

Foreword

If I was considering taking some time to read a book about “finding happiness,” one of the first things I would want to know is *how happy is the author?* Is this just another of the thousands of self help books churned out each year expounding the latest theory of the Seven Steps to a Perfect You? Or will this actually help you; will you find something refreshingly real and honest, something relevant to your life?

I have known Jonathan Robinson for more than fifteen years. We have been on many road trips and adventures. We were in the same men’s group for more than five years. We know each others’ wives and families. I have seen Jonathan in his peak moments of triumph, as well as his most humiliating moments of defeat, and I have watched him learn and grow with humility. From these fifteen years, I want to tell you here about the man himself, and then you can judge if his book is worthy of your precious time.

In this book, Jonathan will tell you that happiness is not always to be found in the external acquisition of things and money, as we have often been told it is. So, is he living this theory in his own life? He is one of the few people I know who has actually earned enough money to retire through writing books and teaching seminars. But I also know that he lives with Zen like simplicity. He lives with his wife Kirsten and his golden retriever Sophie in a rented house in the countryside, smaller than 1000 square feet. He gives away a large percentage of his income every year to various charities. They live very modestly, and yet every time I see him he exudes excited gratitude for all that he has.

Jonathan will also tell you that happiness has much more to do with how much you help and give to other people than what you try to get for yourself. I have witnessed his generosity with friends and people in need, for example paying for a friend's expensive medical treatment. Almost every time he comes over to our house, Jonathan brings some small gift, usually with the now familiar words "I thought you might get a kick out of this...."

Jonathan will invite you to use small techniques, most of which take only a few minutes a day, as a gentle discipline to shift into habits of happiness. He has gently guided me to use some of these tools myself, and they have worked. Each and every one of the things he will ask you to do, he has done himself over many years. Everything you read here has been road-tested in his own life.

He will also remind you of the importance of creating real and connected relationships in your life. Not only does Jonathan put a lot of attention on the quality of his own marriage, but he also places almost as much value on his friendships as well. Luckily for me and the other people who know him, Jonathan takes very good care of people. He seeks out ways to create real connection, to dive deeper together than the usual "*Howeryadoing, bud?...Err, Fine*" that we can all so easily fall into. When you hang with him, he asks a lot of questions with real interest and curiosity.

But most important, in this small book, Jonathan will ask you to give him the benefit of the doubt, and to return to a beginner's mind. It's not an easy place for some of us, especially when we have read a few books (and even written a few as well.) He will ask you to look at things with fresh eyes. And it is this quality that I like the most about my friend. Actually, it is how we met. I was giving a lecture at the International Conference on Science and Consciousness back in the 1990s, about the importance of tailor-made spiritual practice. He stood up, and asked me to suggest a practice for him. Right there, in front of a few hundred people he laid out his challenges and weak spots for everyone to see, and asked for help, as a beginner. When I found out later that he was a bestselling author, who

had been on Oprah a bunch of times, I thought to myself, *this is my kind of a guy*. He is more interested in being a learner than a knower.

As you will discover in the next few pages, Jonathan's willingness to constantly learn, and grow, and explore, is infectious. He will meet you as a friend, with respect and kindness and a genuine care for your well-being.

So there you have it. If you are interested in finding happiness for real, from someone who cares more about the truth of things than expounding a pet theory, or making some extra cash from you, you are in good hands. You are in excellent hands, in fact, so read on with confidence.

I am going to pass you over to those good hands now, and I wish you happy experimenting in finding happiness now.

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Introduction

Shortcuts to Finding Happiness

No matter who you are, you want to be happy. Of course, you may use a different word to describe what you want. You may say you want riches, or power, or adventure, or love, but *why* do you want those things? Because you think if you *had* riches, or love, or whatever you say you want, you'd be really happy. The problem is, you and I are part of a frequently dangerous cult. This cult—known as “cult-ure,” tells us we can find “happiness” by pursuing external things—like possessions and achievements. Unfortunately, studies show that such things don't really make us any happier. Look around you. Except for young kids (who have yet to be fully programed by our particular cult), most people are not wildly excited about their life.

