

HOW TO BE HAPPY *Now*

FINDING HAPPINESS
IN EVERYDAY LIVING

"The pursuit of happiness is a most ridiculous phrase,
if you pursue happiness you'll never find it."

— C. P. Snow —

Jared Akers

Contents

Introduction.....	3
My Story	5
Never Satisfied.....	5
Chasing a Fantasy	6
The Bottom	7
The Journey Begins.....	8
The Committee.....	9
As Good As it Gets	9
How to Be Happy Now.....	11
The Three Keys to Happiness	13
Love	14
Purpose.....	15
Gratitude	15
Putting it all Together	16
Where to Go From Here	18

Introduction

Congratulations! You've taken an important step in seeking happiness, action! Thank you so much for taking the time to download this eBook. It really does mean a lot to me that, out of all the things we have to distract us these days, you've taken the time to read something I've spent many hours on writing. Thank you.

Before we jump into this, I will suggest two things to think about as you read.

Firstly, keep an open mind. All of the things I share in this eBook are from personal experience and people I know who have found happiness in everyday living. Listen for the similarities and not the differences as you read; specifically, identify with the feelings, emotions, and fears.

*"The mind is like a parachute -
it works only when it is open."
- Frank Zappa*

Secondly, **happiness is extremely subjective**. What translates to happiness for one person may not be the same for the next. Nonetheless, I have watched people from all types and backgrounds find happiness by using the methods I discuss here regardless of what happiness initially meant to them. Again, I only ask that you keep an open mind. I say this because, as you'll read in my story later, I struggled for years with what I perceived happiness to be. I discovered why I continued to fail at sustaining long term inner-peace and happiness; I was chasing after the wrong things. Just keep that in mind as you read through this eBook.

You may also notice that my writing is straight forward. I will not sugar-coat things and I have no reason to not be completely honest. As you learn how to be happy now, you will realize that a by-product of living a life true to your authentic self is the focal point of that happiness. The journey you take to get to that point is your own. This eBook is simply to share what has worked for me and countless others. I share it straight and honest, just how it has worked for me. After that, it's up to you; take it or leave it. Results may vary, but if you take action, something will happen!

Jared Akers

<http://jaredakers.com/>

Disclaimer: The use of this material is not a substitute for health or professional services. Consult competent professionals to answer specific questions about depression or other specific health and wellness related questions. If you suffer or believe you may be suffering from depression or any other emotional disorder, I encourage you to seek help from a trained mental health professional such as a psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, or licensed counselor.

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My Story

Never Satisfied

When I was 22 years old I became a zookeeper, fulfilling a childhood dream. I had found my calling and felt lucky to have discovered my life's purpose at such an early age.

A few years went by and I discovered something... it wasn't my dream job anymore. I'm not sure if I just woke up one day and realized I was bored with life, or if it was a process. I do know that I felt something deep in my soul that I remember to this day; that no matter what I accomplished in my life, I would never be satisfied. The profound effect of that moment would not be realized until many years and painful experiences later. Looking back now, I realize that was the moment I began the cycle of chasing after happiness.

For years I bounced around from job to job, relationship to relationship, and always felt I was destined for something great, but had no idea what it was or if I'd ever find it. I would always end up leaving relationships because I didn't have time to invest in them. I was too busy trying to change the world or chasing after what I perceived happiness to be; mainly financial success. Moreover, I did not know how to deal with emotions; something that started at a young age.

I grew up in a loving and supportive family, but for some reason I never learned how to express my emotions effectively. I thought I did, or at least I always seemed emotional and for the most part, happy. I was always the life of the party; and consequently, I partied a lot! I thought happiness was all about having fun. But no matter how much fun I had, I was always left wanting more—which is another story. The key point is, as long as I was looking for happiness from external people or things, I was never going to find it.

