

# THE MIND GAME



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*Section 1:*

*Five Ultra-Practical Steps  
to Emotion Mastery*

*The degree of one's emotions varies inversely with one's  
knowledge of the facts.*

***-Bertrand Russell***



## ***Introduction***

Malcolm Myatt lost his ability to feel sad after having a stroke. The stroke damaged the frontal lobe of his brain that controls the emotion of ‘sadness’.

While this is a real-life story of a stroke patient, would you like to exchange places with him? Have you ever wished at some point in life to get rid of your emotions? Sadness, grief, depression, et al.? What about negative emotions that are actually good to experience, like the ‘sweet pain’ of love or the ‘fear’ of losing a loved one? Imagine not being able to cry after experiencing a great loss or not being able to laugh while listening to Comedy Live on the radio!

Sanders and Mini were having their first child. They were feeling that heady mix of anticipation and nerves. “What sex would the baby be? How would we cope having a baby in a shared house?” were some of the questions running through their minds. At twelve weeks, they attended Northwick Park Hospital in Harrow, UK, for the first scan.

Recalling the situation, Sanders sent me a detailed account of his emotional trauma –

*Mini lay on the bed and nervously grasped my hand as the obstetrics nurse squirted cold gel onto her stomach. The scanning screen was turned away from us and you could feel the excitement in the air as we awaited the good news that our baby was healthy. The nurse kept her expression impassive as she moved the hand-scanner back and forth.*

*She said, “I’ll need to consult with the doctor.” Mini sat up abruptly, fear evident in her face, her*

*breathing, fast. "What's wrong?" she asked, "What's wrong with my baby?"*

*The nurse said nothing, and I felt a sharp grip in the base of my stomach, but I breathed through it even though I felt on edge.*

*The doctor came into the room and checked the screen. He said: "I'm afraid the baby's stopped growing."*

*"Is it dead?" Mini demanded to know.*

*"Yes," came the reply. I felt like an elevator had dropped a floor in my stomach and then caught on something.*

*"Can I see?" Mini asked.*

*"You don't want to see," the doctor replied. I realised he was trying to be compassionate. Probably that image would have stayed with us for years if we had seen it although years later I have found myself wondering what was there. Was there just a bud with no arms and legs? Was it shaped like a baby?*

*I was surprised how little Mini cried. As we made our way down the corridor to go home I remember how muffled the sounds around me were. It was probably that she was the only thing that mattered at that point.*

More than the well-being of the child, Sander's primary concern at that time was Mini and her tears. He couldn't come to terms with the fact that Mini wouldn't let out her emotions, not even in front of him.

Sanders further wrote –

*We took a taxi home and later that evening, Mini fell down unconscious. I called an ambulance and I barely remember walking into the waiting room. She was wheeled on a gurney but my faith in the medical system was strong. I was not prepared for what was next to come.*

*How can I express the sense of shock? It was like suddenly she had been removed from reality, disappeared from before my very eyes. I went to the nursing station, but the woman just told me to go home.*

*I can still feel the confusion of that night: Would I even have a wife in the morning? It was as if time was moving and standing still at the same rate. The bed felt cold and barren. In the morning I wandered around the house – incidentally- I remember there was a chill around me that would not go. I stepped into the porch and decided to stand outside.*

*The wind slammed the door behind me! “Things can’t get any worse!” I thought. I was locked out of the house in my dressing gown and my wife was lying in the hospital, possibly dead. This was before the days of mobile phones, by the way! There was a black hole in my mind’s eye where I could not clearly see or decide the future in my mind.*

*I remember my wife was asleep. I felt relieved and then felt selfish for not feeling more upset. I couldn’t cry, it just wasn’t there. But I felt something settle down there in the dark corners of my mind, something that might come up later.*

*In the years that followed I have had things remind me of that and then I have cried with a grief that caused me to sob and sob like the pain was a rushing river with no end.*

Sigmund Freud was right when he said:

*“Unexpressed emotions will never die. They are buried alive and will come forth later in uglier ways.”*

Emotions are strange. Sometimes, you just cannot cry. And sometimes, you experience an emotional outburst. It is emotions that make us human. Emotions make our lives real. They make us different from robots. Sometimes they play havoc with our lives and sometimes, they make life beautiful. No one knows this better than Sanders, who was later blessed with three beautiful children. Every time he became a father, his heart was filled with sunlight as his happiness knew no bounds. Every time he held his children in his arms, he felt the warmth of his lost child.

### **What are Emotions?**

It's clear that emotions are too complex to understand. Though abstract in nature, the term 'emotion' has attracted several definitions. It is an extreme mental state arising subjectively without any conscious effort. It is a real experience depicting an individual's interpretation, perception and choice of response to a specific situation. Emotions are very different from "feelings". Feelings are in fact the response of an individual to a specific emotion.

Various psychological and physical attributes result in the development of emotions. These serve as a link between our thoughts, actions, and feelings. They are warning signals that



enable us to experience the reality surrounding us. They guide our thinking patterns, actions and behaviour.

Surprisingly, emotions also affect our bodies physically. People who tend to ignore, repress or dismiss emotions are prone to developing physical illnesses. Negative emotions of fear, frustration, anxiety and depression lead to chemical reactions that differ from those released as a result of positive emotions of happiness, love, contentment and acceptance. A person experiencing fear-based emotions for a long time is more likely to develop chronic illnesses as the chemicals released as a result of it may harm the immunity, endocrine system and other bodily functions. A weak immune system further leads to several serious health issues.

### **Emotional Handicap**

Emotional agnosia refers to a person's inability to decipher facial expressions, vocal intonations and body language. The person cannot perceive the nonverbal cues of others' emotions when present in social gatherings, thus limiting his or her social interactions.

If you find it difficult to understand the subtle nonverbal signals in gestures, facial expressions and voice of others, you could be suffering from emotional agnosia. People with this condition find it difficult to determine and identify the emotional and motivational significance of social events; hence, they appear emotionless about certain things. The symptoms vary based on the brain's part that is affected. This problem occurs in patients with autism or schizophrenia. Emotional-social agnosia also co-exists with alexithymia.

## **Emotions in Decision-Making**

Opinion is divided on the importance of emotions in decision-making. Some believe that emotions are irrational thoughts and feelings that do not have a role in decision-making. On the contrary, some believe that emotions are a trustworthy tool for judgment; you must follow your emotions to make a decision. Psychological research suggests that the role of emotions takes a middle path. We have emotions and feelings for a certain purpose and we need to follow them, but rationally.

Amazingly, emotions generate conscious information through an unconscious assessment of circumstances. The human mind constantly assesses current and past situations. It observes minor details such as the hostile body language of a passer-by or the fake smile of a person in conversation with you! It conducts countless evaluations without you being aware of it. As a result, these evaluations create a brief mindset about others, which is identified by the conscious mind. The brief mindset is based on your experiences in a certain emotional state. For instance, you feel nervous, and avoid the passer-by whom your mind perceives as being hostile!

You may become wary or suspicious of the actions of the person whose smile your mind perceives fake.

## **Suppressing Emotions ... Not Good!**

Research studies have shown that when you suppress your emotions, you tend to stop the natural flow of a communication process in the relationship. It is hard to suppress your emotions and usually, it does not work. Hard work is involved in the process of suppressing a particular

emotion. As a result, we tend to become more tense and agitated.

Emotions do not remain inside the human skin. Our efforts to shut emotions off tend to make people, who are close to us, tenser. In a relationship, if you deny your feelings or try to hide them, your partner will realize it by your facial expressions. The face registers these sad emotions faster than the time taken by the brain to shut them off. Hence, the partner knows that you are not fine. If the partner cannot understand the nonverbal cues, he/she will not be able to predict your behaviour. You will say one thing and mean another. This creates considerable tension in the relationship as the partner harbours feelings of doubt. This uncertainty disturbs the balance of the relationship and things become sour.

Emotions are quick reactions. The human brain takes just 10 milliseconds to exhibit an emotional reaction, while our cortex, i.e., the thinking part of the brain takes 600 milliseconds to register that response. If you are confused about being sad or being mad, your face expresses it for at least 500 milliseconds. By this time, the receiver has your emotional response already. The action is similar to pressing the send button on the email prior to checking the email address or the content. Therefore, when you deny the emotional response, the partner gets confused and finds it hard to build a safe and trustworthy relationship with you.

Suppressing emotions increases physical and mental stress, the risk of heart diseases, diabetes and blood pressure. People who suppress their emotions tend to develop stiff joints, weak bones and illnesses resulting from lower immunity.

However, expressing emotions is not appropriate sometimes. For instance, you cannot cry in front of the HR team if you receive negative feedback during a job interview; or laugh at someone else's joke that is meant to hurt someone. What's important is to find a suitable opportunity to vent your emotions, positive or negative, in a safe and healthy way.

The chapters ahead will make you a master of your own emotions. Mastering emotions will make you strong, will ensure you take rational decisions and prevent you from acting impulsively in the face of trouble.

## **CHAPTER 1:**

### **FEEL YOUR EMOTIONS**

**B**elief systems are instrumental in shaping human behaviour. They determine how you interpret and respond to universal actions. For example, if a child is raised in orthodox value systems, he may tend to behave in an orthodox manner. If a child is brought up in an isolated environment, he will never know that one race is superior to another, or one person is more powerful than the other, or the colour of one's skin determines the degree of his/her beauty. When a child grows up in a certain belief system, his real personality gets hidden. He starts behaving in the way his belief system expects him to. This not just happens in societies and households but also in organizations that develop their own belief systems. Clashes occur when one person fails to agree with the other's belief system. Therefore, a fight between two men, two families, two countries, two organizations, is actually a battle of two belief systems. If you stop conforming to these belief systems and accept that there are a billion different possibilities of living life, you become more tolerant of others. You start understanding your feelings in a clearer way.

#### **You are Your Own Boss**

Only you can change your feelings and perceptions. Materialistic things and surrounding environments may serve as momentary distractions from what you actually feel,

but they cannot change the way you feel. We always carry our feelings with us. Our feelings are present in our conscience until we vent them out.

Nature has bestowed two essential emotions upon a human being, i.e. fear and love. Other emotions are minor variations of these basic emotions. Human behaviour and thoughts are based on either expression of love or fear. A feeling of love gives rise to happiness, joy, care, trust, contentment, compassion and satisfaction!!

Negative emotions of fear may lead to anger, anxiety, inadequacy, sadness, depression, confusion, loneliness, hurt, shame and guilt. The intensity of these emotions varies from mild to moderate to strong. For instance, disgust is a mild form of anger, offence is its moderate form and hatred, or rage is the extreme form. Fear is constantly associated with anger.

It is you who decide what to feel and in what circumstance. Yes, you are “YOUR” own boss. But to be able to do so in real life, you first need to understand and feel your own emotions. Once you connect with your emotions, taming them won’t take long.

### **Feeling Your Feelings**

Obsessive thinking, addiction, anxiety and depression resulting from negative emotions dent our confidence and self-esteem. Realizing our feelings and expressing them helps fight negative thoughts and opens our minds and hearts to peace.

Once we realize what we are feeling at a particular instance, we can then develop the appropriate response to it. For

instance, if you feel sad, and you know it, you would start crying.

Health experts have proved that crying is beneficial for our health as it gives a chance to vent our feelings. When a person cries, he/she releases and relieves the body of various chemical toxins. It removes stress hormones and chemicals from our body. People feel relieved once they cry. In fact, research has shown that crying has healing tendencies. It is especially helpful for people who find it difficult to express their emotions. You may have sometimes experienced at solemn social gatherings like funerals, people let family members of the deceased cry. It is considered a good way of letting the 'bad feelings' go. In another instance, if you are extremely happy about something, express your happiness. Sometimes a father may not show his son that he is happy with his progress. He may think that the son might become haughty or over-confident. No! By expressing happiness, both the father and the son will experience joy and will co-exist in peace.

### **Identify and Express your Feelings**

Identifying your feelings and expressing them plays a great role in enhancing our emotional health. Sadly, most of us find it difficult to do so. After identifying our feelings, we usually react in one of the following ways:

- We implode, i.e., avoid, hide, or pretend to ignore our feelings.
- We explode, i.e., react destructively or disrespectfully.
- We express our feelings appropriately.

If we resist or hold back our feelings, we may not feel well. Often, we tend to ignore our feelings or do not share them with others. We feel that we are weak because we cannot find appropriate ways to express our feelings and emotions. This repression might force us into harming ourselves, withdrawing from society, using substances, and the likes. We may end up in severe depression as an attempt to find solace in ourselves or distract ourselves from the feeling. Most distractions work on a temporary basis, but the original feelings are always present in our subconscious.

### **Time for Action**

If you wish to have a healthy relationship with your emotions, you must learn how to vent those emotions out of your system and choose what you want to feel. You must find trustworthy and safe people to share your feelings with, and receive comfort and acceptance. You must also learn to be comfortable with your own self.

Emotions are experienced in the form of waves – small and manageable ones, medium ones, and huge tidal ones. It is important to believe that these waves come and go. You can calm your mind or engage in a comforting activity such as talking to a friend, drawing, or some other form of expressing your thoughts and feelings. Your objective is to explore the hidden emotions inside you and release them safely and in an appropriate manner. Kindness and compassion helps in the quicker release of human feelings. Once you reach the comfort level of your emotions, you need not fear anything. Regardless of the nature of the feeling, you must accept it and strive for a peaceful living. Here are some steps you can take in that direction:



- Keep an open mind, be humble, and accept the natural flow of events. Often, we rely on the human mind to interpret what we feel inside our hearts. We must understand that mere assumptions of our feelings do not reflect the entire story.
- We need to understand our present emotional state and the effect it has on our body.
- Avoid being judgmental while trying to explore and understand your feelings. Personal ideas, experiences and judgments make it hard for a person to identify the true feelings. You do not require any substantial evidence to realize what you feel. Just observe the natural flow of events and explore what you feel now.
- Dreams are involuntary imaginations and ideas experienced by a person. These reflect the inner emotions of an individual, especially those that we tend to ignore. Make a habit of writing down your aspirations and dreams to understand how and what you feel.

## CHAPTER 2:

### FACE YOUR EMOTIONS

**A**fter training yourself to identify and feel your emotions, the next step is to face your emotions. People usually experience the following problems when dealing with difficult emotions.

- *Avoidance:* Sometimes, we do not know our emotions enough to realize that we are ignoring them in order to avoid the pain and sadness that is buried inside us. When we ignore the channel of pain and sadness, we tend to express it in other unhealthy ways. For instance, some people overeat when they are sad or depressed. Such an action may have negative health consequences such as obesity or cardiovascular disease.
- *Undue Judgment:* When we feel insecure and uncomfortable about ourselves, we are likely to judge others unjustly. We tend to blame others for our problems rather than acknowledge that our own actions or decisions might be a possible cause.
- *Guarding:* When someone says something unpleasant about us, we do not reveal our anger. This is an example of how we sometimes guard our emotions. It could be because we feel vulnerable or fear the reaction of the person in response to our anger. However, failure to express true feelings

hampers the authenticity of our interactions with near and dear ones.

- *Anger*: Expressing anger makes us feel powerful, especially when we feel weak on the inside. For instance, if a friend mocks at your action, instead of letting him know that you are hurt, you may act aggressively to reinforce your power.
- *Depression*: If we consistently fail to handle the emotions of pain and sadness, it may result in depression. It is normal to feel sad, but the problem arises when we start hating ourselves.
- *Anxiety*: If we avoid difficult emotions, we may develop anxiety. Often, people make efforts to control others and the surrounding environment to relieve their own anxiety instead of dealing with it.

## Facing the Demon

Instead of avoiding your emotions, face them. Here's how:

- *Pause*: You do not require a complete therapy session to learn how to deal with your emotions successfully. In case of a difficult emotion, stop all activities for a moment and ponder over what you are feeling. Observe your physical senses – is your heartbeat fast? Or are you experiencing a tight throat? Or do you feel uncomfortable in your stomach? Recognize these sensations to understand your feelings.
- *Breathe*: Concentrate on your natural breathing process. It relaxes your mind, preventing you from being caught amidst difficult emotions.
- *Introspect*: You must never overlook your feelings. Instead, you must always think why you are feeling

that way. For instance, if you are feeling scared, introspect and analyse the reason for that fear. Resistance to natural feelings is your worst enemy. Understanding what triggers these emotions helps you handle them better and effectively in future.

Difficult emotions are an essential part of human life. You must train yourself to feel secure even when you feel vulnerable. Pretending to not feel anything is not real strength. Being aware of your feelings and their cause is the true act of courage.

## God to the Rescue

Emotions are volatile, intense, unpredictable and often uncontrollable. We find it difficult to deal with emotions as they transcend the logical sphere of analytical reasoning. Emotions are the driving force of our actions and sometimes make us act in an unexpected manner. Emotions are natural expressions that unite us with other like-minded people or with those who have had similar experiences.

Do you feel that you cannot connect with your emotions? Indeed, life has its own vicious circle of stress that creates overwhelming emotions of anger and fear. These feelings remain inside your subconscious, due to which you may end up in emotional outbursts that ruin your relationships. If you have impulsively developed a habit of losing control over your emotions, divinity can help you gain self-control. You just need to manage these emotions wisely to enjoy a healthy rapport with others around you. Here's how:

- *Accept your shortcomings:* A tremendously effective approach to controlling destructive emotions involves confessing your sins to God.

- *Acknowledge all emotions:* No emotion is bad. It is good when a person uses it to fulfil God's purpose, i.e. to experience life. Be confident when healing bad emotions. You should not be overwhelmed thinking about the difficulties you have to overcome. You must rely on God's grace that will enable you to heal on a daily basis. Learn from your mistakes and move forward with the awareness that success is yours, even if you are imperfect.
- *Alter your thinking pattern:* Thoughts determine how you respond to different emotions. Therefore, you must replace harmful thoughts with healthy ones to manage emotions wisely. You must realize that you need to face situations, which go out of control, without reacting immediately. Remember that you need to handle your emotions patiently rather than immediately freaking out.
- *Recognize your emotional triggers:* Emotional triggers should serve as a wake-up call. If you are overwhelmed with your emotions and feel they are difficult to manage, you must pay attention to how these emotions are triggered. Try to avoid emotional stress by accepting the natural flow of events.
- *Observe how you react during troubled times:* We react in a certain way when we feel troubled with our emotions. One way is to explode, i.e., push emotions outward, and the other way is to stuff your emotions, i.e., push emotions inward. You need to identify your natural reactions to disturbing emotions, choose the response you intend to give and avoid reacting without thinking.

- *Overcome exploding:* Observe your response patterns and create a mental template to be used during those disturbing emotions, i.e. when you feel the urge to involve yourself in emotional outbursts. In this way, you can develop a healthier response. Honour the person in conflict with, and respect his/her dignity while making a response. Give a brief response gracefully, acknowledging you are hurt, clarify your actions and express your views gently, apologize if required and extend compassion.
- *Chanting:* Chanting verses from a religious scripture helps attain a calm feeling when you are troubled with disturbing emotions. Learn to restrain these emotions in a mature way. Meditate regularly in a lone and quiet place, humbling yourself and asking the Lord to reveal your learning from these struggles and attentively listen to His answer.
- *Do not stuff your emotions:* An honest and transparent reflection of your emotional state is a better alternative to stuffing your emotions deep inside. They will only create bitterness, which can poison relationships. Build healthy boundaries communicating clearly about your expectations from the respective relationships. You cannot change people's attitude. Neither can you allow their disrespectful or abusive treatment towards you. In case a person expresses toxic behaviour, even when you have developed clear boundaries, you must terminate the relationship with immediate effect in order to protect your emotions. You must make the best efforts to develop peaceful relationships with those who respect the boundaries you have created. If any conflict arises, wisely tackle the problem and not the individual.

Also, introspect and ask yourself what efforts you are making to improve your relationship. Often, unrealistic expectations arise out of these relationships. Instead, you must deal with these expectations and avoid stuffing your emotions.

- *Always keep a check on other's assumptions and your motives:* When you are surrounded by overwhelming emotions, you must reflect on what are your motives as well as how people assume that particular situation. In case, you feel a sense of pride, selfishness, impatience, bitterness or anger, redirect your thoughts and look at the situation with a healthy perspective. Moreover, you must realize that you cannot assume other people's intentions accurately.
- *Be grateful:* Habits involving thanksgiving and praise help in leading life successfully. You must acquire the habit of praising the gifts given by God and thank Him for your existence. These actions invite divine power, which flows throughout life and changes negative emotions to positive emotions. It also empowers a person to manage his/her emotions well. Weekly Sabbath is an effective way to come in direct contact with your emotions. After the process of a Sabbath, a person gains the power to control his/her emotions. Introspection on how the Almighty wants him/her to grow and heal emotionally helps greatly.

Now that you are equipped to feel and face your emotions, let's help you tame them.

## *CHAPTER 3:*

### *CONTROL YOUR EMOTIONS*

**E**motions affect our behaviour and actions in daily life. We are attracted by new opportunities due to our excitement of venturing into new prospects. We cry when we feel hurt and make sacrifices when we love someone. Undoubtedly, our emotions serve as a guiding principle for our intentions, thoughts and actions. However, when we act hastily under the influence of our emotions, we tend to take wrong decisions that we may regret later.

Human feelings fluctuate between two extremes. The extreme state of negative emotion is rage and the extreme state of positive emotion is euphoria. A logical and moderate approach is always the best. This does not mean that we restrict ourselves from jumping in joy or falling in love. The most important thing to remember is that we must keep a check on our negative emotions and handle them with extra care.

Rage, bitterness, hatred and envy are negative emotions that usually are difficult to control, and we tend to go overboard if these emotions are triggered by another person. These emotions spread in our mindset like weeds and dominate our behaviour in daily life. No one is particularly born with such emotions, but people have the tendency to harbour these feelings for a long time. Therefore, we must find a way to



tame such feelings and control our emotions in difficult times.

The ability to control emotions depends on how much thinking goes behind a particular feeling, and how much we focus on the things that we fear, get enraged or feel depressed about. We need to recognize the rationale behind an emotion and devise strategies to influence how and what we feel as a result of that emotion.

### **Essential Tips to Control Emotions**

If you wish to control hysterical and boisterous waves of emotions and approach the situation in a calm and composed manner, read on. Here's how you can tame the demon!

- *Look ahead:* A Zen master once told his disciple, "Anger, spite, depression, or despair, are seemingly real as well as essential right now; where will they have gone in a month, a week, or maybe in just a moment?" Intense emotions may harm our ability to think about the future. They make us live only in the present moment and give us momentary enjoyment, pleasure, pain or suffering. Especially in the case of extreme anger or anxiety, we tend to forget for a moment that we have a future ahead. For instance, if you are angry with your boss, you may misbehave with him and abuse him without even thinking about its consequences. The momentary action may result in a cascade of negative consequences that leave a trail in all aspects of your personal and professional life.  
All of us, at some point in time, have done or said things that we regret later because we allowed our emotions to

dominate our mind for that moment. To keep such instances from repeating, it is better to temporarily detach yourself from the situation when you are going through negative thoughts and respond after a few minutes. For instance, the next time you are angry, just think how you will be affected if the other person disrespects you, and then act accordingly. If the person has some value in your life, you will not hurl anything improper or abusive at him/her in a fit of anger. So, do not react immediately. Instead, view the larger picture, calm down and resolve the problem amicably.