Fortunately, there is good news. In the last twenty years, the field of Positive Psychology has researched what really makes people deeply happy and fulfilled. What they've learned is that truly happy people share many common values, methods, ideas, and attitudes. Better yet, many of the attributes deeply fulfilled people share can be easily learned by the rest of us. By practicing the ways of people who are elated about their lives, we too can become a lot happier. That's what this book is about. In it you'll find 50 simple ideas and methods that can act as “shortcuts” to the experience of deeper satisfaction you desire.

As a seminar leader and psychotherapist, I've learned that some methods work a heck of a lot better than others. In today's overbusy and fast-paced world, I've seen that most people simply don't have time to use

any method that takes over five minutes to do. As for me, I'm so lazy that I prefer methods that take under a minute of effort. Luckily, there *are* many tools that can be used in well under five minutes that can have a major impact on the quality of your life. You'll find a lot of such tools right here in this book. Even if you find just one idea or method in these pages that really works for you, your life will be forever altered and greatly improved.

Many years ago when I was on *Oprah* to promote an earlier version of this book, I had an interesting conversation with her off camera. I asked her why she chose to have me on her show talking about my book. She said something like, "I liked your practical ideas. Here were things I could really use—and I *have* used. Not so long ago I was a poor teenage black girl who was emotionally and physically abused. It was only by using ideas and methods found in books like yours that I got to where I am today. Now that I'm in the position I'm in, I want other people to know that—wherever they are—there is hope for a better life. You just have to put your hope in the right place."

I enthusiastically agree with what Oprah said. Many of us put too much hope in things that ultimately disappoint us. We put too much of our hope into things like money, a relationship, or a certain achievement. Unfortunately, when such things fail to make us happy, we can be left feeling hopeless. Yet, when we put our hope (and energy) into things that have been *proven* to make us happier, we get much better results. So, what do scientific studies tell us will lead to real happiness? From the countless studies done on this subject, five common themes appear over and over again to contribute to people's deeper enjoyment of life. Briefly they can be described as:

1. Having a lot of friends that you connect with in a satisfying manner.
2. Having a sense of purpose or meaning—often derived from pursuing a spiritual path.
3. Enjoying your work or some other activity that you fully engage in.

4. Taking time to appreciate simple pleasures, and savoring them as fully as possible.
5. Creating and achieving goals that add to the quality of your life.

Sadly, our culture doesn't teach us how to effectively pursue these avenues for finding happiness. Yet, when we learn simple skills that immediately help us to feel better, or help us to connect more deeply with people, our level of life satisfaction inevitably goes up. We start to have hope that, no matter what happens to us in our life, we can use the skills we know to feel gratitude, peace, meaning, and joy.

This book is divided into five sections. The first section is titled "Feeling Really Good," and it offers nine powerful methods for changing how you feel in a quick and easy manner. The second section, called "Loving Yourself," details nine more techniques for being kind to yourself and handling difficult emotions. The third section, "Improving Relationships," offers amazing tips for connecting with an intimate partner, friends, and even total strangers. In the fourth section, "Connecting with Your Soul," you'll learn tools for quieting your mind, hearing your intuition, and opening your heart. Finally, in the last section, "Living Your Dreams," you'll learn how to know what's most important to you, as well as how to stay consistently motivated to manifest what you desire.

You need not read this book from start to finish. Instead, feel free to look in the Table of Contents for a heading that sounds like something you'd really like to know about. Then, turn to that section and discover what magical method awaits your discovery. The only way to know how effective the ideas and techniques in this book really are is by trying them out. Often, simply reading about a method gives no clue as to what the actual experience is like. For example, if you knew nothing about making love, but you read a scientific description of how to "do it," it would not seem like a very special way to spend your time. In a similar way, some of these techniques may sound strange, but they can create miracles in your life.