You see, I was always looking for things outside of myself to satisfy my need or desire for happiness. My self-worth was measured by what I owned, how many people liked me, or my career; not what was inside. It sounds silly to hear myself say that now, because I wasn't all that successful at those other things either. It's not like I was driving

a Porsche and living in a mansion, but it was the want and drive towards those things that I thought would make me happy.

No matter what I obtained materially, accomplished professionally, or experienced physically, it was always the next thing that was just what I needed. When I had that I would feel worthy or better and would finally be happy. But guess what? As I'm sure many if you already know, there was always something else after that. The cycle never ends.

Chasing a Fantasy

Success and happiness for me meant driving a Porsche and living in a fancy loft overlooking the city. And oddly that picture only had me in it. Sure I wanted to have a family, but I was so busy chasing the dream, I never made time for relationships. This fantasy of what my life would look like once I had made it was always in the back of my mind, driving me towards the next big thing. Yet honestly, I wasn't getting any closer to it. Just moving from one job or relationship to the next trying to find what truly made me happy.

There were several reoccurring themes throughout this time of my life. One was self-sufficiency; or more precisely, control.

As a child, I was always taking things apart to see what made them tick. Radio's, watches, anything that had screws holding it together I eventually took apart to see what was inside. It was my way of wanting to understand things. This process continued throughout most of my adulthood and reinvented itself as ambition in areas of employment. One example is my time spent in the restaurant business. Having started as a server, I quickly moved to dishwasher, line cook, bartender, corporate trainer, and eventually manager. I would hold each position for a few months or a year and become bored and move onto something else. All the while knowing I was capable of achieving anything I wanted, but still not sure of what that was.

I see all this now as a need for control; or more precisely, not wanting to depend on anyone else. If I knew how to do everything, I would never have to ask for help and/or need anyone. Needing someone meant letting them into my life and ultimately my

heart—which scared me for some reason. Basically it came down to fear, fear of being alone or not accepted for who I truly was. Thus, by not needing anyone, I fulfilled my deepest fear of being alone. It seems so obvious now, but I really had no idea that I was treating loneliness with isolation.

The process of looking for the greener grass continued into my early thirties. I would set goals for myself, achieve them, and then set my sights on the next challenge; all the while alienating myself from any real emotional relationships. Moreover, I was living a lifestyle that I wasn't really proud of; partying a lot and not growing emotionally or spiritually. Looking back, I think I “partied” to numb the realization I first experienced in my early twenties; that I was never going to be satisfied with life. Eventually I became emotionally and spiritually bankrupt.

The Bottom

The two things I hated most pushed me to a breaking point; **the way things were, and change**. My bottom came when I realized death may be easier than life. Dying sounded attractive rather than accepting I may never find true inner-peace and happiness. Phil Donahue once said, “Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.” Out of desperation I needed to find a different way to live.

*"If you keep on doing what you've always done, you'll
keep on getting what you've always got."*

- W. L. Bateman

It seems a lot of people require a catastrophic or near death experience forcing them to change or have a radical shift in their belief system, perspective, and/or behavior. How many times do you hear about someone who cheated death only to take on life with a renewed passion and find true happiness in everyday living? Why do you think that is? It's because they are no longer chasing after happiness. They have the unique and powerful gift of gratitude! Nevertheless, even in those cases, it's often short lived.

Most people do not just wake up one day and realize they are not happy and need to change their life. It's generally a slow and draining process; a slow-fade. Most people—myself included—didn't even realize there was a better way to live. I like the saying, "I didn't know what I didn't know." Others have significant life altering experiences that

change their outlook about life in an instant. For the rest of us, hard work or experience from painful mistakes is required to find a sense of inner-peace and lasting happiness.

After reaching a bottom, I became committed to doing whatever it took to get better. I sought out a different way of living, leaving behind every conceived notion of what I thought finding happiness meant.

