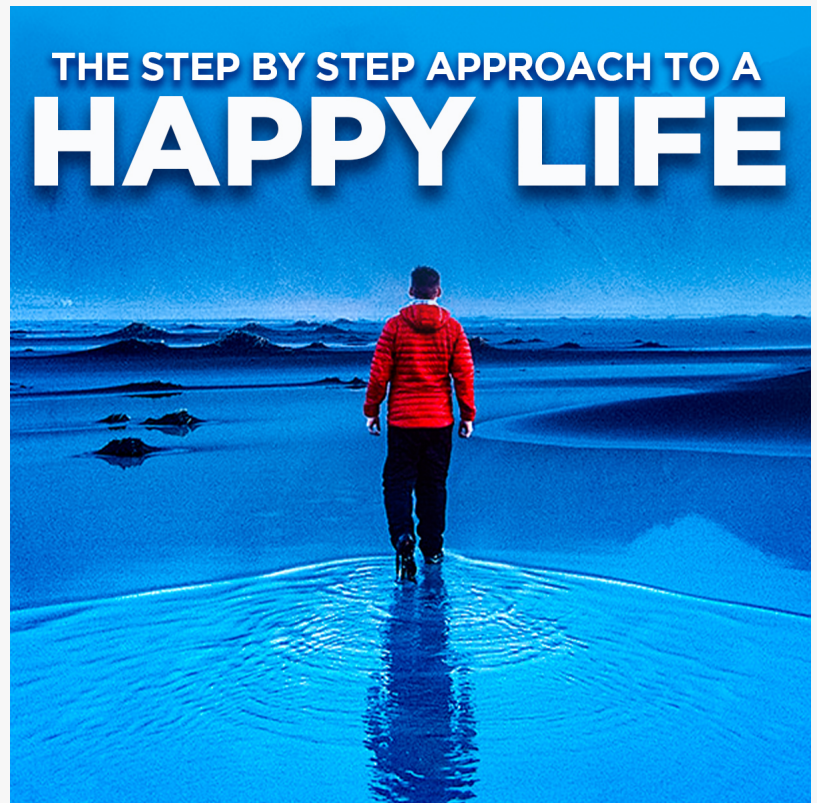


The Step-by-Step Approach to a Happy Life

*Life is about living in the moment,
adjusting to the present, and living well.*

NEWPORT BEACH, CALIFORNIA, USA,
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Have you ever had one of those days or weeks where life is going so well and you can't imagine it getting any better? Then, seemingly out of nowhere, something happens and your day or week isn't good anymore. This may happen after we return from vacation. One moment you're relaxing on the beach, enjoying the moment, and then you return home and lose that feeling of relaxation and you may even feel unhappy. A more serious example of this is when things seem to be going great but then you receive an upsetting phone call that someone close to you is in the hospital. There are both big and small examples that can affect our [happiness](#) every day. And if we have a hard time regulating our emotions, these instances can make us feel like we're on a roller coaster.



A Happy Life

Today we'll review a step-by-step guide to finding and [maintaining happiness](#) throughout these big and small situations that can throw us off course.

1. Acknowledge that life changes

When things are going well for us, it can be scary to accept the fact that things will inevitably change. It doesn't necessarily mean that this change will be bad or we'll automatically be unhappy, but it does mean that change will happen eventually. For example, when we first retire it might feel like the ultimate freedom. But, as we get older we face the potential of health problems that could affect how we travel and experience our retirement. Change is an inevitable part of life, but these changes don't have to bring about unhappiness.

2. Observe when you feel 'off'

When you feel 'off' or unhappy with a change you're experiencing, it's important to observe this feeling. You can do this by asking yourself "What's going on here? Why don't I feel happy today when I felt great yesterday?"

3. Explore your thoughts

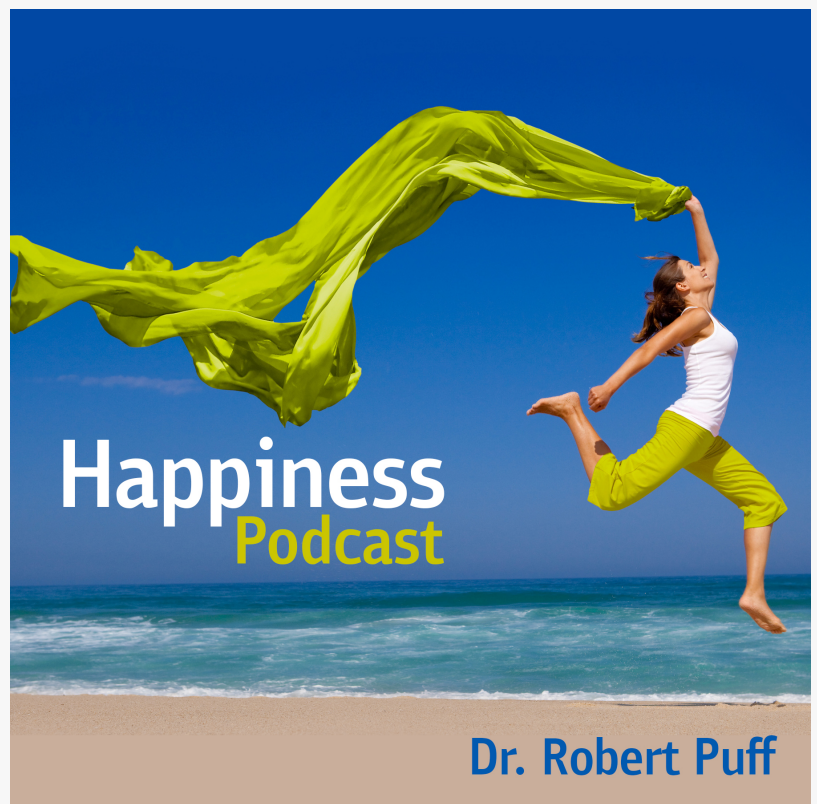
Thoughts have a lot of power over our emotions. If you can notice that your thoughts are causing you to feel a certain way, you can also ask yourself "What am I thinking about right now that is causing me to feel unhappy?" It's important to look inward and explore what is causing you to feel off or unhappy. And when you peel back these layers, you'll usually discover your thoughts are causing you to feel a certain way.