- *Know yourself first:* Usually, we pamper ourselves either a lot or very little. Before analysing others and expressing your emotions, you must learn the method of observing your own emotional behaviour, attitudes and natural reactions. The first solution to control your emotions is to have a thorough knowledge about how and why you react in a certain way under a specific situation.

Sometimes, you may observe that you are expressing an unexpectedly strong emotion. Stop for a while and find the reason. Controlling emotions does not mean that you need to pretend that the feeling does not exist. If you are angry, jealous, sad, greedy, or bitter, try to identify the specific emotion mentally, and say to yourself, “I do not like the way I feel right now, but I feel envious!” Therefore, you admit the true feeling you are experiencing at that moment and gain the strength to control it.

Being honest with yourself means you will not end up feeling guilty as you are willing to face the bitter truth.

You also do not require rationalizing your feelings. Usually, in the process of rationalizing, we tend to look for excuses or some silly reason just to console ourselves. When we are completely aware and mindful of our feelings and emotions, we realize the truth easily and accept it naturally. It means we are strong enough to act according to our emotions and handle the negative emotions practically.

- *Influencing moods:* Often, we need to engage ourselves in different activities to change our moods and perceptions. We assume moods occur instantly and will pass on like a storm. However, emotional storms differ from the natural ones. We can change and influence our moods without even resorting to substance abuse. Managing and influencing our emotions is powerful and essential for emotional maturity, good health and most importantly, happiness.

An effective way to change your mood instantly is to do some other activity. For instance, if you are feeling bored, then watching an uninteresting series on the TV will increase the boredom. Instead, you can switch off the TV set and take a walk in the park or around the neighbourhood to alter your mood. If you are cross with someone, focus your mind on the things you are grateful for in life. If you feel anxious, imagine how bad the situation could have been and be thankful that it is not as bad now. This will help you realize that a negative emotion is just a state of mind that can be changed instantly.

Remember to divert your thoughts and not get carried away by your present negative mood, as it is only momentary. The fastest way to combat negative thoughts is to imagine you are NOT experiencing that feeling. Therefore, if you feel tired and hassled, simply close your eyes for a few minutes. Imagine you are relaxed, comfortable and in a jolly mood. When you think that way, the fatigue will be neutralized, and you will be your cheerful self again.

- *Learn from others:* Observing other people is a great way to learn how they deal with their emotions to lead a happy and balanced life, provided you learn from the right sources. People having high emotional intelligence can deal with hardships and frustrations naturally. You can take advice from such people and get inspired by listening to their experiences. This knowledge may help you change your approach to life if you apply the things you learn from their experiences.
- *Physiological changes:* The common assumption is that emotions crop up in our head. That is not entirely true. Feelings and emotions are physical responses to various situations. For instance, anger involves an increase in blood pressure and heart rate. Therefore, people who have an angry temperament are more susceptible to heart disease. Anxiety and depression produce several physiological changes that damage the person's immunity.

Therefore, to control your emotions and moods, you need to deal directly with these physical changes. Our breathing pattern greatly influences these physical

changes. For example, you can suppress anxiety and anger with shallow and quick breathing. Here is a small breathing exercise that you may practice if you are angry or anxious:

- Stop breathing for 5 seconds and reset your breathing pattern.
  - Inhale slowly, focus on the air entering the diaphragm, and continue until the lungs are filled with air.
  - Exhale slowly and imagine you are feeling pure relaxation, and rest in your hands. While doing this, you will feel your mind is calm and relaxed.
- *Guide your emotions:* Emotions should be thought of as being strong yet senseless characters that need our direction and guidance. Everyone requires some emotion for motivation, but it is essential to apply the correct emotion at the appropriate time. If we give more weight to our emotions and do not think rationally, we risk appearing stupid. It is because we tend to react blindly when we are swayed by our emotions rather than being rational and thinking objectively.

It does not mean that we should be rational and objective when we are attacked by a lion! However, modern life demands a calm thought process to approach life rather than sloppy and blind emotional responses. You must sharpen your left brain, which thinks in a logical and an analytical way if you wish to control your emotions. By doing so, you will be able to

subdue and dilute rampaging emotions and calm your mind. For example, when you are angry, just count from 1 to 100 in the reverse order (100, 99, 98....). By the time, you reach 95 you will see that the anger has disappeared, and you have forgotten the cause of that anger (always works for me!).

- *Create a scenario for disengagement:* Disengaging momentarily from the surrounding environment is a great help when you want to take practical decisions. To do so, you can take help from Mother Nature to recharge spiritually and physically. Here's how:
  - Place an image of a lush green forest or waterfalls in your living room. Look at the picture when you are confronted with overwhelming emotions.
  - Experience the quiet and serene atmosphere of the forest path. Absorb the cool breeze of the babbling brook under the weeping willow.
  - Create a personal space for yourself involving a cosy retreat that helps you enhance your personal powers and energies.
  - Implement and practice breathing techniques and Yoga. It helps you centre your emotions and provides a safe harbour during an emotional storm.
- *Use spare time qualitatively:* Often, we feel counterproductive emotions due to several reasons. These may arise because of tumultuous experiences. The needs and wants are different for every living organism, whether it is a plant, an animal or a human being. An organism suffers if it cannot fulfil its needs and wants. The essential needs of human beings are food, clothing, water and shelter. If you do not fulfil

these basic needs, you will undoubtedly experience physical discomfort. But, a person must meet his emotional needs as well. To develop balanced emotional health, a person must cultivate the following:

- Sense of security and safety, we need to live in a safe area.
- Receive and give quality attention to near and dear ones, regularly.
- Have a sense of belonging in the community.
- Inculcate a feeling of control and influence over one's life.
- Share friendship, love, fun and intimacy.
- Feel a sense of achievement and competence.
- Work up to the hilt while avoiding stagnation and boredom.
- Boost self-esteem and confidence.

When a person cultivates these habits, he adds a purpose and meaning to his life. If you do not fulfil your basic emotional needs, you will feel depressed and find life to be worthless, which will cause both emotional and physical health problems. When you fulfil all or as many needs as possible, you experience greater emotional control, satisfaction, and stability. If you understand and know what your needs are, you can see beyond the basic emotions.

Controlling emotions will help you enhance positive attitudes. But, that's not enough. To be a complete master of your emotions, you need to protect them too! Puzzled? Read on.

## *CHAPTER 4:*

### *PROTECT YOUR EMOTIONS*

**T**here's a tendency among us humans to play with each other's emotions. People play with your emotions if you are emotionally vulnerable and can be easily manipulated. You must not be so chicken-livered that people take your emotions for a ride. It is thus essential to safeguard your emotions. Nobody has the right to hurt you or get an advantage at the cost of your feelings. If you wish to transform yourself from an emotionally susceptible individual to a mentally strong one by protecting your emotions, follow these steps:

1. Identify if you are susceptible to other people's emotions. The person who is overwhelmed by such negative energies around him is called an empath. An empath is like an emotional sponge. You are an empath if you –
  - Tend to be overly sensitive or hyper-sensitive, which is not good for you.
  - Sense anxiety, fear and stress experienced by other people and are physically affected by it.
  - Feel drained, exhausted and unhappy when you are amidst crowds.
  - Get disturbed and anxious by smells, noise and excess talking.



- Prefer to be alone for recharging your emotional energy.
  - Are generous, naturally giving, attentive to others, and spiritually inclined.
  - Feel suffocated in a close relationship and lose your own self.
2. The next step in safeguarding your emotions is to identify the source responsible for making you emotionally vulnerable. Find out if the feeling or emotion is induced by you or someone else. You never know, both may be responsible! If you experience the emotion of anger or fear, confront it in a gentle manner. Find its cause yourself or take professional assistance. For instance, if you are feeling blue even after watching a comedy movie, it may signal that you have been affected by the depression of other people. Energies overlap when people are within close proximities. Similarly, when you attend a concert or visit a mall, if you feel overwhelmed by the crowd, the reason is that you have absorbed the negative energies present in your surroundings.
  3. Once you identify the source, avoid it whenever possible. Move away from the source of negative energy. For instance, do not hesitate to change seats when you are in a public place if you sense a depressing feeling around you.
  4. Concentrate on your breathing pattern by focusing on it. This will help you establish a connection with the Self. Inhale for a few minutes and then exhale. You'll feel the negative energy leaving your body as you exhale. Then, inhale again. You'll feel calm, fresh

and positive energy entering you. This way, you are stuck firmly to the ground and are rid of complex emotions. Imagine negativity to be a grey fog that lifts from the body and positive hope entering as a golden light. This method yields quick results.

5. Flush harmful emotions out of your system. Negative emotions collect in the emotional centre, usually at the celiac plexus or solar plexus. Place your palm on the pit of your stomach to feel love and kindness and flush out stressful emotions. If you suffer from acute depression and anxiety, you may try this technique daily to build a strong core. It comforts you and develops a feeling of safety, thereby generating an optimistic feeling.
6. Envision that you are surrounded by a white light or a colour that you find empowering. The coloured envelope acts as a shield to keep away negativity and physical discomfort, allowing only positive emotions to reach you.
7. Manage the overload of emotional reactions. You are not required to restrict your ability to absorb other's emotions. Practice strategies for turning the negativity into a positive energy that will liberate you.
8. Recognize the people who disappoint you. Emotional empaths find difficulties in tackling emotional vampires such as the criticizer, victim, narcissist and controller. When you are able to identify these people or behaviours, you learn to protect yourself from them. You can avoid their presence and tell yourself, "I respect him/her even if I do not like his behaviour or actions."

9. When you are under stress, situations demand a high-protein diet. Research has shown that diet helps fight stress. So, eat to beat stress! Oatmeal, berries, avocado, cashews, chocolate, green tea, and oranges are great stress busters.
10. When you feel anxious in a crowd, try to find refuge by moving to a corner or by standing apart from the crowd.
11. Be self-reliant in dealing with difficult times and while finding solutions to problems. Prepare for alternate arrangements when you feel overwhelmed. Here are some ideas:
  - Know your limits with regards to accepting other's emotions. Create meaningful boundaries for people with whom you feel overwhelmed. For example, don't end up interacting with someone for two hours when you only prefer to spend half an hour.
  - You must find a private corner for yourself at home. Spend some downtime there and others must respect it. This shall help you rejuvenate. Examples of such private places include a study, reading nook, sewing room or any other area in your home that offers space to realize yourself.
  - Mindfulness and meditation are great tools to protect your emotions.
12. Search for positive situations and optimistic people.
  - Share your emotions with a friend, particularly the one who sees the good aspects of others. In the workplace, you must talk to colleagues who see the brighter things

in life. Listen and speak to people who are hopeful about their future. Hear them having faith in their abilities and trusting others' efforts. You may relish the joy of hopeful words, art forms and songs. Positive hope has a contagious effect and it boosts your mood.

- Cultivating positive emotions adds to a person's inner strength. Once you start interacting with peaceful and loving people, you will begin to flourish, and the negative emotions will begin to wilt. You must respect the needs of the Self by adopting healthy measures of self-love. It will increase your ability to respect other people.
- Compassion should be used as a self-defence mechanism to protect you from those overwhelming emotions. It enables you to empathize with other people's plight. However, it requires you to be compassionate towards yourself first. It means you do not suffer from any guilt about wishing for respite from those overwhelming emotions. This will help you interact more with others. Also, you learn to keep yourself whole without being immersed in the negative sphere.

Once you learn to feel, face, control and protect your emotions, there's a final step you need to take to become a master of your emotions. Find out how to upgrade your emotional quotient (EQ) in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **UPGRADE YOUR EQ**

**E**Q, or emotional quotient, or emotional intelligence, is the power to identify, understand, use and manage your emotions in a positive manner. It determines how easily you relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges and resolve conflicts. Emotional intelligence affects several aspects of our daily lives. It impacts our daily behaviour and the way we interact with other people. A high EQ enhances relationships, ensures success in the workplace, and helps you achieve personal as well as career goals.

If you have a high EQ, you will be able to recognize your emotional state, understand other people's emotional state and interact pleasantly with people around you. Once you understand these emotions, you will relate to other people better, form stable and healthier relationships, achieve success in your professional career, and live a healthy and fulfilling life.

#### **How EQ Affects Your Life**

EQ affects your life in the following ways:

- *Work performance:* A high EQ helps you handle social troubles in the workplace and enables you to motivate and influence others so that you may prosper in your career. When recruiters analyse

prospective job candidates, they give equal importance to EQ along with technical abilities. So, EQ tests are conducted before a candidate is hired.

- *Physical health:* Managing stress is the need of the hour. If you cannot manage your stress levels, you may become susceptible to health disorders. Stress leads to an increase in blood pressure, damages the immunity, contributes to infertility, increases the risk of stroke and heart failure, and quickens the process of ageing.
- *Mental health:* A low EQ impacts a person's mental health too. It makes him/her vulnerable to depression and anxiety. If you cannot understand or manage emotions, you will be affected by frequent mood swings that will hamper you from building strong relationships. You will feel isolated and lonely.
- *Relationships:* Once you begin to understand your feelings and gain control over them, you can express yourself better. You also find it easy to understand how other people feel. A high EQ enables effective communication at the workplace and strong interpersonal and professional relationships. It helps communicate clearly, influence others, do good teamwork and resolve conflicts.
- *Self-awareness:* With a high EQ, you identify your emotions and their effects on your perceptions and behaviour and are aware of your strengths as well as weaknesses, which in turn boost your self-confidence.
- *Self-management:* EQ allows you to control your impulsive emotions and behaviours. It helps you manage emotions in a healthier way, take initiatives,

revisit your commitments and adapt to different situations.

- *Social awareness:* Once you develop a good EQ, you begin to understand the needs, concerns and emotions of other individuals, gauge the emotional cues in advance, feel comfortable in social gatherings, and realize the power dynamics involved in an organization or a group.

EQ covers a wide range of behavioural patterns. Essentially, it influences our way of living, helping us live a healthy and balanced life to achieve success, both personally as well as at work. Several philosophies, theologies and management programs nowadays aim at developing high levels of EQ.

Our brain collects all external information through sensory organs. However, when it is in an emotional or stressful state, our instincts come into play and we act within limited options like fight, flight or freeze stimuli. Therefore, if you wish to access the wider range of options and learn the art of making good decisions, you need to increase your EQ. When we learn to associate with the emotional side of the brain along with being rational, we not only increase our horizon of responses but also leverage our emotional memory to arrive at a good decision. It prevents us from continually committing past mistakes.

You must be aware that the smartest people are not always the most successful people. Those who have achieved academic excellence but are socially inept usually find it difficult to be successful at work or in their personal life. Intelligence quotient or IQ is not the only requirement for success. You may secure good scores in college, but your EQ

will help you manage the emotions and stress involved with the exam.

## **Your Life Will Never Be the Same Again**

People with a high EQ have these abilities:

- Ability to reduce stress quickly and instantly in a wide variety of environments.
- Ability to identify emotions and to keep them from causing overwhelming stress.
- Ability to form an emotional relationship with other people through nonverbal communication.
- Ability to tackle challenges through play and humour.
- Ability to find positive solutions to conflicts and resolve them with confidence.

Anyone can develop these abilities. But first, one must understand his/her own feelings and emotions as well as those of others. Appreciating natural, authentic and beautiful things in life is a positive step towards developing a high EQ. Also, one must respect others and appreciate their uniqueness. Emotionally healthy individuals strive for a fulfilled relationship with others. They do not use other people to satisfy their own needs. Try to find peace in the hardships of your life. You must not permit the hard times of the past moments to impede your joy in the present moment. You must enjoy the natural flow of events and search for satisfaction in your life.

You need to control your emotions and take responsibility for your emotional responses. You must not blame other people for your actions or behaviour. Creativity is the best form of expressing your true feelings. You do not need to be



an artist, painter, poet, or a musician to express your thoughts. However, you must try to break away from the stereotypes and have a creative outlook towards life.

The best measure to develop EQ is to be aware of how you react in various situations and understand those emotions. You must be aware of the nonverbal cues when you express your feelings. Self-awareness helps realize how we feel and react in a situation.

To effect a permanent change in your behaviour that beats mental stress and exhaustion, you must learn to overcome momentary stressful situations and conflicts in your relationship with other people. You will be able to handle the stress if you are emotionally aware. Just reading about measures to increase your EQ will not work. You need to practice these daily, and your life will never be the same again!

### **Key Skills to Upgrade Your EQ**

You can build a high EQ by minimizing stress, focusing on yourself and connecting with the Self as well as with other people. A few smart skills discussed below will help upgrade your EQ. Each skill builds on different learning processes. The first 2 skills help you control and manage overwhelming stress, while the other 3 skills help develop effective communication. But before we unfold these five skills, let's introduce you to Charlie.

*Charlie's wife had told him she wanted to separate for a while. She said she was going out for a walk and handed him a letter. "Read it while I'm out", she said. As he read the letter, he felt like he lost control of his muscles, his stomach lurched, and he grabbed the*

*phone. "Tiffany wants me to move out", he garbled down the phone to his best friend.*

*'No', advised his friend, 'If she wants to separate then she must go.' This turned out to be the worst piece of advice he had ever taken from his friend. Tiffany had not worked for a good while and was suffering from Myalgic Encephalomyelitis. They had two children and his heart broke as he was full of fear for their future. Even now, recounting this many years later from a much better position, he feels sorrow and shame that they did not make their marriage work.*

*One day, they had a big argument and in a fit of anger, Charlie broke his wedding ring apart. He was full of anger and desperation and felt trapped. 'That's it,' she said, 'I want a divorce.'*

*Charlie spent that night crying in the bathtub, wailing in fact: It was like he was trying to draw out a long knitting needle situated down in his guts - and that crying, and wailing would bring it out. Each shout of pain from him brought relief for a few seconds until the needle of pain slid back down again. He didn't know it at the time, but he was heading for a deep depression.*

*The day she moved out, Charlie was at work. He came back to an empty house. He didn't really know what to do with himself. He felt this big painful lump of grief in his gut that he carried around like a tumour. When he saw his two children, he was numb inside, like a robot. He felt like a wounded*

*animal and wished someone would put him out of his misery.*

*He was working a high-pressure sales job and one day his evaluation came. The manager told him his sales were not good enough and he burst into tears. His self-esteem was so low. His marriage had been his life: the love of his wife had made him valid. Now, she didn't love him, and so life was not worth much anymore.*

*Making matters worse, he lost his flat and had to move into a small bedroom in a friend's house. He was now trapped: He had no job – He quit because he couldn't take it anymore - no home, no wife and he was separated from his kids.*

Charlie is the perfect example of someone with low EQ. He lost his wife and kids, and the effects of this loss cascaded into his work life. In the end, he even lost his job. Charlie could have handled matters differently. Let's see how.

### **1. Skill #1: Quickly Reduce Momentary Stress.**

Excessive stress overwhelms your body and mind, hampering the ability to gauge a situation accurately, listening to what is being said, being aware of your needs and feelings, and the process of clear communication. You must approach a stressful situation in a calm way. It helps in relieving stress and you maintain a focused, balanced and controlled thought process. Stress-busting helps the brain function properly in extremely tense and stressful circumstances. Follow these steps to develop effective stress-busting skills:

- *Recognize the stress responses:* Each person reacts in a different manner to cope up with stress. Recognize how your body reacts to stressful situations. Do you have sore or tight muscles? Do you clench your fists? Do you have shallow breathing? Once you are aware of these physical responses, it will help you monitor and regulate stress accurately. If you get agitated or angry under stressful situations, involve yourself in calm and quiet activities. On the contrary, if you're the kind of person who will withdraw from the situation or become depressed, stimulating activities will be best.
- *Discover which technique works best for you:* The best activities to relieve stress are those that involve the sensory organs. Everyone has a different response to the sensory input; therefore, you must identify things that soothe your senses and energize you. For instance, a visual image may uplift your mood. If you like music, the sound of wind chimes, water fountain or a musical piece may reduce your stress levels quickly.

Charlie lacked this skill. He couldn't deal with his stress during the argument and released his emotions in the wrong way by breaking his wedding ring. That was the last straw. He could have kept calm and involved himself momentarily in another activity. That would have ebbed down the argument.

## **2. Skill #2: Create Emotional Awareness To Beat Stress Due To Relationships.**

What relationship do you share with your feelings? Do your feelings flow naturally, encountering emotions one after another? Do you experience physical sensations with

different emotions? Are facial expressions subtle or evident when you feel discrete emotions of sadness, anger, joy or fear? Do strong intense feelings capture your attention? Have you focused on your emotions? How does it affect the process of decision-making?

If you do not have clear answers to these questions, you are emotionally unaware. Emotional health and intelligence are developed by connecting with the core emotions, accepting them and feeling comfortable with their existence. If you are an emotionally unaware individual, you need to reconnect with your core emotions. It helps you change the pattern of experiencing and responding to your feelings.

Mindfulness meditation is a proven technique to empower your EQ. Once you connect with and are aware of your momentary emotions, you learn about their influence on your actions and thought processes. It is the key factor in understanding the Self and to remain focused and calm in tense relationships.

Most people are unaware of their core emotions of sadness, anger, joy and fear. It may be because of negative experiences in their childhood that taught them to hide their true feelings. Although we may deny what we feel, we cannot eliminate our feelings. These feelings continue to remain in our subconscious, whether we are aware or not. The absence of emotional awareness restricts our understanding about our own emotions, needs, motivations and we are unable to communicate with other people. We also risk emotional outbursts that may threaten our relationships.

By the time Charlie developed emotional awareness, it was already too late. After his wife left, Charlie had more time on

hand to study his own emotions. If he was emotionally aware beforehand, his marriage could have been saved.

### **3. Skill #3: Engage In Nonverbal Communication.**

Verbal skills along with stress management techniques make a great communicator. However, nonverbal signals exhibited by an individual are also a critical part of communication. Non-verbal communication includes gestures, i.e., the way a person sits, how loud he/she talks, eye contact, and so on. To attract other people's attention, you must build trustworthy connections, be aware of and control your body language. You must understand and accurately respond to other people's nonverbal cues.

Nonverbal signals do not stop when you stop speaking. They continue to communicate, even if you remain silent. For instance, if you say, "I am fine," but you clench your teeth, without any eye contact, the body language communicates exactly the opposite state. Nonverbal cues generate interest, excitement, trust and desire to connect with people. It may also signal confusion, fear, disinterest and distrust.

You may follow these tips to improve your skills in nonverbal communication.

- Listen to the speaker attentively while in a conversation. If you plan what you will say next, daydream or think about other things, you will certainly miss the subtleties and the nonverbal signals of the conversation. Eye contact helps in expressing interest, maintaining the flow, and understanding other people's responses.

- Engage in signals such as vocal tone, facial expressions, gestures, postures, touch, pace and the length of a conversation.

In Charlie's case, Charlie had a lot of time to win his wife back before she left his home. He could have let her know how much he loved her and that he did not want her to go. Simple gestures like catching her eye and smiling briefly, or getting her flowers would have sufficed. Unfortunately, he did not know the value of non-verbal communication.

#### **4. Skill #4: Deal with Emotional Challenges with Play and Humour.**

Laughter, play and humour serve as natural antidotes in one's life. They reduce the burden of emotional challenges and help in viewing the different perspectives of life. A hearty laughter helps reduce stress and elevates the mood, creating a balanced nervous system.

Playful communication enhances your EQ in the following ways:

- You begin to accept the hardships of life. You view the disappointments and frustrations from a new perspective. Playful humour helps you survive the hard times, annoyances and setbacks.
- You understand the varied difference in opinions. Gentle humour allows you to express yourself in words, which might be tough otherwise.
- Creativity helps us think beyond the rigid stereotypes and frees our mind. We see the world in a novel way.