The Journey Begins

The path to happiness began with one simple step, awareness; the awareness that something had to change. I didn't have much problem with that one, I was acutely aware something had to change if I was to go on living. Secondly was surrender. I had to admit to myself that I didn't know crap about how to be happy. Or at least what I thought would make me happy, well... hadn't. So I opened my mind and began a journey of self-discovery. I sought out professional—and non-professional—help from therapists, life coaches, books, psychiatrists, clergy; anything or anyone I thought could help me. I finally starting asking questions about spirituality and sought guidance from people who seemed to have something that had eluded me for so many years, true inner-peace and happiness!

For me, spirituality is a large part of my happiness. What I believe is not important. What is important is that I believe in something; something or someone that I can turn to for guidance or strength when things out of my control needlessly occupy my time and energy. What started my spiritual journey was an open mind. A mind open to the possibility that maybe there is a higher power or being, and that I'm NOT it! It came down to humility. Admitting that I was not the center of the universe and that maybe, just maybe, there was someone or something out there that knew more about finding happiness than I did.

But spirituality was only one part of the equation. The other thing I learned was that I had an unrealistic view of myself. Having been raised by a loving and positive family, I assumed I had a healthy self-esteem or at minimum some level of self-respect. My perception was that I was a happy, positive, and loving person. It took some time, but I discovered this perception was merely what I showed on the outside. Inside I was lonely, confused, and consumed by fear. Fear that if anyone knew the real me they wouldn't like

me, or worse, not love me. I confused what I was showing people on the outside with what I was feeling on the inside. The truth was I didn't love or even know my authentic self. Looking back, had I truly loved who I was, I would not have treated myself the way I did.

The Committee

Learning to accept myself for who I am was the first step in finding the inner-peace and happiness I sought for so many years. We all have the committee in our heads telling us what we can or can't do. If our self-esteem is lacking or we secretly loath ourselves deep within, the committee is constantly tearing us down. Saying things like "that's nonsense; you'll never achieve that, so why even try?" It's time to clean house! Fire the committee of negativity and start building a team of all stars comprised of your biggest fans!

The first step in my journey was building a committee that cheered me on. After years of living a life of self-neglect, I needed to start doing some simple things that built my self-esteem. Helping others is a great way to do that! There are many ways to building self-esteem, but no one says it better than Francine Ward:

"You get self-esteem by doing Esteemable Acts"

Concentrate on the actionable part of that quote, "doing." Action is required, and it takes hard work.

I have never had a significant moment of personal or spiritual growth by sitting around intellectualizing about something. Sure, I may come up with some great ideas, but it's the action taken from those ideas that enables me to interact with the universe. This interaction is where I get the emotional and physical feedback that precedes all significant emotional and spiritual growth. Doing things which build self-esteem slowly builds the committee into something positive.

As Good As it Gets

Have you ever asked yourself, "Is this as good as it gets?"

I have. One time I distinctly remember was around 2005. I was sitting on the couch in a house my girlfriend and I had moved into. I had a great job and a relationship which was

moving towards marriage and starting a family. I remember sitting there and hearing the question in my head, “what if this is as good as it gets?” The answer was... well, sort of depressing. I had the feeling of settling. That if this was as good as it got, I guess I’d be OK with it but deep down I felt like there must be something more. I was still missing something.

Eventually that relationship and job ended. Basically I self destructed, setting in motion the events that lead to the bottom I talked about earlier.

Let me just say that it does and can get better. Ultimately, it got better than I could have ever imagined. The something I was missing had nothing to do with my circumstances; e.g. job, material possessions, relationship. The process of discovering the missing part was long and hard, but the end result is a happiness which is not contingent on anyone or anything. The most important ingredient was realizing that I had the power within myself to be happy. That I was born with it and it’s my birthright! But first I had to learn to become emotionally connected and accepting of myself completely. The result was the ability to be emotionally connected to others. To be open and true to myself and others allowed me to experience real authentic love and happiness.

There is no better feeling than to have the question “is this as good as it gets?” replaced with the statement: it just doesn’t get any better than this!

