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The Happiness Advantage The Seven Principles of Positive Psychology That Fuel Success and Performance at Work

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Author's Bio: Shawn Achor is one of the world's leading experts on human potential, having researched and lectured in forty-two countries, working to bridge the gap between the science of happiness and performance in our every day lives. Trained by some of the pioneers in the field of Positive psychology, Achor served as the head teaching fellow to help teach and design the famed "happiness" course, the most popular at Harvard at the time. He now serves as the founder and CEO of Aspirant, a research and consulting firm that uses positive psychology to enhance individual achievement and cultivate a more productive workplace. Achor's lectures on the science of happiness and human potential have received attention in the New York Times, the Boston Globe, and the Wall Street Journal, and on CNN and NPR. He lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Visit www.shawnachor.com.

Author's Big Thought: Conventional wisdom holds that if we work hard, we will be more successful, and if we are more successful then we'll be happy. If we can just find great job, win that next promotion, lose that five pounds; happiness will follow. Recent discoveries in the field of positive psychology have shown that this formula is actually backward: Happiness fuels success, not the other way around. When we are positive, our brains become more engaged, creative, motivated, energetic, resilient, and productive at work. This discovery has been repeatedly borne out by rigorous research in psychology and neuroscience, management studies, and the bottom lines of organizations around the globe.

Part One: Positive Psychology at Work

Discovering the Happiness Advantage

- Most individuals follow a formula that is: If you work hard, you will become successful, and once you become successful, then you'll be happy.
- The formula is broken because it is backward. More than a decade of groundbreaking research in the fields of positive psychology and neuroscience has proven in no uncertain terms that the relationship between success and happiness works the other way around. Waiting to be happy limits our brain's potential for success, whereas cultivating positive brains makes us more motivated, efficient, resilient, creative, and productive, which drives performance upward.

- In 1998, Martin Seligman, then president of the American Psychological Association, announced that it was finally time to shift the traditional approach to psychology and start to focus more on the positive side of the curve. We needed to study what works, not just what is broken. Thus, “positive psychology” was born.
- In today’s world, we ironically sacrifice happiness for success only to lower our brains’ success rates. Our hard-driving lives leave us feeling stressed, and we feel swamped by the mounting pressure to succeed at any cost.
- In his research at Harvard, Achor gathered and analyzed a massive amount of research, and was able to isolate seven specific, actionable, and proven patterns that predict success and achievement.
 1. *The Happiness Advantage*—Because positive brains have a biological advantage over brains that are neutral or negative, this principle teaches us how to retrain our brains to capitalize on positivity and improve our productivity and performance. The Fulcrum and the Lever—how we experience the world, and our ability to succeed within it, constantly changes based on our mindset. This principle teaches us how we can adjust our mindset (our fulcrum) in a way that gives us the power (the lever) to be more fulfilled and successful.
 2. *The Tetris Effect*—when our brains get stuck in a pattern that focuses on stress, negativity, and failure, we set ourselves up to fail. This principle teaches us how to retrain our brains to spot patterns possibility, so we can see—and seize—opportunity wherever we look.
 3. *Falling Up*—In the midst of defeat, stress, and crisis, our brains map different paths to help us cope. This principle is about finding the mental path that not only leads us up out of failure or suffering, but teaches us to be happier and more successful because of it.
 4. *The Zorro Circle*—when challenges loom and we get overwhelmed, our rational brains can get hijacked by emotions. This principle teaches us how to regain control by focusing first on small, manageable goals, and then gradually expanding our circle to achieve bigger and bigger ones.
 5. *The 20-Second Rule*—sustaining lasting change often feels impossible because our willpower is limited. And when willpower fails, we fail back on our old habits and succumb to the path of least resistance. This principle shows how, by making small energy adjustments, we can reroute the path of least resistance and replace bad habits with good ones.
 6. *Social Investment*—In the midst of challenges and stress, some people choose to hunker down and retreat within themselves. But the most successful people invest in their friends, peers, and family members to propel themselves forward. This principle teaches us how to invest more in one of the greatest predictors of success and excellence—our social support network.
- Together, these Seven Principles helped Harvard students (and another, tens of thousands of people in the “real world”) overcome obstacles, reverse bad habits, become more efficient and productive, make the most of opportunities, conquer their most ambitious goals, and reach their fullest potential.

The Happiness Advantage at Work

- The seven principles of positive psychology have extraordinary applications in the workplace in both good ideas and bad.

- Positive psychology researchers finished a “meta-analysis,” a study of nearly every scientific happiness study available—over 200 studies on 275,000 people worldwide. Their findings exactly matched the principles taught by Achor: Happiness leads to success in nearly every domain, including work, health, friendship, sociability, creativity, and energy. T
- Despite the academic explosion of positive psychology, its groundbreaking findings are still mostly a secret.
- Grounded in two decades of research that has revolutionized the field of psychology, and further shaped by the author’s study of the science of happiness and success, the principles that form the core of this book have also been field-tested and refined through his work with everyone from global financiers to grade-schoolers, surgeons to attorneys, accountants to UN ambassadors.
- They are a set of tools that anyone, no matter their profession or calling, can use to achieve more every day. They don’t only work in a business setting. They can help you overcome obstacles, reverse bad habits, become more efficient and productive, make the most of opportunities, and help you to conquer your most ambitious goals—in life and in work. In essence, they are a set of seven tools you can use to achieve more every day.
- The Happiness Advantage asks us to be realistic about the present while maximizing our potential for the future. It is about learning how to cultivate the mindset and behaviors that have been empirically proven to fuel greater success and fulfillment. It is a work ethic.
- Happiness is not the belief that we don’t need to change; it is the realization that we can.

Change is Possible

- Brain change, once thought impossible, is now a well-known fact. A fact that is supported by some of the most rigorous and cutting-edge research in neuroscience.
- The implications are far-reaching. Once our brains were discovered to have such built-in plasticity, our potential for intellectual and personal growth suddenly became equally malleable.
- Studies have found numerous ways we can rewire our brains to be more positive, creative, resilient, and productive—to see more possibility wherever we look.
- The great question becomes not if, but how much change is possible? If change is possible, the natural question is, how long does it last? Studies have confirmed numerous ways we can permanently raise our happiness baseline and adopt a more positive mindset.
- It’s more than a little comforting to know that people can become happier, that pessimists can become optimists, and that stressed and negative brains can be trained to see more possibility. The competitive edge is available to all who put in the effort.
- Just reading this book is not enough. It takes actual focus and effort to put these principles into practice, and only then will the returns start pouring in.

