Hey there!

I appreciate you taking the time to check out this Note and I hope you have as much fun reading it as I had creating it.

As you can probably tell, I *love* wisdom. And, if you enjoy getting "More Wisdom in Less Time" I think you might also dig PhilosophersNotes TV where I profile my favorite Big Ideas from my Notes in fun, inspiring, and practical 2-10 minute episodes all about getting our wisdom on and rocking our greatest lives! You can check out the first episode here:

Click here to watch Episode #1

Plus, we've got all kinds of other stuff on the site for you—from our collection of thousands of quotes and hundreds of Big Ideas to my blog where we share inspiring videos and news articles and other goodness.

And, of course, remember that this book is just one of the top 100 books on personal growth I profile and if you'd like to find out what the other 99 are, check this out:

http://www.PhilosophersNotes.com/Notes

Here's to our greatest lives,

B

Brian Johnson
Chief Philosopher

THE BIG IDEAS

Some Not-So-Happy
Statistics.

The Continuum
Of happiness.

Happiness Set-Point:
What's yours?

Life, Liberty & The...
Practice of happiness.

Response-Ability:
The ability to respond.

Scary Mind Math
& ANTs.

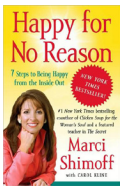
Velcro vs. Teflon
Negative vs. positive.

Incline Your Mind
Toward joy.

Look for the Lesson
And the gift.

Gratitude
The good vibes.

Baby Steps
+ Kaizen.



Happy for No Reason

7 Steps to Being Happy from the Inside Out

BY MARCI SHIMOFF WITH CAROL KLINE · FREE PRESS © 2008 · 320 PAGES

> "Happy for No Reason isn't elation, euphoria, mood spikes or peak experiences that don't last. It doesn't mean grinning like a fool 24/7 or experiencing a superficial high. Happy for No Reason isn't an emotion. In fact, when you are Happy for No Reason, you can have any emotion—including sadness, fear, anger, or hurt—but you still experience that underlying state of peace and well-being... When you're Happy for No Reason, you bring happiness to your outer experiences rather than trying to extract happiness from them. You don't need to manipulate the world around you to try to make yourself happy. You live from happiness, rather than for happiness."

~ Marci Shimoff from *Happy for No Reason*

Wouldn't you love to be "Happy for No Reason"?!?

Me, too. :)

Marci Shimoff came up with the idea for *Chicken Soup for the Woman's Soul* and in this book she weaves together some of the best Ideas from the Positive Psychology movement with *Chicken Soup for the Soul*-like stories from what she calls the "Happy 100," ranging from peeps like Elizabeth Gilbert (who wrote *Eat Pray Love*) to Michael Bernard Beckwith (founder of Agape Spiritual Center and star of *The Secret*).

It's a fun read and packed with goodness. We're barely going to scratch the surface of all the book's mojo as we learn how to build habits in all aspects of our lives to truly be "Happy for No Reason."

So, let's happy dance on in, shall we?!? :)

SOME NOT-SO-HAPPY STATISTICS

- "Less than 30 percent of people report being deeply happy.
- Twenty-five percent of Americans and 27 percent of Europeans claim they are depressed.
- The World Health Organization predicts that by 2020, depression will be second only to heart disease in terms of the global burden of illness."

" What would our lives be like if we could all be happy no matter what?"

~ Marci Shimoff

Yowsers.

Isn't it weird that in an era where we can send someone to the moon (and know *precisely* how much fuel it'll take to get there and back!), we still don't know how to create a culture of consistently happy people?!?

Odd.

In the spirit of inner-space exploration, let's see if we can take a giant step forward. :)

"When you experience your inner, innate happiness and are Happy for No Reason, you still enjoy the things in your life, but you don't look to them to make you happy."

~ Marci Shimoff

THE CONTINUUM OF HAPPINESS

"Happiness for any reason is just another form of misery" ~ The Upanishads

How about a little continuum of happiness?

Unhappy	Happy for Bad Reason	Happy for Good Reason	Happy for No Reason
<——>			
Depressed	High from unhealthy addictions	Satisfaction from healthy experiences	Inner state of peace and well-being

Sweet. So, we can be Unhappy (pretty straight-forward :), Happy for Bad Reason (think: alcohol, drugs, too much TV, etc.), Happy for Good Reason (success in our career, good relationships with family and friends, financial security, etc.) and Happy for No Reason (where we live FROM happiness rather than for it!).

