

SELF MODULE 8: HOW TO BE HAPPY

I can't believe I am about to say this, but welcome back for the 8th and final module of SELF: Strategies for an Extraordinary Life. The title of today's module is: How to Be Happy

And wouldn't it be so simple? Wouldn't life be so grand right now, if you could just watch this video, and I laid out an easy to follow 5 step plan to eternal bliss and never ending fulfillment?

Do these 5 things once a day for two weeks and congrats! You'll be happy forever!

If I WAS able to do that, I'd probably be shooting this video for you while sitting on my 200 ft yacht sailing the mediterranean.

So I'm very sorry to disappoint you today.

But -- what I can do -- what I am going to try very hard TO do, is help you to redefine happiness, how you view it. And shine a light on some of things you may be doing which are ensuring happiness always remains some impossible to reach oasis way off on the horizon.

A moving target.

A place that keeps moving further away the longer you travel towards it.

Before I do that though, there are some things you should know about me. This is where one would use an expression like "full disclosure".

See, it would be the ultimate in hypocrisy if I was to sit up on some perch and lead you to believe I'm the happiest person on the planet. Like -- I'm the Greggy-Lama and I've achieved some zen-like state of permanent bliss.

Because happiness, for me, is something I work on every day. And like most people, I have great days, bad days, and some days where all I want to do is lay in bed, covers pulled up, binge watching Netflix shows and hiding from the world.

But I choose to look at how far I've come in my understanding of what happiness is, and how I can have more of it in my life, as opposed to how far I have to go. And I'm light years from where I was even 4 or 5 years ago. Go back farther- 10, 20 years? And I'm not even the same person.

To hear my mom tell the story, I was the happiest boy in the world growing up.

Loving, caring, compassionate, carefree, open, always laughing and always smiling. Until one day, when I was 10 or 11, I just came home from school and was...someone different.

The happy boy...was gone....

...keep in mind, my mom has a true flair for the dramatic. But you get the idea.

Now, I have no idea what happened. It certainly wasn't something awful. It was probably a rejection of some sort - a kid at school made fun of me, or scared me, or I was embarrassed by a teacher.

I was hurt in some way, as happens to every kid at some point, and things changed.

It wasn't until I was 13 or 14 that I remember life starting to feel really difficult. I was more aware of things. More things bothered me. Navigating social interactions mostly. I just didn't understand a lot in that area, and it's the age when boys start liking girls, and girls start liking boys back, and it all got very confusing for me.

I was no longer the kid who found everything to be just so easy, and whom everyone just automatically fell in love with. And I didn't know how to fix that.

So that's where it began I think. Call it my long journey away from happiness...sounds like I've maybe inherited my mom's flair for the dramatic.

Through junior high school and high school, I was what everyone would just write off as "moody". Things were fine. I had a lot of friends. But I was very aware of a "dark side" I had. At times, I'd get so very angry, but that anger was rarely directed at anyone other than myself.

I was never a fighter growing up, but now that I think about it, I spent decades beating the hell out of myself.

And I'd retreat from the world and hide out until I felt better.

This course is about you, so I won't bore you with a year by year diary of my life, but let's just say that as I got older, those times I needed to retreat grew both in intensity and duration.

Something would put me in a mood, but instead of me being sad or upset for a few hours, it became a few days...after a while the smallest of things could set me off and I'd be depressed about it literally for weeks.

In my late 20's, I was almost 30 lbs overweight, suffered from bouts of insomnia where I'd go one or two days a week awake for 30 hours at a time, literally not sleeping for entire days at a time....

No man ever wants to admit something like this, but I also started suffering from sexual dysfunction. Dysfunction as in nothing was working the way it should.

The sexual issue and the insomnia - I was aware enough to know that whatever it was that I was going through, was now manifesting itself physically. I knew enough to recognize that these were clear, obvious signs.

Signs that were going to keep popping up, probably getting worse, until I addressed what was really going on. And I finally did.