Part 2: The Seven Principles

Principle #1: The Happiness Advantage: How Happiness Gives Your Brain, and Your organization, the Competitive Edge

- A fundamental shift in the field of psychology is underway. For untold generations, we have been led to believe that if we work hard enough, we will be successful, and only if we are successful will we become happy.
- Thanks to breakthroughs in the burgeoning field of positive psychology, we are learning that the opposite is true. The most successful people, the ones with the competitive edge. Don't look to happiness as some distant reward for their achievements, nor grind through their days on neutral or negative; they are the ones who capitalize on the positive and reap the rewards at every turn.
- There is no single meaning; happiness is relative to the person experiencing it.
- Scientists define happiness as the experience of positive emotions—pleasure combined with deeper feelings of meaning and purpose. Researchers have developed self-report metrics that accurately and reliably measure individual happiness.
- Martin Seligman, the pioneer in positive psychology, has broken it down into three, measurable components: pleasure, engagement, and meaning.
- The chief engine of happiness is positive emotions, since happiness is, above all else, a feeling.
- The author's definition is: Happiness is the joy we feel striving after our potential.
- Throughout this book the terms positive emotions, positivity, and happiness are all used interchangeably.
- Results of over 200 scientific studies on nearly 275,000 people—found that happiness leads to success in nearly every domain of our lives, including marriage, health, friendship, community involvement, creativity and, in particular, our jobs, careers, and businesses.
- Data abounds showing that happy workers have higher levels of productivity, produce higher sales, perform better in leadership positions, and receive higher performance ratings and higher pay. They also enjoy more job security and are less likely to take sick days, to quit, or to become burned out.
- Happy CEOs are more likely to lead teams of employees who are both happy and healthy, and who find their work climate conducive to high performance.
- Scientists discovered more proof that happiness causes success when they started examining how positive emotions affect our brain function and change our behavior.
- Everyone has one or two quick activities they know will make them smile, and however trivial they may feel, their benefits are worth it. The Happiness Advantage also lies in the small, momentary blips of positivity that pepper our lives each and every day.
- A short humorous video dip, a quick conversation with a friend, or even a small gift of candy can produce significant and immediate boosts in cognitive power and job performance.
- There are a number of proven ways we can improve our moods and raise our levels of happiness throughout be day. Each activity listed below not only gives us a quick boost of positive emotions, improving our performance and focus in the moment; but if performed habitually over time, each has been known to help permanently raise our happiness baseline.

- The goal is simply to lift your spirits and put you a more positive mindset, so you can reap all the benefits of the Happiness Advantage.
 - *Meditate.* Just five minutes each day to watch your breath go in and out. Meditation takes practice, but it's one of the most powerful happiness interventions. Studies show that in the minutes right after mediating, we experience feelings of calm and contentment, as well as heightened awareness and empathy. Regular meditation can permanently rewire the brain to raise levels of happiness, lower stress, even improve immune function.
 - *Find Something to Look Forward To.* Whenever you need a boost of happiness, remind yourself about it. Anticipating future rewards can actually light up the pleasure centers in your brain much as the actual reward will.
 - *Commit Conscious Acts of Kindness.*
 - *Infuse Positivity Into Your Surroundings.* Your physical environment can have an enormous impact on our mindset and sense of well-being. We can also change our surroundings to keep negative emotions at bay.
 - *Exercise.* Physical activity can boost mood and enhance our work performance in a number of ways, by improving motivation and feelings of mastery, reducing stress and anxiety, and helping us get into flow. Physical activity is not just an incredibly powerful mood lifter, but a long-lasting one.
 - *Money (but Not on Stuff).* Spending money on experiences, especially ones with other people, produces positive emotions that are both more meaningful and more lasting. Money spent on activities—such as concerts and group dinners out—brought far more pleasure than material purchases like shoes, televisions, or expensive watches. Spending money on other people, called “prosocial spending,” also boosts happiness.
 - *Exercise a Signature Strength.* Each time we use a skill, whatever it is, we experience a burst of positivity. If you find yourself in need of a happiness booster, revisit a talent you haven't used in a while. Even more fulfilling than using a skill, though, is exercising a strength of character, a trait that is deeply embedded in who we are. E.g. love of learning.
- As you integrate these happiness exercises into your daily life, you'll not only start to feel better, but you'll also start to notice how your enhanced positivity makes you more efficient, motivated, and productive, and opens up opportunities for greater achievement. Y
- Changing the way you work, and the way you lead the people around you, you can enhance the success of your team and your whole organization.
- The best leaders use the Happiness Advantage as a tool to motivate their teams and maximize employee potential. We all know how this can be done on an organizational level. Google is a great example.
- Provide frequent recognition and encouragement. Managers who do so see a substantial increase in their employees' productivity. Recognition can be given in traditional ways—a complimentary e-mail, or a pat on the back for a job well done. But you can also get creative with it.
- Just as important as what you say to employees is how you say it— a decade of research on high and low performance teams by psychologist and business consultant Marcial Losada shows just how important it is. Based on Losada's mathematical modeling, 2.9013 is the ratio of positive to negative interactions necessary to make a corporate team successful. This means that it takes about three positive comments, experiences, or expressions to fend off the languishing effects of one negative.

Principle #2: The Fulcrum and The Lever: Changing Your Performance by Changing Your Mindset

- Our brains are like single processors capable of devoting only a finite amount of resources to experiencing the world. Because our brain's resources are limited, we are left with choice: to use those finite resources to see only pain, negativity, stress, and uncertainty, or to use those resources to look at things through a lens of gratitude, hope, resilience, optimism, and meaning.
- In other words, while we of course can't change reality through sheer force of will alone, we can use our brain to change how we process the world, and that in turn changes how we react to it.
- Happiness is about adjusting our brain so that we see the ways to rise above our circumstances.