WHAT'S YOUR HAPPINESS SET-POINT?

"Researchers have found that *no matter what happens to you in life*, you tend to return to a fixed range of happiness. Like your weight set-point, which keeps the scale hovering around the same number, your happiness set-point will remain the same unless you make a concerted effort to change it."

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

~ Aristotle

Did you know we all have a happiness set-point? Fascinating stuff that researchers are discovering.

As Marci says: "In fact, there was a famous study conducted that tracked people who'd won the lottery—what many people think of as the ticket to the magic kingdom of joy. Within a year, these lucky winners returned to approximately the same level of happiness they'd experienced before their windfall. Surprisingly, the same was true for people who became paraplegic. Within a year or so of being disabled, they also returned to their original happiness level."

You can think of your set-point like a thermostat. If it gets a little warmer in your house (i.e., you get a little happier!) the thermostat will bring your house/you down to the set-point. And, if it gets a little too cold, it'll bring you up.

Researchers posit that 50% of our set-point comes from genetics while 10% is determined by our circumstances (like our job, marital status, wealth). "The other 40 percent is determined by our habitual thoughts, feelings, words and actions. This is why it's possible to raise your happiness set-point. In the same way you'd crank up the thermostat to get comfortable on a chilly day, you actually have the power to re-program your happiness set-point to a higher level of peace and well-being."

"One begins identifying those factors which lead to happiness and those factors which lead to suffering. Having done this, one then sets about gradually eliminating those factors which lead to suffering and cultivating those which lead to happiness. That is the way."

~His Holiness the Dalai Lama

So, the good news is we can change our happiness levels. Of course, that doesn't (usually) happen with a snap of our fingers. It takes diligent, patient and persistent practice.

LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE *PRACTICE* OF HAPPINESS

"Back in Jefferson's day, he explained, the common usage of the word 'pursue' was not 'to chase after.' In 1776, to pursue something meant to practice that activity, to do it regularly, to make a habit of it.

What a difference a definition makes! Thomas Jefferson, our wise Founding Father, meant that we all had the right to practice happiness, not chase after it—which isn't very productive anyway. So let's stop pursuing happiness and start practicing it. We do that by practicing new habits."

" In 1977, Dr. Michael Fordyce, a psychologist and author of 'The Psychology of Happiness,' published the groundbreaking results of his experiment showing that students asked to study the habits of happy people actually increased their happiness and life satisfaction by just learning about the subject."

~ Marci Shimoff

" Unfortunately, most people put more energy into planning which car they're going to buy than into raising their level of happiness."

~ Marci Shimoff

Aha! So we don't have the right to "pursue" happiness. We have the right to PRACTICE it. I love that.

Marci continues: "People with high happiness set-points are human just like the rest of us. They don't have special powers, an extra heart, or X-ray vision. They just have different habits. It's that simple. Psychologists say that at least 90 percent of all behavior is habitual. So, to become happier, you need to look at your habits."

Aristotle taught us the same thing. He said, *"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."*

How about this from Maxwell Maltz' great book *Psycho-Cybernetics* (see Notes): *"Our self-image and our habits tend to go together. Change one and you will automatically change the other. The word 'habit' originally meant a garment or clothing… Our habits are literally garments worn by our personalities. They are not accidental, or happenstance. We have them because they fit us. They are consistent with our self-image and our entire personality pattern. When we consciously and deliberately develop new and better habits, our self-image tends to outgrow the old habits and grow into the new pattern."*

So, how's your "PRACTICE" of Happiness? Ready to learn some new habits and rock a sweet new wardrobe? :)

Before we get into some more Ideas from the book, how about this:

This is the #1 habit I can develop in my life that'll have the greatest positive impact:

_____

_____

This is the #1 habit I can *remove* from my life that'll have the greatest positive impact:

_____

_____

RESPONSE-ABILITY: THE ABILITY TO RESPOND

" We first make our habits, and then our habits make us."

~ John Dryden, seventeenth-century English poet and dramatist

"Our ability to respond to what happens to us—our response-ability—dramatically affects our happiness. The Happy 100 respond to the events in their lives in a way that supports their inner peace and well-being."

There it is again. Response-ability. :)

As you know if you've read many of these Notes, we come back to this theme again and again and again (!).

Are you a big ball of stimulus-response knee jerk reflexes or are you developing your ability to consciously CHOOSE your response?

