

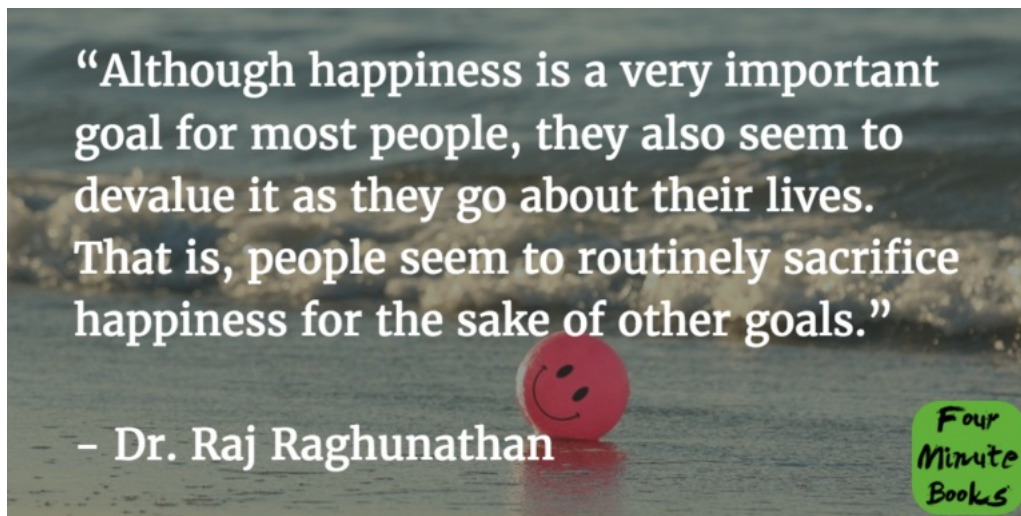
If You're So Smart, Why Aren't You Happy Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *If You're So Smart, Why Aren't You Happy* walks you through the seven deadly sins of unhappiness, which will show you how small the correlation between success and happiness truly is and help you avoid chasing the wrong things in your short time here on earth.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Coursera is one of the biggest online learning platforms in the world. With over 24 million users and 2,000 courses provided by some of the world's best universities, it is a great place to get an education from a top school for free. You can even pay to attain certain certificates and verify your skills on your resumé.

In 2015, the most popular course wasn't one about business, though. It was one about happiness. The creator of that course is Dr. Rajagopal Raghunathan and last year, he synthesized some of his lessons from that into his first book, *If You're So Smart, Why Aren't You Happy*. 15 years after completing his MBA, he noticed his friends' career and academic success seemed to be very unrelated.

What was even less related to both of those was their "life success" as Raj calls it and so he embarked on a research quest to find out why smart people are often so unhappy. He discovered what he calls the "seven deadly sins of unhappiness."

Here are the three I'd like to share with you:

1. The first step on the path to happiness is not devaluing it.
2. Don't be desperate in your quest for love and strong relationships.
3. Happiness is knowing what you want, yet being okay with not getting it for a while.

I know you're smart, but are you happy? Let's take care of some of the roadblocks on our way!

Lesson 1: Find the emotions you connect to happiness and make room for experiencing them.

Let's start with the very first of the seven deadly sins: *devaluing happiness*. Quite frankly, it's impossible to make progress in something you don't prioritize – and happiness is one of the things we most commonly put on the back-burner.

Why? Well, it's a hard-to-grasp concept, so prioritizing things like money, success and fame feels like a more concrete step. After all, these are proxies to happiness to some extent.

When Raj and several other researchers did a study, in which participants should name their three hypothetical wishes to an all-powerful genie, the respondents asked for money, success and great relationships. But when they evaluated peoples' true goals, happiness was the most important one. Everyone could've asked the genie for happiness directly, but most of us don't prioritize happiness enough and so we end up chasing the wrong things.

Here's one way to combat that: **Ask yourself what emotions you connect to happiness.** One way I do this is by answering the question "When did I feel happy today?" every day. Is it love? Inspiration? Excitement?

Only once you what state you're happy in can you start making time for the activities that will get you into that state. And it doesn't even take a genie to do that.

Lesson 2: Neither needy nor avoidant: Find the middle ground of love by being generous.

In the 1970s and 80s, psychologist Mary Ainsworth started a series of longitudinal studies on children who lacked parental care and affection while growing up. As you would expect, these children turned into adults who landed on the extreme ends of the spectrum of love: they were either extremely needy or totally avoidant.

This is the next of the deadly sins: *desperately seeking or avoiding love*. The avoidant part is explained quickly: If you run at even the thought of intimacy, you'll have a tough time experiencing its wonderfulness. The needy side is a bit more complex, you'd think needy people are at least very caring, if overbearing. However, like in economics, lots of supply drives down demand and so people who always make themselves available are less interesting to us.

But relationships *are* a crucial part of happiness, so what's a good way to deal with this? Simple: **Be generous. The sense of accomplishment we get from helping others shows us we can spread happiness from within and improves our self-image.**

Both of these are a lot more conducive to happiness than avoiding love or texting your last date 17 times a day (never send more than two) to check if they want to see you again.

Lesson 3: Be dispassionate in your pursuit of passion to stay flexible and patient.

This last sin is one I personally struggle with quite often: *being either too passionate or too distant about what goes on in your life*. When I have a fallout with an old friend, I quickly go into “I-don’t-care-mode” and write it off as not important enough to warrant my attention or energy, which it actually might be. On the other hand, I’m sometimes overly obsessed with work and not present enough when I’m with friends and family.

When you’re too passionate, you outsource your happiness to your goals and if you don’t reach them, you’re miserable. When you’re not passionate enough, you don’t care and end up in a place you don’t want to be.

The middle road Raj suggests is **the dispassionate pursuit of passion: Be passionate about your life and its events, but approach it in an objective, non-judgmental way.**

That way, you always have something you’re striving for, but are patient and flexible when things don’t go your way immediately. You’ll learn to see that the obstacle is the way and that within our biggest challenges, happiness resides.

If You’re So Smart, Why Aren’t You Happy Review

What a cool way to structure a book! *If You’re So Smart, Why Aren’t You Happy* is very straightforward and practical. “Here’s what makes you happy. Here’s what isn’t. This is how to avoid the bad stuff and do more of the good stuff.” I like the reminder to consciously prioritize happiness and have already started thinking the situations in which I’m most happy. One of them is obvious: writing summaries like this one

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- Where happiness research agrees with stoicism
- How distrust is hardwired into our bodies
- What the GATE web is and how you can avoid getting caught in it

Who would I recommend the If You're So Smart, Why Aren't You Happy summary to?

The 29 year old young professional, who's a few years into her first job out of college, but finds it doesn't fulfill her the way she thought it would, the 45 year old, who's considering getting his MBA to not be banished to the sidelines at work, and anyone who often sends one text too many.