- Archimedes, the greatest scientist and mathematician of ancient Greece, famously posited, "Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world."
- Our brains work in precisely the same way. Our power to maximize our potential is based on two important things: (1) the length of our lever—how much potential power and possibility we believe we have, and (2) the position of our fulcrum—the mindset with which we generate the power to change.
- By changing the fulcrum of our mindset and lengthening our lever of possibility, we change what is possible. It's not the weight of the world that determines what we can accomplish. It is our fulcrum and lever.
- "Reality" is merely our brain's relative understanding of the world based on where and how we are observing it. Most important, we can change this perspective at any moment. And by doing so change our experience of the world around us. This is what is meant by moving our fulcrum.
- Psychology has shown that mindset doesn't just change how we feel about an experience—it actually changes the objective results of that experience. Anyone who has heard about the Placebo Effect already knows how powerfully this works. The simple change in mindset—i.e., a belief that they are taking an actual drug—is powerful enough to make the objective symptom actually disappear.

- The most successful people adopt a mindset that not only makes their workdays more bearable, but also helps them work longer, harder, and faster than their negative mindset peers. In essence, these people use their positive mindsets to gain control (relatively speaking) of time itself.
- They take the same units of time given to everyone and use their mindset to become more efficient and productive.
- Just as our view of work affects our real experience of it, so too does our view of leisure. If our mindset conceives of free time, hobby time, or family time as non-productive, then we will, in fact, make it a waste of time.
- Allowing ourselves to engage in activities we enjoy can actually greatly enhance our performance at work. But simply doing them is not enough to get results. When your brain conceives of family dinner or Sudoku or fantasy football or a phone call with a friend as a "waste of time," it won't be able to reap its inherent benefits. But if you change the fulcrum so that you conceive of such free time as a chance to learn and practice new things, to recharge your batteries and connect with others, you'll be able to leverage the power of that rest time and return stronger than before.

- Just as your mindset about work affects your performance, so too does your mindset about your own ability. The more you believe in your own ability to succeed, the more likely it is that you will.
- The last few decades have seen an explosion of serious science in support of it. Studies show that simply believing we can bring about positive change in our lives increases motivation and job performance; that success, in essence, becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy.
- Our beliefs about our abilities are not necessarily innate, but can change, as our mindset is almost always in flux.

- More important still than believing in your own abilities is believing that you can improve these abilities. Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck, has shown that people with fixed mindsets miss choice opportunities for improvement and consistently underperform, while those with “growth mindset” watch their abilities move ever upward.
- When we believe there will be a positive payoff for our effort, we work harder instead of succumbing to helplessness. Beliefs are so powerful because they dictate our efforts and actions. Once we realize how much our reality depends on how we view it, it comes as less of a surprise that our external circumstances predict only about 10 percent of our total happiness.

- Yale psychologist Amy Wrzesniewski has found that employees have one of three “work orientations,” or mindsets about work. We view our work as a Job, a Career, or a Calling.
- People with a “job” see work as a chore and their paycheck as the reward. They work because they have to and constantly look forward to the time they can spend away from their job.
- By contrast, people who view their work as a career work not only out of necessity, but also to advance and succeed. They are invested in their work and want to do well.
- Finally, people with a calling view work as an end in itself; their work is fulfilling not because of external rewards but because they feel it contributes to the greater good, draws on their personal strengths, and gives them meaning and purpose.
- Unsurprisingly, people with a calling orientation not only find their work more rewarding, but work harder and longer because of it. And as a result, these are the people who are generally more likely to get ahead.
- A calling orientation can have just as much to do with mindset as it does with the actual work being done. Researchers have found that even the smallest tasks can be imbued with greater meaning when they are connected to personal goals and values.
- The more we can align our daily tasks with our personal vision, the more likely we are to see work as a calling. This is not to say that all jobs have equal meaning, but that even a rote or routine task can be meaningful if you find a good reason to be invested.
- You can have the best job in the world, but if you can’t find the meaning in it, you won’t enjoy it. Whether you are a movie maker or an NFL playmaker.
- Sometimes a few key words here and there can make all the difference. What we expect from people (and from ourselves) manifests itself in the words we use, and those words can have a powerful effect on end results.
- *The Pygmalion Effect*: when our belief in another person’s potential brings that potential to life.

- The expectations we have about our children, co-workers, and spouses—whether or not they are ever voiced—can make that expectation a reality. No matter what their motivations might have been before working for their managers, employees typically become the kind of worker their manager expects them to be. That is the Pygmalion effect in action.
- This is a shining example of a self-fulfilling prophecy: People act as we expect them to act, which means that a leader’s expectations about what he thinks will motivate his employees often end coming true.

Principle #3: The Tetris Effect: Training Your Brain to Capitalize on Possibility

- Tetris is a deceptively simple game in which four kinds of shapes fall from the top of the screen, and the player can rotate or move them until they hit the bottom. The sole point of the game is to arrange the falling shapes in a way that will create as many unbroken lines as possible. The game can be surprisingly addictive.
- Gamers soon took to calling this bizarre condition the Tetris Effect. People playing the game see shapes everywhere and can’t stop applying the game principles.
- The Tetris Effect stems from a very normal physical process that repeated playing triggers in their brains. They become stuck in something called a “cognitive afterimage.” Consistent play was creating new neural pathways, new connections that warped the way they viewed real-life situations. L
- The Tetris Effect isn’t just about video games; it is a metaphor for the way our brains dictate the way we see the world around us.
- Everyone knows someone stuck in some version of the Tetris Effect—someone who is unable to break a pattern of thinking or behaving. Often, this pattern can be negative. Constantly scanning the world for the negative comes with a great cost. It undercuts our creativity, raises our stress levels, and lowers our motivation and ability to accomplish goals.
- Like the Tetris players who suddenly saw those blocks everywhere, accountants who were studied experienced each day as a tax audit, always scanning the world for the worst.
- Tax auditors are far from being the only ones who get stuck in this kind of pattern. Lawyers are just as susceptible, if not more so. Trained to be on the lookout for the flaws in every argument, the holes in every case, they start “to overestimate the significance and permanence of the problems they encounter,” the fastest route to depression and anxiety—which in turn interferes with their ability to do their job.
- Being stuck in these patterns might well make someone very successful in a particular aspect of his or her work. Tax auditors should look for errors. Athletes should be competitive. Traders should apply rigorous risk analysis. The problem comes when individuals cannot “compartmentalize” their abilities. And not only do they miss out on the Happiness Advantage, but their pessimistic, fault-finding mindset makes them far more susceptible to depression, stress, poor physical health, and even substance abuse.
- This is the essence of a Negative Tetris Effect: a cognitive pattern that decreases our overall success rates. But the Tetris Effect need not be maladaptive. Just as our brains can be wired in ways that hold us back, we can retrain them to scan for the good things in life—to help us see more possibility, to feel more energy, and to succeed at higher levels.

