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Opening Extract from...

The Happiness Trap Pocketbook

Written by Dr Russ Harris and Bev Aisbett

Published by Robinson

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The Happiness Trap Pocketbook

Dr Russ Harris
and Bev Aisbett



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Important Note
This book is not intended as a substitute for medical advice or treatment. Any person with a condition requiring medical attention should consult a qualified medical practitioner or suitable therapist.

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Contents

	How to use this book	7
	Introduction	9
1	Fairytales	20
2	Vicious cycles	29
3	The basics of ACT	43
4	The great storyteller	46
5	True blues	59
6	Troubleshooting defusion	64
7	Demons in the boat	76
8	Drop the struggle	87
9	Troubleshooting expansion	101
10	Great connections	106
11	You're not who you think you are	120
12	Follow your heart	128
13	The 1000-mile journey	135
14	Finding fulfilment	146
15	A life of plenty	150
16	Willingness	157
17	A meaningful life	164

How to use this book

Welcome to *The Happiness Trap Pocketbook*, an illustrated and simplified version of the international bestseller, *The Happiness Trap*. There are at least three ways you could use this book:

1. **As an easy-to-read introduction to Acceptance & Commitment Therapy**

This book presents a delightfully easy introduction to the main ideas of Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (better known as ACT). We see it as especially useful for people who are not really into reading traditional self-help books, or for those who are so stressed, anxious or depressed that reading is difficult. Of course, we hope that you will then go on to read the original book, which explores ACT in far greater depth.

2. **As an adjunct to coaching or therapy**

If you are seeing a coach or therapist who uses the ACT approach, this book can be a valuable adjunct. You can read chapters ahead of time to prepare for a session, or after a session as a reminder.

3. **As a quick refresher course**

If it's been a while since you read *The Happiness Trap*, you can use the pocketbook as a quick refresher course to remind yourself of the main ideas and exercises.

An Important Message

Simply reading this book will not be enough to make any real difference in your life. You actually will need to do the exercises if you want your life to be richer, fuller and more meaningful. It is much the same as reading a book on how to play tennis or guitar. Your tennis or guitar skills won't improve simply from reading it; you actually have to do the recommended exercises.

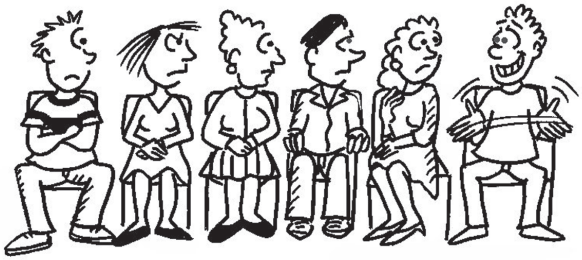
Of course, you can read through the book quickly and then go back and do the exercises, but it's far better to do them as you go.

So, good luck with it all. And remember: life gives most to those who make the most of what life gives.

Cheers
Russ Harris

Introduction

If you're HAPPY and you know it,
CLAP YOUR HANDS ...



OH DEAR!

We should be HAPPY, shouldn't we?

That's what the multitude of self-help books out there suggest – just think happy thoughts and you'll be FINE. But trying to be perpetually positive can be downright STRESSFUL!



You'd think that it would be normal to be happy in the western world, where we have access to so many of the ingredients to build happiness ...

GOOD HOUSING



MORE & BETTER FOOD



EXCELLENT MEDICAL FACILITIES



ACCESS TO

EDUCATION



JUSTICE



WELFARE



CLEAN WATER



&

SANITATION

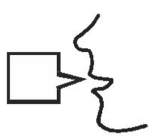


Along with FREEDOM TO

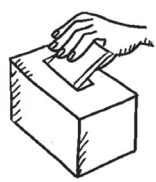
TRAVEL



SPEAK OPENLY



VOTE



But the truth is, on the whole we're NOT happy.
In fact, often we're downright MISERABLE!

Here are some sobering statistics:



1 in 10 has
CLINICAL DEPRESSION



1 in 5 is DEPRESSED
at some time



1 in 4 has or has had an
ADDICTION



30 per cent of the adult
population has a recognised
PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDER

And of all the people you know, almost HALF of these will **SERIOUSLY CONTEMPLATE SUICIDE** at some point ...





... and 1 in 10 will actually
ATTEMPT IT!

SO WHY IS IT SO *DIFFICULT* TO BE HAPPY?

TO ANSWER THAT, WE NEED TO *GO* BACK IN TIME TO SEE HOW OUR MINDS *EVOLVED*!





HANG ON!



WOW!!

HERE'S AN EARLY HUNTER/GATHERER. WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE HIS *NEEDS*?



HMM ... WELL, THE *BASICS* FOR SURVIVAL!



