

# Happiness is a Choice

By Barry Neil Kaufman, Random House, 1991

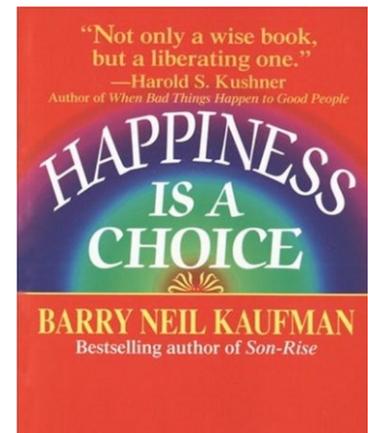
Unhappiness is not inevitable.

Barry Neil Kaufman, therapist, author, motivational speaker, and founder of the Option Institute, has observed that despite disappointments, illnesses, and physical and emotional problems, people who are most successful in finding happiness share certain traits - traits that less fortunate people can learn to emulate so that they themselves can find happiness as well.

Unhappiness is not an enemy - just a choice.

This book is not based on a moral imperative - no shoulds or should-nots - just choices.

BOOK OF THE WEEK:



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## The Big Idea

Unhappiness is not inevitable.

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## Why You Need This Book

This positive and encouraging book is an excellent prescription for a happier life. It teaches ways to defuse unhappiness and thrive despite all of life's challenges. It is sure to reward those who read it and take it to heart with a richer, more balanced life. It affirms the unlimited potential of the human spirit and reveals the options and choices that one can make to find the road to happiness.

## Creating a Personal Vision to Live By

*The eye sees what it brings to seeing. - SHELLEY*

A vision - a frame of reference or viewpoint - is like an invisible friend you invent to help you make sense of unfolding circumstances.

You create visions for the best of reasons: to protect yourself, to honor those you love and to express caring.

But you do not have to become prisoners of your perspectives; you can change them and your life by developing a completely new world picture... one human step at a time.

## *THE WAY WE LOOK AT LIFE DETERMINES OUR EXPERIENCE*

Such a simple insight presents each and every person with an opportunity to make momentous changes in life. The only limits are the ones you create. Why not inspire yourself rather than scare yourself? Your conclusions follow from your chosen biases (your chosen beliefs).

## *WE ARE BELIEF-MAKING AND BELIEF-CONSUMING CREATURES*

The impact of the beliefs you hold is profound. You create and hold beliefs to support what you think are best. Once they are articulated and itemized, your beliefs often sound somewhat bizarre and self-defeating. This is why reviewing them provides you with a wondrous opportunity.

Change beliefs and you change the attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that come from them. Even after exploring your beliefs, if you choose to retain some of the ones you have, you would do so with strengthened conviction. Either position becomes a victory! The decision is yours, as it has always been.

## *OUR BELIEFS CREATE OUR WORLD PICTURE, WHICH WE THEN TRANSMIT TO OTHERS*

As individuals, everyone becomes a force within a shared field of ideas and visions. First, you can acknowledge yourself as a receiver. In addition to that, you transmit your ideas and visions. Your life becomes a beacon that communicates the attitudes you assume, the beliefs you create and the actions you take. You become more than a role model; you seed the field of human experience with your perspectives and deeds.

## The Happiness Option

*Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be. - ABRAHAM LINCOLN*

You weren't born unhappy; you learned to be unhappy. And, in addition, you have become a

master at teaching and reinforcing unhappiness. In small, seemingly insignificant ways, you “save the day” but lose another life to misery. When you reward anger, you teach violence and war. When you support happiness, you teach love, peace, and acceptance. You have the choice.

**IS HAPPINESS AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM?**  
Desire combined with passion and the ingenuity of the mind can give birth to sustained happiness, something that transforms human experience.

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HAPPY?** Some call happiness a feeling of satisfaction, comfort, fulfilment and inner peace. The sensation of happiness might be unique to each and every one; however, you know when you are there. Happiness brings people closer together than pushing them apart. Happiness makes love tangible.