- On a daily basis, we're bombarded with competing demands on our attention. To deal with this overload, our brains have a filter that only lets the most pertinent information through to our consciousness.
- If we have programmed our brain's filter to delete the positive, that data will cease to exist for us. We see what we look for, and we miss the rest.
- The goal of a Positive Tetris Effect: Instead of creating a cognitive pattern that looks for negatives and blocks success, it trains our brains to scan the world for the opportunities and ideas that allow our success rate to grow.
- When our brains constantly scan for and focus on the positive, we profit from three of the most important tools available to us: happiness, gratitude, and optimism.
- The role happiness plays should be obvious—the more you pick up on the positive around you, the better you'll feel—and we've already seen the advantages to performance that brings.
- The second mechanism at work here is gratitude, because the more opportunities for positivity we see, the more grateful we become. Psychologist Robert Emmons has found that few things in life are as integral to our well-being. Countless studies have shown that consistently grateful people are more energetic, emotionally intelligent, forgiving, and less likely to be depressed, anxious, or lonely. And it's not that people are only grateful because they are happier, either; gratitude has proven to be a significant cause of positive outcomes.
- The third driver of the Positive Tetris Effect is optimism. This instinctively makes sense; the more your brain picks up on the positive, the more you'll expect this trend to continue, and so the more optimistic you'll be. And optimism, it turns out, is a tremendously powerful predictor of work performance. Expecting positive outcomes actually makes them more likely to arise.
- Just as it takes days of concentrated practice to master a video game, training your brain to notice more opportunities takes practice focusing on the positive.
- The best way to kick-start this is to start making a daily list of the good things in your job, your career, and your life. Over a decade of empirical studies has proven the profound effect it has on the way our brains are wired. Of course, we can build this Tetris Effect only through consistency.
- As with any skill, the more we practice, the more easily and naturally it comes. Since the best way to ensure follow-through on a desired activity is to make it a habit the key here is to ritualize the task. For example, pick the same time each day to write down your gratitude list, and keep the necessary items easily accessible and convenient.
- Looking at the world through a lens that completely filters out all negatives comes with its own problems. Irrational optimism is the reason market bubbles form. It can blind us to problems that need fixing, or areas that need improving. There are also times when pessimism comes in handy—like when it stops us from making that foolish investment or risky career move, or from gambling with our health.
- The key, then, is not to completely shut out all the bad, all the time, but to have a reasonable, realistic, healthy sense of optimism. The ideal mindset isn't heedless of risk, but it does give priority to the good.
- When we train our brains to adapt a Positive Tetris Effect, we're not just improving our chance at happiness; we're setting off a chain of events that helps us reap all the benefits of a positive brain.
- Focusing on the good isn't just about overcoming our inner grump to see the glass half full. It's about opening our minds to the ideas and opportunities that will help us be more productive, effective, and successful at work and in life.

- The possibilities are there for everyone to see. Will you look right past them, or will you train your brain to see more?

Principle #4: Falling Up: Capitalizing on the Downs to Build Upward Momentum

- The human brain is constantly creating and revising mental maps to help us navigate our way through this complex and ever-changing world. This tendency has been wired in us through thousands of years of evolution: In order to survive, we must create physical maps of our environment, map out strategies for getting food and sex, and map out the possible effects of our actions.
- These maps aren't just crucial to survival in the wilderness; they are vital to succeeding and thriving in the business world.
- All human decisions involve mental mapping: they start with an "I Am Here" point (the status quo), from which a variety of paths radiate outward, the number depending on the complexity of the decision, and the clarity of your thinking at the moment. The most successful decisions come when we are thinking clearly and creatively enough to recognize all the paths available to us, and accurately predict where that path will lead.
- The problem is that when we are stressed or in crisis, many people miss the most important path of all: *the path up*.
- On every mental map after crisis or adversity, there are three mental paths:
- One that keeps circling around where you currently are (i.e., the negative event creates no change; you end where you start).
- Another mental path leads you toward further negative consequences (i.e., you are far worse off after the negative event; this path is why we are afraid of conflict and challenge).
- And one, which call the Third Path, that leads us from failure or setback to a place where we are even stronger and more capable than before the fall. When we feel helpless and hopeless, we stop believing such a path even exists—so we don't even bother to look for it.
- Our ability to find the Third Path is the difference between those who are crippled by failure and those who rise above it. Study after study shows that if we are able to conceive of a failure as an opportunity for growth, we are all the more likely to experience that growth. Conversely, if we conceive of a fall as the worst thing in the world, it becomes just that.
- By scanning our mental map for positive opportunities, and by rejecting the belief that every down in life leads us only further downward, we give ourselves the greatest power possible: the ability to move up.
- Researchers have found unfortunate events to spur profound positive growth in many, many individuals. Psychologists have termed this experience *Adversarial Growth*, or *Post-Traumatic Growth*. In the last 25 years or so that this phenomenon, the possibility of something good emerging from the struggle with something very difficult, has been the focus of systematic theorizing and empirical investigation.
- Positive growth has shown increases in spirituality, compassion for others, openness, and even, eventually, overall life satisfaction. After trauma, people also report enhanced personal strength, self-confidence, as well as a heightened appreciation for, and a greater intimacy in, their social relationships.

