

CHAPTER 1

A SIMPLE FORMULA FOR HAPPINESS

“Remember, the past is gone, the future out there is unknown, and all we have is the present. Learn from the past, be mindful that the decisions you make now determine your happiness today and in the future.”

DEFINITIONS OF HAPPINESS

The Dictionary defines happiness as a state of well-being and contentment coming from within.

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

– Aristotle

“Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.”

– Mahatma Gandhi

“Genuine happiness mainly comes from our own attitude and spiritual qualities of love, compassion, patience, tolerance and forgiveness and so on. For it is these which provide both for our happiness and others’ happiness.”

– Dalai Lama

“A joyful heart is the inevitable result of a heart burning with love and kindness.”

– Mother Teresa

“Nothing can bring you happiness but yourself.”

– Emerson

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

– Abraham Lincoln

“The happiness that is genuinely satisfying is accompanied by the fullest exercise of our faculties and the full realisation of the world in which we live.”

– Bertrand Russell

“Happiness is a bundle of three main ideas: a pleasant life—having more positive than negative emotions; an engaged life—being completely absorbed by the challenges you face at work, love and play, etc.; a meaningful life—knowing what your highest strengths are and using them to belong to and serve something that is bigger than you are.”

– Martin Seligman.

MY DEFINITION OF HAPPINESS

As you see, many people have defined happiness in many ways. I think of the human body as a most intricate and amazing system with billions of cells working in harmony to keep us healthy and happy!

Many people have asked me how I stay healthy, happy and productive every day. As I thought about this question, I realized that all my life I have applied the systems approach to happiness. I have tried to nurture all parts of my being—mind, body and soul—so I can stay happy and perform at my peak.

I am 72 years old, still healthy and happy. I have lived and worked in many countries with people of all ages and positions on a variety of programmes ranging from education and healthcare, to development, empowerment, cyberlearning and tennis.

I still work seven days a week, mostly as a philanthropist CEO, trying to make a difference in the lives of the less fortunate. I also work out 72 minutes a day—one minute for every year of my life on this Earth!

I enjoy thinking positively and creatively. I take pride in working out and eating healthy. I love to be caring, compassionate, loving, giving and nurturing.

These I call the Happy Executive concepts.

THE SYSTEMS APPROACH TO HAPPINESS

How is it possible to apply the systems approach to happiness? First, let me explain my systems approach.

The innovative **Management By Systems (MBS)** approach I developed in the late 1960s looks at everything as a system. MBS requires you to set specific goals and objectives, and then make decisions about deploying available resources most cost-effectively to achieve those goals and objectives. The resources available are: human, financial, information, technology, physical, material, and time.

Everything, from a workstation to the universe, is a system. All of us—from the Presidents and Prime Ministers to simple workers—are systems people. Consciously or unconsciously, we set goals and objectives—daily, weekly, monthly, yearly or multi-yearly—and use all available resources to achieve them.

Of all the resources, the human resource is the most important, since humans in a system make all the major decisions. Financial resources are next in importance, followed by the other resources.

In designing or improving a system, first focus on getting the best human resources, then on finding the financial resources needed by looking at all options and by thinking out-of-the-box, and then on procuring and deploying the other resources.

Time is an important resource. Everyone has 24 hours a day. So, in order to stay ahead in the competitive global economy, plan and use your time effectively every day to achieve your goals and objectives.

There are **eight steps in applying MBS**: (1) defining clearly the visions, missions, goals and objectives; (2) mapping existing available resources; (3) assessing additional resources required to achieve the defined goals and objectives, (4) developing creative and out-of-the-box thinking solutions; (5) prioritising the solutions; (6) development of an implementation plan with specific tasks, milestones and timelines; (7) implementation; (8) monitoring and continuous improvement.

MBS measures system performance using three measures, namely, effectiveness, efficiency and effort. Always make sure that your system is effective, and then focus on making it more efficient, with sufficient effort.

Over the last few decades, I had the opportunity to apply MBS to improve socio-economic programmes as well as public and private sector and NGO operations—ranging from education, empowerment, traffic safety, social security, healthcare and information technology to tennis—in the United States, India, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Mauritius, Egypt and other countries. See Part II, chapters 10 and 11 of this book for details.

It is worth noting that in India, I had the opportunity to explain to Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and other Indian leaders the MBS systems thinking, and help them apply it to develop India's vision to become an Information Technology (IT) power in the 1980s.

To learn more about MBS, visit www.cyberlearning.org/mba.

THE HAPPINESS SYSTEM — NURTURING MIND, BODY AND SOUL

Now, let us apply MBS to happiness. Looking at happiness as a system, your goal obviously is happiness. The resources you have are your mind, body and soul. Thus, from a systems standpoint, you can achieve your happiness or more happiness goal by nurturing your mind, body and soul.

THE SIMPLE FORMULA FOR HAPPINESS

In my case, I have applied Management By Systems (MBS) to develop a happiness system. The simple formula I have practised for years as a person and as an executive seeking happiness can be summed up as follows:

First, find something you are passionate about doing. Second, when you go to sleep at night, ask yourself the following questions:

- Today, did I nurture my mind? Meaning, did I think positively and creatively throughout the day?
- Today, did I nurture my body? Meaning, did I consciously make decisions to eat healthy and do enjoyable physical activities to stay fit?
- Today, did I nurture my soul? Meaning, did I nurture other souls by acting in a loving, caring, helpful and compassionate manner with everyone I came across throughout the day?
- Today, did I perform activities leading to mind-body-soul balance—activities such as deep breathing, meditation, yoga, visualization, singing, smiling and laughing?
- Today, what did I do or experience that made me feel grateful?