I spent 3 or 4 years in therapy, where I was diagnosed with clinical depression. I was put on a low dose of antidepressants, and over time, with the therapy and the pills, I got much better.

You can say what you will about taking pills to feel better. I know there are plenty of people on both sides of that argument. But that time I spent in therapy did wonders for me.

It also started my journey in earnest - a path of non stop self awareness and self development. I owe a lot to those years.

And one thing that became a powerful driving force in my life as a result of those painful and lonely years of depression, was a promise to myself that I would never go back to that place. That chapter in my life was over, and I wasn't going back.

I tell you all this to give you context.

I've always said never learn to fight from someone who has no scars. So when it comes to all this, I have more than my fair share of scars. I also think it's what makes me someone who can teach this stuff to others, because I've lived on both sides of the street.

And so happiness - just...being happy. Being content. Having a smile on my face for no reason, has become kind of my mission in life.

And being able to take all that I've gone through and all that I've learned, all the distance I've traveled from that dark place- and turn around and teach others to do the same?

To me, that seems like a like well worth living.

Mind you, it's never been my goal to figure out how to be happy 24/7. I don't think that's possible, and even if it were, I imagine that would actually get extremely boring. If anyone tells you it's possible, I'd be weary. Because we're humans, and we're meant to have access to a full range of emotion.

No. My goal is to have that state of being be my default position. And it's absolutely my goal for you in this program as well.

Like I mentioned in the lesson on Tools - module 6, I believe whatever it is you or anyone else wants in life, when you dig deeper into it, when you peel away all the layers, all roads lead to the same place.

We all just want to be happy.

So...where does one go to find happiness? If you were to play that detective role again - put on your detective hat, where do you look?

Where do you go?

...where in the WORLD do you even begin?

Do you find it in a bank? - Is the secret to happiness money?

Is it found inside a beautiful home?

In an amazing relationship?

Luxurious vacations?

Is it found inside food?

Do you find it on TV?

Where is it? It has to be there somewhere right?

What about at a bar?

Is it in the inside of a fancy new car? Or on the face of an expensive watch?

Is the secret found in having a great body?

Jim Carrey has an incredible quote that really hits home here- "I wish everyone could experience being rich and famous, so they'd see it wasn't the answer to anything."

There were times in my life, where happiness seemed like this crazy dream that didn't really seem attainable. I couldn't understand how people could just -- be happy.

I thought to be happy I needed lots of money. I needed a million friends all around the world, the best relationships - be the smartest person in the room at all times, have the best clothes take the most amazing vacations.

It started to occur to me is that I was setting in motion a plan for my life where i was never going to be happy. I was going to be 30 and miserable 40 and miserable 60 and miserable - on my death bed...and miserable.

Die without really knowing happiness and what a waste that would have been, especially because it's available to all of us right here and right now. Today.

Here's the problem with how most people view happiness.

If I could make an extra \$10,000 a year, THEN I'll allow myself to be happy.

If I could only lose 25 lbs, THEN I can be happy.

Once I finally meet my perfect partner, THEN -- I know I'll be happy.

When it comes to our happiness we put all these rules in place. Like some complicated, almost impossible to navigate obstacle course. We make it so damn difficult to just be happy.

What I'm saying is, if this is you, then you're looking at all this backwards.

"happiness is determined more by one's state of mind than by external events."

-Dalai Lama

When you're happy, making that extra \$10,000 will be easier (and more fun)

When you're happy, losing weight is so much easier (and more fun)

When you're happy, you're infinitely more attractive and it will be that much easier (and fun) to meet your perfect partner.

See what I mean?

So many of us are like children playing a game of hide and seek, but always looking in the wrong place. We look inside every cabinet and closet, behind every curtain, and underneath every bed.

But what we're looking for isn't "out there".

There's an old Native American Sioux tribe fable, that speaks so beautifully to this:

The Creator gathered all of Creation and said: "I want to hide something from the humans until they are ready for it. It is the realization that they create their own reality."