Happiness and the belief that you can experience your own happiness, anytime and anywhere, is the ultimate attitudinal advantage!

## Thriving in a “User-Friendly” Universe

*As we gaze into the universe deep inside of us, and into the universe which surrounds us, we search for an answer to the question - is it friendly? - BARRYNEIL KAUFMAN*

In choosing a user-friendly vision of the universe, you will notice more supportive action and opportunities around you. In choosing happiness, you will encounter a happy God. In choosing love, you will encounter a loving God.

Your creation of a new world picture, which would be supportive of you and therefore your pursuit of happiness, begins with attentiveness to your own human magnificence and to the innate tendency you and other creatures have to move together in like or compatible rhythms.

You plant the seeds of a user-friendly universe with your perception: “The eye sees what it brings to seeing.”

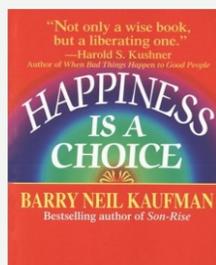
## Shortcuts to Happiness, Implementing the Happiness Option

*Dear Sweet Readers: If you have jumped to this chapter in the book, wonderful! However, after reading whatever sections you want, I would like to encourage you to backtrack to the beginning of the book and read the other chapters which I believe will create a strong foundation from which you can then easily implement the life-changing suggestions presented here. LOVE, BEARS (BARRY NEIL KAUFMAN)*

These tools for taking charge, which fit so naturally and easily in your hands, allow you to replace discipline with celebration and substitute years of questionable study and therapeutic soul-searching with simple reminders. You are fully equipped; you have only to exercise your winning option - your shortcuts to happiness.

You can take the shortcuts now and claim your birthright to happiness. Your choices will become your destiny. Your many choices to be happy (accessible in an instant by virtue of a decision) will create life-affirming and life-sustaining happiness arcs.

### ABOUT THE BOOK:



**Author:** Barry Neil Kaufman  
**Publisher:** Random House  
**Date of Publication:** 1991  
**ISBN:** 0-449-90799-6  
**284 pages**

## SHORTCUT # 1 – MAKE HAPPINESS THE PRIORITY!

Happiness first! Happiness now! Just bringing happiness (and love) to center stage will make a profound difference. Although the validity of this statement might appear obvious, rarely do people put happiness first in their lives.

- No reason to make happiness the dessert on the menu; it can be the whole meal. Even in the face of an attack or the loss of a treasure, you can affirm your first priority in every situation - to be happy.
- You can trust that your happiness will realign not only the dendrites in your brain but also the molecules of your material world and become a lullaby that will charm the universe.

## SHORTCUT # 2 – PERSONAL AUTHENTICITY

- The risk you associate with authenticity is illusory. The more you nurture yourself, remove the masks and allow yourself uncensored expression, the more the rhythms within blend with those surrounding you.
- Personal authenticity leads you to abandon the masks and masquerades you do not truly own so that you can embrace and celebrate your most central character.
- In effect, simplify your life. One face greets every situation without embarrassment or regret. Rather than rehearse the “right” response, you can trust yourself by allowing the response you feel in any given moment.
- Unhappy commentaries are not signs of authenticity; they are signs of unhappiness.

- Increased openness and honesty enhance a sense of personal ease and inner harmony. With that growing river of comfort (happiness) comes increased respect and love for those around us.

- This doorway to happiness opens easily. You can begin by sharing with a lover, a friend, a co-worker, a son or daughter or parent some fact about yourself you might have kept secret or at least, shared rarely with others.

## SHORTCUT # 3 – LETTING GO OF JUDGMENTS

- Of all the shortcuts to happiness, letting go of judgments can be the most dazzling. By discarding judgments and embracing people and situations more openly, you not only provide yourself with opportunities for great happiness, but also sometimes pierce walls formerly viewed as impenetrable.

- Judgments about people and possibilities limit your thinking and what you might try to accomplish.