One last thing. Although the methods here don't take long to do, they *are* powerful. When we try to change ourselves in any way, resistance inevitably shows up. Expect it. Anticipate resistance, but don't let it stop you from giving these ideas and methods your very best shot. If you try the suggestions from this book with an open mind and heart, I know you'll be pleased with the results you receive.

Feeling Really Good

A single psychological principle unites all people who have ever lived: Every human being wants to avoid emotional or physical pain and gain emotional or physical pleasure. Of course, how we accomplish this task is different for each of us. To feel good, some people have to control and manipulate millions of people, while others need only close their eyes and meditate. If the ways you know of feeling great take a lot of time or money or involve a lot of effort, you reduce the odds of feeling happy much of the time. On the other hand, if you know a variety of simple ways of feeling loving, peaceful and joyous, you'll probably experience a lot more pleasure in your life. Likewise, if your methods for avoiding pain are harmful to you (such as drug use, overeating, etc.), your quality of life will go down. Yet if you know healthy and effective ways to overcome pain, then suffering need not be your constant companion.

Each culture has prescribed ways of avoiding pain and gaining pleasure. For example, in Western culture we're conditioned to believe that if we only had more money, we'd definitely be happier. Surprisingly, studies show that once a person achieves middle-class status, additional money has little or no effect on their level of fulfillment. Yet many people struggle for years to make it rich, only to find that they aren't any happier. By the time most people have realized that what they *thought* would make them satisfied hasn't really worked, it's too late for them to explore other avenues.

Unlike most ways we've been taught to feel better, the methods in this section can generally be done in under two minutes, they don't cost anything, and they're immediately effective. In addition, many popular ways to change how we feel have negative side effects, whereas these methods tend to actually be good for you. By learning simple ways to change how you feel, you'll have a lot more energy for pursuing what's really important to you. Having a sense of control over one's emotions can give a person greater "riches" than material wealth. As you practice these methods, you'll begin to feel more in charge of your feelings, your life, and ultimately, your destiny.



How to Quickly Change How You Feel

The Art of Asking the Right Questions

Having written two books that consist mostly of questions (*Life's Big Questions* and *Instant Insight*), I have a lot I could say about this subject. Yet, in essence what I want to convey is that by asking yourself specific questions on a regular basis, you can dramatically change your life. Questions are a quick and powerful way to change your focus—and what you focus on grows. Our emotional state is largely determined by what we think about. If we subconsciously think throughout the day, "What else is wrong in my life?" then we'll likely feel anxious a lot of the time. However, if we focus on the question, "What can I feel grateful for?" then it's easy to feel a whole lot better.

Asking questions to change your focus is a time-tested technique. We already do it, and it has an immense impact on how we feel. Unfortunately, usually we use this method to make ourselves feel angry, depressed, or anxious. We think of things like, "What else do I have to do today?" or "Why is that person such a jerk?" Like a good computer, our

brain attempts to answer whatever question we feed it. Out of the millions of things it could think about, our mind chooses just a few things to focus on. How does it know what to let into consciousness, and what to ignore? Our brain chooses what to perceive based on the subconscious (or conscious) questions we ask ourselves. If you ask a negative question, you'll likely feel morose. If you ask a positive one, you'll focus on different thoughts and likely end up feeling good.

Over many years of trial and error, I have found there are four specific questions that are effective in quickly changing how a person feels. They are:

1. What small successes have I had recently?
2. What could I feel grateful for?
3. Who do I love and/or who loves me?
4. What do I appreciate about myself?

Each of these questions can be like a flashlight that helps you see past your inner darkness to the “heaven within.” It only takes one or two minutes of focusing on any of these inquiries to change what you perceive and how you feel. To tune into the magic they offer, simply begin by taking a slow, deep breath, and then repeat the chosen question a couple of times. At first you'll probably come up with intellectual answers that don't seem very connected to your feelings. Yet with practice you'll learn to feel positive emotions that result from the answers you think of; for example, if you find yourself feeling overwhelmed, you may choose to ask yourself, “What small successes have I had recently?” As you think of several answers, you'll notice your thoughts will begin to move in a different direction. By focusing and visualizing one or more successes, you can begin to tune into the *feelings* of confidence and achievement. In just a couple of minutes you can transform your experience and feel immensely better.