- People’s ability to find the path up rests largely on how they conceive of the cards they have been dealt, so the strategies that most often lead to Adversarial Growth include positive reinterpretation of the situation or event, optimism, acceptance, and coping mechanisms that include focusing on the problem head-on (rather than trying to avoid or deny it).
- People who can most successfully get themselves up off the mat are those who define themselves not by what has happened to them, but by what they can make out of what has happened. These are the people who actually use adversity to find the path forward. They speak not just of “bouncing back,” but of “bouncing forward.”
- With every setback comes some opportunity for growth that we can teach ourselves to see and take advantage of. The most successful people see adversity not as a stumbling block, but as a stepping-stone to greatness. Indeed, early failure is often the fuel for the very ideas that eventually transform Industries, make record profits, and reinvent careers.
- However counterintuitive it may seem, psychologists actually recommend that we fail early and often. I
- Unfortunately, the path from failure to success is not always easy to spot. In the midst of a crisis, we can get so stuck in the misery of the status quo that we forget another path is available. Often we eliminate any upward options from our mental maps. And worse, eliminate our motivation to search for them; we end up undermining our ability to tackle the challenge at hand.
- When people feel helpless in one area of life, they not only give up in that one area; they often “overlearn” the lesson and apply it to other situations. A setback at work might lead to despondency about one’s relationship, or a rift with a friend might discourage us from trying to form bonds with our colleagues, and so when this happens, our helplessness spirals out of control, impeding our success in all areas of life.
- Fortunately, just as personal crises can provide the foundation for positive individual growth, so can economic ones. They often propel companies to greater success, and many business juggernauts were actually launched during the Great Depression.
- The best leaders are the ones who show their true colors not during the banner years, but during such times of struggle. Leaders who become paralyzed by the obstacles in front of them miss this great opportunity. Helplessness will drive down not just their own performance but also employee well-being and their company’s bottom line.
- On the other hand, leaders who find themselves energized by challenge and motivated by failure reap all kinds of amazing rewards. The point is that when faced with obstacles or failure, succumbing to helplessness keeps us down on the mat, while looking for the path of opportunity helps us pick ourselves up.
- Here are a few strategies for finding that Third Path in our careers and professional lives.
 - *Change Your Counterfact* - Counterfact is an alternate scenario our brains create to help us evaluate and make sense of what really happened. Counterfactuals are completely hypothetical. Because it’s invented, we actually have the power in any given situation to consciously select a counterfact that makes us feel fortunate rather than helpless. And choosing a positive counterfact, besides simply making us feel better, sets ourselves up for the whole host of

benefits to motivation and performance we now know accompanies a positive mindset. Choosing a counterfactual that makes us more fearful of the adversity actually makes it loom larger than it really is. When we choose a counterfactual that makes us feel worse, we are actually altering our reality, allowing the obstacle to exert far greater influence over us than it otherwise should.

- *Change Your Explanatory Style* - explanatory style—how we choose to explain the nature of past events—has a crucial impact on our happiness and future success. People with an optimistic explanatory style interpret adversity as being local and temporary (i.e., “It’s not that bad, and it will get better.”) while those with a pessimistic explanatory style see these events as more global and permanent (i.e., “It’s really bad, and it’s never going to change.”). Their beliefs then directly affect their actions; the ones who believe the latter statement sink into helplessness and stop trying, while the ones who believe the former are spurred on to higher performance. Virtually all avenues of success, we now know, are dictated by explanatory style. It predicts how well students do in high school,
- *Learn Your ABCD’S* - One way to help ourselves see the path from adversity to opportunity is to practice the ABCD model of interpretation: Adversity, Belief, Consequence, and Disputation.
 - *Adversity* is the event we can’t change; it is what it is.
 - *Belief* is our reaction to the event; why we thought it happened and what we think it means for the future. We see the adversity as short-term or as an opportunity for growth or appropriately confined to only part of our life—then we maximize the chance of a positive *Consequence*. But if the Belief has led us down a more pessimistic path, helplessness and inaction can bring Negative Consequences. That’s when it’s time to put the D to work.
 - *Disputation* involves first telling ourselves that our belief is just that—a belief, not fact—and then challenging (or disputing) it. Psychologists recommend that we externalize this voice (i.e., pretend it’s coming from someone else), so it’s like we’re actually arguing with another person. What is the evidence for this belief? Is it airtight? Would we let a friend get away with such reasoning? Or is the reasoning clearly specious once we step outside of ourselves and take a look? What are some other plausible interpretations of this event? What are some more adaptive reactions to it? Is there another counterfactual we can adopt instead? And finally, if the adversity truly is bad, is it as bad as we first thought? This particular method is called decatastrophizing: taking time to show ourselves that while the adversity is real, it is perhaps not as catastrophic as we may have made it out to be.
- Remember that success is not about never falling down or even simply about falling down and getting back up over and over like I did in the Helping the Elderly experiment. Success is about more than simple resilience. It’s about using that downward momentum to propel ourselves in the opposite direction. It’s about capitalizing on setbacks and adversity to become even happier, even more motivated, and even more successful. It’s not falling down, it’s falling up.

Principle #5: The Zorro Circle

- According to legend, a masked hero named Zorro roamed what is now the southwestern United States, fighting for those who could not fight for themselves. Zorro was resolute, disciplined, and fearless, a combination that immortalized him as the popular hero of so many books.
- But there is a lesser known chapter to Zorro's story. According to legend, Zorro was not always that swashbuckler. Alejandro's training began by drawing a circle in the dirt. Hour after hour, Alejandro is forced to fight only within this small circle. Only after he masters that first circle does he start to become Zorro, the legend.
- The concept of the Zorro Circle is a powerful metaphor for how we can achieve our most ambitious goals in our jobs, our careers, and our personal lives.

- One of the biggest drivers of success is the belief that our behavior matters; that we have control over our future. Yet when our stresses and workloads seem to mount faster than our ability to keep up, feelings of control are often the first things to go. Especially when we try to tackle too much at once. If, however, we first concentrate our efforts on small manageable goals, we regain the feeling of control so crucial to performance.
- By first limiting the scope of our efforts, then watching those efforts have the intended effect, we accumulate the resources, knowledge, and confidence to expand the circle, gradually conquering a larger and larger area.
- The feeling that we are in control, that we are masters of our own fate at work and at home, is one of the strongest drivers of both well-being and performance.
- Interestingly, psychologists have found that these kinds of gains in productivity, happiness, and health have less to do with how much control we actually have and more with how much control we think we have.

