

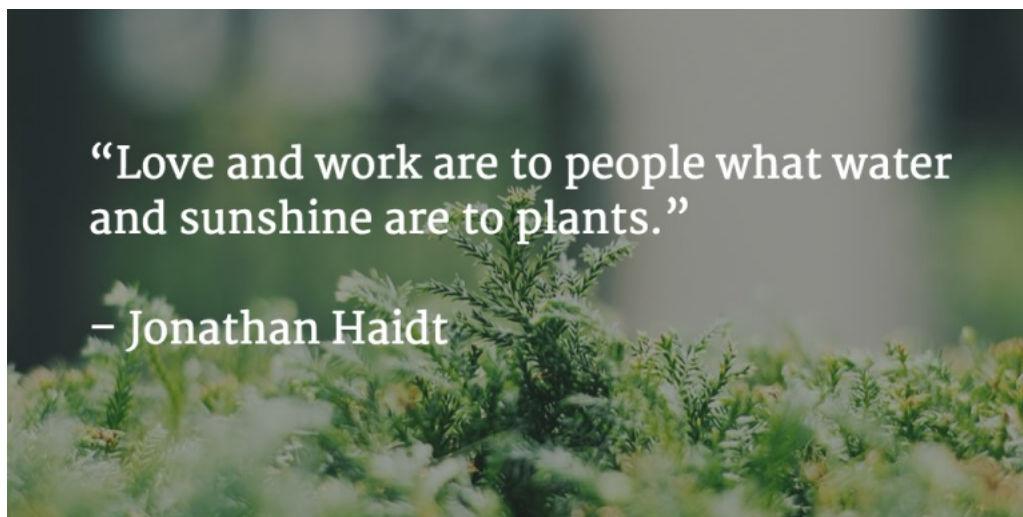
The Happiness Hypothesis Summary

 fourminutebooks.com/the-happiness-hypothesis-summary

1-Sentence-Summary: *The Happiness Hypothesis* is the most thorough analysis of how you can find happiness in our modern society, backed by plenty of scientific research, real-life examples and even a formula for happiness.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



If you're looking for a scientifically proven way to find happiness, you've come to the right place.

In the beginning of *The Happiness Hypothesis*, he establishes a metaphor, which then serves throughout the rest of the book to explain happiness in different contexts.

He says our brain is **divided into two main parts**. Your limbic system is in charge of your **basic instincts**, the needs for sleep, food and sex.

The neocortex is, as its name suggests, a newer part of the brain, responsible for your **rational thinking**. It's what keeps your limbic system in check and makes sure you don't run around naked on the street, overeat, or sleep in when you're supposed to go to work.

While the neocortex follows suit to your thoughts, your limbic brain doesn't. It's fully in charge of your heart rate, moving while you sleep or the knee-jerk reflex.

Haidt therefore describes the limbic brain as a **wild elephant**, with your neocortex being **the rider**, trying to control the elephant.

Unhappiness comes from the rider and the elephant disagreeing, and Haidt uses this metaphor to show you what you can do to close the gap between the two.

50% to 80% of your baseline level of happiness is determined in your genes, but by changing your thoughts you can still **train the elephant**.

For example, your limbic brain is trained to recognize danger everywhere, in order to survive, but by becoming an optimist, you can lessen this behavior, which isn't quite so useful today.

A large chunk of our happiness comes from our **social relationships**, and the first step towards improving them, is understanding them.

You can use this principle the next time you fight with your spouse or roommate: **Just admit some of the things you did wrong**. Your friend will start to reciprocate and also admit what they did wrong, helping both of you to resolve the conflict.

Doing this also helps lessening your self-serving bias, since your elephant thinks it's always right and your rider usually defends it.

Next to your relationships, **your work** is one of the few factors that matters a lot to your happiness.

However, what you spend your time working on is one of those external circumstances that has a big impact, thanks to the progress principle. It says that we draw much more happiness from **working towards a goal**, rather than reaching it.

So try to find meaningful work you're good at – as Confucius says: *“Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.”*

Your most important relationship in your life will likely be the one with your partner or spouse. But on your quest for love, **don't just rely on passion**. No matter how much “in love” you are at the beginning of the relationship, it naturally fades – and that's okay.

Haidt says we must seek to develop **companionate love**, which is what best friends, brothers, sisters and family members share. Having someone at your side through the ups and downs of life, sharing your joy and sadness and exploring and learning together creates a much stronger bond, which can last you a lifetime, but it takes time to develop.

So don't give up a relationship once passion fades, but give your companionate love time to develop.

The rider and the elephant might also disagree about **who you are**. For example your rider can try to preserve your image of being an efficient, career-driven manager, while your elephant just wants to cut himself some slack and play soccer with his buddies.

It often takes a crisis for us to see these differences, which is why **adversity can make us happier**. This is especially true for people in their teens and twenties, who spend a lot of time thinking and looking for meaning in their lives. A crisis gives you the chance to see what the elephant really wants and help the rider adjust your self-image to match your true desires.

Lastly, we need to feel **connected to something greater than ourselves**, which is why religion has a place in our lives. Even if you're an atheist, you probably believe in karma, destiny or fortune. That's a good thing! Belief gives us **a sense of awe**, because it makes us realize that we're a small part of something much greater.

To sum up:

1. Surround yourself with the people you love the most and live in accordance with reciprocity
2. Do work that matters to you
3. Find a partner who will stand by your side through sunshine and rain
4. Allow yourself to be part of something greater

These are just some of the things I learned from these blinks, as there were so many good insights, let alone in the book.

The Happiness Hypothesis Review

These blinks did an awesome job. I read parts of *The Happiness Hypothesis*, and every page hits you with a new insight. I don't know how I would've summarized it, but Blinkist did it.

I would have liked to learn about the formula here (Haidt gives a formula for happiness in the book, consisting of your biological set points, the conditions of your life, and your voluntary activities), but I don't mind that they went for the rider and the elephant metaphor.

Using this throughout all blinks made the summary very consistent and actionable. The book is great, the summary is superb – I highly recommend you get both.

Who would I recommend the Happiness Hypothesis summary to?

The 27 year old who burns through one love relationship after another, the 47 year old who still slaves away in a corporate job she hates in hope for a good retirement and anyone who thinks happiness is just something your born with.

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