When you answer any of the four inquiries, the important thing is to think of *specific* instances when you felt what the question is asking you about. They need not be big, dramatic examples—they only need to be times that were emotionally meaningful to you. For instance, when asking yourself, “What could I feel grateful for?” you could feel thankful for literally

hundreds of things. You could feel gratitude for being healthy, for having food when much of the world goes hungry, for friends, or even for the use of your phone. By focusing on how fortunate you are compared to many other people, you can learn to tune into the feeling of gratitude whenever you desire.

The question “Who do I love and who loves me?” can be a wonderful way to dive into your heart and experience the grace of love. By remembering a specific time you felt loved by someone, or a particular time you felt in love with someone, it’s possible to tune into the warmth within your heart. With practice, you can take “mini love breaks” throughout the day that open your heart with love in just a minute of meditation.

The final question “What do I appreciate about myself?” can be a good antidote to feelings of self-dislike or unworthiness. The simple fact that you bought this book shows that you’re interested in bettering yourself. You probably have a lot of little things about yourself which are likeable. By thinking of some of them, you’ll feel better. For some people it’s hard to see what is good and loveable about themselves. If you have a hard time with this question, you might try asking yourself, “What good things would my friends say about me?” As you focus on what you (or others) see as your positive traits, you’ll feel more confident, loveable, and have genuine compassion for yourself.

The hardest thing about this technique is remembering to use it. Yet if you give it a really good try, you’ll see that it can work wonders. Being able to quickly go from feeling overwhelmed to feeling confident, or feeling anxious to being grateful is one of the most important skills a person could learn. To a large extent, your ability to act effectively in the world is based on how good you feel. As you gain more control over your thoughts and emotions by asking yourself these four questions, you’ll not only feel better—but you’ll also be better able to contribute to others.



How to Easily Become a Happier Person

The Pain and Pleasure List

What do you absolutely love to do? It need not be a big thing. Perhaps you really love to watch football, or maybe you really enjoy baking your own bread. Often, we get so caught up in living our life that we forget to take time for life's simple pleasures. Many people find that their life is so full of responsibilities that they rarely take time for fun and adventure. If that sounds like you, then you'll benefit by using the "Pain and Pleasure List" (PPL). The PPL is a list of at least ten things you enjoy doing and a list of ten things you don't particularly care for. It helps you clarify what really turns you on in life and what you do only because you have to—or think you should. While we all need to do things we don't like from time to time, life is not meant to be a series of burdens and responsibilities. By having this handy list that says so much about yourself, you'll be able to make important changes in your life with a lot more ease.

The first step in using the PPL is to simply create the list. The singular act of writing down ten things you love to do and ten you don't care for can reveal a lot about your life. Recently, a client named James made his list while in my office. He had originally come to see me because of depression, stress at work, and problems with his wife. The list he created follows:

Ten Things I Don't Like to Do

Ten Things I Love to Do

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| 1. Go to work. | Ride my bike. |
| 2. Market myself or my products. | Be by myself, reading a good book. |
| 3. Clean the house. | Play with the dog. |
| 4. Cook. | Eat good food. |
| 5. Be around disagreeable people. | Travel. |
| 6. Spend time with my parents. | Get a massage. |
| 7. Taxes and paying the bills. | Spend time in nature. |
| 8. Give my wife a massage. | Make love with my wife. |
| 9. Go shopping for clothes or gifts. | Drive and listen to music. |
| 10. Argue with wife. | Watch a good football game. |

After James made his list, I had him estimate the number of hours every month he spent doing each activity. When he finished this part of the exercise, it was brutally clear why he was depressed, stressed, and messed-up with his wife. The total number of hours on the “pain” side of the list was a whopping 215 hours per month. The total number of hours on the “pleasure” side of the list was a meager thirty-two hours a month. That’s almost a seven-to-one ratio of pain to pleasure. I’ve found that when the degree of pain as compared to pleasure rises above a five-to-one ratio, people dislike their life. In order to feel good again, such people need to spend less time doing “painful” activities, and more time doing what they enjoy.