It is truly said, “All work and no play, makes Jack a dull boy.” You can apply the following tips to engage in playful communication:

- Set aside some time daily for quality playtime. Life becomes easier if you joke, laugh and play.
- Find activities you enjoy, loosen up, and embrace your playful side.
- Play with babies, animals and young children to relax your mind.
- Relax and energize simultaneously.

Playful communication provides relief from fatigue that allows your body to recharge itself and accomplish more.

This is another opportunity that Charlie missed. He could have engaged in playful activities with his children. If he tried sincerely, his wife may have gotten involved too, and they would have laughed their hearts out over how silly their argument was!

### **5. Skill #5: Find Positive Solutions to Resolve Conflicts.**

Disagreements, arguments and conflicts are inevitable when you are in a relationship. Obviously, two people have different needs, expectations and opinions. However, it is not bad. Healthy ways of resolving conflicts develop trust and mutual understanding. When you do not perceive a conflict as punishing or threatening, you experience freedom, safety and creativity in relationships.

You can follow these techniques to resolve conflicts in a healthy way and build trust with your partner:



- *Focus on the present moment:* When you do not cling to past resentments and disappointments, you begin to realize the real experience of the present and view the situation as an opportunity to resolve past feelings of conflicts.
- *Choice of arguments:* Usually, arguments involve a lot of energy and time, especially when you wish to resolve them amicably. Therefore, you must consider only the important issues that call for genuine arguments.
- *Forgiveness:* Forgiveness helps heal and resolve past conflicts. You must abandon the impulse to seek revenge or punish the offender and simply learn to forgive and forget.

An argument always involves two or more people. If you disengage yourself from it, the conflict will automatically be resolved. Had Charlie known this, he could have nipped the argument in the bud.

Now that you know the five key skills to developing a high EQ, apply them in your lives to upgrade your EQ, and don't be like Charlie!

Emotions, to a certain extent, guide your actions in several situations, even if you do not realize how you feel at that moment. However, the main thing is to interpret these emotions correctly. If it is a nice day and you meet new people, you will feel good after talking to them. The 'feel good' factor may be because the person was pleasant or because the weather at that time was pleasant. Emotions thus act as a vital information source. If you are upset because of an incident that took place earlier in the day and continue to feel upset while talking to a friend, you cannot assume that

your friend is the reason behind your despair. This is a major mistake made by us. Sometimes we may feel frustrated about certain aspects of our lives without being able to pinpoint the reason. We automatically tend to assume that the people around us are the cause of our troubles.

Moods and emotions also affect our thinking patterns. When we lead our lives smoothly and without any hurdles, we rely on the preconditioned routines and knowledge structures that worked for us earlier. When we take risks and things don't go as planned, we find measures to resolve the crisis. If our measures fail or if we do not find the right solution, we tend to become frustrated. It is a warning that our current approach towards life needs a change. The right measure is to find why this frustration persists and try to re-evaluate our impulsive actions. We should try to analyse all the events that happened during the moment of frustration rather than presume and pinpoint a cause.

We have now understood what emotions are and how we can feel, face, control and protect them. We have also tackled the five key skills to upgrade EQ. At your life and soon you'll be a Success won't be far behind.

## *Section 2:*

# *Analysing People*

*“Any fool can know. The point is to understand.”*

*— Albert Einstein*



## ***Introduction***

How many times have we read stories about stalkers stalking girls, or even experienced it first hand? Yet, we see similar situations in movies, only that the stalker is the hero. Is there a difference between stalking and expressing love? How can you differentiate between the two? How do you know when to panic or raise an alarm, or when to handle things subtly?

It is rightly said, '*Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder*' and, '*Don't judge a book by its cover*'. Have you ever wondered why these lines were said? For the simple reason that people are quick to judge others. You may meet a person for the first time, but how do you know what kind of a person he/she is?

Analysing and understanding others is of utmost importance to an individual. If you can grasp the motive of another individual at the right time, you can avoid many dangers. More so, being able to analyse people averts many misunderstandings. You can have more peace at home with family, at work with colleagues, and elsewhere with friends and acquaintances if you can understand them better. To be able to do so, you need to learn how to analyse them.

It is common knowledge that we can understand an individual based on his/her body language, gait, or even facial expressions. While this is true, to analyse the personality of another individual, you need to explore a more complex set of factors, which includes verbal and non-verbal communication processes.

The term '*personality*' refers to differences among people with regards to their behavioural patterns, emotions and cognition. Temperament is a quality that is considered to be

the precursor to an individual's personality. Accordingly, people are categorized into two groups: extroverts and introverts. Extroverts tend to be more talkative, adventurous, assertive and outgoing. Introverts, on the other hand, exhibit a solitary and reserved behaviour.

Theorists argue over analysing personalities from the perspective of culture. Some believe personality is a derivation of an individual's culture and there is no cross-cultural influence, while others believe that common elements are present in every culture. '*The Big Five Personality*' theory attempts to demonstrate personalities in different cultures. It studies the different traits associated with an individual's personality: openness, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotionality or neuroticism. We'll be dealing with this theory shortly.

In the coming chapters, you will get a fair understanding of personality judgment, where you can understand an individual's personality by analysing information about him/her through personal and non-personal interaction. You will be introduced to factors based on which you can analyse the personality of other individuals. If you succeed in applying this knowledge in real life, you will be able to maintain a good relationship with everyone you are associated with.

## CHAPTER 1:

# THE ART OF EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

A popular historian once said, “*Judge a man by his questions rather than by his answers.*” Generally, people tend to make a few mistakes when they strike a conversation. Firstly, they do not give or accept comments in a pleasant manner. Complimenting someone makes a person feel good about himself. The person enjoys conversing with you at that moment. It is a simple technique to improve conversations in a social setting. You must admire a reasonable argument or appreciate a good idea. When you receive a compliment, you must thank the person politely.

The second mistake is to not listen attentively to what is being said. Efficient listening skills are an important facet of good communication. You must listen with due attention and respond effectively to contribute to the whole conversation. The art of active listening is very simple. You need to listen attentively, make suggestions or give comments, repeat key points, and ask reasonable questions to further the discussion.

Another mistake people make is to try to dominate the conversation. It is hard to know when you are dominating a conversation. You may have simply started the conversation, but towards the end, it may turn out that you are the one

who is doing all the talking, maybe because you are excited or nervous about the topic.

### **Questions to Your Benefit**

Questioning plays an important role in conversations. People are often not confident enough about the type of questions they should be asking. One must avoid asking stereotypical questions and rather ask something worthwhile to add to the conversation. Good questions are a symbol of productivity, creativity, positive attitude and can help us achieve our goals. The process of effective questioning also requires the art of effective listening.

At the workplace, the benefits of effective questioning include:

- Meaningful connections with clients.
- Proper understanding of the client's problems.
- Effective work culture in the organization.
- Motivated employees who assume responsibility.
- A better collection of information.
- Improvement in negotiation skills.
- Reduction in communication errors.
- Sharing of valuable feedback.
- Sharing of each other's ideas and experiences.

In personal life, here's how you can benefit from effective questioning:

- Avoidance of misunderstandings.
- Development of an atmosphere conducive to loving and sharing.
- Knowing more about others.
- Making others feel valued.



- Giving and gaining attention.
- Peaceful conversations.
- Ease in sorting out arguments.
- Discovering each other.

### **What Makes an Effective Question?**

So, what makes an effective question? Effective questions invite thought-provoking answers and incite powerful reactions. These questions are open-ended and are a good source of collecting useful information. One must remember to wait patiently for answers to these kinds of questions, as people may become defensive in certain cases. Rather than making assumptions, you must find out what the other person knows in relation to the topic being talked about.

For example, instead of simply assuming the problem, you can ask, “How do you see the problem?” You can improve the process of communication using powerful questions and gauge the level of understanding of the other person. Such questions are used to conduct interviews, settle negotiations and to make problem-solving decisions. Here are some other effective questions: “What do you make of the problem?”, “What do you think about the strategy?”, “What seems to be your obstacle?” etc. You can also ask questions related to outcomes or results that give an idea about the person’s approach. Examples include, “What is your plan?” “What do you want?” Questions like “What will you do?”, “What is your next move?” determine actions that must be taken to achieve a goal. Although we have several reasons for asking specific questions, the information we receive depends on what type of question is asked.

In simple terms, questions can be classified as open-ended or closed-ended. Closed-ended questions invite a definite and focused answer which is either right or wrong. They have only a limited number of answers. Closed-ended questions are appropriate when you are seeking facts or are trying to encourage participation in the conversation. Examples include, “What is your name?”, “Would you like to have a cup of tea?” Many such questions can be asked to invite a response involving only a single word, which may help someone warm-up to your conversation.

On the contrary, open-ended questions invite longer responses involving information and creativity. They are further classified into loaded or leading questions, recall and response questions, and rhetorical questions.

A loaded or leading question subtly guides the response in a particular direction. For instance, the question, “How are you getting on with the new vendor system?” subtly encourages the listener to communicate if he has any problems with the system. Another example of such a question is, “Did you have a good day at school?” When a child is asked this question, he starts to think about the good experiences at school during that day. Leading questions are important in giving shape to a conversation as the response to the first question will lead to the next question.

Recall questions are those that can be answered by recalling information based on facts or from memory. An example of this type of question is, “What is the capital of the United States?”, or “What did you have for lunch”.

Response questions are those that involve a deep analysis or thought process. An example of such questions is, “What are the advantages and disadvantages of parental control software?”, or “Where would you like to go for the tour this Sunday”?

Rhetorical questions are asked to create an impact but do not require a definite answer. For example, “Can’t you do anything right?”, “Aren’t you ashamed of yourself”? Speakers use rhetorical questions while giving presentations to motivate the listeners to think. Lecturers, priests, politicians and other personalities use such questions to attract the audience’s attention. These questions do not require an answer but are rather meant to make people attentive to what is being said.

To derive useful information, you can apply the process of funnelling by asking several questions depending on the response to each question. The questions are restrictive in nature, beginning with open-ended questions and ending with closed-ended questions. Examples of such questions include:

“What time did you reach home?”

“What did you do after reaching home?”

“What time did you have dinner?”

“Will you go to the office tomorrow?”

Funnelling questions can be asked in another way, beginning with closed-ended questions and ending with open-ended questions. A counsellor usually uses the funnelling technique to extract maximum information.

## Kinds of Responses to Expect

As we have listed the various types of questions, let us now look at the kinds of responses that will be attracted to these questions.

- *Honest and direct response*: This is the desired response for any question.
- *False response*: A person may lie while responding to a question. If the questioner is smart enough, he will decipher the lie by studying the non-verbal responses of the respondent before and after he tells the lie.
- *Out of context response*: A respondent may give an answer that is completely irrelevant or unconnected. This kind of response is given to alter the topic of discussion. The best option, in such cases, is to rephrase the question to elicit an appropriate response.
- *Selective answers*: Often people are selective while answering questions. They tend to answer them according to their comfort level and choose to avoid uncomfortable questions.
- *Refraining from the response*: Some people simply avoid answering a question. For instance, politicians usually avoid questions. When a journalist asks a difficult or a disturbing question that may have a negative effect on their image, they avoid it by asking another question or by mentioning something positive in relation to the topic under discussion.
- *Stalling*: Sometimes a respondent takes time before answering the question. Similar to avoiding an answer, the respondent asks another question to buy more time.

- *Distorted response:* People often give distorted responses to questions based on how they perceive stereotypes, social norms and other types of bias. In such cases, people do not understand that their responses are biased or exaggerated.
- *Refusal to respond:* If a person does not wish to answer, he may simply refuse to offer a response. This can be done by staying silent or by saying, “I shall not answer your question.”

To be able to understand others better, you should be able to ask effective questions and listen to the responses attentively. For instance, a good lawyer must have effective questioning skills as well as great listening skills to establish a trustworthy relationship with his client. A complete understanding of the statements spoken by the other person will result in a logical deduction, which is crucial to effective listening and problem-solving.

### **Levels of Effective Listening**

There are several factors that may hamper a person from practising the art of effective listening. These include:

- Temptation to dominate or control the conversation.
- Desire to exhibit skills and intelligence. A person may try to tell the answer before the other person has completed asking the question.
- Discomfort to a response. This happens when a person expresses his ideas and emotions that are beyond the comfort level of the questioner.

To avoid these pitfalls, one must understand the various levels of effective listening:

### **Level 1**

The first level of effective listening is useful when you collect information such as directions, or while placing an order in a store. At this level, you must focus your attention on how you are affected by the words spoken by the other person without placing too much attention on the person who is speaking. The focus is on your thoughts, ideas, judgments, problems, conclusions, and emotions. You must not think about the emotions of the person who is speaking.

### **Level 2**

This level of effective listening involves a deep focus on the speaker. At this level, we may not be aware of the context of the topic. We observe what is being said, how the speaker is saying it, and the non-verbal part as well. We practice the art of listening with full awareness about the other person speaking. We listen with attention to the things they attach importance to and what makes them feel happy or sad. We do not involve the process of judgment at this level. We do not concentrate on planning how to react. Rather, our response is affected by what we hear.

### **Level 3**

This level is a combination of skills used in the previous two levels. At this level, we add to the conversation, gather information, create awareness about the context, and study the effect of the conversation on all members. We also focus our attention on our intuition and all other senses. We observe the non-verbal language and the atmosphere created

due to the conversation. This facilitates further questioning on the topic.

## **Tips to Be a Good Listener and Questioner**

Here are some highly actionable tips to make you an effective listener and questioner:

- ***Articulate:*** Articulation is the result of paying attention and being aware of what is being said. A successful articulation is one wherein people share their opinions and ideas without the involvement of any kind of judgment. You must learn to articulate in such a manner that the person talking to you feels that he is being heard.
- ***Be curious:*** You must develop a sense of curiosity. Simply assuming what will be said next is the wrong approach. Be curious to know what attracts the other person to talk to you. What is his/her motivation behind meeting you? While communicating, ask curious but not over-personal questions. For example, inquire about the other person's well-being and health.
- ***Clarify:*** Clarification is a combined process of questioning and articulating what you hear. By asking for clarifications, you fill the gaps in information and make the person aware that you are listening attentively. It is essential to clarify doubts if the other person's responses are vague. You can help the person clarify the meaning of his/her statements by giving suggestions. For instance, you can say, "This is what I feel you are talking about. Is it right?"

- ***Be silent when required:*** Give enough time to the speaker to answer questions. A few minutes of silence give the impression that you are listening.

Practice and apply these tips in your daily life and you will see the difference. If you know how to ask the right questions and how to listen effectively, you will avoid many misunderstandings, both in the personal sphere and at the workplace. You will also develop a better bonding with those around you and will know them better. Who knows, you will be surprised at what you discover!



## CHAPTER 2:

# UNLOCKING PERSONALITY AND BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS

A person's behaviour changes throughout his lifetime. Behaviour involves actions that are influenced by factors like genetics, faith, social norms and attitude. Behaviour is also influenced by the traits of an individual, which are his distinguishing characteristics.

People are supposed to follow certain social norms and behave according to acceptable standards of the society. Behaviours are perceived as acceptable or unacceptable depending on which cultural society one lives in. Faith is one of the most dominating factors in cultural societies and is guided by the philosophy and religion of the people. A person's faith lays the foundation for his thought process and influences his behaviour. Further, the behavioural pattern of a person is influenced his attitude. Attitude is defined as "*the degree to which the person has a favourable or an unfavourable evaluation of the behaviour in question.*" The attitude of an individual determines how he will behave in specific situations.

The detailed analysis of a personality is based on the essential view that every person is similar in some aspects, and yet is slightly different in other aspects. Psychologists have

mutually agreed on the following definition of the term 'Personality'.

*"Personality is that pattern of characteristic thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that distinguish one person from another and that persists over time and situations."*

Many theories distinguish individual personalities based on several factors. Being aware of these theories will help you analyse the personality of any individual.

### **Trait Theories**

Traits are regarded as generalizations that may not always reflect the true behaviour of an individual. Trait theories are based on these assumptions:

- a) Traits vary among individuals.
- b) An individual exhibits relatively stable traits over time.
- c) Traits influence the behaviour pattern of an individual.
- d) Traits are constant; they do not change.
- e) Traits are usually bipolar, i.e. they vary between one extreme and the other.

Presently, the *Big Five Personality theory* of studying personalities has gained worldwide recognition. A famous psychologist named Lewis Goldberg propounded the model of five-dimensional personality that was called the "Big Five". This theory highlights five major factors that influence the personality of an individual. These are:

- *Openness to Experience*: This factor refers to the ability of an individual to be independent, creative

and inclined towards variety rather than being conforming, practical, and inclined towards routine.

- *Conscientiousness*: The factor of conscientiousness refers to an individual's tendency to be careful, methodical, organized, and disciplined rather than being careless, impulsive, and disorganized.
- *Extraversion*: This factor determines how sociable, affectionate, and fun-loving a person is, compared to being reserved, retiring, or sombre.
- *Agreeableness*: This is the tendency of being helpful, trustful, and soft-hearted, rather than being suspicious, uncooperative, and ruthless.
- *Neuroticism*: This is the tendency to feel insecure, self-sympathetic, and anxious as opposed to feeling satisfied and calm, and having a sense of security.

## **Genetic Influences**

Genetic influences also play an equally important role in determining the personality of an individual. Genetic influences are analysed by studying a pair of twins, as they share the same environment. The genetic makeup of an individual determines his instincts, i.e. the behaviour practised without any preconceived thoughts and which cannot be changed by learning.

Responding to a specific stimulus is an example of the instinctive behavioural pattern. For instance, when the lights are switched on, a cockroach flies across the room in search of a dark corner. When we see fire, the instinct is to be careful. When we see someone angry, the instinct is to avoid talking to that individual.

## Type Theories

The differences between people based on their psychological development are studied under type theories. Different people are classified into different types based on the varied traits and behaviours exhibited by them. For instance, individuals can be divided into introverts and extroverts.

Introversion and extroversion are psychological orientations in relation to two functions:

- The function of perception, i.e. intuition or sensation. This function is based on a trust in concrete, absolute, and sensory-oriented situations called facts rather than abstract ideas and imaginary situations.
- The function of judgment, which involves the expression of feelings based on a rational approach and thought. It means the decisions are made based on logical deductions. The effects of actions on people are not taken into consideration.

A popular psychologist, Meyer Friedman propounded the Type A and Type B personality theory in 1950. The theory stated that *“Intense, hard-driving Type A personalities had a higher risk of coronary disease because they are ‘stress junkies’. Type B people, on the other hand, tended to be relaxed, less competitive, and lower in risk.”* There also exists a combination of both personalities referred to as type AB.

According to this theory, ‘Type A’ individuals are organized, disciplined, ambitious, status-conscious, impatient, sensitive, overworked, proactive, anxious, and concerned with the proper management of time. These personalities are workaholics, multi-tasking, particular about finishing work within the deadline, and hate delays as well as ambivalence.

This kind of personality might resort to smoking or alcohol abuse to reduce stress. The three characteristics of Type A behaviour are:

- (1) Hostility, which might result from small issues;
- (2) Impatience and time urgency, which results in exasperation, a short-tempered attitude, and irritation; and
- (3) Competitiveness, which is the mentality to drive oneself towards continuous achievement, in turn inducing stress.

On the contrary, 'Type B' personalities lead their lives with a lower level of stress as they work at a steady pace and enjoy what they achieve in their lives. People having Type B personality do not get stressed out when they do not achieve their goals. These are usually creative in nature and enjoy playing with novel concepts and ideas. They often reflect on what is happening around them. 'Type AB' personalities are a combination of both Type A and Type B, with different traits occurring at varying degrees.

### **Psychoanalytic Theories**

These theories study human behaviour based on the interaction between different components of an individual's personality. Sigmund Freud developed the concept of psychodynamics. The theory of psychodynamics gives importance to dynamic and unconscious conflicts at a psychological level. According to Freud, human personality comprises of three elements: the *id*, *ego* and *superego*. The *id* component is guided by the principle of pleasure, i.e. it demands immediate fulfilment of needs irrespective of the external conditions. The *ego* appears to meet these demands raised by the *id*, adhering to the principles of the outside

world. Lastly, the *superego* also known as conscience instils moral judgment and the rules of the society on the *ego*, hence forcing the fulfilment of the demands raised by the *id* in a realistic as well as a morally correct manner. The *superego* is developed by the ideals embodied by the parents during childhood.

The *id* is an impulsive component that responds immediately to the instinctive demands of an individual. It is not affected by logic or reality of the situation. A new-born child possesses the personality of an *id* that later develops into *ego* and *superego*. The *ego* engages in a rational, oriented, and realistic approach to problem-solving. The *superego* forms between 3 and 5 years of age. The function of the *superego* is to control the impulsive demands of the *id*, especially those forbidden by the society. It also persuades the *ego* to achieve moralistic goals and perfection in each goal.

The *superego* comprises of two elements: conscience and ideal self. The conscience can induce a guilty feeling to punish the *ego* if it fulfils immoral demands made by the *id*. As a result, a person feels bad after committing a wrong action. The ideal self is an image of how a person sees himself, his career goals, his way of treating others, and appropriate behaviour within the society. A person feels guilty if he does not behave according to his ideal self. The *superego* can also make us feel proud when our demeanour falls in line with the ideal self. The elements of the *superego* are developed during the childhood based on the values given by the parents and how a child is brought up.

## Influencing Behaviour

Burrhus Frederic Skinner proposed the Theory of Operant Conditioning to understand how human behaviour can be influenced. This theory states that you can change behaviour by using appropriate reinforcement after the completion of the desired response. Skinner observed three kinds of responses that can affect a person's behaviour:

- **Neutral operands:** Includes responses that do not affect the probability of repeating a particular behaviour. For example, offering water to a child after he has done something wrong will not have any effect on the probability of the child repeating the same thing.
- **Reinforcers:** Responses increasing the possibility of repeating a behaviour. Reinforcement is classified as positive or negative. Positive reinforcement involves the association of a reward with the desired behaviour that encourages repetition of desirable behaviour. Praising someone for a good action is a form of positive reinforcement. Negative reinforcement involves discarding the unpleasant stimulus that helps a person improve his behaviour. For instance, when a child cries, the tendency is to give him what he wants to stop him from crying. This is a form of negative reinforcement, where the unpleasant stimulus, i.e. the child's cry, is averted by giving in to his demands. Thus, every time the child cries, he is getting his wishes done through negative reinforcement.
- **Punishers:** These are responses that reduce the possibility of repeating a behaviour. It weakens the personality of an individual. Examples of this type of

response include criticizing someone or punishing him to prevent repeating an action.

Thus, by using the right response, you can make a person repeat favourable actions and avoid unfavourable ones.

Once you know how to analyse people through effective questioning and by understanding their personalities and behavioural traits, you will be equipped to deal with any person in the right manner. However, you will not be able to do so overnight. Human beings are complex and so are their personalities. You need to be patient and tolerant about the diversities among people. Eventually, you will have a better understanding of those around you.



*Section 3:*

*Live Better with Less*

*“Only great minds can afford a simple style.”*

*- Stendhal*



## ***Introduction***

You may have seen Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg in the media. What do they have in common? Yes, they are billionaires with multi-million-dollar empires serving billions of people across the world. But there's more to it:

They wear the same kind of dress every day!