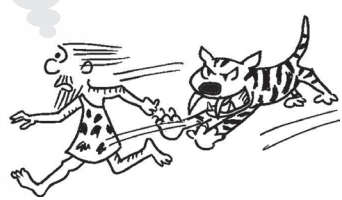
FOOD
WATER
SHELTER
SEX



AND HE HAS AN EVEN *GREATER* PRIORITY!



DON'T GET
KILLED!



THE BETTER WE WERE ABLE TO ANTICIPATE AND AVOID DANGER, THE BETTER OUR CHANCES OF *SURVIVAL*!

GOOD? BAD? HELPFUL?

TRUE, BUT THERE AREN'T ANY *SABRE-TOOTHED TIGERS* IN MY SUBURB! WHAT'S THIS GOT TO DO WITH MODERN-DAY HAPPINESS?







WELL, LOOK AT HOW WE'VE *'EVOLVED'*! COMPARE THE *'DANGERS'* ON OUR ANCESTORS' LIST TO OUR CURRENT PERCEIVED *'DANGERS'* — MOST OF WHICH WON'T EVEN HAPPEN!

SO I GUESS WE'VE JUST EVOLVED TO BE BETTER AT LOOKING FOR *TROUBLE*!





PREDATORS
BAD WEATHER
ILLNESS
LACK OF FOOD OR WATER

WAR

MORTGAGE REJECTION *JOB*
EMBARRASSMENT *LOSS*
UPSETTING LOVED ONES
BANKRUPTCY
PAYING BILLS **THEFT**
SPEEDING TICKET
Climate Change **POLLUTION**
GETTING CANCER ATTACK
OBESITY *DRUGS* **STUFF**

WHAT DO YOU THINK WAS THE GREATEST *THREAT* TO SURVIVAL FOR OUR FRIEND HERE?

LET'S SEE ... WELL, BEING *ALONE* WOULD BE DANGEROUS, I GUESS!

YES! WITHOUT THE PROTECTION OF THE TRIBE, HE WOULD BE *EASY PREY*!

SO HOW DOES THIS PLAY OUT IN *MODERN TIMES*?



WE STILL FEAR *REJECTION* AND TRY TO 'PROTECT' OURSELVES BY COMPARING OURSELVES TO OTHERS!

AM I *FITTING IN*?

AM I DOING ANYTHING *WRONG*?

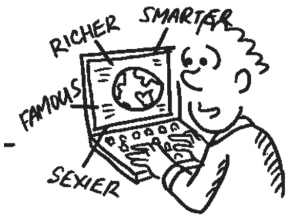
AM I AS *GOOD* AS OTHERS?

AND BACK THEN, THERE WAS ONLY A SMALL GROUP TO COMPARE TO!





NOW IT'S *GLOBAL*!



FOR AN AMBITIOUS ANCESTOR THE FORMULA FOR SUCCESS WAS *MORE = BETTER*





WELL THAT SURE HASN'T *CHANGED*!



AND IT SEEMS THAT NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE GET, WE STILL WANT MORE!

YES! OUR MODERN MINDS TEND TO FOCUS ON *LACK* & CREATE DISSATISFACTION!



SO WHAT *IS* THIS HAPPINESS THAT WE KEEP CHASING AFTER?





'The very purpose of life is to seek Happiness.'

Dalai Lama

'HAPPINESS' HAS TWO VERY DIFFERENT MEANINGS ...



1. A GOOD FEELING





Because happiness feels GOOD, we CHASE it, but we find that it doesn't LAST.

And, as we shall see, a life spent chasing after this feeling is not only UNSATISFACTORY but also the harder we try to experience only pleasurable feelings, the more we feel ANXIOUS or DEPRESSED when they elude us.



2.
AN ACTIVE PHILOSOPHY

THIS SECOND DEFINITION INSTEAD FOCUSES ON CREATING A *RICH, FULL & MEANINGFUL* LIFE!



This involves ...

TAKING ACTION ON THE THINGS THAT MATTER TO US



MOVING IN THE DIRECTION OF WHAT WE SEE AS VALUABLE OR WORTHY



ENGAGING FULLY IN WHAT WE DO



IN DOING SO, WE EMBRACE LIFE IN *ALL* ITS COLOURS!



But a full human life comes with the FULL RANGE of human emotions.



OF COURSE WE ALL LIKE TO FEEL *GOOD*, BUT DESPERATELY TRYING TO AVOID PAINFUL FEELINGS DOOMS US TO *FAILURE*.





The fact is — life involves PAIN:



LOSS



SEPARATION OR DIVORCE



REJECTION



ILLNESS OR INFIRMITY

THE GOOD NEWS IS ...

You can learn to handle painful feelings by:

- MAKING ROOM FOR THEM
- RISING ABOVE THEM
- CREATING A LIFE WORTH LIVING.



AND WE'LL SHOW YOU HOW, USING THE PRINCIPLES OF *ACT*: *ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY*.