Our happiness depends on our ability to respond in a manner that supports our Highest Selves. So, let's get *really* good at choosing wisely, eh?!? :)

SCARY MIND MATH & ANTS

" What a wonderful life I had! I only wish I realized it sooner."

~ Colette, twentieth-century French novelist

"Our minds—made up of our thoughts, beliefs, and self-talk—are always 'on.' According to scientists, we have about 60,000 thoughts a day. That's *one thought per second during every waking hour*. No wonder we're so tired at the end of the day!

And what's even more startling is that of those 60,000 thoughts, 95 percent are the same thoughts you had yesterday, and the day before, and the day before that. Your mind is like a record player playing the same record over and over again… Talk about being stuck in a rut…

" The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of Hell, a hell of Heaven."

~John Milton, English poet

Still, that wouldn't be so bad if it weren't for the next statistic: for the average person, 80 percent of those habitual thoughts are *negative*. That means that every day most people have more than 45,000 negative thoughts... Dr. Daniel Amen, a world-renowned psychiatrist and brain imaging specialist, calls them automatic negative thoughts, or ANTs."

Um, that's frightening. :)

So, to re-cap, on average we have 60,000 thoughts a day. 95 (!!!) % are the same thoughts from yesterday and the day before that and the day before that and... AND 80 (!!!) % of THOSE thoughts are NEGATIVE?!?

O.M.G. ... ANTs, ANTs, ANTs!

Time to get out some (organic, of course) ANT spray and clear out our minds, eh?!?

In the book Marci presents some awesome ways to make sure we *"don't believe everything we think"*—including Byron Katie's brilliant 'The Work.' (See Notes on *Loving What Is* for more on that, and, of course, pick up the book for more.)

VELCRO VS. TEFLON

" We are not disturbed by what happens to us, but by our thoughts about what happens."

~Epictetus, Greek philosophera

"We're still hard-wired the same way: we pay more attention to the negative than to the positive. As the psychologist and brain researcher Dr. Rick Hanson explained to me during our interview, our brains are 'Velcro for negativity and Teflon for positivity.' Our negative experiences stick to us like Velcro, while our positive experiences slide right off us like Teflon. In fact, researchers have found that it takes numerous positive experiences to overcome a single negative one! Unfortunately, this wiring turns out to be disastrous for our happiness."

There's a great section in the book on the fact that we're descended from the "Nervous Nellies" and "Fearful Franks" of the tribe. The peeps who really paid attention to the threats in the environment were the ones who survived long enough to have kids who then had kids who then had us.

As a result, in short, we have a "negativity bias" such that negativity makes a greater impression on our brains and we have "hot amygdalas" such that if we're not careful, we're gonna have a *lot* more fight-or-flight adrenalin running through our system than we want!

How do we deal with that?

Again, it goes back to re-wiring. Marci says: "I'm not talking about wishful thinking, or simply deciding to be happier. That's like pasting a smiley face over our pain or spreading a layer of icing over cake that's burned to a cinder. The bad stuff is still there. What I'm talking about is accessing the higher center of your brain, your neocortex, to reverse the negativity bias and override your primitive alarm system."

INCLINE YOUR MIND TOWARD JOY

" There is only one cause of unhappiness: the false beliefs you have in your head, beliefs so widespread, so commonly held, that it never occurs to you to question them."

~ Anthony de Mello, Jesuit priest and psychotherapist

"One evening a Cherokee elder told his grandson about the battle that goes on inside of people. He said, 'My son, the battle is between the two 'wolves' that live inside us all. One is Unhappiness. It is fear, worry, anger, jealousy, sorrow, self-pity, resentment, and inferiority. The other is Happiness. It is joy, love, hope, serenity, kindness, generosity, truth, and compassion.'

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, 'Which wolf wins?'

The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed.'"

I *love* that.

Which wolf are *you* feeding?

" People who are Happy for No Reason don't always need to figure everything out or be in control; they live in the flow of life, trusting the underlying benevolence and wisdom of that larger wholeness."

~ Marci Shimoff

Marci talks about the power of neuro-plasticity and the fact that we're literally re-wiring our brains moment to moment to moment as we either continue to reinforce our old, unhappiness-creating behaviors or build new, happiness-affirming habits. She says we need to *"Incline our mind to joy!"*

Powerful stuff.