- Remember that how we experience the world is shaped largely by our mindset. Well, the most successful people. In work and in life, are those who have what psychologists call an "internal locus of control," the belief that their actions have a direct effect on their outcomes.
- People with an external locus, on the other hand, are more likely to see daily events as dictated by external forces. Someone with an internal locus will look for what he or she might have done better, and then work to improve in that area. People with an external locus don't just duck the blame for failure, though; they also miss out on the credit for their successes, which can be equally maladaptive because it undermines both confidence and dedication.
- For people who believe that the power lies within their circle have greater academic achievement, greater career achievement, and are much happier at work. An internal locus lowers job stress and turnover, and leads to higher motivation, organizational commitment, and task performance.
- "Internals," as they are sometimes called, have even stronger relationships—which makes sense given they are also more attentive listeners and more adept at social interactions—all qualities, incidentally, that predict success at work as well as at home.

- As we go about our daily lives, our actions are often determined by the brain's two dueling components: our knee jerk-like emotional system (let's call him the Jerk) and our rational, cognitive system (let's call him the Thinker).
- The oldest part of the brain, evolutionarily speaking, is the Jerk, and it is based in the limbic (emotional) region, where the amygdale reigns supreme. This knee-jerk system was necessary for our survival. The amygdale sounded the alarm, flooded our body with adrenaline and stress hormones, and sparked an immediate, innate reflex—a “fight or flight” response.
- In the modern world, the Jerk's reflexive responses can sometimes do more harm than good. In particular, when it comes to decision making, the Jerk often gets us in a lot of trouble.
- After thousands of years of evolution, we have also developed the Thinker, that rational system in the brain that resides mostly in the prefrontal cortex. This is what we use to think logically, draw conclusions from many pieces of information, and plan for the future. The Thinker's purpose is simple, but it reflects a huge evolutionary leap: think, then react. Most of our daily challenges are better served by the Thinker, but unfortunately, when we're feeling stressed or out of control, the Jerk tends to take over.
- Once the stress has reached a critical point, even the smallest setback can trigger an amygdale response, essentially hitting the brain's panic button. When that happens, the Jerk overpowers the Thinker's defenses, spurring us into action without conscious thought. Instead of “think, then react,” the Jerk responds with “fight or flight.” We have become victims of what scientists call emotional hijacking.”
- Psychologist Daniel Goleman, author of the groundbreaking book Emotional Intelligence, has extensively studied the toll this emotional hijacking can take on our professional lives. When this hijacking occurs, our decision-making skills, productivity, and effectiveness plummet. This can have real consequences not just for individuals, but for entire teams of organizations.
- The Jerk wreaks havoc in companies all around the world. It is the reason shareholders buy high and sell low, even when they know they should do exactly the opposite. It is also the reason we fall prey to market bubbles, and the reason markets crash when those bubbles burst. When our brain hits the panic button, reason goes out the window and our wallets, our careers, and our bottom lines all suffer.

- So how do we reclaim control from the Jerk and put it back into the hands of the Thinker? The answer is the Zorro Circle. The first goal we need to conquer—or circle we need to draw—is self-awareness.
- Experiments show that when people are primed to feel high levels of distress, the quickest to recover are those who can identify how they are feeling and put those feelings into words. Brain scans show verbal information almost immediately diminishes the power of these negative emotions, improving well-being and enhancing decision-making skills.”
- So whether you do it by writing down feelings in a journal or talking to a trusted coworker or confidant, verbalizing the stress and helplessness you are feeling is the first step toward regaining control.
- Once you've mastered the self-awareness circle, your next goal should be to identify which aspects of the situation you have control over and which you don't.
- When at work, try tackling one small challenge at a time—draw circle that slowly expands outward—we can relearn that our actions do have a direct effect on our outcomes, that we are largely the masters of our own fates. W
- With an increasingly internal locus of control and a greater confidence in our abilities, we can then expand r efforts outward. No matter how small the initial circle is, it can lead to big returns.

- The practice referred to as kaizen, (which is Japanese for “continuous improvement”) involves a focus on tiny, incremental changes such as improving efficiency on a production line. With kaizen, in other words, companies use the Zorro Circle to transform incremental change into mammoth results. The point: Small successes can add up to major achievements. All it takes is drawing that first circle in the sand.

Principle #6: The 20-Second Rule: How to Turn Bad Habits into Good Ones by Minimizing Barriers to Change

- One of the greatest paradoxes of human behavior: Common sense is not common action.
- In life, knowledge is only part of the battle. Without action, knowledge is often meaningless. As Aristotle put it, to be excellent we cannot simply think or feel excellent, we must act excellently.
- Yet the action required to follow through on what we know is often the hardest part. Positive habits are hard to keep, no matter how commonsensical they might be.
- If our brains have the capacity to change, as we now know they do, why is changing our behavior so hard, and how can we make it easier?
- The greatest contribution William James made to the field of psychology is one that was a full century ahead of his time. Humans, James said, are biologically prone to habit. And it is because we are “mere bundles of habits” that we are able to automatically perform many of our daily tasks—from brushing our teeth first thing in the morning to setting the alarm before climbing into bed at night.
- It is precisely because habits are so automatic that we rarely stop and think about the enormous role they play in shaping our behavior, and in fact our lives. As the Father of Modern Psychology so shrewdly advised, if we want to create lasting change, we should “make our nervous system our ally instead of our enemy. Habits are like financial capital—forming one today is an investment that will automatically give out returns for years to come.
- Habits form because our brain actually changes in response to frequent practice. As we progress through our days, learning new facts, completing new tasks, and having new conversations, our brains are constantly changing and rewiring to affect these experiences.
- Within our brains are billions upon billions of neurons, interconnected in every which way to form a complex set of neural pathways. Electrical currents travel down these pathways, from neuron to neuron, delivering the messages that make up our every thought and action. The more we perform a particular action, the more connections form between the corresponding neurons. (The stronger the link, the faster the message can travel down the pathway. This is what makes the behavior seem second nature or automatic. This is also how we become skilled at an activity with practice.
- We have the power to create new habits and then reap the benefits whether we’re 22 or 72.
- The reason so many of us have trouble sustaining change is because we try to rely on willpower. The reason willpower is so ineffective at sustaining change is that the more we use it, the more worn-out it gets.
- We face a steady stream of tasks that deplete our willpower every single day. So it’s no wonder, really, that we so easily give in to our old habits, to the easiest and most comfortable path, as we progress

through the day. This invisible pull toward the path of least resistance can dictate more of our lives than we realize, creating an impassible barrier to change and positive growth.