How to Be Happy Now

If you skipped past my story to get right to the meat of this eBook... well, that's OK. If not, I hope you related to some of the emotions and struggles I encountered while searching for happiness.

The first step to finding happiness now is... (drum roll) **stop fighting**. Stop trying to wrestle happiness out of life through material possessions and professional accomplishments. The biggest mistake most people make in chasing down happiness is they believe it can be captured, purchased, achieved, or won. Yes, I realize this is not earth shattering news here and that you've heard this before. I have been guilty myself in the past, upon hearing the cliché "you can't buy happiness," of responding with something like "that's something only rich people say" or "give me a million and let me try!" But we still continue to do it all the time don't we?

True everlasting happiness is a by-product of discovering and loving your authentic self.

Take a moment and imagine what the perfect YOU would look like? What person or hero do you admire the most? What characteristics do they have that you would like to see within yourself? The key word here is **characteristics**; we're not talking about material possessions or physical features.

- Do they have integrity?
- Are they free of judgment and prejudices?
- Are they more concerned with bringing something to the table than what's in it for them?
- Do they seek to understand rather than being understood?
- When you're talking to them, regardless of how busy they may be, do they make you feel like the most important person in the room?

The list could go on and on. This is a list of things that just came to my mind that I strive for each and every day. And yes, it's hard and takes constant work, but the result is peace of mind and a good night's sleep; something no amount of money can purchase.

I had a psychiatrist tell me one time, “Jared, find someone who you truly admire and emulate them.” My reaction was... (To myself) “Lady, you’re full of crap! Obviously you don’t know me. Ask my mother and friends, they’ll tell you how great I am. I’m going to accomplish great things. Things this world has never seen. How can I emulate someone who doesn’t exist?”

You know what? She was right. It really is that simple. But the hard part... it has to be you! It has to be the person you feel inside you really want to be. This has nothing to do with material possessions or anything physical. We’re talking about character traits and values which make these people great, not what they own or have achieved professionally. Think about it; how many times have we seen the story of the rock-star or millionaire who seemingly has everything, yet commits suicide or is still unhappy?

We all have an ideal and authentic self inside of us that we ultimately would like to become. Maybe we have the best of intentions most times, but our actions do not always align with our intentions. People are judged—rightfully so or not—based on their actions, not their intentions. Look deep inside and discover that person you want to be! Yes, it may seem too great of a journey or impossible to live up to, but start by taking small actions that will lead you to that ideal self.

Let me give you a quick example from myself.

I would often hear the committee telling me I need to exercise or live healthier; but I never did anything about it. I would put it off till next week, or make feeble attempts at getting into shape or eating healthier for a week or two. Over time, I would berate myself mentally for being weak and not following through. Psychologically this wreaks havoc on my self-esteem and ultimately my happiness.

Today I use a different approach when listening to the committee. If I’m feeling a little down, I try to focus in on what the committee is telling me. You’re fat, you look old, etc. Then I can focus on what action I need to take, if any. The key question to remember is can I do something about it? If I can, I do it and as a result I feel better. If there is no immediate action I can take, I let it go.

The difficult part of this process is learning the difference between things we can and cannot control. It does get easier with practice and a little help.

Now, if you're like me, you might be scared of discovering who you really are. Maybe you're afraid of what you might find? Or in my case, what if I do discover that person, live up to these ideals or authentic self and I'm still miserable? Then I'm really screwed! What then?

In my case, it was like I was living a split life. There was this version of me which I thought others perceived me to be. Loving, caring, altruistic, funny, having my sh#t together. Yet on the inside I knew I wasn't living up to those ideals. I wanted to, but wasn't sure I could or if that was even who I truly was. Another fear was what if I could live in-line with that perception of me and was still dissatisfied with life? Often the hope of something is more secure than trying and failing; or in this case, succeeding.

