something that others don’t?

You can go online and find an endless number of articles and other resources that talk about how to “find” happiness or how to “be” happy, right? Lots of formal research has even been done to try to pin down exactly what it means to be happy – research that breaks down the literal scientific state of “happy” individuals in terms of physiological factors, like hormones and other chemical balances; as well as environmental and cultural factors, like socioeconomic status and other social influences. Yada, Yada, Yada! I know that to some people this can sound boring, but let me tell you this, “happiness” is an important topic these days and likely always will be.

Frankly speaking, I think it’s cool that we live in a time where information like that can be studied, documented and easily shared among millions of people – folks like you and me. The fact that this kind of information is provided and sought out by so many people makes me optimistic. People want to be happy. Can you imagine what the world would be like if everyone was, in fact, happy? No one person can wave a magic wand and make that happen for everyone else, but can **you** achieve happiness for **yourself**? I think so. In fact, I know so and that’s why we’re here right now.

In this e-book we’re going to explore the idea of happiness – what it is and what it isn’t. We are also going to explore what **your** idea of happiness is and where it comes from, and how we can all shift our states of mind to promote a realistic, achievable concept of what it means to be truly happy in our day-to-day lives. Maybe it sounds simple – and maybe it is. But this is a multi-layered idea that deserves some time and consideration. So come on into this topic with me and we’ll start peeling away those layers, okay?

We’ll break down the definition of happiness and the effects and limitations our perceived definitions impose on our ability to be happy. We’ll look at the sources (or origins) of how we define what it means to be “happy” which can either create barriers or open doors to feeling satisfied and content in our lives on a daily basis. We’ll move on to ways to start **shifting** the focus in our lives into other directions that make true, meaningful happiness possible. You’re going to see that happiness, that blissful state

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Edward Muñoz
Keynote Speaker – Peak Performance Coach
info@edwardmunoz.com
www.UnleashYourChampion.com
877-440-5299

that we all desire, is not some random gift of chance, or the predestination of a lucky few.

In the following minutes, I am going to share with you why happiness is a habit. It's something that we all have the ability to develop.

Let's get into this, shall we? The title of this eBook is Happiness is a Habit. And in order to have a meaningful discussion on the topic of happiness, first we have to look at how we define happiness. All right then, to do that let's start out by identifying a couple of words that we can all agree would be pretty much universally acceptable to at least begin describing what happiness is.

How about the words "satisfaction" and "contentment." What do you think? To be happy, people need to feel content and satisfied in their lives. So if those words offer a meaning of happiness, the next question to ask is: "What do I need to feel satisfied and content?"

If I were to ask you that question, what would you say? If you were to ask a random person on the street what they feel *they* need to be satisfied and content, you'd be surprised by how similar many of their answers would be. People have a pretty consistent idea of what they think they need in order to be "happy" – satisfied and content in their lives. Why is that?

Well, think about it. People's ideas are generally shaped by three common sources or general influences: Their environment, life events and habits. Let's explore how each of those sources affect our individual ideas of what happiness is – of what it is we need to be satisfied and content.

Alright, we said the first one is our environment, right? When I say "environment," I'm talking about everything around you - people and things. This includes family and friends, the household, the schools you went to, and the neighborhood you grew up in. Those childhood influences are especially powerful because as children, we're most impressionable. The things that we are told - as well as those things that we *perceive* - make a strong imprint on us.

Environment includes your culture.

As you know, culture includes things like family traditions, religious or spiritual influences, what part of the world you live, things like socioeconomic status, gender, all

of that, right? Your belief systems. The way you prioritize things. Not only the specific place that you live, but the society in which you live, contribute to the cultural influence on you.

Think about what things in your life influence the way you think and do things. What about the things you spend time on? Many people would agree at least part of that answer would sound something like this, “Edward, I spend a lot of time on my phone or on my computer. My gaming system. “Whatever device, right. Most people spend part of their time, if not a majority of their time, on some kind of device with some kind of media.

Media. Ha-ha-ha, that’s a big one right?

In Western society, media is a pervasive, dominant - and almost universal way - which cultural messages are transmitted, influencing a lot of people. That is one of the reasons that many people have a similar picture in their minds of what happiness looks like, because they’re all being influenced or imprinted largely by the same information channels. In the society we live in, much of the media we engage in promotes the idea of material wealth as the marker for happiness. Think about the celebrities you hear about, television shows and other media that are popular right now and the messages that they send about life styles and material possessions.

So when people are asked what they would feel is necessary to be satisfied and content, their answer will usually include some version of the things that fall under categories that represent the pursuit of money and the things it can buy: cars and clothes, houses and other **stuff**, right? Material things. People think that happiness means getting what you want and so many of them equate the idea of happiness with material gain.



But material things are *external* and the satisfaction to be had from external factors will not last. Let me tell you what I mean.

You see, what happens is, you get that thing you want, right – the car, the girl, the house, whatever it is. And it’s fun for awhile and it feels great for a few days or a few months or maybe even a few years, but then you start to

say, okay, well I've got the car I wanted, or that real pretty girlfriend, or that nice watch, or whatever.

So, now what? You're sitting there with all this stuff but you're not happy. You're not content anymore; you're wondering what's next? And there's always a next, right? There's always something else. A flashier color or a newer model. You find yourself in this endless pursuit of *things*, and the satisfaction you get from them is short lived.

I'm not saying that it's not nice to have financial security and nice things, but here's an important thing to consider.

If you base your happiness on the things that you own, then the satisfaction you get from them will not last. It will be temporary. What you have will never be enough.

Are you with me so far? Good.

In his book "Do You," mega millionaire Russell Simmons tells how millionaire entrepreneur Damon Dash calls people like this "cake-a-holics," because they're addicted to making money and material wealth in the same way a drug addict is addicted to dope. Just like the junkie endlessly chasing the next big high, the cake-a-holic is stuck in his own futile pursuit of "happiness."