Jobs is famous for his black turtleneck clubbed with jeans and sneakers. Zuckerberg does not shy away from repeatedly wearing a simple grey T-shirt. When asked why he does so, Zuckerberg replied in an interview that deciding what to wear is silly. He said, *"I'm in this really lucky position where I get to wake up every day and help serve more than 1bn people, and I feel like I'm not doing my job if I spend any of my energy on things that are silly or frivolous about my life, so that way I can dedicate all of my energy towards just building the best products and services."*

"Frivolous"! That's what he said! It is surprising to know that a man who can afford anything in the world prefers to keep his life simple. Being simple is not restricted to clothing but rather to the way of living. If we sit back and examine our lives, we'll see that most of our troubles, stress and depression will ebb away if we start to lead a simple life.

Living a simple life is not easy. It does not mean doing away with your desires in life or sacrificing your needs and dreams. It goes beyond that. In the coming chapters, you will understand how simple living can benefit you and how you can start to lead a wholesome yet simple life. So, let's move on to simple living and high thinking!

## ***CHAPTER 1:***

### ***KEEPING IT SIMPLE***

**S**implicity involves several voluntary practices that allow an individual to lead an easy life with a greater amount of self-sufficiency. Simple living epitomizes a satisfied life. A simple person is content with the gifts of nature, provided his essential necessities of food, clothing and shelter are fulfilled. Asceticism also involves simple living, as ascetics refrain from indulging in luxuries. However, it is not necessary to become an ascetic to lead a simple life.

People choose a simple life for various reasons such as health, spirituality, work-life balance, frugality, personal taste or stress reduction. Several spiritual and religious traditions of the world inculcate the principles of simple living. Gautam Buddha, Lord Jesus Christ and John the Baptist are popular proponents of simple living. Ancient Chinese scholars like Lao-Tse and Confucius also believed in the art of simplicity. Ancient Greek philosophers too believed that leading a simple life is essential for developing virtues.

Epicurus, a philosopher from Athens, proposed the tenets of Epicureanism. It teaches that an individual should seek to limit one's desires and live with modesty to achieve tranquillity and happiness. A life filled with extravaganza, pomp, and show outweighs the happiness of life. On the other hand, a simple life provides happiness and bodily

comfort. All unnecessary things should be avoided or used moderately.

With the advent of technological innovations, simple lifestyle is making its way into the mainstream culture. Life has become easier and everything is available with the click of a button. The Internet has revolutionized the way modern people live. People can communicate with each other even if they live far apart. Although there are ecological disturbances resulting from these technological advancements, there is no doubt that the world has become more compact and accessible due to them.

### **The Beginning of a Simple Life**

A simple approach to life is the key to happiness and contentment. It develops harmony and allows people to co-exist with others in peace. It also helps maintain a great ecological balance. So, one must enjoy the small and beautiful moments of life instead of spending time and resources on being ostentatious and showy.

A simple life begins with a simple diet that includes nutritious food produced domestically. The vegan diet promotes the art of simple living, developing self-reliance, preventing the exploitation of animals and other environmental conditions.

Another important step towards simple living is to focus on the things that really matter to you. Have you ever asked yourself "What is that one thing that matters the most to me in life?" What qualifies as the top priority of your life? There are numerous trivial things that give us joy. For example, a light-hearted conversation, a good meal, a genuine smile, a hearty laugh, etc. are enough to make a person feel happy.

Nowadays, we are so busy running the rat race that we have started ignoring the small things that make us happy.

Success doesn't mean owning a pepped-up bank account. It means leading life to the fullest. A happy, contented and successful person always accepts every challenge in life happily. He starts caring for people and leads life with a purpose. He is keen to learn at every step and seeks knowledge always. He remains active and maintains a high standard of personal conduct. He starts to understand the difference between 'mere existence' and 'living life'.

### **Recipe for a Good Life**

If you wish to live a good life, do not ask why life is unfair. Instead, accept the challenges life throws at you. Everyone at some point in time faces some or the other kind of challenges. Do not run away from your challenges. Stand tall and develop the courage to handle tough times.

Life teaches us important lessons at every step. While you learn your lessons, you can have incredible fun with your life. Only a few moments of craziness are enough to spice up your life. Dance like no one's watching you! That is the ultimate feeling of happiness one can experience. Laugh at yourself to get rid of negative thoughts. Laughter is the best medicine. Sharing a laugh with your friends and family is the best way to forget bad times and to move on in life. But, make sure you do not offend others with your jokes.

Life offers a wide variety of choices. You must decide which path you want to take. Your choices let you avoid troubles or reap the benefits of life. You should rejoice at having the greatest gift of life, i.e. choice. You can make choices

independently and decide how you want to lead life. So, make sure your decisions are made wisely and not in haste.

Attitude is what a person wears at all times. In fact, 85% of your success depends on your attitude. For example, in a corporate office, if an employee does not work efficiently and behaves in a callous manner, he/she will not be considered for an appraisal. However, if an employee works diligently and uses smart work approaches, the management will be impressed by his/her work ethics and reward the employee handsomely. When you expect the best from your life, you will get the best reward. If you do not have high expectations, you will lead a life below par. So, an individual should challenge himself to test his potential.

Habits are a crucial part of a successful life. Our life revolves around our habits. Some are good, and some are bad. Good habits help develop our personality and character in a positive way. They push us to strive and work towards our destiny. Bad habits, on the contrary, dredge our personality, and we end up with a life of emptiness that lacks purpose.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

# **THE GOLDEN RULES OF SIMPLE LIVING**

**W**e, human beings are social animals. We like to be surrounded by people and meet new people at social gatherings. Who do you look for when you need advice? Do you find a shoulder to lean onto, often? Do you want someone to lend an ear to you? It's our near and dear ones, i.e. friends and family members, who tend to these needs of ours.

It is thus most important to strengthen our relationships with others, so we can have a reliable support system that stays with us always. Having people who love you unconditionally is the biggest treasure of life. It does not matter whether they are related by blood; the commitment of friendship is what matters most. Ups and downs occur in all kinds of relationships. But these are only momentary. These periods of emotional dilemma require self-exploration. These are testing times for your close relations, which ultimately strengthen the bond of friendship. Sadly, people often part ways at such times.

### **Emotional Wounds**

Have you ever been in any of the following situations?

- You aren't sure what love is or how to be in a relationship with others, including friends or lovers.



- You were hurt in a past relationship, and now you are careful to maintain emotional distance.
- You like your family, but don't necessarily want to hang out with them.
- You have many friends, but none as a best friend.
- You never cry in front of your friends and family.
- You tend not to hang out in groups of friends.
- Your friends don't know each other because you keep them separated.

Such instances are a likely result of emotional wounds. Emotional wounds are inflicted upon everyone. Sometimes, time is not the best healer of such problems. You need to act appropriately when you go through emotional hiccups. Feeling vulnerable, feeling like you are being taken for granted, feeling that your heart is being stomped on repeatedly, and feeling emotionally weak will only eat you from the inside. To counter such feelings, you should muster up courage and inner strength to advance to the next level and bypass these negative emotions. Interacting with people with mindfulness and being deep and real with your feelings will help you stay content and happy.

### **Golden Rules of Simple Living**

Here are four golden rules of simple living that will help you overcome your emotional wounds and live a life of love, satisfaction and contentment:

1. **The Beauty of Character:** Your character is defined by your behaviour. Good people live their lives on morals and principles that gain them respect. You can polish your character by focusing on these attributes:

- **Manners** – It involves treating others with respect and consideration.
  - **Language** – Our words, voice, and tone are a reflection of our character. How we speak determines our personality.
  - **Obedying Rules** – The human society is governed by certain rules which everyone must obey in order maintain peace and harmony.
  - **Appreciating Differences** – You may have a difference of opinion with other society members. However, you should not judge other people based on caste, creed or other biased perceptions. More so, you cannot judge a person's attitude or personality without knowing him/her personally. You must stay away from assumptions while talking to someone.
2. **Honesty:** Honesty is the best policy. Work hard and lead your life honestly. It contributes to emotional, physical, and mental wellness because you will remain free from guilt. On the contrary, dishonesty crumbles your character and makes you shallow. It makes you corrupt, fake, and fractured. People easily see you as a fraudster. It never gives you peace and the guilt eats you inside out.
  3. **Kindness:** Kindness and gratitude cost less, but an individual can accomplish a lot if he/she inculcates these qualities. Look for the good in other people. Try to point out the good habits and characteristics of others. When you help a person bring out his best, he will love you always. A gesture of kindness increases your feel-good factor as well.
  4. **Being True to Yourself:** You will be true to yourself by being aware that you are mortal and by shedding all your fears. Get rid of ego problems and daily

worries and spend time with your near and dear ones every single day.

Theoretically, these rules sound great. But they are tough to accomplish. If you are sincerely willing to live a life of peace, happiness and tranquillity, you will have to work hard from your end. It will only be a matter of months when your life will be totally transformed, and you will look and feel your best!

## CHAPTER 3:

### THE FIRST IMPRESSION

**Y**ou must have heard the saying, “*The first impression is the last impression*”. A quick glance, generally one-tenth of a second, is enough for a person to form a first impression. The person can easily identify if you are simple, showy, genuine or fake.

#### **What Influences a First Impression?**

When we talk about living a simple life, we wrongly assume that it means living poorly. This is one of the reasons why people shy away from living a simple life as they do not want to give a wrong first impression. However, when someone looks at you for the first time, he does not just see how you look, what you wear, or the accent in which you converse. He creates an opinion based on your body language, mannerisms and demeanour as well. We meet many people every day, thus, forming a new impression about ourselves in others’ minds.

The accuracy of judging an individual’s personality is based on three important perspectives: pragmatism, realism and constructivism. Psychologists maintain that first impression refers to an event where a person meets another person for the first time and creates a mental picture of the other person.

The accuracy of creating the first impression is based on a variety of characteristics: race, age, culture, gender, language, accent, physical appearance, voice, posture, and the time taken to form an impression. It has a great influence on how an individual is treated in the various contexts of life.

### **Tips for Making a Winning First Impression**

It is impossible to reverse the effect of a first impression. Therefore, it is very important to create a good impression as it sets the tone for the future of a relationship, whether social or professional. Here are tips on how you can make a winning first impression:

1. **Be Punctual:** It is a poor excuse if you reach the meeting venue late. You should always strive to reach a little early. Keep enough time in hand to manage traffic or detours.
2. **Be Yourself:** If you appear uncomfortable or edgy, it would give a wrong impression. A calm and confident approach lays a strong foundation for a good first impression. So, be yourself. This attitude makes the other person comfortable too.
3. **Dress Appropriately:** It is not necessary to dress up as a model when you are meeting someone for the first time. The other person does not know you. So, the objective should be to create a decent impression about yourself in the other's mind. Dress according to the occasion. If the event is a business meeting, don an appropriate business attire such as a suit or a blazer. For social events, give attention to the traditions or cultural norms of the host and dress accordingly. Neat and tidy attire creates an excellent

- first impression. Present yourself in a comfortable and confident way at the event.
4. **Groom Yourself Properly:** A modest haircut, clipped nails and absence of mouth odour are some of the grooming essentials you should tend to before meeting someone.
  5. **Sport a Smiling Face:** A warm smile creates an excellent first impression. Greet everyone with a smile on your face, but do not overdo it.
  6. **Openness:** Body language is an important element of a good first impression. Non-verbal actions and gestures speak louder than actual words. Maintaining eye contact while speaking, a firm handshake and standing tall are some of the gestures that help create a good first impression as you appear as a confident person. Being aware of nervous habits like biting nails and rubbing sweaty palms will help you control them.
  7. **Small Conversations:** Striking a meaningful conversation follows the give-and-take policy. Prepare a list of questions you want to ask the person you are going to meet. Or, attempt to learn about that person by letting him talk first. If some common point arises, you can talk further.
  8. **Positive Attitude:** A positive attitude, even during criticism or nervousness, sends a positive outlook to the other person. One must make useful contributions to a conversation while maintaining a smile as well as a confident approach.
  9. **Courtesy and Attention:** One must exhibit good manners and politeness while meeting someone for the first time. The expression of courteous and attentive behaviour creates a good first impression.

In fact, the absence of these two components may ruin the opportunity of creating a good first impression. So, behave in the best manner possible.

In addition to these tips, make sure you ignore your mobile phone while talking to someone. Attending to your mobile phone will interrupt your conversation and you may not be able to listen to the other person with due attention. It is important to keep in mind that the new acquaintance requires full attention from your side. Nothing less will be acceptable to create a good first impression.

## CHAPTER 4:

### USING NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

**A**n essential part of simple living is learning how to communicate better. You will speak more with your actions and through non-verbal communication than through your possessions, appearance or words. Also, you will be able to understand others better if you learn how to capture the subtle meanings in others' non-verbal cues.

Peter F. Drucker says, *"The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said."* In fact, it is said that 80% of what a person understands from a conversation is from the body language rather than from the spoken words. Non-verbal communication is an essential part of communication. However, it is not just confined to body language. It is the entire process in which visual signals are sent and received among individuals. Common examples of such signals include a smile, wave, or a wink. All these actions communicate information. Even becoming silent at the right time can effectively communicate the intended information. Non-verbal communication when clubbed with the spoken word creates an impact on the listener.



## **Types of Non-Verbal Communication**

Interestingly, non-verbal communication is classified into four types, namely – aesthetic communication, physical communication, signs and symbols.

Aesthetic communication occurs when a person expresses the information in a creative way. This type of communication includes music, theatre, dance, crafts, painting, art, and sculpture. For instance, ballet is a creative representation using music and dance, but no song. An opera uses words but emphasizes the facial expressions, posture, costumes, and creative gestures.

Physical communication includes personal communication and focuses on body movements such as a smile or frown, touch, wink, smell, salute, and many others. Social conversation is a combination of physical signals as well as spoken words.

Signs refer to a mechanical type of non-verbal communication. Examples include 21-gun salute, siren, aeroplane display, lights, flags, and many more.

Symbols are a part of the communication process used to imply personal or religious status and enhance self-esteem. These include cars, jewellery, clothing, and other items that make others aware of the social status, influence, financial means, or religion of an individual.

To know a person better, one must understand the non-verbal cues. People can communicate to a large extent by their posture when present among a group of people. The interpretation of the distance maintained between you and the speaker varies across different cultures. It can imply

either a sense of attraction or intensity. Face-to-face interaction implies competition, while side-to-side interaction shows cooperation. Posture plays an essential role in non-verbal communication, whether you cross your legs, or fold your arms, or slouch, or stand erect.

Touching may convey a feeling of attraction, encouragement, empathy or intimacy. Examples include a pat on the back, pushing, hugging, shaking hands, or other such ways.

Facial expressions, eye contact, and gestures also play a crucial role in non-verbal communication. For instance, you may roll your eyes to express disinterest. When you are talking to someone, remember that he/she is noticing the changes in your facial expressions too. Thus, his/her responses will alter accordingly. It is important to maintain eye contact with the speaker to assure him/her that you are listening to what is being said.

Kinesics or body language is used to emphasize or reinforce a statement and offers information regarding the attitudes and emotions of an individual. However, it may happen that the body movement conflicts with the statement. A skilled observer may detect such behavioural discrepancies and use it as a hint to understand the other's feelings.

Gestures refer to voluntary or involuntary movements made using different parts of the body, such as hands, legs, arms, fingers, and head. A person with arms crossed over each other demonstrates a sense of insecurity and low confidence. Clenched fist demonstrates anger and stress. Nodding of the head shows your approval of the statement.

Ironically, vocal communication also involves non-verbal communication. The voice tone, inflexion, loudness, and pitch express more than the actual words being said. When you say something in a strong voice, listeners perceive enthusiasm and approval. If you say something with hesitation, it conveys a lack of interest and disapproval.

## **Effects of Non-Verbal Communication**

The effects of non-verbal communication are:

1. **Repetition:** Non-verbal cues repeat the message that is being communicated through actual words.
2. **Contradiction:** These cues may also contradict the message an individual wants to convey.
3. **Substitution:** The non-verbal cues can effectively substitute a clearly defined verbal message. For example, the eyes of an individual convey a more vivid message than the actual spoken words.
4. **Complementing:** Non-verbal cues may complement or add to the meaning of a verbal message. For instance, an employer pats on the back of a deserving employee saying, "*Well done, keep it up!*" The combination of verbal as well as non-verbal cues motivates the employee to a greater extent and enhances the impact of the message.
5. **Accenting:** Non-verbal cues may underline or emphasize a verbal message. An example is an action of pounding your fist on the table to express disagreement or frustration.

A basic understanding of non-verbal communication will help you improve your communication skills. It will enable you to lead a simple life where you are less dependent on other objects, possessions or looks to make a statement.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **GETTING ALONG WITH PEOPLE**

**A** major step towards self-sufficiency and living a simple life is to learn how to get along with people. If you start being on good terms with others, you will no longer have to depend on materialistic things to project a certain image of yourself. People will love and respect you irrespective of what you wear, or which brands you carry!

#### **Tips on Nurturing Good Relationships**

If you want to get along well with others, here is what you should do:

##### **1. Understand Your Own Value Systems**

A famous psychologist, Eduard Spranger, stated that there are six core values of a human personality. Their degrees vary in each individual. These are:

- Theoretical value, i.e. passion for knowledge
- Aesthetic value, i.e. a passion for beauty, harmony, and balance
- Social value, i.e. a passion to serve others
- Utilitarian value, i.e. a passion for money and basic utility
- Individualistic value, i.e. a passion for control and power
- Traditional value, i.e. a passion to find the ultimate meaning of life.

Analyse which values are present in you and to what extent. This will also help you understand the values of others with more clarity.

## **2. Understanding Others' Values**

The value that you prioritize most might be the least prioritized by another person. For instance, you may have a high social value, which is to serve others, while the other person has a high individualistic value, which is to gain power and control. When values don't match, misunderstandings arise and end up in conflicts. To avoid this, try to understand, respect and tolerate the value system of the other person. This way, you will be able to improve your communication with the other individual and be on good terms with him.

## **3. Being Aware of Differences**

Conflicts arise when the values of an individual are different from the other person's set of values. For instance, if you have a theoretical approach, i.e. you give importance to the value of knowledge; you solve problems using an analytical approach and arrive at rationally justified decisions. If the other person has an aesthetic approach, which means he believes in the creativity of life and arrives at emotional decisions, both of you will have a conflict. This difference of opinion is also termed as the conflict between the right brain and the left brain or between the head and the heart. So, you should understand the differences between the value systems and resolve your differences.

#### **4. Let People be Themselves**

Each person has a different passion and motivation for leading life. We must appreciate the point of view or opinions of others and be less judgmental in our ways. It is truly said, "*We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are.*"

#### **5. Set Clear Boundaries**

To improve or sustain a relationship, you should not allow people to unjustly criticize any aspect of your personality. Neither should you unjustly criticize others. When people start to feel that you understand them completely, they will appreciate your company and will also make efforts to understand you better. You should make it clear to others as to how they should treat you and do not let them take you for granted.

#### **6. Platinum Rule**

The Platinum Rule says, "*Do unto others as they would have you do unto them.*" Behave with people in the way you want them to behave with you. If you wish that people should respect your attitudes and values, you must also respect theirs.

#### **7. Respect Yourself as Well as Others**

When you are aware of the differences of others and the reason behind it, you will respect them. The same is to be expected from others. This way, you will have better communication and develop a compatible relationship with others.

## **Understanding People's Motives**

People want to know the reasons for their actions as well as the actions of others. They attribute causes to certain patterns of behaviour instead of assuming that these are random behaviours. As a result, people assume authoritative control over their own behaviours and situations.

Fritz Heider, the founder of the Attribution theory, based his theory on the causes of different behavioural patterns in a human being. Attribution refers to a process comprising of three stages. In the first stage, an individual's behaviour is observed. In the second stage, the perceiver has to determine that the observed pattern of behaviour is deliberate in nature. It means that the person who is being observed must be assumed to behave intentionally. In the third and the final stage, the observer relates the observed pattern of behaviour to causes that may either be internal or external. Internal causes are attributes associated with the person who is being observed, whereas external causes are the attributes associated with external factors or outside environment. Internal attributions refer to a person's capability or the outcome determined by the efforts of a person. Luck and task difficulty are examples of the external causes of a certain behaviour.

When a person observes the behaviour of another individual, a judgment is made taking into consideration the respective factors that have led to the particular behaviour. The elements of consistency, distinctiveness as well as consensus play an equally important role in determining the causes of behaviour pattern. Consistency refers to a situation to determine whether the individual under observation behaves in a similar way when he faces the similar set of situations or

circumstances. If there is no change in the individual's behaviour under similar conditions, the level of consistency is termed as high. If he behaves in a different manner each time, then the level of consistency is regarded as low. Distinctiveness is a state to determine whether the individual being observed behaves in the similar fashion under different kinds of situations. If no change occurs in the behavioural pattern under a variety of situations, then the person is less distinctive; if different behaviour is exhibited under different situations, then the person is highly distinctive. The last element of the attribute theory, consensus, refers to the degree of how similar people, if under similar situations, would behave in relation to the person who is being observed. If other people act in the similar pattern, it is a situation involving a high consensus. However, if other people behave in a different manner depending on the situation, the situation will have a low consensus.

People associate attributions to daily activities of others. A major problem in associating attributes is the fundamental attribution error, i.e. a tendency to overestimate the effect personal factors have on one's behaviour and underestimation of the way situational factors can influence an individual's behaviour.

What we need to understand here is that associating attributes with others' actions is detrimental. You may analyse in your mind the reason behind a person's actions. But it would be wrong to make such assumptions and you may not know the entire truth. Making such assumptions will make you judgmental and people do not appreciate being wrongly judged. It is thus best not to judge others' actions



and be more tolerating and accepting. This way, you will get along with others in a better way.

We have thus seen how you can become self-sufficient and lead a simple life by learning how to make a first impression, how to improve non-verbal communication and how to get along with people in a pleasant manner. Moving on, we'll see how you can capture happiness and live a joyful life. So, cheers to happiness!



## Section 4:

# Go Happy, Go Lucky!

*“Man is fond of counting his troubles, but he does not count his joys. If he counted them up as he ought to, he would see that every lot has enough happiness provided for it.”*

*– Fyodor Dostoevsky*



## ***Introduction***

What is true happiness? Our wants and desires keep changing. What we want at one point of time may change at another point of time. Do we know what we truly want? So, how can we define true happiness? If you read the following story, your understanding of true happiness may soon change:

*Once upon a time, there was a boy who belonged to a rich family. He did not have enough friends and often got angry and vented his frustration on the servants. One day, he went with his father on a trip to the countryside. His father wanted to show him the lives of the poor people. Soon, they reached a farm in a village that belonged to a poor family of four. They spent many days in the village. On their way back, the father asked, "My son, did you like the trip?"*

*The boy answered, "I loved it. Was great, dad."*

*Then the father asked, "Did you see how poor people live?"*

*"I did," said the boy, but his father wanted to know more about what he felt about the trip.*

*The boy replied, "Dad, we own one dog, while the poor ones have four dogs. We have only one pool in the garden, while they live at a place where the river is endless. We have shiny and expensive lanterns, but they can see stars above them at night. We go to clubs for recreation, while they have a horizon to*

*explore. We live on a small plot, while they are owners of large fields. We purchase food, they can grow it. We protect our properties with a fence, while they have friends to protect them."*

*His father was speechless. The son further added, "Thank you, dad, for giving me the chance to see that we are actually poor."*

It is obvious why the father was speechless. Aren't you surprised too? True happiness cannot be measured in material terms. Human beings cherish love, freedom and friendship, and these are the essential ingredients to lead a happy life.