At some point if we really want long-lasting significant change in our lives, we're going to have to face these fears. We have to dig deep, find out who we truly are in order to open up to the possibility of becoming who we're supposed to be.

What's the worst that could happen? Maybe we don't like ourselves. Big deal, at least we know who that person is now and we can do something about it. We may also find out we're pretty damn special and amazing. Which I already know you are!

*"I may not be who I should be;
I may not be who I want to be;
I may not be who I could be;
But thank God I'm not who I used to be."
- Anonymous*

The Three Keys to Happiness

Finding Love, Purpose, and Gratitude each and every day, in every moment possible, are the keys to being happy right now!

So how does one find Love, Purpose, and Gratitude each and every day? One way is learning how to have a healthy, loving relationship with ourselves.

Love

"Love is the only way to grasp another human being in the innermost core of his personality."

- Viktor Frankl

Learning to love ourselves—being emotionally connected—teaches us the innermost core of our personality. I have loved a lot in my life, but no love has been comparable to the love and empathy I feel for others once I truly learned how to love and be emotionally connected with self. And for that, I had to first learn to accept myself, completely.

I saw a preview for the movie *Shrink* with Kevin Spacey and heard a line that really made sense, "**the first step towards happiness is always the hardest.**" Learning how to accept ourselves is definitely hard for most, at least it was for me. But it can be done and it starts with taking small steps towards being the ideal you!

The by-product of a loving relationship with yourself is the realization that everything you need to be happy is already inside you. It doesn't need to be purchased or chased after, you already have it! More precisely, by learning to accept the consequences of being yourself, you no longer need to look outside yourself for happiness. We just need to get all that other crap created by our ego out of the way!

Start by learning how to love yourself. Let me give you a practical example of how this can work:

Most of my life I have loved helping people, at the same time, I had a hard time accepting help from others. It's like I would give the shirt off my back to anyone, but don't dare try to give me yours! The reason was simple; I wanted people to like me. If I do something for you, you will like me and thus I'll feel better about myself. There are many reasons why I acted this way, but in short, I wasn't living up to my ideal self which resulted in low self-esteem. Consequently, I needed external things to build me up, e.g. praise for being so helpful.

Today I am living as close to my ideal self as I ever have; as a result I have a healthy and loving relationship with myself. I care about me and need less external things to build me up.

As we need less external sources to build us up, we can concentrate more on what WE need to be happy internally; things we learn through the loving relationship with ourselves. And you'd be surprised at how little that is!

A PSA on Egotism: Needing less external influences to build us up is not saying we do not need other people or that we are in any way superior. A healthy self-esteem is based on a realistic view of oneself. Never attempt to boost your own self-esteem at the expense of others. Besides, if you are building towards your ideal self, you will have no need or desire to!

Purpose

Our purpose in life can be as big or small as we want it to be. For me, it's simple; to share the amazing experiences I've had in my life with others. I'm not trying to save the world, just share what I have learned. That a few years ago I was at a bottom emotionally and seriously considering suicide, and today, I am full of happiness and inner-peace. And yes, the first step was the hardest; awareness and surrendering, then making a commitment to try something different.

Find something that brings joy to your heart and you are close to finding your purpose. It can be as simple as volunteering at a local homeless shelter or gardening. Try not to worry so much about choosing the perfect one, your purpose can change! Start out with something simple.

Think of what an amazing world it would be if everyone learned how to deal with their greatest obstacle and spent the rest of their lives helping others with what they've learned!

Gratitude

Happiness, like sadness, is an inside job. Let's take a closer look at Sadness: Sadness is an emotion characterized by feelings of disadvantage, loss, and helplessness.

Simply put, if you concentrate on what you don't have, you're going to be sad.

Now let's look at gratitude: The state of being grateful; thankfulness.

So by that definition, gratitude alone should be enough to combat sadness or the state of being unhappy, which in most cases it is. A heart full of gratitude has little room for sadness.