The first key to changing your life and behavior is to be *aware* of what’s currently not working. If, after completing your own PPL, you see a similar pattern to James’ then you’ll know you’ve been denying yourself too much. You need to put pleasurable activities at a greater level of importance in your life. Sometimes people think if they make pleasure a bigger priority, the rest of their life will fall apart. Not true. When we *don’t* have enough good times in our life, we become less capable and

effective in our career and relationships. We pay a price. As we feel good more regularly, the “rising sea” of our emotions tends to lift the various “boats” of our life.

On the other hand, some people who complete the PPL see a pattern of having *too much* pleasure in their life. They tend to avoid responsibilities and discipline at all costs. Unfortunately, this form of hedonism doesn't work well long term. By avoiding difficult things now, people with this predilection often create problems in their finances and relationships later on. The key to having a successful life is to find the right balance of pain to pleasure. It must be a balance that works, not only in one's current life, but it must also work long term.

Another way the PPL can be useful is as a convenient reminder of what you really like to do. Sometimes we get so caught up in the various “chores of life” that we forget to enjoy ourselves. By putting the PPL in a place where you'll see it often, it can softly help you to remember the direction you want to go. In addition, seeing what causes you “pain” can serve to remind you about areas of life you'd possibly like to change. If your list boldly declares that you spend 160 hours a month at a job you don't like, then it might help motivate you to look for another job.

Ultimately, to change your life, you need to change individual behaviors. If there's a lot of pain and little pleasure in your life, ask yourself the following two questions:

1. Are there any activities on the “pain” side of the list that I can easily change, do less of, or have someone else do instead?
2. Are there any activities on the “pleasure” side of the list that I can easily do more of, beginning with scheduling time for it in my life right now?

As you ask yourself these two questions, search your lists for answers you can immediately act upon. Then take action. Schedule a fun activity into your busy week, or see if you can get someone else to do what you always hate doing. Even a small change can snowball into a major shift in your attitude and disposition. Let the Pain and Pleasure List be your caring companion—gently reminding you of the road to greater fulfillment.



How to Easily Feel Inspired

The Magical Movie List

The TV and newspapers blare out an endless stream of bad news. Our own lives are filled with a constant barrage of stress. With so much negative information overwhelming us at all times, we need an easy and effective way to replenish our souls. Fortunately, a quick and powerful source of inspiration is readily available—movies. A good movie or DVD is truly a remarkable gift of modern technology. In about two hours you can enter a whole new world and become absorbed into its story, characters, and underlying message. When a movie touches your heart, it can inspire you to new heights of hope and possibility. It can almost instantly change your attitude and how you feel.

Nowadays, the average American spends about eleven years of his or her life watching TV—more than any other waking activity, including work! While watching TV can be fun and relaxing at times, the preponderance of violent images and bad news on TV can also be stress-inducing. In fact, studies show that most people actually feel *worse* after they watch TV. On the other hand, an inspiring movie can have an uplifting effect on people for many hours—or even days. Research indicates that traits such as kindness and bravery are increased in moviegoers after they watch movies whose characters display such qualities.