The coming chapters will unravel the secret of happiness. You will understand why people are unhappy, what causes stress and depression, and how you can stay happy in this challenging and competitive world.

## CHAPTER 1:

### CAPTURING DIVINE HAPPINESS

**T**he relationship between peace of mind and spirituality has always fascinated humanity. Spiritual powers come from the inner soul of an individual. You will be enthralled to know that each one of us possesses spiritual powers to a certain degree. You can strengthen your spiritual powers by making meditation, introspection and other exercises a crucial part of your daily life. There is so much that goes on around us that we become disconnected with our inner self. But when we connect with our inner self, we find peace within us and even in our surroundings. Stephen Richards, the author of the *Cosmic Ordering Guide*, rightly puts it, *‘When you connect to the silence within you, that is when you can make sense of the disturbance going on around you’*.

Here’s an inspirational story about a saint and a disciple that will help you understand the connection between peace of mind and spiritual powers.

*A saint and his disciple arrived in a big city. They were searching for food and a dwelling place but had no money. The disciple felt that they will have to beg to get food and would have to sleep on the roadside.*

*He said, “This pavement here is big enough. Both of us can sleep here tonight.”*

*The saint commented, "Will we sleep under the open sky?"*

*"Yes," the disciple replied.*

*Smiling, the saint said: "No. Tonight we shall eat and sleep in a big hotel."*

*The student exclaimed, "How will we afford that? We don't have any money."*

*The saint replied, "Come. Sit here."*

*They sat on the roadside. The saint then said to the disciple, "Concentrating your mind on what you want will help it come to pass."*

*The saint, with eyes closed, began to meditate with high concentration. Ten minutes later, he rose and walked. The student followed him. After crossing several alleys and streets, they reached a hotel.*

*"Come inside," the saint told his student.*

*They just took the first step towards the door, when a man came towards them.*

*"Good evening, Sir. I am the manager. You are nomadic saints, and I assume you do not have money. Will you work in our kitchen, in lieu of which I shall give you a room to stay and food for the night?"*

*"Yes. It is fine," the saint replied.*



*The student was puzzled. He asked, "How was that possible? Did you practice some kind of magic?"*

*The saint said, "I just wanted to show you how powerful our thoughts work. When a person concentrates strongly on a thing he desires, and his mind cannot resist the thoughts, his desires will be fulfilled."*

*The saint added, "The secret of happiness is to concentrate, visualize, view finer details, have faith and project emotional and mental energies into your mind. These are the prerequisites. When a person's mind is devoid of any other thoughts except one, it gains immense power. One must be careful about his thought process. Focused thoughts are powerful and have a strong influence on an individual."*

*The student agreed and said, "Now I understand that I should develop a sharp and focused concentration to utilize such power."*

*The saint replied, "Correct, son. This is the first step to achieve happiness and peace of mind."*

Does this story motivate you? When you really want something in life, focus your thoughts on it and remember that it will definitely happen, provided you make constant efforts on your own.

Here's another refreshing story that will expand your mindset:

*Fifty people were attending a business conference. Suddenly, the moderator stopped and conducted a*

*fun activity. Each participant was given a balloon. Everyone was asked to write his or her name on it with a marker pen. The moderator then collected all the balloons and put them in another hall.*

*Now, all the delegates were asked to go to the other hall and find his/her balloon in five minutes. Everyone began searching frantically, colliding with others, nudging and pushing each other, resulting in chaos. However, no one was able to find the balloon with his or her name on it. Now, the moderator asked each delegate to collect a random balloon, see the person's name and give the balloon to him. Within few minutes, each member had his or her balloon.*

*The moderator began his speech, "We are facing exactly such situations in our life. Each person is frantically searching for happiness in the world, without actually knowing where to find it. We feel happy if people around us are happy. Give and share happiness, and you will get your happiness."*

How true! Aren't we all looking for true happiness? But the truth is that true happiness comes from being surrounded by happy people!

Ancient philosophers around the world believed that true happiness exists in two forms. The first type of happiness comes from instances that occur as per our desires. The reasons for such happiness may be a supportive family, good friend circle, financial security, or a promotion. The happiness of such kind is short-lived because you need to

depend on external factors, which may not happen all the time.

The other form of happiness comes from emotional well-being. It does not depend on external circumstances or on our mood. It comes from the association between our mind and our conscience. This state of well-being is our inner joy, which helps us appreciate the excitement and thrill of living in the present.

### **Spiritual Meditation**

An essential step towards achieving true happiness is awakening your true Self. But, how can you awaken your true Self?

By exploring your inner self and concentrating your energy silently, you will experience a detachment from the sensory feelings and simultaneously experience complete freedom. Try it right now. Ask yourself, “Who is reading this?” Be aware of the silent observer who watches the external circumstances unfold in your life. This is the eternal presence of your true Self.

Meditation is the most powerful and direct method of awakening our true Self. It gives us an insight into our individuality. This awakening makes us happy because we realize the consciousness that is hidden within us. While meditating, we transcend our basic thoughts, emotions and memories that forbid our ego from realizing who we are. We pass through an expanded realm of awareness and explore the inner joys, a cause of happiness that does not depend on any person or thing.

We may realize the existence of our real self when we meditate for the first time; however, most often, awakening processes follow their gradual course. Regular meditation liberates our thoughts from the conditioned philosophies and beliefs. We are not limited by the accumulated mental and physical toxicity that obscures our perceptions about the essence of our true self.

### **Inner Peace and Bliss**

Several techniques help find inner peace. These include yoga, walking in silence in a natural setting, focusing on breathing, prayer, contemplation, biofeedback, and innumerable others. People who try to meditate may subsequently stop doing so. This might result from frustration if the desired visible results are not seen, or if the wrong technique of meditation is being practised. If you feel like quitting meditation once you start, do not worry. Continue persistently because eventually, the results will start to show. You will experience improvement in physical health as well as increased happiness and emotional well-being.

Several forms of meditation have been suggested to accomplish varied goals. You must choose the type of meditation that suits your goals. However, all meditation practices help achieve relaxation and inner peace.

### **Nine Ways to Spiritual Happiness**

Mindfulness and meditation are popular methods for gaining spiritual happiness. Here are nine other practical methods that will help you connect with your instinctive happiness and enable emotional well-being:

- 1) Live the small moments of your life. You only have the present moments to live and cherish. You must be aware of what is around you now. Live each present moment to its fullest. Learn to accept whatever instances life has to offer you in the present. Complete acceptance will enable you to enjoy the moment. Take lessons from the current hardship, and once it goes, leave it as it is. Do not think about these moments afterwards. Moments occurring in the present reflect the unfathomable laws of Nature that instigate a thought in your mind, and the way you respond to it through physical action. The universal laws guide your actions. Hence, do not try to challenge the infinite powers. Instead, accept them and allow the natural flow of events.
- 2) Pay attention to the signals expressed by the body to suggest comfort and discomfort. When you choose to act in a certain manner, ask your body, "What is your reaction to my thought/action?" If the body communicates the sign of emotional or physical distress, listen to it carefully and avoid that behaviour. If you feel eager or comfortable, continue with your action or thought.
- 3) You may have ended up in situations where you reacted angrily or vented out frustration on another person, then, realizing that you are amidst a situation of self-conflict, felt guilty. In such a case, it is better to withdraw and abandon the anger and frustration of past incidents. This helps heal you and allows the natural flow of events.
- 4) Abandon your want of external acceptance and approval. Be wise to judge your capabilities and worth. The objective must be to discover your self-

worth, regardless of what other people think about you. Realizing your self-worth gives you complete freedom. Therefore, concentrate your efforts on exploring what you are good at rather than thinking about what other people expect from you.

- 5) Be aware of the fact that the external world reflects your inner reality. The people, to whom you react strongly, whether it is love or hate, project the inner self. The thing you hate most about someone else is an element or quality about yourself that you dislike. The quality that you love the most in others is what you wish to have in yourself. Understand the basis of relationships to become aware of the evolution of human emotions. The objective is to attain complete self-awareness. Once this goal is achieved, you will become more tolerant of others.
- 6) Avoid being judgmental; you will feel relaxed. Judgments hamper the power to accept the situations as they are. Thus, you get involved in the debate irrespective of whether the action is right or wrong. Remember that every single creature in this universe should be forgiven and understood. Judging situations or behaviour makes one ignorant and hampers understanding and love between individuals. Every instance where you forgive someone will increase your happiness and will also boost the feeling of self-love and self-acceptance.
- 7) Proper support to the body and mind requires proper nourishment through food, environment and experiences. Consider the value of your body more than just a life-support mechanism. The human body is a vehicle that carries an individual on the journey of life. Do not contaminate it with toxins by

consuming toxic food or by accumulating toxic emotions. A healthy body contributes to happiness and emotional well-being.

- 8) Do not indulge in fear-motivated behaviour; instead, replace it with behaviour motivated by emotions of love and compassion. Usually, we tend to think about the disappointing moments of our past. It leads to the development of fear. Thinking about our past events leads to fear that they might recur, and we feel threatened by such fears. Realizing the true existence of the Self helps wipe out such fears. The inner joy and truth strengthen you, motivating you to combat fear.
- 9) You must realize that the external physical world mirrors your deeper intelligence. Intelligence is an invisible capacity to organize all energy and matter that is shared with the cosmic powers. It has an inseparable link with every element of nature. Hence, if we destroy nature, we are negatively affecting ourselves. So, do not attempt to disturb the ecological balance of the Earth by polluting its water and air. Also, a deeper insight of the Self makes one realize that human life cannot be sustained with a toxic environment and with toxic thoughts in the mind. Each individual thought creates an impression on your intelligence. Thus, maintaining purity and a harmonious balance with nature will give you the optimum level of intelligence required to achieve happiness.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

### ***FROM UNHAPPY TO HAPPY IN A JIFFY***

**A** happy person sees the beauty of life while an unhappy one sees only its dark side. You may have experienced many a time when you break good news about yourself to someone, you will get varied reactions. Happy people always share your joy while the unhappy ones often seem disinterested or fake being happy. You can easily spot a happy person in a crowd. Happy people shine and look beautiful, irrespective of how perfect or imperfect their features are or whatever their skin tone is. They radiate and glow because they are happy inside out.

Everyone wishes to lead a happy and contented life. Each day we strive to explore our happiness, according to our understanding. We make mistakes in the process, which prevent us from achieving happiness and push us into gloom and darkness.

#### **Behaviours of Unhappy People**

Are you making efforts to explore your inner peace? Do you fail to cross the winning line that excites you to strive continuously to find happiness? On the path of life, we discover many things that work for us and some that do not. Generally, people try various activities and exercises to find happiness. They are constantly searching for the answer to



the question, “Why are other people happy, but I am not?” If you are searching for inner peace, joy and a harmonious balance, you must avoid the following behaviours:

**1. *Unhappy People Dislike their Jobs***

In the modern, fast-paced life of today, one spends more than half of his/her day, usually eight to nine hours, at the workplace. If you do not like your job, you will not be able to love your life because most of your life is spent on something you cannot stand. The worst part is carrying the baggage (anger and frustration) back home and venting it out on family members, disturbing the calm and comfortable home environment.

So, what should you do if you are unhappy with your job? To be happy, it is not recommended that you leave your job or resign. Instead, analyse life practically and think about the importance of the job in your life. Think why you cannot stand your job. Is it a wrong career option? Do you have any problems with your boss or with the company rules? Answer these questions patiently and then arrive at a probable solution. Do not worry about the time taken for the process. It is important to analyse all work aspects rationally rather than reacting impulsively. If you analyse your work life rationally, you may end up finding the actual cause of your displeasure. Sometimes, the hatred towards one's job is not the job itself, but a factor associated with the job. Once you identify the underlying problem and solve it, you may not dislike your job anymore.

**2. *Unhappy People are Worried About their Financial Standing***

It does not matter if a person is rich or poor. Being rich is not the key to happiness. Otherwise, all the rich people in the world would be the happiest. But such is not the case.

You cannot specify the amount of money that will make you happy. Instead, aim to satisfy the basic needs of life and save accordingly without worrying much about your finances. Live a contented life, i.e., be satisfied with whatever you have. Financial uncertainty can be a major cause of stress. Just take life as it comes and live life to its fullest with the available means.

**3. *Unhappy People are Not Active***

You need to be physically and mentally active to attain true happiness. Learn to adopt feel-good measures to enjoy every moment of life. Engage yourself in hobbies such as hiking, yoga, swimming, biking, running or surfing. Physical activities help promote good health and enhance emotional well-being.

**4. *Unhappy People have Wandering Minds***

Wandering minds are a sign of unhappiness and discontentment that results in low morale. Do you wake up thinking about other stuff rather than living in the present? These thoughts create a bad mood and that makes it difficult to focus on emotions and health.

What you can do instead is to concentrate on the present activity. It is not possible to control past events or take control of future events. But you can attempt to make your present moment your best moment. Meditate to bring the wandering mind back into focus and enjoy the present moment. Cherish life and make the most of it, as you live only once.

**5. *Unhappy People Usually Travel Long Distances***

To avoid the elements they dislike in their lives, some people travel long distances unnecessarily. Such behaviour may cause health problems, depression and stress. In doing so, people lose a big part of their lives in long commutes. Such a habit may further strain your relationships and disturb your inner peace.

**6. *Overconsumption is Considered a Measure of Avoiding Loneliness***

People engage in the heavy consumption of alcohol, shop excessively, or hog food when they are unhappy. Be mindful of these negative actions and realize that they are detrimental to your life. Happiness is something that you feel within. Such habits may pacify you temporarily but are harmful in the end.

What you can do instead is to try and find the real cause of the bad mood, analyse it and arrive at an appropriate solution.

### **7. Unhappy People May Prefer Loneliness**

Sometimes, people who are unhappy prefer to be alone. Instead of socializing, they may spend their free time on social media or in a lonely place.

Successful relationships enhance one's health and happiness. Meet people in person rather than being addicted to social networking. Share your problems with loved ones in person as it will help you feel relaxed. You get a different view towards life. If you take these measures, you will see your life changing dramatically. It does not matter whether you are married or single. Make friends and develop close ties with family members.

### **8. *Unhappy People Do Not Like the Place They are Residing in***

Sometimes, people say they would like to shift out of town as they do not like it anymore or they would like to change their house for the same reason. If you too have such a feeling, wait. Think about why you do not like the place anymore. Has the town changed or is it your attitude that needs rethinking?

There are certain steps you can take to be happy in your current town or place of residence. For instance, you can attend new events such as theatre, music concerts and other cultural fun activities. You can volunteer for a charitable organization or plan a trip to the countryside. If you are not satisfied despite making such attempts, you can always shift to a new place altogether.

### 9. *Unhappy People Do Not Like Themselves*

Not appreciating oneself or finding faults is one of the major causes of unhappiness. Unhappy people often spend time sulking over their faults or imperfections. They may even dislike themselves for actions they have taken in the past.

If you wish to be truly happy, do not find faults in every single quality you have. Each individual has some or the other weakness. Being happy requires self-acceptance. Accept your weaknesses and make efforts to overcome them by acquiring additional skills. Try to find inner peace and do not be bothered by what other people think about you. Feel good about your personality and capabilities. If you feel low and dislike yourself, take a break. Reflect on the good moments of life and love your existence. Love yourself because you completely deserve it.

### **Transform From ‘Unhappy’ to ‘Happy’**

If you are wondering what activities and actions will help you lead a happy life, the following tips are sure to help:

- 1) ***Get rid of negativity.*** If you wish to be happy in your life, you must learn to forget and forgive. You must take up every challenge, as it is an opportunity to grow further. Be thankful for everything you have in life. Gratitude is an essential virtue of becoming happy. Be optimistic and have a positive outlook on your future. Believe in your talents and capabilities to accomplish your goals. Accept failures as a part of the learning process. However, learn from your failures and avoid repeating past mistakes. Celebrate your

success but do not boast about it. Accept everyone as they are and be approachable. Avoid worrying about trivial issues. Take a vacation to train yourself not to ponder over any worries or concerns. Associate with people having positive energy. Maintain and nurture existing relationships and give them quality time. Love yourself as an individual and appreciate the unique talents and gifts of your life. Spend less time in pleasing others and more time in pleasing yourself. Enjoy and laugh at your own experiences and try to see the lighter side of them instead of taking life too seriously.

- 2) **Be kind:** Serve everyone with kindness. Others will feel better and have a positive interaction with you. You too will feel good about it. You must speak about the positive qualities of other people. Conversations focusing on negative aspects will make you feel negative about yourself too. Pay attention when another person is speaking. Be mindful and attentive to what others say and contribute to the conversation appropriately. Use gentle, wise and kind words while speaking. Respect others. Trusting others will give them an opportunity to have faith in you. Develop a sense of friendship and community by being open to others' views. Teamwork is required to achieve happiness. Motivate others to join hands in your endeavours and establish a powerful synergy as nobody can accomplish his/her goals alone. Generosity is a great quality to attain happiness. You must give with a free mind without expecting any returns. Volunteer in charitable activities to help a social cause. A smiling

face makes others happy, and you too will be happy if others maintain a good attitude towards you.

- 3) ***Enjoy the present:*** True happiness can be achieved only if you learn to live in the moment. Do not recall negative memories and stop worrying about future events. Celebrate the small moments of your present life. Observe the natural flow of events and accept it with an open mind. Adjust your reactions according to the external environment and develop a harmony between nature and the self.
- 4) ***Exercise regularly and stay active:*** Health and fitness play an important role in achieving happiness. Maintain a daily schedule of waking up early in the mornings. Enjoy the smell of fresh air, sounds of the birds and the cool breeze. Natural biorhythm helps a person to feel energetic the whole day. A good night's sleep has a positive effect on the human mind. It improves self-confidence and enhances the capabilities of problem-solving. Cold morning showers increase blood circulation, minimize inflammations, help lose weight and boost mental energy. You must reduce the timings of watching television. Your life expectancy reduces by 22 minutes for every hour of TV that you watch. Regular exercise not only purifies your body, it also produces endorphins that relieve depression, prevent stress and boost your mental energy. Laughter combats negative effects of stress and enhances the sense of joy, happiness and well-being. Yoga and mindfulness exercises connect the mind and the body. A healthy and balanced diet has a positive

effect on the energy levels and your mood. Organic vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts and milk products contain minerals and vitamins.

- 5) ***Maintain a good spiritual health:*** You must have the urge to learn something new every day. Expanding the level of awareness gives you the strength to explore new ways of experiencing the natural gifts. Creativity challenges your mind to learn new concepts and establishes a positive attitude. Practice the art of natural creativity. Meditation instils a positive energy in your mind. It improves mental focus and concentration, relieves stress factors and you become compassionate, kind and humorous. Meditation brings peace of mind and joy to perform daily activities in your life. Honesty is the best policy because it keeps you free of guilt. It helps you keep a free mind, build trustworthy relationships and enhances the capacity and willpower to become successful.
  
- 6) ***Find the inner bliss:*** Inner peace is the key to happiness. An ideal life includes minimal resources and is simple and satisfied. A luxurious lifestyle creates more stress rather than satisfaction. A cluttered mind develops thoughts of frustration, anxiety, guilt and distraction. You should feel good when at home. A disorganized and cluttered home fills negative emotions in our mind. Sacrifice some of your desires to make yourself happy. Take some time off from your busy schedule and travel to places that do not have easy access to things. It will teach you to



appreciate the small things that you have, and others don't. Make efforts to understand your family members, friends, near and dear ones, and yourself better.

7) ***Be one with nature:*** Recharge your mind by getting involved with nature. Travel to a sanctuary or a forest and observe wild plants and animals. Experience sunshine and fresh air. Feel the inner peace and joy of being with nature. Start your week afresh. Silence gives you an opportunity to understand yourself better as a person. Be calm and silent for minimum ten minutes every night and again when you wake up the next morning. This habit will develop inner happiness that will help you face every challenge in life.

8) ***Explore new ways of restructuring life:*** You can explore new activities that make you happy. The best way to find happiness is to ask what makes one happy. Try to reason why you are unable to perform actions that make you happy. Also, try to find out what you must do to achieve a feeling of accomplishment.

9) ***Create a list of things that make you happy:*** Begin with the small things on the list that bring joy on a daily basis. Gradually, try to accomplish the greater moments of joy that are mentioned in your happiness list.

The measures just mentioned go a long way in making unhappy people happy. Another great way to beat the blues

is to keep pets. Pets provide an emotional comfort and support. They cannot speak, but they express unconditional love. They help enhance relationships. To feel happy and make life fun, you can own a pet. Spend some time with your pet after returning from work. It will give you a refreshed and energetic feeling.

Do not feel disheartened if you do not achieve your goals immediately. Remember everyone is destined to achieve happiness sooner or later. Focus on applying the discussed measures in your life to find happiness and you will turn into a cheerful, glowing, beautiful and happy person in a jiffy.

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### ***KILL THE STRESS DEMON***

**Y**ou cannot achieve true happiness unless you get rid of stress and depression. These become routine aspects of our lives as we go through many situations and experience innumerable dilemmas in daily life. If you understand the causes of stress, it will be easier for you to fight the stress demon. Read on to know more about what induces stress and how you can fight it.

Technological and workplace stress is the modern form of stress afflicting people. We spend more than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of a whole day at work. We are bombarded with deadlines and targets that may stress us out. If we are not able to cope with the stress, our performance at work gets affected, further stressing us out. It is a vicious cycle that goes on and on. Statistics show that almost 1 out of 3 people in the world are on antidepressants, as depression and stress-related disorders are rampant in modern society. These medications can treat only the symptoms, and not the causes of depression.

Stressors are pressures and situations that induce stress. Negative aspects of life, such as a toxic relationship or a hectic work schedule, are the major stressors. Events that force you out of your comfort zone or demand adjustment also induce stress. For instance, events such as marriage,

examinations, buying a home, waiting for an increment, etc. also cause stress in individuals.

It is important for you to know that stress is not always created due to external factors; it can be self-generated too. For instance, when people are excessively worried about the result of an event, they develop pessimistic and irrational thoughts that lead to stress.

### **More about Stress**

The causes of stress depend partially on the way you perceive a situation. What causes stress in one person may not necessarily do so in another person. For instance, one person may feel stressed from morning commutes to the workplace as he/she may get anxious about reaching on time. On the other hand, another person may enjoy his/her morning commutes because he/she enjoys listening to music on the way.

External stress-inducing factors include:

- A major change of events in life such as marriage, promotion.
- Work-related or education-related events.
- Problematic relationships.
- Financial crisis.
- Hectic routines and schedules.
- Problems associated with family and children.

Internal stress-inducing factors include:

- Pessimism.

- Chronic fears about trivial issues.
- Negative thoughts and self-talk.
- Perfectionism – having an ‘all or nothing’ attitude.
- Unrealistic expectations.
- Rigid thinking process.

## **Depression and its Types**

Several types of depression exist. The most common forms of depression are major depressive disorder and dysthymic disorder.

People suffering from major depressive disorder find it difficult to sleep, work, study, eat or enjoy any pleasurable activity. It disables a person from functioning normally. Some people may experience it temporarily while others may go through continued major depression.

Dysthymic disorder refers to a mild chronic depressive disorder. The symptoms are experienced for a long time, up to two years or more.

Psychotic depression is a severe form of depression that involves delusions and hallucinations. The patient withdraws from real-life situations.