Simmons says that he also fell into that same trap at the beginning of his career. He was making the money, started buying all of those status trophies – cars, jewelry – all the things that money could buy. But after awhile he also started to notice that all those fancy toys were not bringing in the happiness he was expecting.

You're probably saying right about now, "Damn, give me all those toys and money and I'll figure out a way to be happy," but trust me, that isn't the case and it never will be. Simmons mentions in his book that he knows several millionaires and 13 billionaires that aren't happy. These so-called "successful" people possess mansions, yachts and jets, yet their medicine cabinets are filled with antidepressants. They're down because all their money is not making them happy; in fact, they feel just the opposite.

They keep searching for the next deal, not understanding that the feelings their material wealth might bring is as fleeting as the smoke floating out of a junkie's pipe. The reason

why they are unhappy is because they are endlessly chasing a carrot that forever remains just beyond their reach.



It's like the story about a boy who tried to get a stubborn donkey to pull his cart. He invented a really smart way to get the donkey to go forward. His solution was to tie a carrot to the end of a rope attached to a stick. The carrot would hang in front of the donkey. The carrot was positioned in the donkey's sight, but just beyond his reach. Every time the donkey would see the carrot swing within his reach, the faster he would go.

The carrot is just a metaphor for the things we want in life and the donkey, of course, represents us going after what we want in life. This is exactly how we act in life. We spend our lives chasing the carrot looking for happiness only to find out happiness is not there. So we take off again chasing the next carrot, only to find more of the same shaped in a different form. Look at it this way. I bet when you were a child in Middle School, you probably thought, "when I graduate Middle School, then I'll be happy. I know that in High School I will be very popular. Yep, that's when I'll be happy." When you arrived at High School and felt intimidated by all the seniors and great players on the team, then you thought, "Oh, this is definitely not it." I know when I become a senior that will be it. Those seniors are way too cool. "Then you became a senior and you thought, "Oh this is definitely not it. Now I have all this peer pressure to do all sorts of things, I'm just so confused. I really don't know what I'm gonna do with my life.

Then one day you thought, "Oh I know when I go to college that definitely will be it. I will get to be on my own, experience being totally independent and most of all; I'll be away from my parents. That will totally be it." But when your first week in college passes by, you realize, "Oh this is definitely not it." Now you have a lot of homework, long papers due and all this stress to keep up with all your new demands. You start to doubt if you really made the right decision.

Then you get a glimpse of hope with this new idea. I know! I'll get into a relationship. That'll definitely be it. So you get into a relationship and you're madly in love. Then, you start to notice all these other gorgeous people who were not around before and all of a

sudden they are now very much interested in you. Oh this is definitely not it. You find yourself asking if you really want to turn down all of these opportunities. I know, I'll just be single again. When you become single again, now you notice nobody's interested in you no more. You start asking, "What happened, where did I go wrong?" Oh this is definitely not it.

Then one day you come up with a great idea. I know I'll go get a job so I can make money to buy everything I want. That will definitely be it. Then, you go out and get the job only to find out that it wasn't all you thought it to be. You find yourself thinking, "Holy crap, what did I get myself into?" What! No summers off, only two weeks of vacation and worst of all I have to wait until I'm 65 to retire. Oh this is definitely not it. I know, I'll get married and settle down and have a family. Yes, that will definitely make me happy.

Then, you get married, and find you are arguing more than ever. Every topic becomes an argument you never win. Now you have to take out the garbage before going to bed, help wash the dishes and help fold the laundry before going to bed. Oh this is definitely not it. I know I'll buy a nice car, furniture and a new house. Yep, that for sure will make me happy. That's definitely it. Then you buy the house only to have all this constant influx of new bills and high interest payments. And you catch yourself thinking, "Oh this is definitely not it."

Oh! I know if I have a child then that will definitely be it. That will certainly, without a doubt bring me a lot of joy. Yep, this time I know 100% that is what I want. Then, you have your first-born and this baby changes your life forever. Your baby inspires you and gives you another reason to live. YOU'RE SUPER HAPPY! But your happiness doesn't last long. Pretty soon you find yourself waking up several times in the middle of the night to a crying baby. Then you have to change the diapers, buy new clothes, watch after him/her, invest in their future and you say, "Oh this is definitely not it."

Champion, people spend their whole lives in an attempt to get someplace they think will be it. Then they get bored once they arrive there, or find out it's not as big or amazing as they made it out to be. The mistake is they spend their whole lives trying to get somewhere other than where they are. And if you are somewhere other than where you are, then you don't get to be in your life. You become a character in a fiction story that you created about your life.

What I want you to get is that you first have to be happy with what you have **now**. Realize that happiness is where you are, not out there, somewhere. Learn to appreciate what you have and consciously make a choice to be grateful for what you have. Once you learn to appreciate what you have, then and only then should you attempt going after other things in life. The BIG DIFFERENCE now is that you're not chasing the carrot looking for happiness you're just chasing it because you know you deserve more.

Alright. The second thing that influences our idea of happiness is events. I'm talking about life-changing stuff, like getting married or having a baby. Things like getting a promotion or losing a job. Getting in an accident or experiencing a death in the family, that sort of thing. Think about how the nature of any given event, and the circumstances surrounding it, can significantly color your outlook on things.

Like material wealth, life events are external factors. The problem with life events is that you don't have control over them. Your ideal picture of happiness can be altered instantly when one of these big life-changing events happens.



For example, in 1994, I returned to New York after serving 4 years in the Marine Corps, thinking I had finally left the Persian Gulf War behind me, only to find myself entering into another war – poverty. With little money, I was forced to move back in my parents' home to live in the basement. I slept in a frigid room during the winter months, as cold air seeped through the plastic that attempted to block the draft

entering the windows. Cold showers were the norm, because of the overworked water heater. My salvation was a small electrical heater and a tried-and-true Marine Corps sleeping bag.