The Eagle said: "Give it to me, I will take it to the moon."

The Creator said: "No. One day they will go there and find it."

The Salmon said: "I will bury it on the bottom of the ocean."

The Creator said: "No. They will go there too."

The Buffalo said: "I will bury it on the Great Plains."

The Creator said: "They will cut into the skin of the Earth and find it even there."

Grandmother Mole, who lives in the breast of Mother Earth and who has no physical eyes but sees with spiritual eyes, said: "Put it *inside* of them."

And the Creator said: "It is done."

I just love that story so much.

What you seek, can only be found in the one place many never look - inside yourself.

Now that you know *where* to look for it, how exactly do we go about achieving it?

I'd like to introduce you to Matthieu Ricard. He is a former molecular geneticist turned Tibetan Buddhist monk, and is known as the world's happiest person.

In case you're wondering how the hell does one get that title -

He participated in a 12 year study on meditation and compassion run by neuroscientist Richard Davison at the University of Wisconsin.

In that study, while hooked up to hundreds of electrodes, it was discovered that when meditating on compassion, Ricard's brain was unlike any neuroscience has ever studied. His brain produced gamma waves (linked to consciousness, attention, learning and memory) at a level never seen before.

The scans also showed excessive activity in a particular part of his brain - the left prefrontal cortex, which literally means he has an abnormally large capacity for being happy, while at the same time having a greatly reduced capacity for negativity.

Now, even he admits the title of world's happiest man is a media generated creation, but safe to say for the purpose of what we are doing here today, this man may have something to add to our conversation, wouldn't you agree?

According to Ricard, the secret to being happy takes just 15 minutes a day.

Ah-ha. NOW I've got your attention :)

Here are his 3 tips:

1. Get rid of the constant me me me me. We are all so focused on ourselves. Instead, focus on altruism - the selfless concern for the well-being of others, and benevolence.
2. Train your mind like a runner trains for a marathon. How?
3. Spend 15 minutes a day thinking only happy thoughts.

15 minutes a day thinking happy thoughts. That doesn't sound so hard does it?

Ricard says: "typically when we experience feelings of happiness and love, it's fleeting, and then something else happens, and we move on to the next thought. Instead, concentrate on not letting your mind get distracted, and keep focused on the positive emotions for the next stretch of time."

All these things we do- all the years of school. All the time spent trying to look good- to try get in better shape, trying to find ways to support ourselves and our loved ones - trying to do whatever it is we are trying to do - how much time do we spend consciously trying to be HAPPY? Really WORKING on it?

I love what he says about kind of staying in that zone when you feel happy. Not allowing it to just slip away because you got distracted by a text message, or saw something on facebook.

It's so simple yet so powerful.

So we now know where to find happiness. And we've explored a few tips on how to achieve it.

And while I may not be a world famous, enlightened buddhist, I'd like to add a few secrets that I've discovered along my journey that have best served me in regards to being happy.

But these are secrets I don't want you to keep. These are secrets that are meant to be shared ok?

1. Don't compare yourself to others. Your road is your own. Now, that doesn't mean you have to travel it alone. But while your life path may have similarities to others, it's still uniquely your own.

My favorite quote of all time is from Teddy Roosevelt. Comparison is the thief of joy.

If you spend your life comparing our situation, yourself, your life, to others, you are setting yourself up for a lifetime of hurt and disappointment.

Because a simple fact of life is no matter who you are, there will always be someone better looking. Someone with a better body. Someone with more money. Nicer things. Someone who is more giving than you are. Someone smarter...

I think this is much more difficult that it used to be, because with social media it's just so easy to get sucked into scrolling through your newsfeed on facebook seeing what people are up to, or looking at amazing pictures people are posting on Instagram.

So you have to be mindful of this.

Compare yourself to yourself. No one else.

2. Your happiness truly is a choice. To be happy, you first have to choose to do so. And once we make that decision -- how do we go about finding something? We look.