Postpartum depression, also termed as postnatal depression, is a disorder that a mother develops within a few weeks after childbirth. Mothers suffering from postpartum depression find it difficult to bond with their new-borns. Other symptoms of this form of depression include loss of appetite and insomnia. Unfortunately, most cases of postnatal

depression remain undiagnosed and patients suffer for a long time without any treatment or support.

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) occurs during winter due to less sunlight and long dark hours. Sunlight stimulates the hypothalamus, a cognitive part of the brain that controls appetite, sleep and mood. Insufficient exposure to sunlight induces depression by disturbing a person's appetite, sleep and mood. Light therapy, psychotherapy and antidepressants generally relieve the symptoms of this depressive disorder.

Bipolar disorder or manic-depressive illness occurs when a person experiences extremely high and extremely low moments. The extreme highs are termed as manias and the lows as depression.

### **Symptoms and Signs of Depression**

Not everyone suffers from the same type of depression. The severity of the symptoms determines the degree and extent of illness. Here are the most common signs and symptoms of depression:

- Constant feelings of anxiety, grief, sadness and loneliness.
- A pessimistic outlook towards life.
- Hopelessness and restlessness.
- Frequent irritability.
- Withdrawal from recreational activities and hobbies.
- Disinterest in sex.
- Lower levels of energy and prone to fatigue.

- Difficulty in remembering details, concentrating or making sound decisions.
- Insomnia or disturbed sleep. The tendency to sleep too little or too much.
- Less or no appetite or tendency to overeat.
- Contemplating suicide or hurting self.
- Complaints like pains, aches, cramps, headaches and poor digestion.

If you are suffering from any of these symptoms, seek help immediately. Take steps to relieve yourself of depression.

## **Tips to Relieve Stress and Depression**

- **Tip#1:** Shopping helps relieve stress and depression. Spend money wisely as to not disturb your monthly budget. A little self-pampering will make you happy. Shopping also provides a person with the opportunity to spend time with friends and family members.
- **Tip#2:** Volunteering is an opportunity for people to discover the reality of life. Volunteering in charitable causes will help you realize the difficulties in the lives of deprived people. Serving food at a church's kitchen, donating an organ or participating in a charity walk are some of the volunteering options you can choose from. Such activities boost happiness and help you develop empathy.

- **Tip #3:** Reminiscing good moments from the past helps combat stress and depression. Flipping through old photographs of a vacation or of a child's early years is more effective than alcohol or chocolate.
- **Tip #4:** A well-lit and bright room relieves stress. People experience sound sleep and a refreshed mood with bright indoor lamps.
- **Tip #5:** Write down the good things of the day in your diary. Describe each happy moment in detail and your role in it. This way, you will be mindful of your pleasant actions and behaviour.
- **Tip #6:** Enjoy the natural flow of events and live each moment. Listen to music using headphones in a dark room and feel every note being played. Immerse yourself in the words written in a novel to get a deep understanding of it. On the weekends, practice a favourite hobby. Simply, enjoy the present moment.
- **Tip #7:** Exercise boosts the release of endorphins, which are feel-good enzymes that enhance the feeling of well-being. Outdoor exercises are successful in relieving stress and depression.
- **Tip #8:** Spiritual strength intensifies our body's defence mechanism against stress and depression. Yoga, meditation and mindfulness practices influence the brain positively and promote emotional and physical well-being.



- **Tip #9:** Singing in the shower liberates the mind from negative emotions and thoughts, making you feel happy. It also increases the development of antibodies and enhances immunity.

Apply these tips in your life religiously and you will surely see the stress demon disappearing!

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### ***TOWARDS ETERNAL HAPPINESS, A STEP AT A TIME***

**W**e spend most of our lives trying to be punctual at work, following rules at school and college, and adopting a decent behaviour. We are brought up with the habit of seeing the clock, passing with flying colours at school and working like paid slaves at work. We are so good at censoring our own personality that we fail to recognize even our own selves after some time.

At a point of time, we start feeling unhappy, dissatisfied and depressed because we are so busy censoring our true personality and individuality. I believe people are ignoring their true passions and have been duped into living false lives influenced by advertising, television and the likes.

Advertisers attract people by making them think that buying a huge home, owning a big car, wearing branded attire or holding the latest technical gadget will bring them happiness. People feel these are the real pleasures of life. But, wait and think for a while. Will these really bring you happiness? It is hard to define happiness because each person associates a different meaning and purpose to it. Whatever be your definition of happiness, here are some tips that you can implement to achieve true happiness:

1. ***Avoid imitating other people's actions.***

Everyone has a beautiful and unique personality. That is a big reason to be happy, right? However, I meet people who imitate others. Some people change their dressing style, hair, physical appearance and other features to appear like someone else. They think it is the societal 'trend'. You must remember that emulating others is not a method of achieving true happiness. Each person has his own tastes and preferences. You should be proud of yours.

2. ***Fashionable trends do not define your personality.***

Popular brands sell their products by tapping into consumer culture. People are easily influenced by such advertising as they do not wish to be the odd one out. You must remember that branded clothes and accessories are very expensive, and the trends keep changing continuously. Ask yourself whether you have a real need to purchase an item. Do not fall prey to these lucrative advertisements.

3. ***Stay away from peer pressure.***

Modern people are developing excessive risks of stress-related disorders due to constant peer pressure. If your colleagues at the workplace are behaving nastily, cut them some slack. You may discover the real reason for their attitude and behaviour. It is said that to change a society, you need to change yourself first. Secondly, you cannot control other people's actions and behaviours. Be mindful of your actions. Avoid being rude to other

people. You must exhibit such behaviour that you expect will make your life better.

4. ***The art of giving.***

Every individual defines the term 'giving' in different ways. You must contribute to the society in whatever way and time you get. Indulge in voluntary projects and help the community, friends and family members. For instance, if you are a blogger, you can help other bloggers improve their writing style, promote their articles, encourage their views and help them grow. If you participate in a charitable event, volunteer every month and increase your participation gradually. Gratitude is an unsaid secret of gaining happiness.

5. ***Enjoy the gifts of nature.***

What is stopping you from feeling truly happy? All you need to do is enjoy the gifts of nature and you will be the happiest! Organize a hiking expedition or a trek to the jungles or mountains. Or simply visit a park. It is much better than being stuck at your workstation, worrying about clearing debts.

6. ***Do not allow work-related stress and daily routines to turn you into a zombie.***

Life is given only once. Take time off from your busy schedule and plan a vacation with your family members. Share your dreams and aspirations with your spouse and other members. Find a purpose of leading life. Automatically, you will find the path to achieve true happiness. Life is an unpredictable

journey, but mindfulness and goal setting can add more meaning to your life.

Find out the biggest problem that you can solve using your abilities and skills. Test your potential to find the purpose of your life. Everyone has unique skills. The main thing is some people discover them early in life whereas others are unable to explore and unravel their unique gifts until later.

7. ***Satisfaction:*** Do you sometimes feel that you have enough and do not need more? That is the stage where you have achieved satisfaction. Try and inculcate a sense of fulfilment with whatever you have. This will help you attain total satisfaction with what life has given you and will subsequently result in true happiness.
8. ***Meditation helps a person know his inner self and find peace of mind.***

An in-depth analysis of your desires and level of satisfaction adds true meaning to your happiness. Several aspects of our modern lifestyle have made it difficult to search for true happiness. Our minds are pre-conditioned to assume that we are unhappy. What we fail to realize is that happiness is an internal pleasure and an intense stimulation to various moments. We do not realize the moments of happiness and fail to experience them. Meditation and chanting give us the opportunity to realize our Self and understand why we are not happy. They also make us mindful of the moments that give us

happiness but which we usually oversee or fail to realize.

9. ***Taking help from others is not wrong.***

You may take someone's help, in case you feel confused or lost. We have a vast realm of opportunities to explore, learn and discover with other people. Social networking and blogging are great resources to connect with like-minded people. You can begin asking them about what makes them happy. You can also ask them how they maintain a simple life and focus on their personal growth too.

10. ***It is okay to change your perspectives.***

You must change your perspectives about the events in life if you wish to find true happiness. If we are rigid and maintain an orthodox viewpoint, we will be a misfit in the modern society. The rethinking process involves reading, discussing and listening to other people's views about a concept. You must adapt the skills to inculcate happiness and resilience.

11. ***Health is an essential requirement for achieving happiness.***

If you have a healthy body and mind, you will think about positive emotions and remain energetic throughout the day. If you are lethargic or ill, you will not be able to boost your energy. You will face challenges in motivating yourself to work properly and think positively. Negative emotions will hamper the thought process during that time and you will remain unhappy. Careful choices in relation to diet, exercise and water intake make us healthy, wealthy and wise.

## 12. *Finding yourself.*

It is very difficult to understand the human nature as we are vibrant. Try to find the real 'you' to attain true happiness.

A simple method to discover YOU is to ask the following three basic questions:

- WHO ARE YOU?
- WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF YOUR SHORT LIFE?
- HOW WILL YOU FIND HAPPINESS IN THIS SHORT LIFE?

Imagine you are walking on the street and you see each one of your characteristics represented by someone. What is the immediate feeling you get? What do you observe? How do you express yourself? This exercise will make you feel what others think about you. In this process, if you notice any bad quality, you must try to correct yourself.

## 13. *Always speak the truth about yourself.*

It is said that if you are true to yourself you will behave honestly with others too. Sometimes in the process of finding our inner self, we identify some of our weaknesses. We spend our lives complaining about them or shift our attention to the strengths of our personality. It is a wrong approach. Instead, we should face our weaknesses and take up the challenge to overcome those feelings. We must not ignore the weaknesses as it can dent our self-confidence and pose an obstacle in the path of our

happiness. Try to acquire skills to combat these weaknesses.

**14. *Patience is an important virtue that we must inculcate to find true happiness.***

Develop the art of self-compassion. Take the journey of life one step at a time. Life will unravel its secrets gradually. Do not act in haste. The virtue of patience allows us to discover the beautiful mystery of exploring life and enjoying every moment.

**15. *There is a child in each one of us, even after we mature.***

This inner child has a powerful voice which stays in our deeper conscience. We can hear this voice when we are scared, hurt or concerned about our safety. Therefore, in case of a tough challenge, just ask the inner child, “Why do I feel hurt nowadays? What is my real wish?” Talk to your inner child and try to make him happy by doing things you enjoyed doing as a child.

**16. *Acts of kindness fill our hearts with happiness.***

Actions such as appreciating a friend’s work or a family member’s gesture make him/her happy. This is an excellent way to acknowledge others’ efforts and feel good in doing so. Do other acts of kindness such as feeding poor people or taking care of the elderly.

**17. *Fear undermines the confidence and strength of an individual to achieve happiness.***



Understand the reasons behind your fears and use them as an opportunity to get rid of those fears. Repressing fears caused due to unrealistic expectations or difficulties in conforming to societal standards will make you uncomfortable. Be comfortable with what you are irrespective of what the society thinks.

**18. *A smiling face heals the body, mind and heart.***

Remember the good experiences of your life to add a smile on your face. Sometimes when a person experiences negative emotion, giving him/her a soft smile can cause a shift in mood.

Happiness is a virtue. It is not available for sale at any luxurious shopping mall. Once you start to love yourself and make efforts in that direction, you will find true happiness. How many of you have experienced self-compassion and self-love? Do you take care of your needs or depend on others? Do you believe in looking after yourself first instead of what others expect from you? Learning to love yourself and overcoming the predetermined barriers that hamper your growth will help you lead a happy and content life. Self-love brings you near the Self and creates happiness that you deserve in your career, relationship and life. It brings tranquillity, love, satisfaction, fulfilment, significance, freedom, wisdom, maturity and strength to be happy all your life. The only thing that might come in the way is your anger. In the next chapter, we'll see how you can deal with anger.



## *Section 5:*

# *Angry? Don't Be!*

*“Any person capable of angering you becomes your master;  
he can anger you only when you permit yourself to be  
disturbed by him.”*

*-Epictetus*



## ***Introduction***

Anger is a funny thing. At times, we experience overwhelming emotions of anger. But once our anger ebbs, sometimes we cannot even recall what we were angry about. What's even funnier is that the person with whom we are angry does not even understand the cause of our anger. Many times we shout at others and express anger without even explaining why we are angry at a person. I read a funny story that exemplifies this. Let me share it with you:

*A man was in love with a young woman who was twenty years of age. One day, the woman told the man that the next day was her birthday. The man promised to send her flowers, one rose for every year of her life. The man went to his favourite florist and ordered a bouquet of twenty roses and left. The florist, knowing that the man was his frequent customer, decided to send extra flowers to show his goodwill. He sent the woman a bouquet of thirty flowers. The man knew nothing about this. When he went to meet the woman, he found her in a very angry state. She hurled hurtful words at him and he had no idea why! He left the place not knowing what he had done to deserve such treatment from the woman he loved.*

The man did not know the reason for the woman's anger. But, you sure do, right? The woman got angry because she assumed that her man thought she is ten years older than she actually was. If only the woman had taken it on a lighter note and let the man know what had happened, instead of making

assumptions, her relationship with him would have lasted longer.

To lead peaceful lives, we need to learn how to control our anger and sort out issues in a cordial manner. In the coming chapters, we'll understand what anger is and how we can manage our anger to lead better lives.

## **CHAPTER 1:**

### **ALL ABOUT ANGER**

**L**ook into the mirror and ask yourself, “Do I struggle with my anger?” Yes. Everyone does. Anger is a reaction to various things – people, situations, memories, personal issues, etc.

Common answers to the question ‘Why do I get angry, often’ include:

1. I am being ignored
2. I hate fake people
3. I hate liars
4. I get angry when people criticize me
5. I am nice to others, but they are mean to me
6. I cannot control my impulse

When people get angry, it is normally a response to the following stimuli:

- Jealousy
- Hurt/emotional pain
- Worry
- Anxiety
- Rejection
- Disapproval
- Embarrassment

If someone is angry with you, they want you to become aware that something is not right. Their anger might be a consequence of what you have said or done, or they might be angry about some other issue and are venting it out on you. It is unfair though, but it serves as a warning signal that the other person is unhappy.

Sometimes anger appears to be irrational. However, when you delve deeper into the crux of the matter, you find the actual reason that triggers the anger. Identifying the real cause helps you overcome it intelligently.

Each individual reacts to different triggers of anger, of which a few common ones are:

- Threat/attack
- Frustration/lack of power
- Unfair treatment

Not everyone interprets situations in a similar way. A situation that makes you angry may not elicit the same response in someone else. Thus, it is wrong to assume that our interpretation of a situation is right and the other's is wrong. Several factors and experiences in life mould our views and how we interpret and react to different situations. These include childhood, upbringing, past experiences, and present situations.

Whether you are angry about a past experience or about a present situation, you must always think how you interpret and react to that situation. It will help you cope up with your emotions better. Moreover, you will be able to discover productive strategies for anger management.



I used to be short-tempered earlier. My brain used to go blank and I used to subconsciously vent out my anger through physical violence. I used to throw around stuff or hurt myself. At that time, I did not realize how destructive I was. Fortunately, now I can control my temper.

### **Childhood, Past and Current Influences**

Our upbringing contributes to our ability to cope up with frustration and anger. As a child, whatever you have learnt about anger becomes a difficult issue in adulthood. It is hard for you to manage your anger as an adult because issues with adults are more complicated.

Let's take an example of a child brought up in an environment of aggressive behaviour. The child starts to believe that violent aggression to express anger is normal. Hence, the child never learns to control his/her temper. Angry outbursts will take place often, especially when you do not like the other person's behaviour or a situation.

The second instance is of you growing up in an environment where complaining is not allowed. Hence, you start suppressing your anger which in turn becomes a long-term habit. So, you do not react properly to uncomfortable situations.

When you see your parents go out of control or fight with other adults, you view anger to be destructive and horrifying. You begin to fear yourself when you land up in situations of anger and thus do not feel comfortable expressing your feelings, even when you are angry. Such feelings might crop up at another time although unconnected, which can turn into a complicated situation.

If you have gone through disturbing moments in the past that have caused anger (as a child or as an adult) but you could not express your anger at that moment, you are bound to carry that emotional baggage with you even as an adult. You may come across situations in the present that are more challenging, which in turn makes you angrier.

How is your life at the present? Are you facing problems? Definitely, you will end up being angry, especially for irrelevant reasons.

Anger may be a result of grief. If you lose someone close to you, it is difficult to cope with conflicting emotions. If a specific situation makes you angry, but you cannot express your anger directly or know how to resolve it, then you express your anger at other unrelated situations.

### **Forms of Anger**

Anger is a dangerous emotion, for you as well as for others. Yet, being angry is accepted as a common emotion. Every individual reacts differently to different situations. The different types of anger can be summarized in the following four ways:

1. **Aggression:** A person starts to fight when angered, to harm others. At such a moment, a person does not care about people and will not even think once before hurting them. In fact, when you are angry, you are no more 'nice' and wish to inflict harm upon others. If you observe animal tactics, when they get angry they get into an aggressive posture as if they are ready to attack. The attack may injure you or prove to be fatal.

Often, people express anger as a threat, with a combination of angry outbursts, aggressive body posture, and attacking words. Aggressive anger threatens to harm, provided the other person concedes defeat. For example, when you think about how the world has treated you or when you feel the other person deserves punishment, you tend to become aggressive.

Aggressive anger also has its own dangers. An angry attacker often wishes to invoke fear among others that finally triggers the other party into submission.

2. *Defence*: Sudden attacks trigger the fight-or-flight reaction. The hormone, adrenaline, shoots up tremendously to provide muscle power. You must be swift and hit hard in a fight. Moreover, agility and speed form the essence of escaping a fight as well. Your initial response to a threat is fear; you may either fight with the opponent or run away.

Sometimes, a person may respond by fighting, especially when his/her reputation is at stake. But, if the person is afraid, he may feel weak and desperate. As a result, this fear crops up as anger, where the defensive self is the aggressor.

3. *Outrage*: We follow formal as well as informal rules of society to maintain coherence. These rules include moral values and social norms – being fair, not harming others, and not supporting immoral acts. When people do not conform to informal rules of the society, a formal system needs to be introduced to maintain peace and harmony. Let us take the example of stealing. It is an immoral act. Hence, formal procedures and punishments are in place

to discourage the act of stealing. When informal rules are infringed, social groups deal with it themselves. In this case, the level of punishment is only up to exclusion and criticism. Culprits of moral outrage and indignation need to mend their ways for being accepted back by the other members of the society. A common method of asking for acceptance is apologizing or recanting.

When someone breaks rules, you feel betrayed or are morally outraged; you see the defaulter as bad and someone who deserves harsh punishment. Even a single offence may call for severe punishment when the level of crime is heinous. Incidents of moral outrage are covered by newspapers daily. The media amplifies these immoral acts using emotive language to enrage the target audience. Politics and religion also use this tool without supervision. The mob effect reaches an extent where you are told that if you are not angry at a particular issue, you are bad too. Hence, you land up in a false dilemma where you are repeatedly asked, “Are you with us or against us?” with an intention to force you into agreeing with the mob.

4. *Frustration:* Have you ever thought why we create personal goals? They act as a part of our survival and add meaning to our life. They give us a satisfaction because we are working towards something. Goals vary for different people. They range from short-term goals, for instance, getting to work, to long-term goals like looking forward to a promotion, etc.

When you achieve your goal along with material pleasures, you achieve a sense of satisfaction as you can

control your life happily. However, when nothing goes as per your plan, you tend to get angry and frustrated.

Let us take the example of a traffic jam. Why do you get annoyed when you are stuck in a bad traffic jam? You cannot control the traffic, but it stops you from reaching somewhere important, maybe you are delayed for a meeting or a conference. What do you do in such a case? Shout at the other drivers to vent out your frustration and get involved in a road rage. Does it help?

Deliberate frustration on others expresses power and seeks approval. When someone refuses permission, withdraws resources, or blocks actions, you tend to get angry but do not express it as you feel it might lead to unwarranted consequences.

Frustration is an important factor contributing to stress. We do not take any measures to control it. We often continue to be angry internally or engage in self-criticism due to our inability to handle our frustration. In such a case, we may vent out our anger on others, even if they are innocent but because they are near us at that moment.

Isn't there a way out of all this? Surely, there is. You must learn to understand anger and cope up with its actual cause. Especially when you get angry, you must be more careful about how harmful it can be for you as well as others. When a person is angry, he/she is provoked into doing unusual things, so you should be aware of other people's extent of irrationality. Getting involved in a reasonable argument requires a calm atmosphere. If

everyone around you is screaming or shouting at the top of their voice, does it resolve anything?

Screaming, shouting, calling names, throwing objects, and threatening harm are similar to animal behaviour. When you are angry, you appear to be intimidating. People are scared to talk to you or even be around you. You throw away your maturity in the bin and rant like a 2-year old. But in the end are you happy? Obviously not, you must seek medical assistance and counselling if you feel happy after harming someone.

What does a person want from his life in general? Things must go right, respect must be gained from the society along with family support. However, you fail to achieve these goals when you make anger and frustration a part of your daily life. You distance yourself from others so much that you start living alone.

Anger management needs more than merely finding the cause of anger. Practical skills will help the person control his/her emotions. Through self-reflection and introspection, an individual can realize his role in this existence. Self-realization will help a person cope up with differences in life, which is a big step towards anger management.

### **Excuses You Shouldn't Give**

People find many excuses to get angry. They justify their anger and irrational rants by giving some of the following excuses:

1. **I can't help but get angry.** Do not give lame excuses if you are angry. Women usually blame PMS as a reason for being irritated. Both men and women blame stress, exhaustion or worries as a probable cause of anger.

Angry people fail to understand that they are permitting themselves to rant. In a sense, they are not under self-control.

2. **Explode to tell others you're angry.** Why do you get into a fit of rage? Because you believe that anger is similar to the steam built-up in an overheated steam engine. You feel you need to blow off that steam in order to get back to normalcy. Raging tends to produce more than just anger.
3. **Frustration as a reason for anger.** Can you relax when you are anxious, frustrated or scared? Not at all. You feel the situation is challenging you at that moment. When life goes against your way, when you face difference of opinion, when your best plans are interrupted, or when you make a mistake, your tolerance levels are put to test. At that moment, you tend to believe that blowing off your feelings is better than piling up your emotions.

You must realize that frustration is absolutely normal. Often when you are frustrated, you should feel inspired and indulge in creative activities.

4. **Always be the winner, no matter whether you are right or not.** People suffering from chronic anger often believe that their reputation is at stake when

they are involved in a conflict. It becomes a prestige issue for them. They feel that their self-esteem would be lost if they lose the argument. They feel the need to assert their authority, even if it is not right.

Their behaviour is childish. If they are proved to be wrong, they will look for means to prove the other person wrong. Mature people believe in a grounded principle of self-esteem, i.e. they can put their ego aside and find the best ways to resolve a problem.

5. **Respect at stake:** Often, people misuse the term 'respect'. Generally, this conflict occurs during a disagreement in cases like – a driver tailgates, a partner refuses to carry out your plan, a kid doesn't do what you say, you feel disrespected.

Disrespect is something you cannot tolerate. So, what do you do in such cases? Make a noise or threaten others to reassert your view and demand respect. Unfortunately, when you have to demand respect through fearful means, it will not draw care and love from others. People will distance themselves from you.