In the fall of the following year, I registered for Communication Arts classes at NY Institute of Technology. Going to college was a better option than hanging out in the streets and getting into trouble with my friends. However, I was broke and had to hop turnstiles instead of paying the subway fare just to go to school. To make ends meet, I took different jobs. I worked as a part-time customer service representative for a television radio repair company, which did not pay very well and left me starving.

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Edward Muñoz
Keynote Speaker – Peak Performance Coach
info@edwardmunoz.com
www.UnleashYourChampion.com
877-440-5299

Even though I was working, sometimes I could only afford to buy a banana, a plain hot dog or a quarter juice for lunch. So I became a taxi driver, and drove customers to some of the worst neighborhoods in Brooklyn, often putting my own life at risk. Still, I was determined to finish school, so I continued studying full-time while working full-time. My future looked bleak and I felt like a slave to my circumstances. I was often tired and sleepy. I was frustrated and embarrassed with what my life had become.

Just when I thought things could not get worse, they did. My engine blew and I needed it replaced, so I took it to the auto shop. While waiting for the repairs, I walked to the local hall to play pool. I had never been there, and the place had a reputation as being a drug spot. Knowing this, I still went. As luck would have it, within 15 minutes of playing pool, cops raided the place and everyone was handcuffed, including me. Fortunately, after a lengthy interrogation, they found the guy in question and I was released. I dashed out of the scene and never returned.



Several months later I took some of my hard-earned savings and I started an ice cream route. The business was promising, until I let a kid drive the truck and supervise the assistant. I drove by during busy hours to check on him, only to

witness him chasing young ladies instead of focusing on work. I resisted the urge to fire him and continued to give him second chances. That Summer I lost all my money and accumulated enormous debt, forcing me to sell my taxicab and pay back the person who rented the ice cream truck to me. My next mode of transportation was a “jalopy” – one of the cheapest, oldest taxi cars on the market — which often left me stranded with passengers in the middle of highways in undesirable locations.

Breakdown after breakdown, I became lazy, depressed and overwhelmed. I slept long hours and ate several times throughout the day, only to become a more negative person. I questioned my life and my past actions. I felt like a victim and hated my life.

This period of my life was very frustrating. I felt like I was spinning my wheels all the time, and never getting anywhere. I'm sure you can relate to my story. It seemed like the harder I tried, the more debt I accumulated. I tried to go five steps forward, and ended up going 10 steps back. I knew I had hit rock bottom when the money I had borrowed from my mother to start my ice cream business was lost. The trucks were still out there, but they simply were not producing.

I had no choice but to work an 80-hour week as a taxi driver. I practically slept in my car because I had to make enough just to survive and pay my four workers. My network marketing business also failed and my girlfriend even left me. To make matters worse, I had to sneak into the private house where I lived to avoid seeing the landlord because I did not have the rent I owed her. I fell so far behind; it became embarrassing just to go home. She lived on the first floor and I lived in the attic, so she usually caught me even though I tried to sneak quietly past her door.

After each disappointment or roadblock, I became more depressed and overwhelmed. I slept long hours and ate several times throughout the day as a way to escape my problems. I questioned my life and my past actions. I felt like a victim and hated my life.

When I got home from work I would lie on the floor and stare at the ceiling, wondering what had happened to my life. Here I was, broke, sad, and desperate. My desire to become a millionaire dissipated with all my problems. Rather than thinking about becoming successful, I became consumed by my problems.

I was so broke; I spent the summer without an air conditioner. You can imagine how hot it was in my 400-square-foot, 2-room attic apartment. Then, when winter arrived and things cooled off, I had to go to a thrift shop to buy a used coat because I couldn't afford a new one.

Months passed by and things only got worse. I felt stuck in my circumstances and problems, and began to feel there was no way out. Not caring about anything anymore, I didn't pay parking tickets. The consequence of ignoring the tickets was that my car was towed five times in a single year. When I went to see my father, he would say, "Are

you here to ask me for more money, because I don't have any more for you." To say that I was embarrassed is certainly an understatement.

To avoid all this shame from my family, friends, and peers I decided to avoid them by working, eating, and sleeping whenever I was home. Then, one night while working the night shift at my taxi base, I ran into a woman who was a well-known drug addict. Keep in mind my taxi base was in East New York right in the heart of Brooklyn—one of New York's highest crime neighborhoods—in the late 90s during the pre-Giuliani days. This lady would come around selling things she had stolen so she could buy more crack cocaine.



Anyway "Nicky" approached me to sell a used radio. I just gave her a look that said, "You know I don't buy stolen merchandise." She hung her head and said she just wanted to see if I could give her a few bucks because she was hungry.

Well, I didn't say a word. I just turned my pockets inside out and showed her I had no money at all. It was the first time in two years as a taxi driver that I did not have a penny to my name. That's how bad things were. Maybe you can relate.

Nicky couldn't believe her eyes. "You always have money!" she said. Then she calmed down a little and asked if I was hungry.

I didn't really want to answer, but before I even could, she pulled a handful of coins out of her pocket and passed them to me. "Have some dinner on me," she said. When I started to give it back, she wouldn't take it. "How many nights did I get a meal because of you, and now I want to pay back that favor," she said.

I couldn't believe what was happening. Here was a crack lady that had come to me for help, and I was the one who needed *her* assistance. Wow. It hit me like a ton of bricks. That's when I knew I had hit rock bottom and started to realize how bad things really were.

As you can hear from my personal story, if you base your happiness on the things that that happen to you, then you're leaving your chances for satisfaction and contentment completely up to whim and to chance. Your happiness will be fleeting, transient and insecure because you never know what's going to happen. Here's the thing, though. Maybe you can't change what happens to you, but you do have control over the way you **choose** to deal with what happens to you.

Hold on to that thought about choosing, ok, because we are going to come back to it.

So far we've looked at some of the ways environment and events affect our ideas of what happiness is, or should be. And those are both things that are constantly changing and are **external** – they are things that are outside of us.