Since what we watch on TV or in the movies affects how we feel and act, it's critical we become selective about what we expose ourselves to. When you were young, your parents probably prevented you from seeing certain TV shows and movies. Now that you're an adult, you need to choose which images and stories will help feed the type of person you want to become. Because there is a lot of “garbage” in the media, it's not an easy job to do. To

help make the task easier for you, I have come up with a list of thirty highly inspiring movies. This list was created by asking approximately 2,000 people who attended my workshops about the “most inspiring movie they ever saw.” The thirty movies that got the most votes ended up on the list. In alphabetical order, here are the movies most people selected:

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| 1. <i>Being There</i> | 16. <i>Harold and Maude</i> |
| 2. <i>The Bucket List</i> | 17. <i>The Matrix</i> |
| 3. <i>Brother Sun, Sister Moon</i> | 18. <i>Michael</i> |
| 4. <i>Casablanca</i> | 19. <i>Network</i> |
| 5. <i>Chariots of Fire</i> | 20. <i>Out of Africa</i> |
| 6. <i>Dead Poets Society</i> | 21. <i>Peaceful Warrior</i> |
| 7. <i>The Empire Strikes Back</i> | 22. <i>Powder</i> |
| 8. <i>E. T.</i> | 23. <i>The Razor's Edge</i> |
| 9. <i>Field of Dreams</i> | 24. <i>Rocky</i> |
| 10. <i>Forrest Gump</i> | 25. <i>Schindler's List</i> |
| 11. <i>Ghandi</i> | 26. <i>The Shawshank Redemption</i> |
| 12. <i>The Girl in the Café</i> | 27. <i>The Ten Commandments</i> |
| 13. <i>Good Will Hunting</i> | 28. <i>Titanic</i> |
| 14. <i>Gravity</i> | 29. <i>The Wizard of Oz</i> |
| 15. <i>Groundhog Day</i> | 30. <i>Yes Man</i> |

Of course, there are many inspirational movies that didn't make it onto this list. Yet if you haven't seen several of these movies, my advice is that you see them. Simply check Netflix or call your local video store and see if they carry the ones you haven't seen. A truly wonderful movie is a blessing. It can make your heart soar, teach you new ways to live, and help you gain the wisdom of the characters portrayed in the script. Even if you've seen most of the movies on the above list, rent and see them again. I've learned that I often get more benefit from seeing a movie a second, third, or fourth time, than I did the first time I saw it.

A few years ago, I went to a showing of the classic movie *Harold and Maude*. The first time I saw this movie, I loved it. I was now seeing it for

the fifth time. I casually commented to the woman sitting next to me that I had seen this movie on four previous occasions. She looked at me as if I was crazy, and then said, “I’ve seen this movie twenty-six previous times!” She was serious. She went on to tell me that this movie had totally changed her life. The main character in the movie, Maude, inspired her to leave her loveless marriage, travel around the world, and become an artist. I was amazed. Ever since I heard this woman’s story, I have been much more open about the potential effects a movie can have on a person’s life. Nowadays, I often see the same movie on several occasions. I’ve learned to “absorb” what inspires me about a particular movie so that it never seems “old.” For me, watching movies has become a powerful source of illumination and learning.

In an attempt to always have new stimulation and entertainment, we often fail to get the deeper significance of what is right in front of us. What movies have truly inspired you in the past? Perhaps it’s time to see them again. What movies have simply given you a good laugh or made you feel good? With an open mind, you can watch a great movie over and over again and be nourished from it with each viewing. Like a good friend, a good movie can repeatedly feed your soul and uplift your heart.



How to Be Filled with Energy

The Magic Pill

Have you ever felt depressed and filled with enormous amounts of energy at the same time? Probably not. When we have a lot of energy, we both feel better and get more done. Of course, we’re told that the way to greater vim and vigor is to eat right, exercise, and avoid harmful substances. We know

what we *should* do, but we often don't have the energy or discipline to follow through. If you're like me, you wonder "are there any safe shortcuts to having more energy?" Luckily, there are. There are now a plethora of supplements you can buy in health food stores that can safely and effectively supply your body with more vitality. Once you find one that works well for you, it's like finding a magic pill that helps you feel healthier, happier, and more energized. Who knows, you may even become motivated to eat better and exercise more often!