3. What you seek is inside, not out

4. Number 4 may be a bit of a cliché alert, but truer words have never been spoken.

Happiness is a pursuit. It's not a final destination. It's a pursuit. A way of life.

5. You don't need a reason to be happy and feel good. This is the most important thing in the world. You do NOT need a reason to be happy.

6. You cannot THINK your way to happy. Remember - it's your brain's job to keep you alive. Not to make you happy. It's not in your mind. It's in your body. It's in your heart.

It comes from doing the things that feel good to you, whatever they are, and no, that doesn't mean drugs or alcohol or things meant to give you a temporary but false state change.

I'm talking about the things that genuinely light you up. That put a smile on your face every time, no matter how silly.

When you find those things, they don't have to make sense to anyone else. They don't even have to make sense to you. And you don't need to explain them to anyone. You don't need a reason.

And I say "when you find those things", but I have a sneaking suspicion you already know what they are. You've always known. Or maybe you knew and have kind of forgotten a little bit as time went on.

Let's do an exercise here. You're going to need either a pen and paper, or using your computer or phone is fine too.

Just find something you're comfortable making lists with, and make sure you can save that list somewhere where it's easy to find or print it out and put it somewhere where you'll see it all the time

This exercise has only one question, but it's a big one. So spend some time with this and you don't have to complete the list now...or ever. You can, and should, always add to it.

Here's the one question -

What do you love?

What do you love?

Other ways to ask that question --

What makes you happy?

What lights you up? Makes you feel all light and silly and puts a huge smile on your face?

We all have those things. It could be anything. Playing duck duck goose. Knitting. Cooking. Dancing, singing. Whatever.

What brings you joy?

What made you happy as a child?

Look, I've come up with a very complicated formula for all this.

Honestly I'm hesitant to share it because it's top secret and patent pending. It's very high-level cutting edge stuff.

But screw it. I promised you I'd hold nothing back so I'll share it with you.

I'll try to explain it as clearly as I can.

Step #1: Find stuff that makes you happy

Step #2: Do way more of that shit

I cannot tell you how many people I have worked with, where I've asked them "what makes you happy?". Then once they came up with their list, I'd ask "do you do those things?" - and the answer is usually "no".

Here's a list that I made while I was writing this lesson. I know I'll be adding way more to this.

- Hanging out on the couch with Lauren at 8PM or 9PM and watching basically anything with Lisa Vanderpump or any of the housewives shows. Sorry not sorry!
- Playing my guitars
- Playing with zoe, our pug
- Surfing The beach + ocean
- The Rolling Stones - listening + watching videos

- The Foo Fighters
- Music in general
- Working out + cardio
- Movies
- Waking up early
- Anything Star Wars
- Game of Thrones, the Walking Dead, the Housewives, Marvel agents of Shield
- Buying new clothes
- Eating healthy
- Laughing

And so in closing, as we get to the end of this lesson, and the end of this program, I have one question I want to leave you with:

What if your life's mission was to be happy?

What if today, and for all the rest of your days, you spent time each day doing the things you've learned here the last 8 weeks. To take control of doing all the things that have always been in your power... to feel good. To be happy.

To show up in your life as the best and happiest version of yourself as often as possible.

The simple and elegant act of conscious and deep breathing.

Taking steps to better understand and embrace the power and energy of your emotions.

Training your mind and keeping your focus where it best serves you. Asking yourself those better questions so you spend way more time in an empowered place.

Paying attention to and honoring your miracle of a body - through movement. Exercise. Clean eating. Using your posture to consciously affect your mood and state.

Getting comfortable with all of the amazing tools available to you to handle anything that comes your way. Learning when to use them in what situations.

Finding a morning routine that you are not only comfortable with, but that you love, so you can start your day off winning. Feeling great. Being happy.

And of course using what you know now about habits, to lock all these things into place so they become automatic. So they become who you are, not what you do.