Sometimes people resist the idea that happiness does not come from external things. They'll say, "But Edward, I have great children. They make me happy." Or, "My job is very fulfilling and it makes me happy." Those are external things right?

Yes, they are. Don't get it wrong. Those great children, that great job or whatever it is, are all **sources** of happiness, but they are not what "**make**" people happy.

Do you get the difference? It's not just a matter of words; it's in how you view things. Word choice can be a powerful lens through which to direct your focus and your energy.

If you think of something outside of yourself as "making" you happy, once again you're putting that responsibility for your happiness on someone or something else. But if you think of those things as sources of happiness, you can begin to put it in perspective. What is it about those kids or that job that make you feel good?

The answer is that these are things in our lives that give assurance of fulfilling our very basic human needs for purpose and acceptance.

So, things like your children or your job are still external elements – it's the feeling we get from those things that are internal and more within our control. Still, in so many ways our thinking is shaped by external things – factors that are not in our control. There's nothing wrong with it but the more important question to ask is who would you be if your ideas were not shaped or influenced by something?

The thing to consider here is the fact that your brain – your mind – has the capacity and the *power* to create incredible ideas from the information it's given. It's like there's an artist or an architect in who is in your brain taking direction from the messages it is getting from your influences – who is gathering specs, and who then hands you a picture – a blueprint – based on the information it has received from all of these sources, and says, "Here you go. Here's your blueprint. *This* is what happiness looks like."

And because it's a pretty good-looking picture – a nice, professional document, right – it doesn't occur to us to question it. We figure happiness means a certain thing, looks a certain way, and so it's easy to become frustrated when our lives don't match up to that perfect picture.

For instance, if your environment – your family, your friends, the music you listen to or the programs you watch – all tell you that material wealth is the key to happiness, then your incredible mind gets working, right? It tells you that, well, since you don't have all those things you think you should have, you're not happy. I've got this blueprint right here and your life doesn't look like this picture of happiness, so you must not be happy."

So we wonder what's wrong with ourselves and we don't question the blueprint.

But what if we *did* question that blueprint or the specs that led to creating it?

What if, we said, instead, "Okay, mental architect, that's a nice-looking picture of happiness that you've got there, but I gave you the wrong specifications. I'm going to need you to change a few things."

You have the power to do that. What do you think about that?

Your same incredible mind that came up with that flawed blueprint of happiness is flexible and intelligent and can come up with a new, realistic working blueprint of happiness that is much better suited and achievable.

So, the first thing to change, then, is the idea that happiness comes from getting or having things, or from other people, or from the things that happen to you. The reason I say that is because the exact opposite is true.

Happiness does *not* come from external things. It does not come from anything outside of yourself; it comes from within. You are responsible for your own happiness. Let me repeat that. **Champ** you are responsible for your own happiness.

You might be saying, how is that Edward? How can that be when all this bad stuff has happened to me?

You know who you are out there; you know what I'm talking about. Maybe you're going through a touchy divorce or you've lost your job and fallen on hard times. How can a person be happy when all of these crazy things are happening to them?

I'll say it again - happiness is not externally generated. In fact, just the opposite - it **is generated from within. It's internally generated.** It doesn't matter what things you have or what is happening to you - those external factors need not affect whether you are happy or not.

That's because **you** can take responsibility for your own happiness by **creating** it yourself. And you can instantly do this by realizing and practicing the following thought: happiness is a choice.

It's true, folks, so I'm going to say it again. Happiness is a choice. The option to be happy at any time in your life no matter what is going on, no matter what you have or don't have, is within your control because happiness is a choice.

Let me tell you my personal story about choosing happiness.

I live in New York at the time of this writing and my family and I were impacted terribly by Hurricane Sandy in October of 2012. I remember listening to the news and hearing the anchor report that Sandy was on its way to New York. The mayor requested that several towns be evacuated. My neighborhood was not on the list, even though we lived half a mile from the bay.

Ultimately, Sandy proved to be devastating to us. Our home was submerged in four feet of water. It was a huge setback: 80% of our personal belongings were lost.

In our backyard was a huge pile of mushy, wet junk that consisted of family photos, clothes, furniture – you name it. That pile of junk represented our life.

As I was looking at it, I experienced a surreal moment. When I looked at what used to be baby photos of my now teenaged daughters, and our son's baby clothes, literally covered in mold, that was depressing. I realized that there was no way to retrieve those things, and I could have felt anger and frustration, or I could choose to be happy. In that moment, I chose happiness.

Several contractors noticed my happy demeanor. One even said to me, "You must be happy because your insurance is going to buy you all new stuff." I said, "No, my insurance is only paying for part of it. We didn't have flood insurance. I'm happy because I'm happy." It was a decision that I made. I was happy because I chose to be happy.

Happy about what, Edward? Like I said, the insurance policy would only cover a small part of the damage and losses we sustained. Hurricane Sandy caused a serious financial burden – we lost a lot and it cost a lot! But instead of living in that lack mentality, thinking about the things we didn't have any more, I **chose** to be grateful for what we **did** have – the lives of myself and my loved ones, and the ability to move forward. That attitude of gratitude, versus having a lack mentality, gave me a genuine sense of happiness.

Turning your focus on what you **do** have versus what you don't, is a good starting point on cultivating an attitude of gratitude. Now I know it will be hard to choose an attitude of gratitude when everything is going downhill but it will be the only thing to bring you back uphill. Nobody said that life was going to be easy.

Life will always challenge you with circumstances and new problems on a daily basis. But it will always be up to you to choose how you will react to those circumstances. Let me share with you an idea that I also explore in my book, Rich Brother, Poor Brother. This simple but effective methodology will help you understand how we are wired when it comes to choosing.

Let me have you go through a short exercise. Draw two imaginary circles in your head and give one the title "Complainer Driven" and the other "Champion Driven."