One way we can do it is to *"Register the Positive."* As Marci says: "Have the intention to notice everything good that happens to you: any positive thought you have, anything you see, feel, taste, hear, or smell that brings you pleasure, a win you experience, a breakthrough in your understanding about something, an expression of your creativity—the list goes on and on. This intention activates the reticular activating system (RAS), a group of cells at the base of your brain stem responsible for sorting through the massive amounts of incoming information and bringing anything important to your attention. Have you ever bought a car and then suddenly started noticing the same make of car everywhere? It's the RAS at work. Now you can use it to be happier. When you decide to look for the positive, your RAS makes sure that's what you see."

That's a REALLY Big Idea.

" If this were happening for a higher purpose, what would it be?"

~ Marci Shimoff

Isn't it wacky that when you buy a new car all the sudden you see that model/color *everywhere*?!? The number of those cars (obviously) didn't change. What changed was your RAS started filtering those cars into your awareness because it was now relevant for you.

Same thing with positive and negative events.

One really fun Idea Marci shares on this: start giving away awards throughout the day: the most beautiful flower award, the kindest driver award, the most amazing clouds award. By playing the game you're conditioning your mind to see the beauty and wonder of your world—which, of course, is a VERY good idea if you'd like to live with more joy.

Try it out. It's super fun. :)

LOOK FOR THE LESSON AND THE GIFT

"The sad truth is that as long as you say, 'It's my mother's fault, my husband's fault, the government's fault, my sixth-grade piano teacher's fault…' you won't be happy."

Are you blaming one of the above (or, perhaps… a bad economy?!?) for all your problems?

If so, the sad truth is that, as long as you continue to do that, you simply WON'T BE HAPPY.

D'oh. We've *gotta* stop blaming. Marci's alternative? "If blame is one of the clouds obscuring your inner happiness, try it yourself. Rather than asking *Who's to blame?* start asking *What can I learn from this? What is the gift in this for me?*"

That's awesome. The next time you find yourself blaming, see if you can step back and ask yourself what you can learn from the challenging situation.

This. Is. Huge. (Seriously. :)

By refusing to blame anything outside ourselves and looking for the hidden gift, we're taking our power back and putting ourselves on the road to happiness. Very (very!) powerful.

THE GOOD VIBES OF GRATITUDE

"In an experiment by Dr. Robert Emmons at the University of California-Davis, people who kept a 'gratitude journal,' a weekly record of things they felt grateful for, enjoyed better physical health, were more optimistic, exercised more regularly, and described themselves as happier than a control group who didn't keep journals."

" There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle."

~ Albert Einstein

That's powerful. We've gotta train our gratitude muscles, yo!

It's SCIENTIFIC!!! If we do something as simple as keep a weekly gratitude journal we will be healthier and happier.

So, uh, let's, eh? :)

BABY STEPS + KAIZEN

"To make the quickest progress, you don't have to take huge leaps. You just have to take baby steps—and keep on taking them. In Japan, they call this approach kaizen, which literally translates as 'continual improvement.' Using kaizen, great and lasting success is achieved through small, consistent steps. It turns out that slow and steady is the best way to overcome your resistance to change."

Alrighty then. That's a *really* quick look at a handful of the plethora of Big Ideas from this great book.

Remember: To live with consistent happiness, to be "Happy for No Reason," stop *pursuing* happiness and focus on PRACTICING happiness.

So, let's get our kaizen on and take baby step after baby step after baby step all the way up the beautiful mountain that is our abiding joy,

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

If you liked this Note, you'll probably like…

The Big Leap

Authentic Happiness

Learned Optimism

Loving What Is

Psycho-Cybernetics

About the Author of "Happy for No Reason"

MARCI SHIMOFF WITH CAROL KLINE

Marci Shimoff is a celebrated transformational leader and a #1 *New York Times* best-selling author. The woman's face of the biggest self-help book phenomenon in history, she is the coauthor of six of the top-selling titles in the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series. She is also a featured teacher in the international movie and book sensation *The Secret*. President and cofounder of The Esteem Group, Marci delivers key-note addresses and seminars to corporation's, women's associations, universities, and professional and non-profit organizations. Over the past 25 years, Marci has inspired millions of people around the world, sharing her breakthrough methods for personal fulfillment and professional success. (Learn more and get a lot of cool free stuff, including all the exercises from the book at **HappyForNoReason.com**!) Carol Kline is a *#1 New York Times* bestselling author and coauthor of five books in the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series.

About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON

Brian Johnson is a lover of wisdom (aka a "Philosopher") and a passionate student of life who's committed to inspiring and empowering millions of people to live their greatest lives as he studies, embodies and shares the universal truths of optimal living. He harts his job.