If you go to a health food store and ask about supplements to give you more energy, you'll likely be overwhelmed by the number of products available. After much trial and error, I've learned three things about how to find the right supplement for your body. First of all, it's important to look at the ingredients in each of the bottles. Many energy supplements are really just caffeine-like derivatives that take a toll on your body. Caffeine, ma huang, ephedra, and guarana are all very similar in that they stress your adrenal glands and ultimately leave you with less energy. It's better to look for products whose main ingredients are things like bee pollen, spirulina, wheat grass, amino acids, ginseng, blue green algae, royal jelly, or vitamin B-12.

The second thing helpful to know when looking for a supplement is that different pills work for different people. Just because your friend swears that Product X changed her life doesn't mean it will have any effect on you. It's best to buy small amounts of several products and give each one a trial run to see which one works best. In addition, you may need to try each supplement for a month or so to notice what, if anything, it does for you. Thirdly, there's a tendency for your body to gain a "tolerance" for whatever you take. This means that, over time, it has less effect on your body. That's why it may take more caffeine than it used to in order for you to feel really "buzzed." If you've tried several supplements, you can begin with the one that had the greatest effect, but periodically change to others when you feel you're building up a tolerance.

Bearing all this in mind, there are several supplements I can heartily recommend because of their ingredients and the consistently good

results people report. My personal favorite is something called Uptime. Although it has a small amount of caffeine in it, it has plenty of nutritional goodies that more than make up for the fact that it contains a little caffeine. If you're a coffee drinker, definitely consider using Uptime as a healthier alternative. If you can't find it in your health food store, you can order it directly by calling (800) 441-5656, or ordering it off the Internet at www.up-time.com.

Another favorite is something called Ultra Energy Plus by the Rainbow Lite company. This product is filled with good stuff and contains no caffeine at all. Although it doesn't take effect as quickly as Uptime, it can give you a nice boost of sustained energy. Think of it as a powerful food that blasts your body with vitamins. You can order Ultra Energy Plus at vitacost.com. This website will save you a lot of money on almost any supplement. (I have no financial tie to this website).

There are also various drinks you can buy to give your body a boost of energy. Nowadays there are many places that offer a variety of fresh squeezed juices that are energizing and good for you. Look for smoothies that have bee pollen, vitamin B-12, or a lot of "green stuff" added to them, or try some fresh wheatgrass juice. A big smoothie sipped throughout the day can provide you with plenty of vitamins and sustained energy. Experiment with what your local juice bar offers until you find one that tastes good and feels great.

A final energy supplement I think is great is called Ignite. It's an energy drink that's actually good for you. It makes you mentally and physically alert for hours—with no crash at the end. Unfortunately, it can only be bought through a multi-level system. If you want to know more about it, you can email me at iamjonr@aol.com and I'll send you more information. The great thing about finding a magic pill or drink that lifts you up is how easy it is. No matter how lazy you are, you can always pop a pill into your mouth or drink some fresh juices. Although supplements are easy to "use," their effect can be life transforming. Many people don't realize that the reason they feel depressed or unhealthy is due to a lack of nutrients. I've seen clients in my therapy practice who literally change

overnight by finding a supplement they really needed to take. Once you find one or two things that feel good to your body, you'll have a consistent way to support your body, mind, and spirit. With a little exploring, for under a couple of bucks a day, you can find a supplement that can have a major impact on your life. That's a deal too good to refuse.



How to Neutralize Bad News

Asking About What's Good

If your life is anything like mine, several times a week you receive what appears to be “bad news.” It need not be anything big. Perhaps you realize that your car needs a new muffler or your back begins to ache again. Since things often don't go the way we want, it's important to learn to handle life's little upsets without losing one's equanimity. How can that be done? One approach is to try to look on the bright side of whatever happens in your life. That sounds good in theory, but it can be difficult to do in the real world of constant activity and stress. What's needed is a simple technique that can quickly change our thinking—even though we feel upset. That's no small task. Luckily, there's a method that is so simple and effective that it has even worked for a lazy person like myself. I call it “Asking About the Good.”