Start simple; find gratitude in this very moment! Think about it, in this moment, right now, everything is OK. Unless you're in a sinking ship or plane crash while reading this, chances are in this exact moment everything is OK.

Look around you right now... go on, do it... and tell yourself in this moment you're OK. Your hair isn't on fire, the sky isn't falling, and nobody (hopefully) is knocking on your door demanding money. Right now, in this moment everything is fine!

Staying in the moment sounds easy enough right? The problem is, it's literally impossible to stay in the moment with all the junk we constantly have running around in our head. Things like bills or regrets of the past and fears of the future; not to mention the committee constantly meeting about how we should be doing this or that and how much happier we'd be "if only."

"Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow."

- Melody Beattie

No matter what our circumstances are in life, there is always something we can find to be grateful for. It's much easier to fire the committee of negativity when we're in a state of gratitude. So look around you right now in this moment and find something to be grateful for!

Putting it all Together

Finding love, purpose and gratitude in every moment possible are the keys to happiness. It can be hard at times, especially with all the crap running through our heads. However,

once we begin living more true to our ideal and authentic self, these things start to become natural and happiness will find you.

Finding love and purpose can be different for everyone, so find something that works for you. As for gratitude... I want to give you a simple practical exercise I use all the time; a gratitude list.

Get out a pen and a sheet of paper and number it 1 – 10. Start writing down all the things you can think of, in this moment, that you're grateful for. Here is mine:

1. A warm bed
2. A refrigerator full of food
3. My wife as I hear her in the other room cleaning (and when I'm done with this, I'm grateful I get to help! Really, I'm not kidding ;-)
4. My fingers
5. My eyesight
6. The snow on the ground outside (honestly, I don't really like snow, I'm more of a beach person but I'm grateful that friends I know who wanted a white Christmas got their wish this year!)
7. New carpet under my feet
8. The snuggly fleece pajama pants my wife bought me for Christmas
9. Books
10. Being alive today!

A gratitude list helps you see right there on paper that you do have some things to be grateful for. No matter how bad you think things are, we all have something to be grateful for, so write it down!

Gratitude in the heart is the seed from which grows love and purpose.

Where to Go From Here

I could write about these topics forever (and have), so I'm going to stop now or I'll never finish this eBook.

However, if you're **serious** about finding happiness, and willing to put in the work, I suggest you check out my full-featured book "[Happiness for the Practical Mind: 7 Steps to Discovering and Loving Your Authentic Self](#)." In it I go into detail on the processes which helped me and others find true serenity and happiness. I walk through some of the processes we've discussed in this eBook and practical ways to work through them. I touch on things such as Awareness, Surrender, Acceptance, and Self-Searching and how each one of these can be incorporated into everyday living. Everything is based on years of research, documenting the common thread of happy people, and taking massive action.

"Happiness for the Practical Mind is a comprehensive, action-oriented guide of ideas to create happiness from the inside out, from a man who has battled his fair share of demons. It's honest, simple, and concise—a great read!"

- Lori Deschene, Author of Tiny Buddha, Simple Wisdom for Life's Hard Questions & Founder of TinyBuddha.com

Check out the book on [AMAZON](#)

If you have any questions or comments about this eBook, please don't hesitate to email me at jared.akers@gmail.com and let me know your thoughts, questions, or to just share what's going in your life. Really, I mean that!

Also, be sure to check out the [How to Be Happy Podcast](#) where my wife Emily and I talk about life, love, relationships, happiness, and respect for oneself and our partners in life.

If you have a question regarding life, happiness, relationships, or anything that's on your mind you might be struggling with or need to share, I'd encourage you to call our podcast question line at: **775-234-8373** and leave a message. We just might answer and use your question on one of our episodes so we all can learn from each other.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this. I am grateful for you!!!

For more great tips on finding happiness, check out my website <http://jaredakers.com>



Jared Akers