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Edward Muñoz
Keynote Speaker – Peak Performance Coach
info@edwardmunoz.com
www.UnleashYourChampion.com
877-440-5299

What I want you to get is that every choice you've ever made in your life came from one of these two models. On one hand, we have the complainer, *who brings out the worst in us*, and then, on the other, we have the champion who brings out the best in us. Let me explain the difference between the two.

The complainer is the little negative voice in your head. He is called the complainer for a simple reason – he's always complaining. If we allow him to complain all the time he will start to affect your attitude. If not handled right away he will negatively impact your happiness, productivity and your desire to succeed in life.

You know it's the complainer talking when he says:

- Don't do that
- You are not good enough
- You know it won't work
- You'll never rise any higher
- You can't succeed
- You don't have what it takes
- You've reached your limit
- You know what happened the last time you tried it

But the good news is that we also have a champion in us and he is the positive voice that reminds us of how great we are. You know it's the champion talking when you hear him saying:

- If he/she can, so can I
- It's a done deal
- It's just a matter of time
- I know you can do it
- Let's do it now
- You are well able
- You are close to your breakthrough

As you can see, both the 'complainer' and the 'champion' exist within you. I bet you would like to know where they live right? The champion lives in your heart. Have you ever heard someone say, just follow your heart, your heart knows best, or what are your heart desires, or he/she has the heart of a champion? It's because this is where the champion lives. The champion is committed to you being powerful. He is a force for good. He is a force to be reckoned with. When he shows up, you are bold, courageous and persistent. He is constantly thinking of goals to achieve in the future, talks in a positive manner and comes up with ideas to fulfill that future. He is constantly pushing you out of your comfort zone and empowers you to be your best!

The complainer, on the other hand, lives in your head. He does not want you to go beyond your comfort zone. He lies around in your head to cloud your judgment whenever you come up with a good idea. Have you ever noticed that people who are depressed rarely speak? It's because they keep all their problems in their head and try to solve them on their own. It's like entering a jail cell with a 300-pound dude waiting to kick your butt. If you stay too long in your head he will eat you alive, metaphorically speaking. It is real hard to talk yourself out of a problem when you are having a conversation with the complainer because his number one job is to complain and never create solutions and possibilities.

It is important to understand that the complainer is 'reaction driven' and the champion is 'creation driven.' The complainer is always on the defense so his automatic way of being is to constantly defend himself because he always wants to be right. He wants to look good and never lose the battle.

Now the champion operates at a whole different level. He/she makes choices based on a creative response to the situation. Intentionally choosing to create puts you in a better mindset to handle whatever comes your way. It also allows you the opportunity to think and create a better way to respond when you are in a heated debate. Let's say that your boss is mad at you because you are 10 minutes late to work or late on a deadline. If you let the complainer speak he will defend himself and make you look like a fool. Whenever you recognize that you are getting upset or want to be right just stop and catch yourself and say "Gotcha!" Then take a deep breath and choose a response that will empower

the conversation instead of destroy it. This simple act will help you regain your power and happiness.

Until you are able to identify when the complainer in your mind is running the show, then you can never unleash your champion. Now the best part is that once the complainer is gone, it provides the space for the champion to stretch out and show up. When he shows up your power and happiness also show up.

If you want to live an extraordinary life, all you need to do is ask yourself, “Is the complainer running the show or is the champion? If you start with that question, it will lead to a higher quality of life. When the champion within is allowed to be in charge, it leads to a greater sense of contentment and satisfaction. Remember those two words?

Very strong sources of satisfaction and contentment are action and accomplishment, and that’s one of the reasons why a champion in charge, who chooses to have a hand in his or her own happiness, will be a happier person. Now isn’t that powerful?

Choose to be that champion for yourself. Choose to be happy today.



Remember when I spoke earlier about the fact that we can’t change the external things in our lives but we can change the way we respond to those external things? A hurricane – talk about a powerful external thing over which you have no control – but I responded to it by **choosing to be** happy in spite of Hurricane Sandy’s devastating effects. That was a profound experience for me and it’s something that anybody can do. I said earlier that we were going to come back to that idea of choice, and here we are. **You** can choose to be happy. You have **so** much power. Isn’t that incredible?

So I want to challenge you to get into a mindset of *choosing*. Often we just accept things the way they are because we think we can’t do anything about it. But think about the following choices we make in our lives every day. We go through a series of moments

where we have to choose between right or wrong, good or bad – sometimes those choices are subtle and we don't even give them much thought. But what if you were to give some thought to **these** choices? To be proactive or reactive? To accept people as they are or try to change them? To be grateful or dwell in a lack mentality. To read, learn and grow or sit back and watch life pass you by? To go after your dreams or watch others go after their dreams? To be a failure or to learn from your failures?

The better we become at making choices, the better the sense of satisfaction and contentment in our lives. Often, people who are presented with a choice will immediately start analyzing it to death. Then they will either choose the easiest or most tempting of their available choices. But after they make a choice, they will beat themselves up for choosing what they chose instead of taking responsibility for their choice. People like that can torture themselves wondering “what if” they'd chosen differently.

Instead of enjoying what they have and where they are in the moment, they complain about choosing a black BMW with beige interior over the burgundy interior. They complain about choosing their current spouse over the ex-partner. They complain about those extra unwanted pounds over the fact they are currently healthy. They complain about their finances instead being grateful for having a roof over head. They complain about their teenage daughter's problems instead of being grateful that they have a child of their own. This list goes on and on. As these examples illustrate, people who have this state of mind find no happiness in their choices. They're never satisfied.

What I want you to consider is that we can all choose to be happy, no matter what things we possess or what kind of crazy things are happening in our lives. I am inviting you to choose, powerfully and intentionally, and to be happy with your choice regardless of the outcome.

From today on I want you to consider the choices you make every day, and add to those choosing to be happy.

As I mentioned before, the first step in creating happiness is to actually choose it. The next step is to make happiness a habit - and that's why we're here, right?

A habit is something we do regularly without consciously thinking much about it. It is an automatic mental and behavioral activity that is reinforced through repetition. Are you with me?

