

# The Happiness Project Summary

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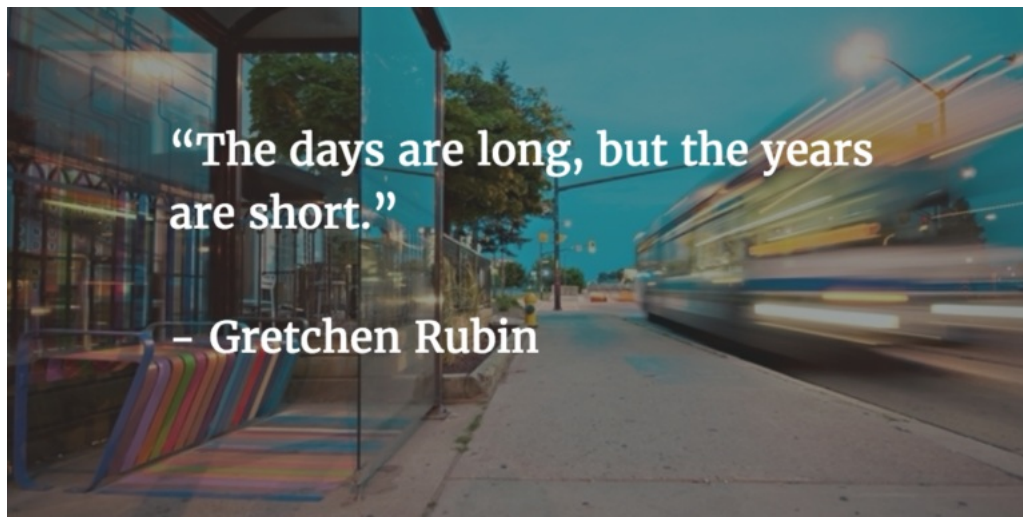


[fourminutebooks.com/the-happiness-project-summary](https://fourminutebooks.com/the-happiness-project-summary)

**1-Sentence-Summary:** *The Happiness Project* will show you how to change your life, without actually changing your life, thanks to the findings of modern science, ancient history and popular culture about happiness, which the author tested for a year and now shares with you.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



"The days are long, but the years are short." Damn, that's profound. I wish I'd thought of these 9 words on a rainy afternoon in a bus. But I didn't. Gretchen Rubin did. Realizing that she's working hard, but not on the things that will matter once the short years of her life have gone by, she decided to dedicate a year of her life to running happiness experiments.

*The Happiness Project* is the report of her results from testing ideas about happiness from ancient times, the latest scientific research, as well as popular culture and common belief. She found a multitude of ways in which you can improve your happiness, without moving to the other side of the world or making millions.

Here are 3 of them:

1. Clean up your house and your brain, because all clutter wears us down.
2. Accept these two things to build better relationships.
3. Money is like health.

Alright, at least 2 of those need some thorough further explanation, so let's hop on the happiness train!

## Lesson 1: Both mental and physical clutter are a drag, so clean up your house AND your brain.

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The very first area of her life Gretchen looked at was her health, her energy, as she calls it. Why? Because if you're sick in bed, there's no way in hell you'll be happy.

Among more typical things like getting enough sleep, exercise and good food, Gretchen also found that clutter really weighed on her. Not only does it take up to 50% more time to manage your household if it's very cluttered, **all of the unused junk also takes up mental energy**, because every item has its spot somewhere inside your brain.

I can vouch for this – having sold all of my video games and 75% of my old clothes. When you declutter your house, you'll notice a strong relief of stress inside your head too, which will help you take the next step – sweeping the floor on a mental level.

Digital to-do list tools and note taking software are great, but they have a huge disadvantage: no storage limit. If you've ever filled up an Evernote file or Trello board with so many tasks that you couldn't possibly finish them, you know what I'm talking about.

The stress this creates comes from the Zeigarnik effect, which makes your brain nag you about any unfinished task, even if it was started years ago. Getting rid of notes about old tasks she'd never finish or finally checking off small items like making a backup of her computer helped Gretchen get rid of a lot of mental clutter with little effort, thus boosting her happiness.

## Lesson 2: These are two great principles to base happy relationships on.

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It was really hard to fit these into one fitting headline, so here go two of Gretchen's principles for happier relationships:

1. **You can't change your partner; you can only change yourself.**
2. **What you do every day matters more than what you do once in a while.**

Our brains remember negative events a lot faster and deeper than positive ones, so in any relationship, **it takes about five positive actions to correct one negative one**. Therefore, doing less negative ones for example by reducing fighting and quitting the bickering is a great way to make your relationships happier.

Gretchen noticed she was nagging her husband a lot and complaining, but once she reduced that, she herself became happier – even though her husband hadn't changed at all. When you focus on what you can control, you correct what's really the root of the problem: your own actions and attitudes.

Similarly, Gretchen started performing more acts of random kindness, with little gestures and gifts for her husband, because she realized these “everyday niceties” matter more than big gifts once a year.

## Lesson 3: Money is like health.

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Money is like health – you can’t buy it, but whoever has the most of it wins. Ha! Gotcha. You didn’t really think she said that, did you? Here’s what Gretchen *actually* says about money:

**Money is like health – it doesn’t guarantee you’ll be happy, but not having to worry about it makes your life a lot easier.**

I like that Gretchen consciously observed this area as well, because even taking a conservative approach, given her multiple bestseller status, she sure is in that situation and went out of her way to explore it from when she wasn’t.

We know that in the US, around \$75,000 per year will get you everything you need and more. More than that will only increase your happiness marginally. We also know that excessively buying stuff won’t boost your happiness long-term, because you always return to your baseline level of happiness.

However, Gretchen says that if you spend your money consciously, and make few, but targeted purchases, that the short burst of happiness you get is not only real, but also leads to a feeling of growth. What’s more, if you use the purchase on an ongoing basis and in the right way, it can add to your happiness for a long time.

For example, Gretchen bought an expensive food processor, but now uses it every day to make delicious smoothies for herself and her family, which increases her health, helps her connect with her husband and daughters, and puts her in a good mood.

## The Happiness Project Review

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Running one-month experiments for a year is something I’ve been putting off for too long myself. I love the idea. Leo Babauta once did it on zenhabits. Gretchen did it and wrote a book about it. And another one.

I’ve gotten the privilege to work with Gretchen and her four tendencies framework from Better Than Before, through my work as a coach.me coach. She has a way of making things sound scientific and sincere without losing the everyday, conversational touch many scientific publications are missing.

The Happiness Project is a buffet of happiness snacks – all you have to do is pick and try them, see which ones work for you, and not worry about the rest. Such a great book!

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## **What else can you learn from the blinks?**

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- Which phrases you can use as a baseline for your own happiness experiments
- How a pedometer can boost your happiness
- Why happiness rubs off
- How to double the joy of tidying up
- What happens when your job is your favorite thing to do
- How to figure out what your hobbies actually should be
- Why confronting death makes you happier

## **Who would I recommend The Happiness Project summary to?**

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The 15 year old teenager in a stressful young relationship, who spends a lot of her time wishing her partner was different, the 46 year old executive with a great salary, who still feels unhappy, and anyone who hasn't decluttered their home for over a year.