- People have become geniuses in pinpointing all that's difficult and bad in their lives and the world around them. People set themselves up for unhappiness rather than for peace or comfort. Misery as a human experience comes from judging yourself, other people and events as bad or terrible.

- Acceptance and utilization, not condemnation, of the miracle of consciousness and your ability to reason will lead you to happiness.

- You are the belief maker! You can find the best or create the best in each and every situation. The “good” and the “bad” and what follows (the happiness or the misery) are

products of your judgments - pure and simple!

- You can dump the old judgments like dusty plates from old cupboard shelves and refuse to make new ones. You can begin anew today, right now. Just decide.
- Let go of the judgments and you will fly on the wings of acceptance, love and happiness!

#### SHORTCUT # 4 – BEING PRESENT

- Unhappiness exists only as a reflection or regret about the past or as anticipation or worry toward the future.
- It does not exist right now, in this moment... if we stay in this moment.
- You create limitations with obsolete concepts that do not serve you.
- Unhappiness is akin to confusion. By holding on to old discomforts, you bury the present and its wonder in the fog of the past.
- You are not in pursuit of history; you are in pursuit of happiness.
- You have only to remind yourself to attend to each unfolding moment in your chosen endeavors.
- Being present not only increases your skill and effectiveness in personal and global relationships; it expands profoundly the depth and scope of each experience.
- Letting go of the past and future is diving into the current in a river or a stream. Such a decision is neither irresponsible nor risky. Being present opens the doorway to happiness.

#### SHORTCUT # 5 – BEING GRATEFUL

- A personality characteristic that people clearly display when they become happier is their unending sense of gratitude.
- Being happy brings not only a recognition and harnessing of the power of your inner guidance, but also an acknowledgement of the synergistic power of a user-friendly universe that makes such happiness and self-trust possible.
- Gratitude is the sweetest way to embrace happiness. You can cut through all the misery by turning your attention to being grateful.
- Gratitude then becomes the shortest of shortcuts to happiness.
- To be grateful means not only to delight, enjoy and appreciate, but also to recognize simultaneously the blessing and the wonder of an experience. In such moments there is only happiness.
- You can train yourself to be sensitive to the many miracles of living. In the face of such awareness, gratitude (and happiness) will bubble easily to the surface.
- Whenever you think you have lost your way or have noticed joy to be absent from your daily endeavors, you can look around and find a host of things, events or people to appreciate. If you make the items specific, you will never exhaust the resources with which to fuel your gratitude.
- You can smile at a stranger, hug someone you know or tidy a disorganized shelf and be thankful for the opportunity.
- If you choose gratitude, you will be happy!

SHORTCUT # 6 – DECIDING TO BE HAPPY

If you decide to satisfy your inner longing for happiness, you can use these simple tools, these shortcuts, to grease the wheels that will speed you on your way!

- This shortcut encompasses all the other shortcuts and could render them obsolete as you learn to empower your decisions.
- By deciding to be happier (to dispense with your unhappiness), you acknowledge your capacity to choose your beliefs and feelings as well as to take a directorial role in guiding your responses to events and people with a clear and conscious intention.
- In deciding to be happy, you cut through to the heart of who you are. You want it! And you will do it now!

## A Simple Blueprint for Personal and Planetary Peace

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What happens if for some reason you want to jump off the train of happiness after climbing aboard? No problem. You can always choose (decide) to be uncomfortable again - for happiness is a choice and misery is always an option.

THE SHORTCUTS TO HAPPINESS
SHORTCUT # 1 – MAKING HAPPINESS <i>THE</i> PRIORITY!
SHORTCUT # 2 – PERSONAL AUTHENTICITY
SHORTCUT # 3 – LETTING GO OF JUDGMENTS
SHORTCUT # 4 – BEING PRESENT
SHORTCUT # 5 – BEING GRATEFUL
SHORTCUT # 6 – DECIDING TO BE HAPPY

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