- We are drawn—powerfully, magnetically—to those things that are easy, convenient, and habitual, and it is incredibly difficult to overcome this inertia.
- Active leisure is more enjoyable, but it almost always requires more initial effort—Chikszentmihalyi calls this “activation energy.” In physics, activation energy is the initial spark needed to catalyze a reaction. The same energy, both physical and mental, is needed of people to overcome inertia and kick-start a positive habit. Otherwise, human nature takes us down the path of least resistance time and time again.
- In the workplace, the path of least resistance is especially maladaptive, luring us into a whole host of bad habits that breed procrastination and undercut productivity.
- Technology may make it easier for us to save time, but it also makes it a whole lot easier for us to waste it. In short, distraction, always just one click away, has become the path of least resistance.
- The desired behavior to the path of least resistance, is the 20-Second Rule, because lowering the barrier to change by just 20 seconds is all it takes to help form a new life habit
- In truth, it often takes more than 20 seconds to make a difference—and sometimes it can take much less—but the strategy itself is universally applicable: Lower the activation energy for habits you want to adopt, and raise it for habits you want to avoid. The more we can lower or even eliminate the activation energy for desired actions, the more we enhance our ability to jump-start positive change.

- *Save Time By Adding Time* - The first step is a seemingly counterintuitive one—disable many of the shortcuts that were originally designed to “save time” at office. E.g. keep your email program closed while you work.
- The less energy it takes to kick-start a positive habit, the more likely that habit will stick. Whether you’re trying to change your habits at work or at home, the key to reducing choice is setting and following a few simple rules. Psychologists call these kinds of rules “second-order decisions,” because they are essentially decisions about when to make decisions.
- Setting rules in advance can free us from the constant barrage of willpower depleting choices that make a real difference in our lives. Rules are especially helpful during the first few days of a behavior-changing venture, when it’s easier to stray off course. Gradually, as the desired action becomes more habitual, we can become more flexible.

- This book is full of ways we can capitalize on the Happiness Advantage. But without actually putting those strategies into action, they remain useless, like a set of expensive tools that sit locked behind a glass case. The key to their use—to permanent, positive change—is to create habits that automatically pay dividends, without continued concerted effort or extensive reserves of willpower.
- The key to creating these habits is ritual, repeated practice, until the actions become ingrained in your brain’s neural chemistry. And the key to daily practice is to put your desired actions as close to the path of least resistance as humanly possible.
- Identify the activation energy—the time, the choices, the mental and physical effort they require—and then reduce it. If you can cut the activation energy for those habits that lead to success, even by as little as 20 seconds at a time, it won’t be long before you start reaping their benefits. The first step metaphorically—and sometimes literally—is just to get our shoes on.

Principle #7: Social Investment: Why Social Support Is Your Single Greatest Asset

- In the midst of challenges and stress at work, nothing is more crucial to our success than holding on to the people around us. Yet too often we become blind to this reality and try to go it alone; and as a result we end up feeling helpless.
- We don't have to go to the brink of a collapsing economy to understand how easy it is to retreat into our own shells at the moment we need to be reaching out to others the most. We've all been there some time or another.
- The most successful people take the exact opposite approach. Instead of turning inward, they actually hold tighter to their social support. Instead of divesting, they invest. Not only are these people happier, but they are more productive, engaged, energetic, and resilient. They know that their social relationships are the single greatest investment they can make.
- One of the longest-running psychological studies of all time—the Harvard Men study—followed 268 men from their entrance into college in the late 1930s all the way through the present day. From this wealth of data, scientists have been able to identify the life circumstances and personal characteristics that distinguished the happiest, fullest lives from the least successful ones.
- There are 70 years of evidence that our relationships with other people matter, and matter more than anything else in the world.
- The more social support you have, the happier you are. And as we know, the happier you are, the more advantages you accrue in nearly every domain of life.
- Our need for social support isn't just in our heads. Evolutionary psychologists explain that the innate need to affiliate and form social bonds has been literally wired into our biology. When we make positive social connection, the pleasure-inducing hormone oxytocin is released into our bloodstream, immediately reducing anxiety and improving concentration and focus. Each social connection also bolsters our cardiovascular, neuroendocrine, and immune systems, so that the more connections we make over time, the better we function. We have such a biological need for social support, our bodies: can literally malfunction without it.
- When we enjoy strong social support, on the other hand, we can accomplish impressive feats of resilience, and even extend the length of our lives.
- The same strategy—hold onto others—is just as crucial for our survival as we navigate the daily stresses of the working world. Studies show that each positive interaction employees have during the course of the work day actually helps return the cardiovascular system back to resting levels and that over the long haul, employees with more of these interactions become protected from the negative effects of job strain.
- In essence, investing in social connections means that you'll find it easier to interpret adversity as a path to growth and opportunity; and when you do have to experience the stress, you'll bounce back from it faster and better protected against its long term negative effects.
- In the volatile world of work, this ability to manage stress, both physically and psychologically, is a significant competitive advantage.
- Managers often have little control over the backgrounds or skill sets of employees placed on their teams, but they do have control over the level of interaction and rapport. Studies show that the more

team members are encouraged to socialize and interact face-to-face, the more engaged they feel, the more energy they have, and the longer they can stay focused on a task.

- In short, the more the team members invest in their social cohesion, the better the results of their work.
- Sweeping corporate policies aren't always necessary; small differences can have just as much of an impact. The people who actively invest in their relationships are the heart and soul of a thriving organization, the force that drives their teams forward. In sports, these people are called "glue guys." Glue guys keep players stuck together at those tough moments when it is most tempting to let go.