6. **You must fight to make things right.** As a child, if you grow up seeing your parents fight continuously, you will also start believing that fighting is normal. Sadly, you do not know how to resolve differences of opinion or manage conflicts without escalating the issue. Then what have you learnt from your parents' past? You are providing the same



atmosphere to your family members as your parents did, but is it right?

7. **Why don't others understand that they didn't mean what they did or said when they were angry?** When you get angry, you feel anger allows you to loosen up. You feel others should not take your angry reactions or hurtful statements seriously because you acted or said those things in a fit of anger. But, you do not realize your actions when you are angry. People who have to bear that reaction of yours feel hurt, humiliated, embarrassed or afraid.

Dealing with anger requires identification of the assumptions, those mentioned above, that abet a person's anger or temper. Each individual has his/her own unique reasons for getting angry. Any number of anger management tips will not have a long-term effect unless the person changes his/her assumptions related to anger. Once, you change your assumptions you will learn to apply anger management techniques with confidence and conviction. Hopefully, you will not get into a fit of anger often!

## **CHAPTER 2:**

# **ANGER MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

**W**hen was the last time you got angry at the office? Maybe when your boss took the credit for coming up with a brilliant idea during a meeting (the idea was actually yours). Or your colleague reminded you aggressively that he is a better performer than you. Just think about your reaction to these instances. Did you control your temper or was it clearly visible to all that you felt upset? If the latter is your response, you have done a lot of damage to your reputation at the workplace.

### **Anger Management Tips for the Workplace**

Here are some anger management tips that will help you manage anger effectively in the workplace:

#### **1. Save your email as a draft.**

Sometimes, you feel that it is appropriate to write an email giving an explanation about what irritates you most at the workplace. It is true that no one can stop you, but it is better to not send off that email right away when you are angry. Compose it, but don't click on the 'SEND' button. When you send an angry email, it creates more problems for you since everything gets documented then. Take some time off, revisit your email, read it carefully when you feel level-headed.

**2. Take a walk.**

Leave your seat and take a walk outside for 10 minutes. The exercise will diminish your anger. You begin to think clearly when you physically withdraw from the situation. It is a sort of a mini-escape. It is a chance to calm your mind and body. You must walk in natural surroundings, breathe fresh air, look at the plants, trees, birds, etc. or simply just gaze at the sky. It rejuvenates your mind and clears your thought process. Moreover, you will feel amused when you think about the cause of involuntary anger.

**3. Talk in person or via phone.**

When you feel angry at a person, call him/her or talk face to face. When you hear each other's voice and see each other's facial expressions, your anger may get lost in translation, which helps sort issues cordially.

**4. Words – a weapon.**

Do not accuse anybody. Instead, try and make the other person a part of your solution. A better solution will say, "I understand, we do not see the situation in the same way, but we must focus on our goal and the finish line. This is my logic, why don't you share your thoughts so that we can collaborate to find a probable solution?"

**5. Get rid of some steam.**

Once you finish your work and are about to leave, don't carry the baggage until you return to work the following day. If you have a mentor in the workplace, share your discomfort with him/her. Another great alternative is to exercise or practice a sporting activity

that will distract your mind and ward off residual negativity.

### **Anger Management Tips for Home**

The tips mentioned above will come in handy at home too. Here are some more for a peaceful home:

1. **Communicate with affection.**

Whoever you are talking to, be it your parents, siblings, spouse or children, always speak with affection. When you get angry, leave the room for a while and when the anger ebbs, go back and speak your mind. This is how others will realize their mistakes.

2. **Change your position.**

If you are standing, take a seat. If that does not help, drink some water. Even if that does not help, go to sleep. Do whatever it takes to avoid reacting harshly at the moment in a fit of anger. Once you are in the right state of mind, you can put forward your arguments clearly and the issue will sort out smoothly.

3. **Carry out an activity.**

If you are angry with someone at home, involve him/her in a common activity. During that activity, discuss with him/her your likes and dislikes. Also, let the person know how hurt you are feeling and what made you angry. The other person will be receptive to your feelings and your anger will soon vanish.

### **Working With a Colleague You Don't Like**

People you don't like will drive you crazy because you tend to waste your time complaining or feeling stressed when you talk to them. That's not where the story ends. There is a

deeper problem here. If you do not like someone at your workplace, it is possible that the concerned person is aware of it. Hence, he/she will be prompted to not like you as well. Do you think working with someone you don't like is easy? You should try working with a person who doesn't like you and observe the consequences of such a partnership.

When you get along well with your colleagues, you will always get help. However, people who don't like you will try to obstruct your way.

There are benefits of being liked in the workplace. Research studies have concluded that the more people like you, the more productive, smooth, and profitable your life becomes. On the contrary, if someone does not like you, he/she can pose to be a threat to your career at some point of time.

Always, problems cannot be solved with a smiling face. Think about the actual reason why you do not like someone. Is he/she being greedy/selfish/mean/ dismissive? In other terms, does the other person have a character flaw or a trait that you loathe?

For example, you find Mr X self-serving, satisfied, and egocentric. The hardest part comes at this stage. Can you behave like Mr X? Yes, but you do not prefer that part of Self. You would like to keep that side of your personality at bay. Similarly, you would like to maintain distance with Mr X.

Suddenly, it becomes more interesting to work with people you dislike. How? Once you get to know them better, you start accepting the traits that you once did not like. It is a process of accepting your weaknesses and knowing yourself

better. Hence, the way to work with people you dislike is to overcome your own traits that you dislike.

Use that person to understand your personality traits. Ask yourself, “Why do I have a problem with Mr X? What habits of Mr X bother me so much?”

Consider the answers as a reflection of your personality. Life is a game and you explore your real SELF by observing the behaviour that you hate most.

Think when was the last time you were selfish or greedy or mean? Can you differentiate between attraction and disgust? Admit to yourself in black and white. Being compassionate towards your own self helps you deal with the complexities of humanity.

You will eventually learn to like people around you once you develop the skill of compassion. You will start liking even those people whom you did not like earlier. You will want to help those people and in turn, help increase productivity and business efficiency.

Always put yourself in the other person's shoes and react accordingly. How would you feel if someone just blurted out his/her frustration on you because of a trivial reason?

Gossiping is a big NO as it hurts the reputation of others. You may feel tempted to chitchat with another employee about how awful a certain colleague is. Many people practice such gossip to bond with colleagues, laugh at someone, and feel that you are walking on the clouds. However, engaging in such a conversation is unhealthy and you are seen as a BIG BULLY.

If you wish to bond with your colleagues, engage in a healthy conversation. Ask about their passions, secret ambitions, hobbies, etc. Building a reputation is quite difficult but you become the most positive and inspiring person in the workplace.

If you are living with unpleasant people at home, apply the same tips as discussed and you will surely see a change of scene.

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### ***CREATIVE ARTS COME TO YOUR RESCUE***

**D**id you know that there are more interesting ways of managing anger? You can manage your anger creatively by indulging in music, dance, art, creative writing, and drama.

#### **Music On, Anger Gone!**

Music works as a great mood stabilizer. If you are feeling angry, just switch on your radio or listen to songs to relax the mind.

Music causes a physical and emotional stimulus. If you listen to soothing music, it will rejuvenate your senses. Hence, you will feel energetic after listening to music when you feel low. Certain types of music help you reflect on past memories and experiences.

Even creating music is a good channel for venting out your frustration and anger. You can sing, hum, whistle a tune or play a musical instrument.

For example, if you are feeling disturbed, you may listen to the sound of drums. Swing your head to match the drumbeats and your anger will disappear in a few minutes.



## **Dance to the Tune**

Dance like no one's watching you. When you feel angry, just go out in the open, throw your arms by your side, and swirl around. It will refresh and calm your emotions. Combined with music, dance gives you a different kick.

Dance is an excellent method of relieving stress and releasing your anger. Tap your feet to form rhythmic movements along with the music. Move along with the music beats to relieve your stress.

## **'Art' it Out**

Different forms of visual art help manage temper and angry outbursts. Common forms of art therapy include painting, sketching, drawing, sculpture, photography and pottery.

You can mix different colours to paint a picture. Just paint random strokes with your paintbrush. It is usually said that anger helps you combine colours well and draw beautiful patterns, something you cannot achieve in a normal state of mind.

## **Drama Queen... or King!**

This therapy of anger management includes several theatre techniques. Also known as psychodrama, it explores emotions and feelings by enacting varied anger issues.

Common forms of drama therapy include:

- **Roleplay:** Participants must assume the character's role and work collaboratively to create a story. Each participant must determine the character's actions based on their own perceptions.

- **Mime:** You need to express your emotions through your physical actions. It does not involve any dialogues or speech.

Other forms of drama therapy include theatre games, group dynamics, improvisation, and puppetry.

### **Creative Writing**

Often, when you feel angry you tend to use the wrong words while expressing your anger. In other words, you are not mindful of what you are saying to the other person.

Hence, creative journaling gives you a great chance to express your emotions when you are feeling low. Penning your thoughts on paper gives you time to reflect on your current state of mind. In addition, a creative journal helps you express the negative emotions in a positive manner.

Hopefully, you will use these creative techniques to get rid of your temper. In the coming chapters, we will deal with how you can ensure that you have a happy workplace.

## *Section 6:*

# *A Happy Workplace*

*“Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do.”*

*-Steve Jobs*



## *Introduction*

In the modern context, we spend half of our lives at the workplace. If we are not happy and content with our work and office environment, our productivity is hampered. Most people do not love their jobs. Some like it while some simply tolerate it. Only a few people love their work and enjoy their lives too. This does not mean that everyone is living a frustrated life, desperately looking for their perfect job or for a career they are passionate about.

We need to find fun and enjoyment in our work. Only then will it hold some value in our lives. It will also increase the probability of achieving financial success. However, to enjoy one's job, it is not necessary to like it or love it.

Every job involves aspects that may be unpleasant. Consider an example to understand this better: after you graduate from college, you work in a company in the sales department. Most of sales contact is through cold calling or meeting in person. So, not everyone likes the sales profile.

Have you ever thought why you concentrate your best efforts on a job that you don't even love? Simply because you need to earn a living? A job is more than that. It gives you a sense of achievement. The satisfaction you get after performing tasks well cannot be explained in words.

This does not mean that you should continue working in a profile or a company that is unpleasant for you. You may start lobbying or search for a good option elsewhere provided you have devised a proper career plan. Also remember, while the quest for a perfect job continues, you

must enjoy your present job, celebrate your success, and expand other joys surrounding your life.

The coming chapters throw light on the importance of happiness in the workplace. Readers will get an insight into how happiness at work increases self-esteem and productivity. If you are happy with your job, you will get the energy and motivation to lead a healthy and balanced life. Optimism is one of the key factors for achieving success at work. So, without wasting any time, let us hop on to the first chapter!

## **CHAPTER 1:**

### **HAPPINESS AT WORK - HOW IT MATTERS**

**M**ost of us mistakenly believe that if we achieve success at work, we will automatically become happy. However, Shawn Achor, founder and CEO, Good Think, feels the scenario needs to be reversed. You need to be happy at work if you wish to achieve success. It is truly said, *“Doing what you like is freedom, liking what you do is happiness.”*

Happy employees are completely engaged for 8 to 9 hours daily, but they are not tired at the end of the day. Instead, they are content with their performance at work and have a vibrant energy to spend time with family, doing community service and indulging in hobbies.

#### **What Happiness at Work Means**

Do you feel happy in your workplace or struggle to go to office daily? Chances are that you must be constantly watching the clock at work, waiting eagerly for the day to end. You must also be dreading Mondays and rooting for Fridays.

The secret lies here. If you do not feel happy with your job, you do not test your potential. It is detrimental to you, your future job prospects, career progress, colleagues, boss and

the company. Even family, society and friends do not prefer to support a moaner.

It is obvious that a happy employee loves his or her job and gets completely absorbed in it. Happy employees work with great passion and develop a strong connection with the company. They strive to discover innovative methods of working and help the organization tread along the path of success.

On the other hand, disengaged employees only work for pay checks. They perform the minimum tasks and invest time in the workplace, but dispassionately. This means the employee has reached the lowest level of satisfaction and feels unhappy. The loss of interest in the job is reflected when employees speak about their dissatisfaction, undermine the achievements of other colleagues and prevent others from being happy at work. These kinds of employees are harmful to an organization.

It is vital to keep employees engaged and happy at work. They are more productive, increase sales, are eligible for a promotion, record less absenteeism and are highly engaged in their work.

In case the business leaders wish to extract more from their employees, they must adopt a smart approach without disturbing the satisfaction level of the employees. Firstly, the various tasks must be prioritized. Next, a detailed log of allocation of time to different activities must be kept. A to-do list enlisting the essential activities must be prepared. The calendar must be updated, making a note of the important deadlines.



## Ten Reasons Why Happiness at Work Matters

1. People feel energetic when they are in the company of happy people because they share good relations with everyone at the workplace. Happiness at work delivers the following results:
  - Enhances teamwork with colleagues.
  - Improves employee relations.
  - Enhances customer satisfaction in the service industry.
  - Boosts company sales.
2. People who are satisfied and happy at work create new ideas and devote time to innovation and product development. Happy employees generate creative ideas that benefit the company.
3. Happy employees do not complain about problems in the workplace. Instead, they strive to look for a solution. Unhappy workers tend to make a mountain of a molehill and do not take any initiative to fix the issue.
4. Happy employees are more energetic and efficient at work. Often, this energy is contagious as other people are inspired to give their best at the work.
5. Happy employees have an optimistic outlook towards life. They see every challenge as an opportunity. It is rightly said, *“Whether you believe you can or believe you cannot, you are right.”*
6. Low motivation leads to low productivity. Happy people always motivate their colleagues. You must be interested in your job, only then you shall be able to

enjoy each day of work. Being happy at work is the only reliable way to sustain a job.

7. People who are happy with their job do not fall ill often. If you do not love your job, you will be affected by stress disorders and workplace burnouts. People often take a sabbatical after working for a few years, as they feel unhappy with work. Stress at the workplace forces people into unhealthy habits such as smoking and alcohol.
8. Happy people have a willingness to learn. They are excited to learn new concepts, thereby increasing the productivity of an organization.
9. People, who are happy at work, perform their tasks with due attention and concentrate on their activities, thereby making fewer errors. They may make occasional mistakes, learn from those mistakes, rectify them and do not repeat the same. They do not hesitate to admit their mistakes. Their calm and relaxed attitude helps them work efficiently.
10. Happy people arrive at better decisions and give sound advice to their bosses. Unhappy people always operate in a crisis mode. They have a narrow outlook on their job and lose sight about the objectives of the organization as a whole. Happy people are up-to-date with the latest news of the industry, which enables them to make informed decisions that are helpful to devise a sound business strategy.

## **Elements That Define a ‘Happy Workplace’**

Evaluating the best-suited work profile is a major part of the battle for a successful and rich career. The remaining part constitutes the appropriate work atmosphere where you can learn, work and grow personally as well as professionally.

The difference between an excellent workplace and an ordinary one may be complex. Experts believe that regardless of the work profile and the field of work, the best workplaces share a variety of common characteristics. Some of these characteristics are:

- 1. They emphasize stellar communication.**

Creating a terrific relation requires transparency and a free flow of clear communication. You must interact with your boss as well as colleagues well. Great business leaders update their employees about the developments in the organization and involve them in the success of the company. Luncheons with the management, newsletters and regular updates give the employees a sense of belonging.

- 2. They invest in employee training.**

Good business leaders give equal importance to their vision as well as the employees’ well-being. Happy employees tend to get more training sessions for honing their skills and making themselves eligible for promotion.

- 3. They reward outstanding performance.**

The most common reason for employee attrition is less motivation due to the absence of sufficient appreciation. Along with the monthly pay check, employees expect a token of appreciation when they deliver excellent performances. Employees are happy

when they receive additional benefits and timely bonuses appreciating their productivity.

**4. The health factor.**

Good workplaces become a happy joint if there are healthy people in the organization. A healthy and balanced life increases the overall wellness of an employee and enhances productivity. Sickness benefits and health insurance are essential for a good workplace. Fitness facilities at the workplace motivate the employees to work hard. Financial incentives to people maintaining optimal health is another characteristic of a happy workplace.

**5. Vacations and holiday packages.**

Good companies realize the critical role of work-life balance in an employee's life. Good business leaders allow employees to go on a holiday or a vacation to a foreign destination with family and friends.

**6. Fun at the workplace.**

It is essential to like your job and enjoy every minute spent at the workplace. A fun environment at work encourages creativity as well as productivity. The employees enjoy working and promise a longer commitment to the company. Companies may organize sporting activities such as baseball, corporate events, team-building activities and birthday celebrations. It helps everyone feel as being part of the fraternity and ensures that the employees will contribute more to the company and stay in it for long.

Happiness at the workplace is the most effective way of increasing the productivity of your employees. No system, methodology or application can match the productivity that results from an employee being happy.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

### ***HAPPY EMPLOYEE IS PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYEE***

**B**oth a corporate manager with several employees or an entrepreneur of a start-up firm must not ignore the fact that happy employees generate a great value for a business. For instance, a report from the Harvard Business Review stated that happy employees exhibit around 31% increase in productivity, 37% increase in sales and their creativity increases up to 3 times.

Now, the challenge for modern business leaders is to look out for the best method to keep your employees happy and boost productivity. For instance, the Fortune 500 magazine ranks Google as the best workplace in the world. The company follows a simple strategy of providing free food for every employee. The service is available three minutes away from each business centre and is supplied through micro kitchens that are open throughout the day in the office campus. Unfortunately, it is somewhat complicated for most companies to follow this model. Many experts believe that it is hard to find happiness in the workplace, mostly because human beings are not programmed well to stay happy.

#### **Activities that Boost Productivity**

Ron Friedman, a popular psychologist has explored the problem of keeping employees happy in his book *'The Best*

*Place To Work*'. According to him, the following activities may lead to a successful and happy workplace.

1. The frequency of giving performance rewards is more effective than the actual size of the reward. Feedback from various business owners indicates that small rewards and positive feedback at regular intervals keep employees happy for a long time rather than a single happy event in a year. Even biggest awards lose their shine in a year or less. On the other hand, most employees are happy when they get small doses of appreciation frequently.
2. Variety in the form of rewards is effective in increasing the productivity of the employees. For instance, a family vacation gives an employee the opportunity to take a break from the monotonous routine life, and it brings the pleasure of spending time with near and dear ones. At the workplace, variety refers to organizing various employee engagement activities to break the daily office routine. People tend to discount events that happen repeatedly, no matter how positive.
3. Surprising positive experiences create a huge impact. An unexpected event in the workplace automatically attracts the employees' attention, lending a great emotional weight to the event. Hence, a business manager must surprise his or her employees frequently by organizing special activities or lunches, to nullify the effect of occasional bad news.
4. A new and positive life experience boosts the mind more than reward gifts and vouchers. For instance, a

hobby class, a ride in the hot-air balloon, or a vacation holiday gives greater joy than a material object such as a fancy suit, LED TV, or a nice wallet.

5. Soothing music lifts the mood of an employee subconsciously. A similar experience can be felt with a pleasant aroma such as scented candles, or coffee. Modern business leaders are implementing the strategy of aroma marketing to create a positive environment at the workplace.
6. Job appreciation creates more focus on the goals and achievements of an organization. Successful business leaders spend more time listening to the achievements of their employees. In a business scenario, recognition of achievements helps build teamwork and co-workers express gratitude towards their manager.

Other research studies have shown that when employees feel happy at their workplace, they collaborate with other members, work towards common objectives and innovate to yield better results. It means that business leaders must elevate the employees' moods through refreshments, interactive sessions and by sharing good news.

Executives and managers must not confuse group lunches and recognition events as being unproductive or a waste of time. All forms of interactions bring together employees positively and enhance productivity. Hardworking and productive employees are usually ambitious, focused, passionate and excited to attend such events.

## **The Science of At-Work Productivity**

A modern business leader can emulate the success model of Google to make employees happy and increase their productivity. Martin Seligman, a popular psychologist and author of the book, '*Authentic Happiness*' based on his research on 272 employees and their work performance over a period of 18 months, arrived at a conclusion that happier employees deliver better performance and are paid the highest. Happy workers incur low medical bills, work efficiently and report less absenteeism.

The television series, 'The Apprentice', is a great example of media's portrayal of work culture and employees' behaviour. It emphasizes that it is tough to operate a business, and moving forward requires you to place your interests first and capitalize on the misfortune of your employees.

Richard Reeves, author, 'Happy Mondays' believes that happiness should not be considered an abstract term. John Helliwell, an economist from the British Columbia University conducted a research on well-being and happiness. The study was based on surveys of about one lakh people worldwide. His findings have created a huge impact on the implications of a happy workplace. He emphasized that a better relationship between the employee and the employer is the key to success.

Another research study by the University of Warwick concluded that happy people are more productive and work harder. Happy employees create a positive atmosphere in the workplace and motivate others to produce best results. This conclusion is based on randomized trials. Professor Andrew Oswald, a Professor of Economics at the University of Warwick stated that top-notch companies like Google have



made major investments in employee support, because of which, employee satisfaction is high. For Google, employee satisfaction rose by 37%. He adds, “*Under scientifically controlled conditions, making workers happier really pays off.*”

So, it all boils down to one thing: a happy employee is a productive employee. If you wish to see success at work, stay happy!

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### ***BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM***

**S**elf-esteem' is now a common buzzword. Parents, teachers, and therapists strive to boost self-esteem, assuming that high level of self-esteem leads to positive results and benefits.

Some people with high self-confidence and esteem overemphasize their good traits and success. This category of people includes people who are defensive, narcissistic and have a conceited nature.

The correlation between performance and self-esteem is not simple. It cannot be accurately said that high level of self-esteem delivers good performance. Self-esteem increases when a person performs well. Performance at work is often related to high self-esteem, though there are slight variations in their correlation. Efforts to boost the students' self-esteem do not improve their academic performance; it is often counterproductive. Hence, a definite cause-effect relationship has not yet been established between self-esteem and performance. Probably, occupational success results in a high level of self-esteem. But, self-esteem is a positive factor only in certain professions. Research studies have failed to deduce that self-esteem results in a good performance, except for the fact that high level of self-esteem encourages persistence after we fail.

## **Traits of People with High Self-Esteem**

People having high confidence and self-esteem are attractive and likeable, have sound relationships, and create a better impression on other people than those having low self-esteem. However, there is no substantial evidence confirming these beliefs. For instance, narcissists create a charming impression at the first time, but eventually, they alienate other people. Moreover, self-esteem cannot predict the duration or quality of a relationship.

People having high self-esteem are willing to talk publicly and criticize the approach of a group. Leadership is not a direct outcome of self-esteem; however, there are certain indirect effects of self-esteem. Such people exhibit favouritism in a group, which may lead to discrimination and prejudice.

Violence is an outcome of neither low nor high self-esteem. Narcissism increases the aggression to retaliate for wounded esteem and pride. People having low self-esteem exhibit violent behaviour and are delinquent. We find the lowest and highest rates of bullying and cheating in people with high esteem.

Coming back to the context of happiness and self-esteem, both emotions share a strong relationship. Although there is no significant evidence about the extent, high self-esteem has a positive effect on an individual. People having low self-esteem tend to suffer from anxiety and depression in some circumstances. On the other hand, high level of self-esteem alleviates stress.