Sometimes it's obvious and other times the root cause can be subtle and you'll need to think for a while about what caused you to feel this way. In my personal practice where I help people feel better, many folks come in saying "I'm just depressed and I don't know why." My job is to help them dig deeper and answer the question: what was going on in your life that made you feel depressed? When I ask my patients this question, we can always find the precipitating cause.

Many people are susceptible to feeling depressed because of their genetics, and as a result, they experience more negative thoughts that in turn, make them sad. This same person might be able to go to an upbeat happy movie and also feel happy because their thoughts are currently on pause. But, when



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they leave the theater and there is room for their thoughts again, they will most likely revert back to feeling depressed. Our thoughts hold a lot of power over our emotions and as a result our overall well-being. It's important to be curious about our unhappiness and ask what happened at the time of these unhappy feelings instead of just accepting them.

4. Ask yourself if you can do anything about your feelings

Once you have accepted that things change, observed the fact that you might feel off or unhappy as a result of this change, and explored the thoughts that contribute to this negative feeling, you must ask yourself "Is there anything I can do right now to make myself feel less unhappy?" Let's use going on vacation as an example again - one day you wake up and you feel unhappy after feeling happy for several days. It's important to understand the root cause of this feeling, and in this case, it's because it's the last day of vacation. Once you know the cause, you can ask yourself if there is anything you can do about it. You could extend your vacation, or you can choose to look forward to something after your vacation ends like watching a movie on the plane, or seeing friends and pets when you go home.

When you choose to look forward to something versus harping on the fact that your vacation is ending, it helps you stay positive about a change, even though you might not be happy about it. Changing your thoughts can help make transitions like this so much easier. Oftentimes this is the hardest step because we don't like change! This is because we are either happy in our current situation, or change can bring about sadness. For example, if you stay married to someone for many years, one person is most likely going to get sick or die and the other person will have to deal with that. To prepare for these heartaches, you can accept change in the first place and remind yourself that you can adjust to anything, even if that means feeling devastated for a while. Allowing yourself to adjust to new circumstances will make life easier.

Let's look at another example to explore this further. Getting divorced is an awful thing to go through. This loss may take months or years to process, and even though the healing time for this can be long, it's still important to ask yourself if there is anything you can do to make it easier. Perhaps that means dating, reconnecting with friends, or taking yourself on a vacation. Change does not cause us to suffer, it's the fact that oftentimes we don't like the change and we suffer as a result. So when we fight changes throughout our life, we make things harder for ourselves.

5. Accept the current situation

If you can't do anything in your current situation, the best thing might be to simply accept your circumstances. The key to acceptance is recognizing that you can't change things, but you can make things easier for yourself by focusing on the things that bring you happiness. Let's use another example to explore this: losing your job. After you lose your job you might spend a great deal of time searching for a new job, but eventually, you'll hit a wall. Instead of harping on the fact that you don't have a job and it's awful and frustrating, you can choose to watch a show,

listen to a podcast, meditate, etc. The important thing to remember here is that you can use your time to do something else when you feel stuck. Better yet, getting outside into nature or moving your body can help [alleviate negative thinking](#).

6. When you have an opportunity to fix the situation in the future, give it a try

After you've accepted the situation and maybe even given yourself a break from thinking about it, you can always revisit it another time and see if you can try something else to fix it. And again, if there aren't any solutions the next go around, it's okay to accept that and let it go. Life is about living in the moment, adjusting to the present, and living well. When we're able to do this, we can live a happy life.

About the Happiness Podcast:

Do you ever wonder what it takes to lead a peaceful, happy life? Are you curious about the specific steps involved in a self-actualized, limitless life? Are you struggling with anxiety or depression? Or are you just plain tired and want some help? We explore all these concerns and more every week on the Happiness Podcast, which has been downloaded over 9 million times since its inception. Happiness does not happen by chance, but because we take specific actions in our lives to create it.

Dr. Robert Puff, Ph.D., author of 13 books, TV show host, Psychology Today blogger, and corporate trainer, has been studying the actions it takes to reach the highest levels of human achievement for decades, and he wants to share what he knows with you. Come and explore, along with millions of others from the Happiness Podcast, Dr. Puff books and Psychology Today blog, private clients and corporate workshop attendees, the specific steps to take so that you can soar in your life.

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