- Of all the social ties we have at work, the boss/employee relationship, what Daniel Goleman has cleverly termed a "vertical couple," is the single most important social bond you can cultivate at work. Studies have found that the strength of the bond between manager and employee is the prime predictor of both daily productivity and the length of time people stay at their jobs.
- When this relationship is strong, companies reap the rewards. The best leaders already know this, and they go out of their way to make employees feel cared for.
- It is clearly in the best interest of everyone involved—the boss, the employee, and the organization as a whole—to prioritize relationships. Unfortunately, in today's harried and fast-paced workplace, far too few leaders put in the time required to forge strong bonds with either their colleagues or their employees. Many leaders simply refuse to put in the effort, and the reasons are many and varied: and yet the more they ignore the power of social investment, the more they undermine both their company's performance and their own.
- If you're a leader, you not only have the power to strengthen your own connections, but to foster a work environment that values, instead of hinders, social investment. If you're in a leadership position in your company (or even if you're not!), simply introducing two employees who don't know each other is probably the easiest and fastest way to invest in social dividends. To be even more effective, the introductions should go beyond just name, department, and job description.
- It is important to note that building strong social capital does not require that all colleagues become best friends or even that everyone like one another all the time—this would be impossible. But what does matter is that there be mutual respect and authenticity.
- The best leaders give their employees the space and time to let moments of social connection develop on their own. So time for team lunches and after-hours socialization is also crucial.
- If your goal is to foster team cohesion, the language we use matters. We can promote social connection at work just by using language that implies a common purpose and interdependence.
- The leaders most committed to social investment also get moving, quite literally. The best way to form more connections at work is to get out from behind the desk. This idea of "managing by walking around" was popularized in the 1980s by leadership expert Tom Peters.
- Connecting with employees face-to-face also provides a perfect opportunity to put into practice a recommendation mentioned earlier - frequent recognition and feedback.
- Expressions of gratitude at work have been proven to strengthen both personal and professional bonds.
- A wealth of evidence shows that our relationships are the greatest predictor of both happiness and high performance. So even though our basic instincts might tell us to turn inward, positive psychology knows better. Our social support can prove the difference between succumbing to the cult of the average and achieving our fullest potential.

Spreading the Happiness Advantage at Work, at Home, and Beyond

- Most people think this research is useful for them, but even more useful for all the people around them. The person we have the greatest power to change is ourselves. But while the seven principles must start at the individual level, they by no means end here.
- Once we start capitalizing on the Happiness Advantage in our own lives, the positive changes quickly ripple out. This is why positive psychology is so powerful.
- Using all seven principles together sparks an upward spiral of happiness and success, so that the benefits quickly become multiplicative. Then the positive effects begin to ripple outward, increasing the happiness of everyone around you, changing the way your colleagues work, and eventually shaping your entire organization.
- Recent research exploring the role of social networks in shaping human behavior has proven that much of our behavior is literally contagious; that our habits, attitudes, and actions spread through a complicated web of connections to infect those around us.
- This theory holds that our attitudes and behaviors don't only infect the people we interact with directly—like our colleagues, friends, and families—but that each individual's influence actually appears to extend to people within three degrees.
- Unfortunately, the power of emotional contagion means that overt negativity can infect a group of people almost instantly. Daniel Goleman couldn't have said it better: "Like secondhand smoke, the leakage of emotions can make a bystander an innocent casualty of someone else's toxic state." This means that when we feel anxious or adopt an overtly negative mindset, these feelings will start to seep into every interaction we have, whether we like it or not.
- Luckily, positive emotions are also contagious, which makes them a powerful tool in our quest for high performance in the workplace. Positive emotional contagion starts when people subconsciously mimic the body language, tone of voice, and facial expressions of those around them. Once people mimic the physical behaviors tied to these emotions, it causes them to feel the emotion themselves.
- Smiling, for instance, tricks your brain into thinking you're happy, so it starts producing the neurochemicals that actually do make you happy. So the happier everyone is around you, the happier you will become.
- Of course, some people have a more powerful effect on a group's emotional tone than others. For starters, the more genuinely expressive someone is, the more their mindset and feelings spread.
- When we model the type of mindset and habits that fuel high performance, we are in effect instilling these very mindsets and habits in our colleagues, friends, and loved ones.
- The power to spark positive emotional contagion multiplies if you are in a leadership position. Studies have found that when leaders are in a positive mood, their employees are more likely to be in a positive mood themselves, to exhibit pro-social helping behaviors toward one another, and to coordinate tasks more efficiently and with less effort.
- What this means is that leading by example is no longer an empty mantra. Practicing the seven principles in your own life can actually become your most effective leadership tool, without your even knowing it.
- It has been said that a single butterfly flapping its wings can create a hurricane halfway around the world. As this theory, known as the Butterfly Effect, goes, the flap of a butterfly's wings may be one tiny

motion, but it creates a slight gust of wind that eventually picks up greater and greater speed and power. In other words, one very small change can trigger a cascade of bigger ones. Each one of us is like that butterfly. And each tiny move toward a more positive mindset can send ripples of positivity through our organizations, our families, and our communities.

- When you capitalize on the Happiness Advantage, you are doing far more than improving your own well-being and performance; the more you profit from the principles in this book, the more everyone around you profits.
- By making changes within ourselves, we can actually bring the benefits of the Happiness Advantage to our teams, our organizations, and everyone around us.

Recommendation: This is a must-read for everyone trying to excel in a world of increasing workloads, stress, and negativity. The Happiness Advantage isn't only about how to become happier at work. It's about how to reap the benefits of a happier and more positive mind-set to achieve the extraordinary in our work and in our lives. There are a wealth of experiments and research to substantiate the seven principles discussed. I wish I could have shared them all.



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Many CEO's find themselves asking "What now?" to sensitive situations that only an experienced former CEO can understand. Frumi is the advisor to call to work with you and your executive team as a confidante and – team builder. She has an uncanny knack of getting to the heart of your corporate climate and maximizing your team's performance, profitability and sustainability.

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