Make it a no-brainer and proactively develop the cell memory that automatically creates a happy mood. I'm challenging you now to engage in the process here. It's up to you to make happiness a habit. You might be asking how do I do that, Edward?

It's like this, champ. Habits are created through repetition. We all have our little habits, right – or sometimes big habits – those things that we just do without even thinking about them. You keep doing things over and over until eventually it becomes cell memory and you just start to do those things automatically.

For example, I bet you eat the same meal for breakfast at least 10 times per month. I bet you take the same route to work every day. I bet you get sleepy around the same time every day. I bet you order the same meal every time you go to your favorite restaurant. These are all habits and you developed them by repeating the same behavior, over and over.

If habits are developed through repetition, we can effectively create happiness by repeatedly doing those things that contribute to happiness. I want you to become your own happiness generator by prioritizing those things in your life that help generate that sense of satisfaction and contentment. That statement was so powerful that I am going to repeat it again.

“I want you to become your own happiness generator by prioritizing those things in your life that help generate that sense of satisfaction and contentment.” Just imagine what your life would look like if you really took this on.

So, remember, I told you that we were going to look at three things that influence our idea of happiness, and we talked about two of them right? We talked about how our environment and the events that happen in our life, whether big or small affect our happiness.

The third important element that influences our happiness is our habits. Now this is where I get raw and real. The most significant factors in your happiness are your habits. What you do every day. The things that you do habitually are a major influence of what your idea of happiness is.

This is interesting because it loops back in a couple of ways. Take a minute to list in your head the top 3 to 5 tasks that you spend time on. That list might look something like – I spend time with my family and friends, which is both environment and culture, as we discussed before, right? Maybe you spend a lot of time watching TV or listening to music, playing videogames and that kind of thing, right?

All of those things that we know influence our happiness? Or our idea of it.

So, as I was saying, the things we spend time on become our habits.

Are you with me?

I want to spend some time on this because this is an area where you can actively make the most impact on your own personal happiness.

The things we spend time on become our habits and habits are especially powerful when it comes to the idea of happiness because you can get twice the benefit from them if you adopt the right habits.

As I said earlier, habits are behaviors that we learn through repetition. That's good news because it means that by consistently devoting time to the things that truly make us feel good, we can proactively program our own minds to learn and start to automatically do those things and naturally feed that wonderful sense of satisfaction and well-being – that sense of contentment – that we know as being happy.

If the things we spend time on are both a source of happiness as well as a major influence on what our perception of what happiness is, then it becomes very easy to shift our perception into a state of happiness that is consistent and lasting. So the next question should be: “how do I create a state of happiness that is consistent and lasting”?

Hold on to your horses, my friend. That is exactly what I am going to share with you now.

There are many studies and things out there that look at the things people who have been identified as “happy” do in their lives that create that sense of satisfaction and contentment.

Looking at what those people have in common, I will suggest that each of us can create a great level of happiness by purposely focusing on the consistent implementation of habits in the following areas: Family, spirituality, health, pursuit of passion, valuing accomplishments and service to others. Let's take a further look at each individually.



Let's start with the first one, family. When you purposely invest time to have quality time with your family, this will create exuberant amounts of joy. If you really think about it, most people put off time with the family so they can work more and make more money. It's like the donkey who was chasing the carrot. He chased it for all the wrong reasons.

If you put other priorities before your family, you will most likely either end up with money and no family or both. People who have high levels of happiness make family a priority and they do it by intentionally blocking out times on their calendars to spend time with their families and close friends. One of those activities you can schedule ahead of time is family gatherings. If you think about it some of your happiest moments came from family gatherings. If your family lives in another part of the country or you have very little family then you can also create a friends gathering.

There is a sense of fulfillment and content that only your close relatives and old friends can provide. It's soothing to the soul. There's no better feeling than hugging an old friend, or a distant cousin that you have not seen in years. People who have high levels of happiness also choose to go out to dinner with their immediate family at least once per week. They also plan family vacations ahead of time. Basically, they put their wholehearted attention on their family several times per month and per year. It's their

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Edward Muñoz
Keynote Speaker – Peak Performance Coach
info@edwardmunoz.com
www.UnleashYourChampion.com
877-440-5299

priority. To them it's not a someday thing it's an all the time thing. They fit it in into everything they do, not the other way around.

Recently, I listened to a podcast interview where the interviewer asked author and motivational speaker Dr. Joe Martin what his definition of success was. He said, "when you have gained the love and respect of your family then you are successful". He went on to say that if you have the love and respect from your closest family members then you have the space to be more, do more and have more.

Today I am inviting you to choose to focus more of your undivided attention on your family and make it a habit. Don't forget that the title of this eBook is "Happiness is a Habit" and I chose it for a reason. I promised to share with you how to live a happier life and your job if you are truly committed to live a happier life is to put it into practice. I'm doing my part. Are you going to do your part?



Now I am going to talk about building a habit around spirituality. The word spirituality could mean different things to different people. For some people spirituality means God, to others it could be worshipping Jehovah or Buddha; and to others it's worshipping the sun, moon, earth and water. To others it could be the universe or meditation. Whatever spirituality represents to you, make it a habit to pray, meditate and connect to your higher power. Doing so will help you release the stress you accumulate daily from life's demands. Speaking of releasing, I want to share with you a story that I once heard from Jack Canfield who is the Co-Author of the Chicken Soup for the Soul Series. The story talks about the importance of releasing and giving things up.

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Edward Muñoz
Keynote Speaker – Peak Performance Coach
info@edwardmunoz.com
www.UnleashYourChampion.com
877-440-5299



In 1957, a group of monks were moving a 10' ½" Buddha made of clay from one side of Bangkok to another side. When the crane arrived it harnessed its claws around the monster-size Buddha, but as it was lifting, the Buddha started to crack because it was too heavy. One of the Monks who were present was concerned with the damage to the Buddha, so he ordered the crane driver to put it back down.

