

A Monk's Guide To Happiness Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *A Monk's Guide To Happiness* will help you find more joy in life by identifying the mental pitfalls you fall into that make it so hard to have and how to shatter the shackles of suffering to finally find inner peace.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Last week was tough. I felt mentally drained and disappointed in myself. But this morning, all of that is gone. What happened? All I did was take a little time yesterday afternoon to be mindful.

Examining my feelings without judgment, I could see where I had been wrong to be so hard on myself. I also had the opportunity to consciously choose to become happier and to look at the opportunities to become better in the week ahead.

It almost felt like at the flip of a switch I found peace. I'm not always this good at being mindful, but when I do it, life gets better almost instantly.

Can you imagine how powerful it would be if you could have this superpower to feel calm in any circumstance?

Well luckily for you and me that's just what Buddhist monk Gelong Thubten will teach you in *A Monk's Guide to Happiness: Meditation in the 21st century!*

Here are the 3 most helpful lessons I got out of this book:

1. The first step to having more joy in life is to understand what happiness is.
2. When we recognize the thinking patterns that make us unhappy, we open up the path to contentment.
3. Tranquility comes from learning to be mindful, which we can practice in every experience we have throughout each day.

Happiness, here we come!

Lesson 1: Knowing what happiness consists of is the first step in the journey to finding more joy.

I love to reflect on the past so that I can learn from it. I also enjoy planning ahead for the future so I can use that knowledge to improve my life and the lives of those around me.

This is why the following quote by Lao Tzu worried me when I first heard it:

“If you are depressed you are living in the past.
If you are anxious you are living in the future.
If you are at peace you are living in the present.”

“But isn’t it important to learn from the past and prepare for the future?” I thought. Only by recognizing the importance of the present, however, did I learn how to connect the important lessons of the past and the opportunities of the future together.

The keyword in the quote is *living* in the present, which is the sweet spot where happiness exists.

Thubten teaches us that there are three components to happiness now:

- Fullness
- Anchoring to the present
- Freedom

When we recognize that we don’t need anything to be content, we feel fullness, which makes us happy. It’s a feeling of contentment with who we are and what we have, right now.

Getting an anchor to the present involves staying focused on the here and now. We don’t need to get caught up in past failures or future worries.

And last is freedom, or the feeling of liberation from every source of unhappiness. This involves not letting our negative emotions hold us hostage.

Lesson 2: You will have more enjoyment in life if you understand what you do that takes it away.

It may seem counterintuitive to learn how to be happy by learning about unhappiness. But whenever we uncover the roadblocks in our way to something we want, we set ourselves up for success.

And looking back to our first lesson, it's easy to see that whenever we're feeling down, it's because of three mentalities:

- Incompleteness
- Being mentally removed from the present
- Confinement

These attitudes come from wanting things that we don't have but that we think we can't be happy without.

Let's say you're looking to get a promotion at work, for example. You don't have it yet, but you somehow think that getting it will make you happy. This gives you a feeling of incompleteness.

This comes from the incorrect assumption that you can find happiness outside of yourself and in some future occurrence instead of now. It doesn't matter if you're trying to get something material or an experience or achievement, wanting what you don't have makes you unhappy.

It's also a problem because it locks your happiness up by putting it in the hands of circumstances that you have no control over. In the case of your promotion, for example, no matter how well you do it's still up to your boss whether or not you get it.

And even if you do end up getting it, your satisfaction won't last long. Soon you'll be habitually looking to the next thing that you think will make you happy.

Lesson 3: Meditation is the pathway to inner peace and contentment, and you can develop it with daily practice in any situation.

Now that you understand the nature of happiness and unhappiness, it's time for some concrete actions you can take to have more joy. And the big secret is, all it takes is learning how to meditate properly.

That's because meditation does a perfect job of helping us experience fullness, freedom, and anchoring to the present. And you can do it every day, even right now.

All it takes is three simple steps:

1. Find something in the present to anchor your mind to.
2. Notice whenever your mind wanders.
3. Softly bring your thoughts back to your anchor.

The easiest way to practice the first step is to anchor your mind to your breath. I learned from the *Headspace* app that it helps to count the breaths up to 10, then start over.

It's important to remember that your mind is going to stray. When this happens, you simply need to recognize it without judgment.

It's normal to think about other things when you're meditating, but you do want to bring your mind back to the present.

You can try this with actions you already do, like brushing your teeth. Anchor your mind to the taste or sounds. Then when your thoughts wander, observe that it's happened and gently get it back on track.

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A Monk's Guide To Happiness Review

I really liked *[A Monk's Guide To Happiness](#)* and I'm confident that you will too. It does a great job of undermining our dysfunctional beliefs about how to feel peace and gives great tips for beating them. I already feel happier just after reading it, I can't wait to see how applying its lessons is going to change my life!

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Who would I recommend the A Monk's Guide To Happiness summary to?

The 58-year-old who is too engrossed in social media to notice the feelings of the people

around her, the 34-year-old who has been working for a few years and is tired of striving for the happiness they think promotions will bring, and anyone who wonders why it's so difficult to find joy.