

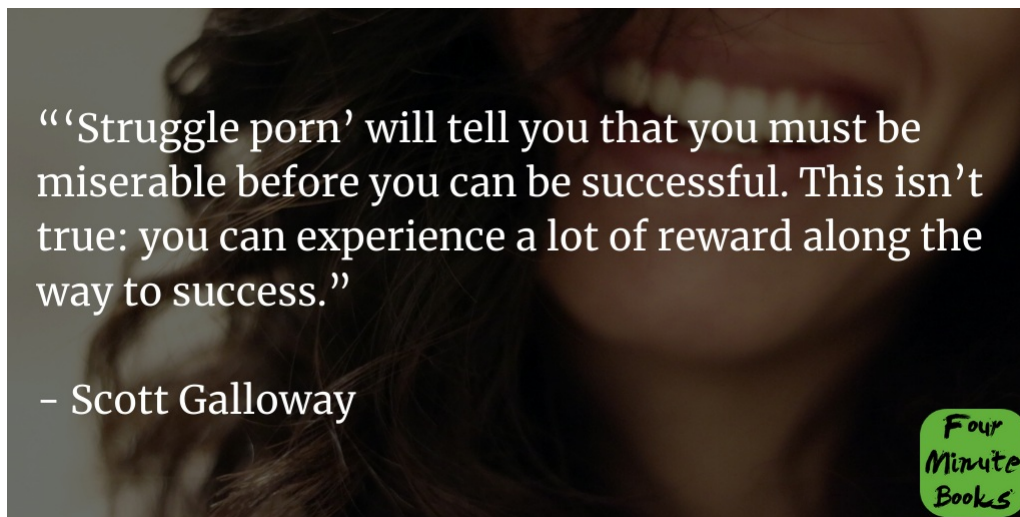
The Algebra of Happiness Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *The Algebra of Happiness* outlines the variables in the equation for happiness and how to build them in your life.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



I learned algebra when I was 13-years old. It's been a long time and I've completed a lot more complicated math classes since, but I'll never forget the simplicity of algebra. Now, don't panic if the sound of math seems intimidating. There's only one equation you need to know:

$X + Y = \text{Happiness.}$

X and Y are called variables and represent unknown numbers that add up to another number. In a normal math equation, we would see something like $X + Y = 9$, for example. We don't know what X and Y are, but they must add up to 9. The value of one depends on the value of the other. If $X = 1$, for example, then Y must equal 8 so they add up to be 9.

Learning to be happy follows this same pattern of discovering what values we must combine to make us happy. The trick is knowing that some variables change depending on others, like how much you work or play, for example. And this is what *The Algebra Of Happiness: Notes on the Pursuit of Success, Love, and Meaning* will teach you!

Here are the 3 biggest lessons I've learned from this book:

1. Be careful of the tradeoff between personal and professional success by planning ahead and investing time and attention appropriately.
2. If you work hard to become rich, make sure to shift your focus away from your professional life so that you can enjoy that financial freedom.
3. Happiness in life comes from having a compatible partner and practicing the relationship habits that will keep you together.

Are you ready to add to your happiness? Let's get started!

Lesson 1: If you prepare well when you're young, recognizing the tradeoffs between work and relationships, you will be happier throughout your life.

Let's take another look at our previous example. If $X + Y = 9$, then whatever X and Y are have to add up to be 9. But if X is higher, like 7 or 8, then Y must be lower, at 2 or 1 for $X + Y = 9$ to be true. The same is true for your life. Playing too much when you're young leads to having to work a lot when you're older. **But if you sacrifice your time and energy in your youth to work hard, then you can relax in your old age.**

It may be too simplistic to only use two variables to describe the equation for happiness, though. There are many variables at play, all of which have tradeoffs. Take someone who works 80-hour weeks, for example. They can't devote as much time to their relationships as someone only working 40-hours a week. If the person working 80-hours a week were to experience a health crisis, they may end up alone on their deathbed. It's all about balance.

We must take care of our relationships, too. They are the highest source of joy. Say you do work hard and earn a lot of money. What is it worth without people in your life to enjoy it with? Carefully monitor the tradeoffs you are making at each stage in your life. Doing so will ensure that you always have balance.

Lesson 2: When you reach financial security, change your focus to enjoy your hard-earned freedom.

What good does money do if you're not going to enjoy the freedom it earns? It's hard to let yourself relax after all of your hard work. But doing so is a necessary step in the equation for happiness. Why do you want to make a lot of money? Is it just to be rich or to make enough that you don't have to keep making more money? If you do it right, you'll have the freedom to work less and give more time and attention to your relationships and passions.

It's difficult to release your grip on the corporate world because after many years of practice you're likely at your peak state in your career. If you're a Type A personality like me, that may sound especially difficult. You've not only become the best at what you do, but your

drive to constantly improve is also strong.

But think hard back to the beginning of your journey. **You'll remember that your family and their happiness is the reason you started all of it in the first place.** Relax and enjoy some time with them.

One friend of the author named David Carey chose to quit at the peak of his work in the publishing industry. When questioned why he made this decision even in his young age, Carey responded: "I want to help young people, and I'm sick of firing my friends."

Lesson 3: **To be happy, find the right partner and work hard to keep your relationship strong.**

As mentioned before, what good does making a lot of money do if you're alone your whole life? The deepest happiness comes from creating quality relationships and making them last. **Search for a partner who is emotionally stable, likes you for who you are, and aligns with your beliefs.**

When I met my wife I instantly knew that we were compatible. She exuded emotional stability and loved to talk about the things that I did. Best of all, she laughed at even my dumbest jokes. And she still does today, after multiple years of marriage!

Once you are in these relationships the trick is to keep them strong for life. It's easy to fall in love with being in love. But those feelings eventually leave every relationship.

Real, lasting love, and the happiness that comes from it, is more slow and constant. To keep your love strong, don't keep score of positive or negative actions. Competition breeds contention, which disintegrates relationships and happiness. Develop the habit of forgiveness and your relationships will last.

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The Algebra of Happiness Review

I like algebra, and I really like being happy, so I especially enjoyed *The Algebra of Happiness*. Some of the tips seem obvious, while others I'm not so sure are as applicable in the information age. I liked this book but I think it's a good idea to take certain aspects of it with a grain of salt.

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Who would I recommend The Algebra of Happiness summary to?

The 42-year-old father who is working too many hours and wants better work-life balance, the 24-year-old new parents who are planning ahead for their future, and anyone who wants to be happy and successful.