Suddenly, it started to rain, so they proceeded to cover it with a big canvass. Several hours later one of the monks returned to check on the Buddha. When he passed by the Buddha he flashed his light under the cover and noticed something reflected back from the light. This really struck him, he wondered what it could be so he returned with some equipment and started chipping away at the clay intensely for hours and hours to see what was beneath.

To their amazement beneath the clay was a golden Buddha that stood tall of 10' ½" feet made of nothing but solid gold. Weighing in at 5.5 tons with a worth of 195 million dollars, this spectacle left the monks' community in Bangkok, China and the world in total awe.

Their best theory was that back when the Burmese army attacked Thailand, the Siamese monks knew that they would be under siege soon, and they decided to cover their precious and golden Buddha with clay so it would look like a worthless Buddha. Unfortunately, since all of the monks were massacred during the war, no one ever knew the truth, and this is why it remained intact until the curious Buddha discovered it in 1957.

As you can clearly see, this Buddha was DISCOVERED. In the dictionary it says that to discover is *to reveal or make known*. And as Jack stated in his speech it means "to take the cover off something that was already there". You see each one of us are unstoppable champions at heart that have all this creativity, untapped potential, full of intelligence and what happens is that it gets covered over with clay. The clay represents the following:

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Edward Muñoz
Keynote Speaker – Peak Performance Coach
info@edwardmunoz.com
www.UnleashYourChampion.com
877-440-5299

- Self doubts
- Fears
- Limiting beliefs
- Disempowering stories
- Past failures

Over the years you get covered up with this stuff and it covers or blocks your natural powers, your creativity and your intelligence from coming out. In essence you are held back. It's almost like you are this priceless diamond covered by a ball of manure. Many of us do not want to remove the manure because we do not want to go through the pain it requires to release what's there and reframing our beliefs and thoughts to maximize our full potential. And so what we do is cover the manure with more manure. So we got this false good covering the pains, negativity of past failures, and the doubts but all along underneath is the priceless diamond. The priceless YOU!

But at some point we have to go through the manure to get to the real essence of who we are. Much like the monk with the hammer and the chisel, our job is to chisel away and release every negative thought and emotion in our body. Jack stated that you don't need to put more on to you, what you need to do is take away what's not you and then the natural brilliance of you will come out. Doing so will leave you in a happy state. And the best way to do this is by connecting to your spirituality on a consistent basis. This is why praying or meditating is so important. It's not just important but crucial to your happiness.

I've learned over the years that following daily and weekly rituals like the ones I just mentioned will help you release what's in the way of your happiness. I cannot reiterate enough that you must do whatever it takes on a consistent basis to release and let go of every negative thought and emotion that is in your way of being happy. Your happiness depends on it.

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Edward Muñoz
Keynote Speaker – Peak Performance Coach
info@edwardmunoz.com
www.UnleashYourChampion.com
877-440-5299



Now I am going to talk about building a habit around your health. This habit is a toughie for most people. Unfortunately, most people have bad health habits and poor lifestyle choices. Renowned speaker and author Dr. Deepak Chopra says that more than 40 percent of American adults make a resolution to live a better life each year, and fewer than half keep their promise to themselves for longer than six months. Conditioning is hard to break, but the key is that the power to break a health habit belongs to the same person who made it. The turnaround amounts to giving up unconscious behavior and replacing it with new behaviors. Here's a perfect example that exemplifies how to create a new behavior which in turn over time will turn into a new habit.¹

Leo Babauta the author of Zen Habits and a father of 6, in a matter of years quit smoking, started exercising, ran marathons, started eating healthier, dropped sixty pounds, became debt free, and started a blog that would go on to become one of the world's most popular. Fitness entrepreneur Steve Kamb from NerdFitness.com, interviewed Leo and shared the methods Leo did on a consistent basis to get healthy:

In his book, Leo suggests that you pick ONE habit, make it absolutely tiny, and focus on that habit for a period of 21 days to a month. Here are a few examples:

- **Want to start exercising?** Awesome. For that first week, aim for just five minutes per day. Just five minutes!

- **Want to start cooking your own meals?** Don't try to cook ALL of your own meals yet. Just aim for one meal per day or one meal per week. Whatever works for you and your schedule
- **Want to quit drinking soda?** Instead of going from a twelve pack of mountain dew per day, replace just one of the cans with water. That's it.
- **Want to get out of debt?** Start by saving an extra twenty bucks each week, or finding a way to earn an extra twenty bucks.
- **Want to learn a new language?** Practice your new language for fifteen minutes per day. That's it!

As you can clearly see, the aim is to keep your goals small and simple. The smaller and simpler they are, the more likely you are to keep them. So if you want to make exercising a part of your daily routine, start small and keep it simple.²

Did you know that exercise releases endorphins? Endorphins trigger a positive feeling in the body, similar to that of morphine. For example, the feeling that follows a run or workout is often described as "euphoric." That feeling, known as a "runner's high," can be accompanied by a positive and energizing outlook on life. Just imagine how much happier you would be if your endorphins were constantly running throughout your body. Wouldn't you be happier on a consistent basis? If the answer is yes then what are you waiting for.



Now I am going to talk about pursuing your passions. This is crucial because most people hate what they do for a living. Jeff Olson states in his book “Slight Edge” that Sigmund Freud was once asked what people need in order to be able to live a full and happy life. His reply was three words: “leiben and arbeiten.” In English that translates to “Love and Work”. Put another way, follow your passion. It’s obvious that if you love your work, that you are passionate about your work. A passion is something you do with all of your heart. It could be defined as an activity, an idea, an ideal, or even an occupation that you pursue without regard to time or difficulty. It’s simply following your heart’s desires. Following the path of your heart’s desires is the path of the highest self. Knowing what you’re passionate about allows you to live with purpose. It allows you to make a difference in your life and the lives of others.”

So you might be asking how can I discover my passions.”