A few years back, I was giving a lecture on how good things can come from seemingly disturbing problems. During the break, a student approached me and said he had something for me in his car. As he took his time rummaging through his car, I got increasingly annoyed because I was taking too much time away from class. Every time I was about to head back to class, he'd say, “Wait! I think I found it.” Finally, I insisted I must get back to class. As I entered the class, about a hundred

people yelled, “Surprise!” It was the day after my birthday, and most of my friends had come to throw me a party.

What was humbling about this experience was the fact that I had just been talking about seeing the positive in adversity, but had totally missed the opportunity when it happened. I realized that in order to feel peace during difficult times, a very simple and precise technique was needed. The idea alone is not enough to help when the crap is hitting the fan. Therefore, I tried various methods that I thought would help. Most failed miserably, but one technique has withstood the test of time and challenge. Whenever a problem arises, I simply ask myself, *What could potentially be good about this?* Then, even if I don’t believe it, I come up with at least two things that could *potentially* be valuable about the problem I’m facing. If nothing else, when difficulties arise in my life, they can always help me learn important inner traits such as compassion, patience, humility, and faith.

The question “What could potentially be good about this?” is a great aid to gaining equanimity in life. Besides the fact that it takes your mind off the negative aspects of the situation at hand, it can help you see the possible opportunities that were invisible to you before. Most growth, whether it be personal or professional development, comes from facing challenges and turning them into opportunities. If you can sincerely ask yourself the above question when you’re upset or stressed, you can quickly find your way back to a feeling of peace.

When asking yourself “What could potentially be good about this?” you need not come up with answers you truly believe. Just the simple act of inventing a couple of possibilities will help you to feel better. Normally, when something happens that we don’t like, we don’t see *anything except* what made us upset. We lose all perspective.

Imagine you have a black dot the size of a nickel on the page in front of you. If your eyeball were right on top of that black dot, all you would see is black. A person in such a position would rightfully state, “I see nothing but a big black void, devoid of any color. That’s all there is out here—total darkness.” When you ask about the potential good of any

situation, it helps you to gain perspective once again. It points your mind away from the black dot, and towards the bigger page of your life. Even if you aren't convinced that anything good could come from the problem at hand, at least you're no longer glued to the black dot. The experience of inner peace results from the ability to see that any "black dot" is only a small part of the picture of life. From a yard away, a nickel-sized dot is no big deal; from across the room, it's hardly noticeable.

The best way to see how well this method works is to try it out. Fortunately, life will give you many opportunities! Let's say that you come home one day and find that your neighbors have a new dog—one that has a predilection for barking for no apparent reason. After hearing the dog bark for two hours straight, you feel like hurting someone. Instead, you ask, "What could potentially be good about this?" At first you exclaim, "Nothing!" Yet, you know that such thinking won't do you any good, so you strain to come up with two possibilities. First, you think, "Well, I'll have to talk with my neighbors about this, and potentially we could become closer as we work out the problem." You're halfway there. Finally, you begrudgingly think, "I guess this is motivating me to communicate my needs, and better stand up for myself—which I often find hard to do." Now that your thinking is not stuck on the black dot, you can see how this situation can be used for your growth. Congratulations! Besides turning this situation into a growth opportunity by asking a simple question, you will most likely also feel a bit better.

It can be hard to remember to ask about the good when you're upset. In addition, even when you remember to ask, it might be hard to come up with two answers. You'll probably notice that there's a part of you that actually resists looking on the positive side. Yet there's no joy or energy in the experience of feeling "woe is me." By asking about the potential good, you'll soon feel better and be better at solving life's little upsets. As you learn to use this method as a habitual response to problems, you'll develop confidence that any situation can be turned into an opportunity for your growth. When you can consistently see the "silver lining" in the upsets of life, you'll be well on your way to creating lifelong happiness.