If you answered yes to these five questions, you can feel confident that you were a happy person today, and you can look forward to an even better tomorrow!

Remember, the past is gone, the future out there is unknown, and all we have is the present. Learn from the past, and be mindful that the decisions you make now determine your happiness today and in the future.

Every morning when you wake up, remind yourself to practise the simple happiness activities covered by the above five questions. Take one day at a time in a simple, manageable manner. Your happy days will extend to happy weeks, months, years, decades and a lifetime! You will become a lifelong happy executive! And your happiness will radiate to others around you—your family, co-workers, friends and community members. In fact, this recipe for happiness applies to all human beings, executives and non-executives alike!

Of course, there will be bumps on the way. But the happy executive practices will help you reduce stress and smoothen the road to your happiness. We will discuss the pathways to living healthy and happy, by making appropriate changes in your lifestyle.

Based on my experience, my simple, straightforward advice is this: Nurture your mind daily by thinking positively and creatively. Nurture your body daily by eating healthy and engaging in physical activities that you enjoy. Nurture your soul daily by nurturing other souls around you—your family members, friends, employees, co-workers, community members and others you touch, by being caring, loving, sharing and compassionate.

I have practised these happy executive concepts for over 50 years. In the following chapters, I will provide you with the details of the simple and effective ways to find happiness by nurturing mind, body and soul, and maintaining mind-body-soul balance daily. I hope it will help you, as it has me, to reach your true happiness potential.

CHAPTER 2

NURTURING MIND

“Think positively and creatively all the time, and enjoy doing so. As a creative thinker, you should not be afraid of problems; you should look at them as opportunities to come up with creative solutions. Often your creative solutions, based on “out-of-the-box” thinking, will produce better and more effective systems and solutions than tinkering with process-oriented piecemeal solutions.”

POSITIVE THINKING

Remember the expression, “You are what you think you are!” The mind is the most complex and fascinating part of a person. It works like a super-fast TV screen, passing hundreds of thoughts, like images on film, every nanosecond. It works to instantaneously digest internal and external information, perceptions, senses, emotions and feelings, while continuously making and changing decisions.

The best and simplest way to nurture your mind is to think positively and creatively. According to Buddha, “All that we are is the result of what we have thought. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him like a shadow that never leaves.”

When faced with stressful situations or with personal problems, positive thinking will generate positive energy and provide better outcomes. Negative thinking is like an avalanche, accelerating down a steep slope, building with immense speed and progressively worse consequences. By thinking positively, you influence your thoughts as well as the thoughts of those around you, thus creating a positive environment.

Although it may be challenging, it is important to make a conscious effort to nip a negative thought in the bud. If your thoughts have a tendency to be negative, it will be hard to see the positive. The mind is like an open field. If you walk toward the same destination, over time you will create a path. In the same way, you have spent much of your life thinking in certain ways about certain problems or situations and strengthening your mind’s routine. Your mind makes thinking easy and does so by creating habits, getting from point A to point B along a familiar route. For this reason, it is difficult to change your mind state and try to think differently. However, if

you practise redirecting your thoughts from negative to positive, you will create new neural pathways that will strengthen with more positive thinking. In time, your mind will make these tendencies unconsciously, and you will find yourself more of an optimist.

Think out loud and listen to your thoughts. How do they make you feel when you hear them? Are they positive? Are they negative? Address the problem by rephrasing your statement with a new tone or altering your approach. This will prevent the thought from developing into a negative one. Simultaneously, train your mind to see an alternative, positive side.

I remember it took a couple of years for me and others to counsel tennis star Monica Seles and her family back to positive thinking, after she was stabbed on courtside at the peak of her career. That incident taught me that even the direst of circumstances can be overcome with patience and positive thinking.

CREATIVE THINKING

Sometimes we get stuck in old patterns and grooves, and we cannot seem to get out of our predicament, however positively we view the situation. It is time then to use more of our imagination, which is so active in children and young people and often atrophies in adults. Imagination is a great gift. According to Albert Einstein, “Imagination is everything. It is the preview of life’s coming attractions. Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere. The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge, but imagination.”

Think positively and creatively all the time, and enjoy doing so. As a creative thinker, you will not be afraid of problems; you should look at them as opportunities to come up with creative solutions. Often your creative solutions, based on “out-of-the-box” thinking, will produce better and more effective systems and solutions than tinkering with process-oriented piecemeal solutions.

A case in point is our creative solution of distributing pensions through banks, rather than expanding government pension distribution centres in Venezuela. This saved millions of dollars for the government, while eliminating the waiting time to collect pensions for millions of Venezuelans!

Another example is my experience with developing world tennis champions. Instead of the conventional method of working on improving strokes, we decided to create a holistic total tennis system to improve mental toughness, physical conditioning, strategy and weapon strokes—the two or three dependable strokes one could call upon to win critical points. Then, we added tournament play and practice with the pros. This helped produce three world champions—Andre Agassi, Monica Seles and Jim Courier— in three years!

Studies show that positive and creative thinkers lead a better quality of life and live longer. You can be healthier, happier and more productive by practicing positive and creative thinking at all levels.