That’s a question I am asked a lot. You can discover your passions by answering the following questions:

- What would you like to do if money was not an issue?
- What are you constantly dreaming about that sparks excitement every time you think about it?
- What makes you come alive?
- Who would you like to help?
- What message would you share with the world?

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Edward Muñoz
Keynote Speaker – Peak Performance Coach
info@edwardmunoz.com
www.UnleashYourChampion.com
877-440-5299

- What mark can you leave on humanity?
- If a genie granted you three wishes, what would you wish for?

The answer to these questions will tell you what you are passionate about? Discovering and pursuing your passion will allow a sense of freedom from the everyday routine and humdrum of a nine to five job. All you need to do is allow yourself to move towards it. You know you have passion when your soul is smiling, you have peace of mind and you wake up fiya'd up!

Passion keeps you up late at night working on some projects while others easily get bored, restless, tired and sleep all night. Your drive will provide a surge of confidence that others will envy. It will cause a shift in you so drastic that you will become unrecognizable to others. Things that historically have never moved will start moving because you started moving. When you choose to follow your passion, you achieve more. You're more efficient, effective, productive, and most of all you are a lot happier. Make it a priority to follow your passion. Doing so will lead to a happier life.



Now I am going to talk about the importance of valuing your accomplishments. American Enterprise Institute President Arthur Brooks has found out through research that people who value their accomplishments no matter how small tend to be happier than many people who seem to have it all. For example, someone who grew up poor, went to college, got a good job, moved to the suburbs may feel happier than many

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Edward Muñoz
Keynote Speaker – Peak Performance Coach
info@edwardmunoz.com
www.UnleashYourChampion.com
877-440-5299

millionaires because he values his accomplishments as many millionaires are still chasing the next big deal and chasing the carrot as I mentioned about thirty minutes ago.

This person may not drive expensive cars, but is able to drive his motorcycle on Sunday's is just as happy as the millionaire with \$100,000,000 in the bank because he set himself out to accomplish something and feels accomplished according to Arthur Brooks. People who have accomplished something have a deep sense of fulfillment. To me, fulfillment happens when you are fully filled with happiness and value your small or big accomplishments. It could be as simple as noticing that your kids are getting good grades and when you are present to this, you feel accomplished and fulfilled. So if you want to live a happier life, I am encouraging you to make it a habit of valuing your small and big accomplishments.



Now I am going to talk about building a habit out of servicing others. I once heard that the easiest way to get out of depression is by helping another person get out of their depression. The legendary motivational speaker Zig Ziglar used to say, "if you help enough people get what they want, then you will get what you want". If you want to experience a new level of joy just learn to become a giver. It brings peace and happiness to your soul. I once heard from a good friend that those who receive a lot in life once gave a lot. When you give of yourself, you give to yourself. Giving makes your life complete.

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Edward Muñoz
Keynote Speaker – Peak Performance Coach
info@edwardmunoz.com
www.UnleashYourChampion.com
877-440-5299

Said another way – being of service to others makes your life complete. Most people focus on just taking and not giving. It's time to start shifting our attention from how much can I get to how much can I give. It's time to stop figuring out what everybody can do for you, and start trying to figure out what you can do for other people. You will never be truly fulfilled as a person until you master the art of giving. Now here's the kicker: When you give, do it without expecting anything in return. You might say, but Edward I don't have anything to give. Sure, you do! You can give a smile, a hug, or some advice to a friend in need. As long as you come from an authentic place and speak from the heart any message you share will make a difference.” So if you want to live a happier life, make it a habit to be of service on a more consistent basis. In other words, make it a habit.

Well, there you have it. I just shared with you the six areas where you should focus your attention on and intentionally choose to build habits to bring more happiness to your life on a more consistent basis. Wow I am literally blown away with this information and research. I can just imagine what's around the corner for you. Do you get that adding all of these areas to your happiness portfolio will certainly impact your life in a big way?

I bet you never heard of a happiness portfolio right? You've probably heard of investment portfolios, real estate portfolios but never a happiness portfolio. Now you have the tools and know how to create your very own happiness portfolio. Just imagine what your life would look like if you intentionally chose to build habits in all of the areas that I just mentioned? It would look spectacular, wouldn't? You'd be a lot happier, wouldn't you?

Well, we've come to the end of this eBook. I really hope you found it to be of great value. We've just touched the surface but I think we've covered some interesting ideas and gotten to the gist of what it takes to make happiness a habit. We've learned that if we repetitively choose happiness, as well as repeatedly spend time doing the things that are known to generate satisfaction and contentment in our lives, we develop our ability to create and enjoy happiness, not at some undetermined, completely unknown point in the uncertain future but now, here, today in the present.



**REMEMBER THIS IS YOUR LIFE
– THERE ARE NO DO-OVER'S.
WE ONLY GET ONE SHOT AT THIS THING
CALLED LIFE.
MAKE IT WORTHWHILE.
CHOOSE TO MAKE
HAPPINESS A HABIT.**

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Edward Muñoz
Keynote Speaker – Peak Performance Coach
info@edwardmunoz.com
www.UnleashYourChampion.com
877-440-5299



Edward R. Munoz

Creator of the www.TheuEffect.com

is an accomplished entrepreneur, an author, a gifted motivational speaker and business coach who believes with a passion that everyone is capable of success. From humble beginnings packing grocery bags on weekends and driving a taxi in Brooklyn's worst neighborhoods to leading a \$100 million real estate sales team, Edward has learned the principles that can help anyone realize their dreams.

Would you like to know the one secret that helped Edward go from a washed up cab driver to an unstoppable entrepreneur running a multimillion-dollar business. This ONE secret is responsible for over \$100,000,000 in sales. This secret is what the rich entrepreneurs don't want the broke entrepreneurs to know about.

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Edward Muñoz
Keynote Speaker – Peak Performance Coach
info@edwardmunoz.com
www.UnleashYourChampion.com
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