The Book of Fun

Last year, 8,231,719 self-help books were published around the world. 483,135 were in English, with subjects ranging from Do-It-Yourself Dog Waxing to Save the World While Losing Excess Fat. 71,902 are spiritual advice.

As you probably have guessed, I just made all that up, but it's almost nearly somewhat true. There are literally thousands of books out there that were written to function as guides to an improved life. Many bill themselves as spiritual guides, or self-improvement programs.

I have only ever read one, and I've talked about it elsewhere. It helped to change my life, but the truly interesting thing about it was that there wasn't a single thing in it that I didn't already know. Somehow, having someone else point out the obvious got me thinking about myself in a different way, and I was able to take the suggestions seriously.

Almost all of these books have something in common. They take one of the Great Aspects of Fun, such as Happiness, or Joy, or Sexual Fulfillment, and tell you what you already know. The formula is pretty simple: do good stuff, do it well, and don't do bad stuff. Be good to yourself. Keep Calm. Have sex in trees if you need to spice things up.

This is all good advice. The problem is with the recipes for happiness that come with these little cheese-bites. Let's face it: if you can get five books out of telling people to stop acting like losers and start acting like winners, you've lost them. The instructions, if they take that many pages to expound, are too complicated for most people, and it may do them more harm than good to go on reading. Most people, no matter how many times you tell them it's good for them, will never achieve peace through meditation, or self-esteem through twelve-step programs, or multiple-male-orgasms through four-hour self-control sessions with well-paid goddesses. If it works for you, fine, but it isn't going to work for many. I suspect very strongly that more people fail at these programs than succeed, and the people who succeed are the ones who were doing relatively well in the first place. You can't talk someone out of addiction, unless they want to be talked out of addiction.

So if you're reading some author's fifth book on the same subject, you're making her/him rich, but may not be getting much out of it. I could be wrong; you may be getting something out of it, in that you find such reading fun, but I certainly wouldn't, and neither would my goldfish, which makes two of us, which means that there are millions of us out there. We don't need more advice to make us feel like failures when we can't live up to it.

So this, the Book of Fun, the bible of the Temple of Fun, written by the Chief Rabbi and Grand Wazoo of the Temple of Fun, will not be a Recipe for Fixing Your Broken Life. You probably already know what you need to do: if you're an addict, stop being an addict; if you're too materialistic, stop being so materialistic; if you're too agitated, calm the \*$)@ down already! What do you need my advice for?

My publisher is having a conniption. Wait! Don’t go! You do need my advice!

You need my advice for two reasons: one is that I want to sell lots of copies of this book, and the other is that we all need each other's advice, as long as we know that we don't have to follow it, and I believe that my message can help anybody who is helpable. I have something to give you, and probably something to learn from you as well. And it is always good to know that someone cares enough about you to want to help you to improve your life. Take it as you will, but if you genuinely want my life to be better, I may ignore your opinion while thanking you for caring.

My message, in all its glory, is startlingly simple. The fact that there is a whole book to follow up on it is evidence of the large amount of corollary thinking that follows from this message. But I don't have a program for you to follow, and I'm not going to tell you anything new. What I am going to try to do is give a voice to something already hidden in the dark shadows of your psyche.

By all means, meditate - it certainly can't hurt. Absolutely, practice positive affirmations. Without a doubt, loving yourself is a wonderful thing to do. All these things are fun, and lead to more fun, which leads to Fun.

There. I said it. That's my advice. Almost always, even in black moments, you must remember that life and the universe are meant to be Fun. You don't need to believe in anything else. You don't need to follow a recipe. You just need to live knowing that life is meant to be worth living. The difficulty is not in knowing this. The difficulty is in remembering to remember it.

Sometimes, as in the death of loved ones, or news of yet another preventable genocide, it is very hard to believe that life is meant to be fun, or that the universe loves us. Don't try to force yourself at these times. Let grief have its way, and when it is time, remind yourself of the worth of living. Fun will return. It is always there for you, when you are ready for it.

If you can only do this by positing the existence of God, then do so. I don't have to. To me, as I tell you in another chapter, God is a poetic truth, not a literal one, and I can live in the light without living in the light of an imaginary being. That's just my opinion, and feel free to tell me I'm wrong – just know in advance that I don't particularly care what you think of my chances of ending up in heaven. That's another question that will be dealt with later.

Many of you will read this book and think, "I could have written that!" So why didn't you? Others among you will read this, and reject what you read. You will think of me as an idiot. You may be right. I'm a happy, well-adjusted, lucky, smart idiot, and I have probably more fun than you do.

But some of you will read this and say, "Now why didn't I think of that?" And to that I say, "You probably did, you just never put it into words, because our world is so anti-fun that even thinking about it is considered unproductive, a sign of weakness, and thinking good thoughts just doesn't pay well." You, I cannot stress enough, already know what you need, you just may not know that you know it.

There is no way you can fail with my plan, if you even decide to follow my advice for the shortest second. There is no way, if you decide that Joy, Happiness, Love and Peace are worth having, that you can fail to improve the fun quotient of your life. Just imagining fun is fun. You may be lying in the darkness of the worst hole of your life, the world confined to a tiny window ten feet above your head, and as soon as you decide that you will find a way to achieve Fun, your life is already better (*note: better ≠ best)*.

The reason I'm not going to give you a recipe for Fun is well-illustrated by that example. I would guess that the best way out of that hole for you is imagination and meditation, and while I can give you some half-baked advice on each, it is not my intention or ability to find solutions to every variation on the theme of misery. You must chart your own path. I give you a destination, and nothing more.

Which is not to say that you should throw this book away. I have done my best to fill this book with positive affirmations that you can use in your life. I've even provided you with a positive affirmation about the power of positive affirmation. I have a lot to say, seeing as I've been storing up these words for decades.

Sometimes, all it takes to find the path is to know that you are not alone in looking for it. I've taken this path myself, more than once, having started and restarted my journey more times than I've had years in my life. I want your life to be as good as mine is, which is pretty damn good. I need your life to be as good as mine is. I will be very annoyed with you if you don't at least try to make your life as good as mine is. My world can't be perfect until yours is.

I'm not rich, or famous, or respected in my field. I'm a nobody with a long history of being a nobody. I'm not qualified to do anything but tell my thoughts, but I do that without trepidation. I'd like to be rich, famous and respected, but I'll be having more fun trying than not trying, but those things are of relatively small importance to me, compared to the Great Aspects of Fun.

Now a confession: I have moments of weakness when enlightenment falls away from me, and I do stupid things. Sometimes I lie, and then wonder why. Sometimes I allow depression to creep in around the edges, succumbing for a time to a sickening self-pity, which I find in myself to be the most hideous of emotions. Unlike many false prophets, I make no claims to divinity, or divine guidance, or perfection.

But (and it's a big but), I know that the universe loves me, as it loves you, and this convenient lie brings me back to my path.

I accept that there are literally hundreds of millions of people who are completely immune to Fun. Your brain has to be set up for it. I sincerely hope that many of those people, the chronically depressed, will find the medical help and hope that they need, and will come to Fun by their own twisted paths. I accept that many are not the least bit interested in having Fun. These people are perverted and should be avoided, or are insane. Poor them!

You will find more about the various topics I've touched on in this chapter later in the book. It may seem a little silly that after I've made such an issue about the simplicity of the Path of Fun that I've written a whole book about it. I beg to differ. Fun must be applied to all the various facets of life, and while I won't really tell you how, I will tell you why.

That is my mission. Now on to the cupcakes!