## **Steps to Increase Self-Esteem of Employees**

To build confidence and resolve the issue of low esteem, we must change the way we feel about ourselves emotionally. A change in our emotions requires us to alter our core beliefs about the Self. Firstly, we must stop thinking inferiorly about our abilities and ourselves. Stop telling yourself, “I am not good at all.” It can transcend our imagination about our physical appearance, our smartness, financial position or low confidence. Secondly, we need to change our perception of success. We need to list our priorities and rate our success accordingly. The change in this core belief is against logic. However, we need to overcome our insecurities in life and boost self-esteem.

Employees who feel good about themselves can focus better, require fewer holidays, and coordinate well with their colleagues. On the other hand, employees with low self-esteem work at a slow pace, make mistakes and do not take initiative to give their best. Though it is not the employer’s sole responsibility to boost the morale of his or her employees, nevertheless, he/she should try and motivate them from time to time. Here are some tips on making that possible:

1. Establish trust in the abilities of your employees. Micromanaging is perceived as lack of trust, thereby reducing the self-esteem of the employees. Sufficient training will upgrade the skills and allow the employees to trust that the employer relies on their expertise, motivating them to trust their capabilities.
2. Encourage expansion and success. Stories spread about a boss who thwarts every effort taken by his assistant to upgrade his skills and become eligible for

varied promotional transfers, as the boss could not afford to lose his best employee. A successful business leader should always encourage his employees to acquire the best skills, even if the result is a great career opportunity for him or her. In this way, the employees will start believing in the efforts of their bosses and appreciate their gesture, which in turn improves their work performance. The word of mouth will spread about this gesture and other people will crave to get an opportunity to work under that boss' supervision. The objective of a company is teamwork among the employees as well as the company's overall success.

3. Give rewards and recognition. Usually, companies follow a policy of rewarding employees who achieve their targets. It is a method of recognizing their contribution to the firm. It enhances their self-esteem. Certificates, awards and gift vouchers serve as a token of appreciation for their efforts and productivity.
4. Credit the performance of an employee only when and where it is due. We have observed in the modern business world that when an employee suggests a bright idea, the manager steals the credit for that idea. In this way, the employees feel dejected and stop sharing new ideas. Therefore, when an employee suggests an innovative idea, the manager must ensure that due credit is given to that employee. If possible, the idea should be shared during a pitch meeting and that employee should be allowed to participate so that his/her ideas are credited. Alternatively, the manager may send a note to all employees mentioning that an employee's

suggestion is implemented, crediting him/her for the idea.

5. Resort to external help for increasing employee self-esteem. Team building experts may be hired to conduct seminars, workshops, and exercises for this purpose. A trained instructor is equipped with the necessary skills to motivate the team and make them feel excited about their job. The outcomes of such sessions boost the self-esteem of the entire workforce, thus creating a positive environment at work and enhancing productivity.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **KEEPING EMPLOYEES MOTIVATED**

**T**he scientific definition of motivation states that it is a set of “*internal and external factors that stimulate desire and energy in people to be continually interested in and committed to a job, role, or subject and to exert persistent effort in attaining a goal*”.

The intrinsic definition of the term ‘motivation’ is – when a person is happy performing activities, being less concerned about external rewards.

Some employees work less during the official hours, do not deliver assignments on deadlines and need continual correction and supervision. On the other hand, some employees strive to give their best performance, put in their 100%, accept challenges without any complaints, and are happy to work regularly. The latter are examples of motivated employees.

Several theories are proposed on the concept of motivation. Some believe that social processes play an important role in an organization because employees attach more importance to a sense of belongingness than monetary compensation. Other theories propose that frequent reward programs are essential for enhancing the motivation and productivity of employees. Although there is no correct approach to instilling motivation, business leaders need to adopt sharp

managerial skills and devise an appropriate approach to motivate employees.

### **The Need for Motivation**

Managers are interested in approaching motivation as a tool but they cannot afford the costs of such a measure. They feel that to motivate employees they will have to compensate their employees in monetary terms. When an unmotivated employee quits the job, the manager is taken by surprise, failing to realize that the management approach is to blame. High level of unemployment allows them to find a replacement. It is difficult to keep talented employees happy and retain them for a long time in the organization. If a good and motivated employee leaves the organization, the company not only loses knowledge but also must recruit new employees and incur training costs. As a result, it becomes an expensive deal.

Modern business leaders understand the significance of motivating employees at the workplace due to its several benefits, which are as follows:

1. Motivation triggers employees to put their best foot forward and improves their efficiency. Every organization requires human resources and financial experts to accomplish its goals. The employees must feel they are an integral part of the organization. Motivated workers deliver an excellent performance which results in an increase in the level of productivity and lower operational cost. They are job oriented and serve as an asset to the company.
2. Motivation helps in developing a stable workforce. It promotes a strong reputation and increases goodwill



of the company. It is, therefore, essential to appreciate and make employees realize their value for the company. It is truly said, "*Old is Gold*." If an employee works for a long-term, he does not regard the organization as just a stepping-stone. Motivated employees promote the organization through word-of-mouth and attract competent professionals to the organization.

3. Motivated employees do not resist any form of changes to the organizational structure. A motivated workforce accepts new changes with an open mind and helps the organization to implement new strategies and follow the path of progress.
4. Motivation develops a strong association of the employees with the management, provided the managers fulfil the needs of the employees. These needs include attractive rewards, promotions and a healthy work-life balance. In this way, employees feel they are a part of the organization and there is no distinction created between the objectives of the organization and their own interests. Motivated employees develop a cordial relationship with their managers and do not hesitate to express their innovative ideas.

Although the reasons mentioned above are essential for a business concern, motivation is most important for an employee, as it helps him/her achieve personal objectives and be satisfied with the job.

Therefore, motivation is a gradual and continuous process because it is based on the employee needs that are unlimited. Alternatively, each person has different wants, needs and desires. Hence, a successful leader must identify the different needs and make efforts to understand the employees better.

### **Methods of Keeping Employees Motivated**

A manager can use several financial and non-financial tools for motivating his employees. The main tool is salary. Employees must receive a fair compensation to justify the job responsibilities. Every employee must be considered separately and compensated according to his performance; otherwise, the outcome can be fatal.

A common reason loyal employees state, when they quit their jobs, is that they find out a colleague is being paid more, which seems unfair to them. If an employee outperforms the expectations through an exceptional performance, he must be rewarded with an appropriate bonus amount. Annual bonuses are a good way to reward the performance of a loyal employee.

Fringe benefits such as company travel, sickness benefits, pension schemes, staff discounts and subsidized meals are crucial to retaining good employees.

Due to less competition, managers are biased and do not give importance to the crucial factor of motivation. The worst thing is they resort to using techniques of negative motivation. For instance, they might associate the behaviour of an employee with fear of losing the job or facing punishment. These techniques produce only short-term positive results. In the long run, the employee loses interest in the job, suffers from stress and ends up quitting.

With an increase in the level of cutthroat competition in the industry, managers must make efforts to retain the talented employees within the company because they are a valuable resource to the organization.

Job enrichment is a great technique to motivate the employees. It refers to a process of giving employees complete control of their tasks to be accomplished. This leads to an increase in productivity as the employee assumes sole responsibility and commits fewer mistakes. However, different employees may offer varied reactions. Some may be excited to undertake more tasks and accept the accountability factor, while others may be annoyed with the increase in responsibility.

Training usually motivates employees because it gives them an opportunity to acquire new skills or enhance their potential. The absence of training does not give an opportunity to employees to test their full potential. On-the-job or off-the-job training methods may be organized to motivate workers.

The most popular and widespread tool for motivation is performance appraisal. A well-structured appraisal is defined as *“a systematic and periodic process that assesses an individual employee’s job performance and productivity in relation to certain pre-established criteria and organizational objectives.”*

Managers must take sufficient time to carefully assess the appraisal process. An appraisal instils confidence among employees, even if the manager does not give a positive feedback. The appraisal should be structured properly and justifiably.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### ***BEING HAPPY AT WORK***

**I**n the modern world, we get easily distracted from the important activities in our daily life. Wherever we go, whatever we do, we need to perform certain activities and distract ourselves from reality. However, engaging in an activity in a mindful manner requires some practice. If you succeed, you are bound to find happiness in whichever activity you do. Mindfulness requires strict discipline, but it helps us achieve happiness and peace.

Here are some techniques that will help you be mindful at work:

#### **1. Understand personal tendencies.**

Each one of us has a unique tendency that prevents us from focusing on the present moment. If you recognize your tendencies, it will help you resolve future problems in advance. Realize what type of thoughts distracts your attention. Analyse your reactions while you are reading this book. Such questions will help you become mindful of your thoughts. Few common tendencies that appear in individuals include worrying, anxiety, guilt, regret, pleasure-seeking and fear. A great method is to note down these tendencies, as and when they occur, and assess their effects. Without wasting any time, take a paper, pen, and jot down your thoughts.

**2. Acceptance.**

Once you begin to realize your tendencies, do not judge your actions and behaviour. Instead, you must embrace your thoughts and accept your personality. There is a rationale behind your tendencies. There are certain signals you get in life that warn you about your tendencies. Notice these signals, observe your feelings, emotions and thoughts, and practice deep breathing exercises.

**3. Deep breathing.**

A powerful tool to anchor our lives is deep breathing. When we experience a crisis or are in challenging times, we must take deep breaths and concentrate on the present situation. We must count our breaths. A count of four on inhaling and four while exhaling may help. The logical part of the human brain counts the number of breaths and the emotional Self focuses on the thoughts.

**4. Question the thought process.**

Negative thoughts and emotions must be questioned immediately. When we feel negative about something, we must use that emotion in the form of a reminder for examining the thoughts causing a disturbance in our mind. Most of us ignore the negative thoughts. As a result, we develop negative emotions and feelings. Remember that there is nothing good about a negative emotion. Not only do negative emotions create bad feelings, they affect us physically too. We develop serious health issues due to negative thoughts. Therefore, whenever we feel

negative, we must try to calm down and think twice before reacting.

**5. Useful reminders.**

You may use reminders while performing daily chores. Tie a string around the wrist to remind you to think about peaceful situations. It is a great method of remaining in the present moment. Numerous ways have been suggested by scholars and researchers to use reminders in a successful manner. You may even create a reminder on your smartphone. External reminders have a great impact on our thought process.

**6. Determination.**

It has a great impact on developing mindfulness. Increase the level of your contribution to the current moment in your life. You need to approach mindfulness techniques with absolute determination. At times, you may face challenges and feel like throwing in the towel. However, strong determination helps you overcome these challenges and obstacles. Challenges teach us a lot about our strength and potential. One of the major goals of being mindful is to never be scared of failure. You must think that your techniques are fool proof and you are not bound to fail.

**7. Passion.**

Unfulfilled passions and desires are the biggest obstacles in the path of achieving happiness. Enjoy every moment in your life and engage yourself in an activity that you love to perform. Your heart will

jump with joy and you will feel amazing. For instance, if your passion is writing, you can write articles that help others improve their way of life. It will help you live in the current moment.

It does not require much effort to draw an inspiration. Primarily, you must discover the real passion and strive to follow it to the utmost.

## **Tips to Find Happiness at Work**

So far, we have discussed exploring true happiness through mindfulness. Now, we shall see actionable tips that will help you be happy in the workplace.

### **1. Attach meaning to your job.**

In 1983, Steve Jobs was able to convince the future CEO of Apple, John Sculley, to resign from his position at PepsiCo. He asked him a question, *"Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling sugared water or do you want a chance to change the world?"* Readers may feel why this question is effective at all. Besides tapping on the potential of his imagination and creativity, the new job provided Scully with an opportunity to perform a meaningful task. A research study conducted by Prof. Adam Grant, Wharton University, concluded that people who are aware that their work creates a positive and meaningful impact on other colleagues tend to be happier than those who do not share this perception. They are even more productive. Another research study conducted by Prof. Teresa Amabile, Harvard University, discovered that the size of the goal does not matter, whether it is treating cancer or assisting a

colleague, you must associate some meaning to it to develop happiness at the workplace.

**2. The concept of 'Office Nest'.**

Since employees spend maximum time at work, to improve their happiness at the workplace the manager may decorate the office area, abiding by the rules of the company policy, and create a relaxed and comfortable environment in the office.

**3. Make friends with colleagues.**

The company policy of a start-up firm Hostt has been the subject of many researchers studying about happiness at the workplace. In a case study of the company, it was concluded that if you have a colleague who is also a good friend, you will engage in your work with much greater enthusiasm. It is not an easy task to hire the right person for the right job. When you hire people for your company, pay attention and appreciate employee referrals. If employees develop a good camaraderie, they will contribute to a greater level of productivity at work. Christine Riordan has mentioned in an article published in the *Harvard Business Review* that workers who "*have friends at work perceive their job as more fun, enjoyable, worthwhile, and satisfying.*" Friends at workplace create a sound support system and generate loyalty.

**4. A smile on your face cheers others up.**

Smiling increases happiness. The brain works sharper due to the production of neuropeptides. It is



truly said that a smile is contagious. If you smile, others will smile automatically.

**5. Do not mix personal and professional lives.**

Julie Morgenstern, the author, *Time Management from the Inside Out*, in an interview to the CBN News said, "*When your personal life is in tumult, a lot of emotional hijacking goes on. Emotions consume you and stress exhausts you.*" Because of your personal turbulences, you develop stress that hampers the quality of your work. You remain distracted and are less productive.

**6. Orient yourself towards the future.**

Experts like Geoffrey James believe that a person can arrive at better decisions that will directly affect satisfaction at work when he/she has a clear picture of the long-term goals and plans.

**7. Thank your colleagues.**

Research studies at the Harvard Business School concluded that gratitude gives a great sense of self-esteem and triggers polite and helpful behaviour from other people. You must thank each member of the staff working with you including the maintenance staff and the receptionist. Everyone feels happy when you appreciate his or her work.

**8. Avoid burnouts.**

We follow hectic schedules at work that may lead to burnout. Hence, take off for a minute, breathe and then resume work. An excerpt from an interview given to the *Business Insider* by Sharon Salzberg, the

author of *Real Happiness at Work* states, "Without some breathing space in the face of constant demands, we won't be creative, competent, or cheerful... We won't get along with others as well, and we won't take criticism without the possibility of imploding. It is a must to control the level of our daily stress."

**9. Eat healthy food and drink plenty of water.**

A certified nutritionist, Shirley Weiss believes that a healthy diet and proper hydration system during a workday makes a great difference to the attitude and energy levels of a person. Instead of having tea or coffee from vending machines at lunch, you must consume meals that include yoghurt, honey, asparagus and cherry tomatoes. You will maintain a normal range of blood sugar and avoid fatigue, headaches. This will also help you concentrate better.

**10. Organize your desk.**

A well-maintained and organized desk helps you prepare better and increases your work efficiency. It improves the level of happiness too. A cluttered workplace is a major contributor to stress at work and results in loss of essential items.

**11. Avoid multitasking.**

Modern workers believe that multitasking is effective. Contrarily, Prof. Clifford Nass of Stanford University has claimed that multitasking is a time-wasting tactic. It results in poor concentration and reduces the level of creativity. You must focus on a

single task at one time, instead of juggling several tasks. A great idea is to prepare a checklist of the tasks assigned for the day and tackle them in a sequence.

**12. Do not try to change people.**

Every person has unique skills and talents. We must avoid the urge to change people. Instead, we must tap into their potential by studying the unique personality traits of each employee and assign tasks accordingly. You must not allow other people's actions to affect your performance. Retreat in case of an ego clash and avoid blaming others for your faults.

## **CHAPTER 6:**

### **POSITIVE ATTITUDE & WORK**

**P**ositive attitude at work not only helps a person achieve promotions and successful projects but also makes him/her feel happier. However, most people struggle to find a job they love. It is rare that people say they love their job. In this chapter, we shall discuss how you can maintain a positive attitude in the workplace.

#### **1. Quick and professional analysis of different issues.**

No boss likes an employee who complains constantly. If you have clear reasons for developing a negative attitude at work, you must discuss such problems with the manager or the company's owner. You will not arrive at a solution if you remain silent. Therefore, speak up and give sufficient time to the management for rectifying the problem, as nothing can be changed overnight. Suggest reliable solutions for the raised problem instead of just complaining.

#### **2. Respecting colleagues.**

Sharing a cordial relationship with colleagues is the best way to make your workplace happy. Respect your colleagues and understand their viewpoint to create a stress-free environment, even though you are not required to like everyone.

**3. Getting enough sleep.**

Adequate sleep boosts your energy in the morning to approach the challenges of a new day at the workplace. You tend to feel grumpy when you have not had a good night's sleep. Sleep early so that you can feel positive the next morning. Some people feel 4 to 5 hours of sleep is enough, but you must aim at getting a minimum of 8 hours of nightly sleep.

**4. Identifying negative attitude.**

Sometimes you do not realize how you contribute to the negative environment at work. Therefore, you must be aware of your words, thoughts, and actions. You must identify situations where you utter words without any probable reason. Think about the situation in the opposite way and respond accordingly. You must not react immediately; rather take some time, reflect on your ideas and beliefs, and then arrive at a decision.

**5. Reducing stress levels.**

Work stress is sometimes contributed by the experiences at home. If your personal relationships are under stress, you will not be able to concentrate and perform your best at work. Therefore, you must not carry personal life-related stress to the office. Similarly, you must not carry the burden of work stress to your home, as it may make relationships sour.

**6. Equip yourself with skills.**

If you hate your present job but are continuing it just for the salary, hold on because it is the wrong approach. There are several ways in which you can prepare for a new job. If you do not like the company, draft a good

resume and float it to HRs. If the problem is work profile, devote extra hours and hone your skills to become eligible for a raise and promotion. If you do not prefer the industry you are working in, obtain a professional degree and equip yourself with skills to qualify for a different industry.

**7. Goal-setting techniques.**

It is disheartening when you do not have a purpose in life. Why are you working at your current job? A better idea is to analyse your talents and potential and discover opportunities that will help you enhance your potential. You may take feedback from your manager on how he views your performance and abilities. Set short-term goals such as for 2 weeks, a month, 3 months or 6 months. Assess your successes in this period. Identify the roadblocks and try to remove them in the next period. Reset your goals according to your performance in a realistic manner.

**8. Changing responsibilities.**

Job rotation is a successful technique to enjoy your work and develop a positive attitude. For instance, if you are a receptionist and hate attending calls daily, you can switch jobs with a data entry operator or an assistant for a few days. In this way, you will develop new skills and may find a job that you really love.

**9. Greeting with a smile.**

A smiling face creates a happy mood at work. Smile when another employee greets you or passes by. Even a new customer feels happy when you welcome him with a smile.

### **10. Your job does not define you.**

Overall, work is just work. It does not define your life. If you have had a bad day, go home and engage yourself in hobbies or spend quality time with family members and friends. However, you must not think negatively at this time. Work is just one part of life. Therefore, maintain a positive attitude, collect the monthly pay check and fulfil your desires.

### **Do You Love Your Job?**

Often, we see people making radical career switches. Yes. Opportunities exist. It does not necessarily mean that these changes make them happier. Loving your present job is imperative. You should feel motivated enough to attend work daily.

You may follow these steps to understand your attitude towards your work better. Reflect on these for some time and be surprised with the discoveries!

- The job does not define you as a person. What matters is how you perform at work, which defines your personality. Attitude may be a correct term in this context. To perform a task well, you must do it with compassion and care. Your behaviour with colleagues and your mood swings are noticed by the employer. It has a great impact on your co-workers. Sometimes, a situation goes out of control, but you should handle it smartly.
- Do not focus only on the monetary benefit. Salary is not a good excuse to like or dislike a job, as human beings are naturally very greedy and face difficulties

in feeling satisfied. Whatever be your present salary, you should not always expect more. What you can do instead is track your expenses and prepare a monthly budget. Your work should fulfil your personal needs. Find the importance of your tasks. Reflect on why only you have been chosen for a specific assignment. Maybe you have the desired skills to perform the task efficiently or you may have developed a sense of confidence and trustworthiness among the owners of the company. Analyse the perspective of your role in the organization. It will boost your self-esteem and help you develop a sense of personal satisfaction and emotional well-being. You may also reflect on the points you had considered while taking up the job and whether the present situation is a temporary phase that is forcing you to consider other vacancies.

- Question the worth of the job. If you do not find a job to your liking or are turning into a person you wouldn't imagine to be, it is time to reflect on your thoughts. You may not require a new task at all; even a novel direction may be effective. A new designation may influence the much-required positive attitude to perform the task. Additional responsibilities give a sense of accomplishment. If you are unable to perform multiple tasks at the same time, do not accept new tasks.
- Self-awareness creates a sense of greater satisfaction in the workplace. It increases the sense of emotional well-being. If you feel that a change is required urgently, only then consider a new vacancy. Analyse other people's responsibilities and the happiness level achieved by other colleagues.



## **Tips to Change Your Attitude Towards Work**

You must identify the reasons for exhibiting undesirable behaviour at work. Spot things creating a negative impact and find what changes are appropriate for rectifying the same. For instance, if you feel tired and it results in a bad attitude, counter the action by getting enough sleep or take small power naps at work. If you do not find the job challenging, accept new assignments and approach them with a positive attitude.

A positive outlook helps you perform tasks using a realistic approach, determining a strong association with the assignment. Accept the fact that some tasks in your job are less interesting and fulfilling compared to others. If you nurture this acceptance, you will take a step towards loving your job. Less motivation doesn't mean you cannot accomplish the tasks. Rather, it means that you do not wish to complete the assignments. Acknowledge the responsibility of changing your attitude to work more proactively.

Stop comparing your performance with others who love their jobs, as it will further depress you. Usually, colleagues dislike the job you perform well. Instead, set goals for your personal performance. SWOT analysis is a good way of focusing on the completion of tasks suitable to your style of work. It is a productive method of changing attitude towards work to enable better performance.

## **CHAPTER 7:**

### ***HOW HAPPY PEOPLE BEHAVE AT THE WORKPLACE***

**S**o far, we have discussed the important role played by a happy workplace in our lives. In this chapter, we shall focus on certain habits possessed by happy employees at work.

**1. Commitment towards continuous improvement.**

Happy employees strive to perform their best, whether they are given due credit for their work or not. When they give their best, they learn from their mistakes, which tests their true potential and they feel good about themselves. A good performance builds personality, character, self-esteem and better work habits.

**2. Striving to fulfil goals.**

Happy employees are ambitious and have realistic goals. They work towards these goals and can ignore the deterrents and distractions at their workplace. They know these situations are temporary; hence, they do not give them much importance. During a crisis, happy people tend to work on their long-term goals instead of bothering about the negative phase surrounding their work.

**3. Controlling situations.**

Happy employees are not emotionally affected by the negative emotions or toxic gossip spread at work. They concentrate on the task at hand. They continuously find challenges to get busy instead of engaging in office gossip. They do not get involved in conflicts and keep themselves away from such situations. Focusing their energy and attention on tasks under their control, happy people develop the sense of achievement and satisfaction.

**4. Willing to help others.**

Happy people are satisfied with their own performance. As a result, they offer a helping hand to other colleagues who face troubles accomplishing their tasks. Research scholars at the Wisconsin-Madison University concluded that employees who help others at the workplace are happier compared to other employees. They harbour warmth, satisfaction and earn respect from fellow workers.

**5. Avoiding Interaction with Negative People.**

A chronic complainer is discouraged by happy people at the workplace. Happy people explore methods of avoiding the negative effects and focus on resolving the current problems from a different angle. They tend to come up with innovative solutions. Their positive attitude forces their detractors to discuss their problems with them. Negative people tend to drain the resources and energy of other employees. Hence, positive employees discover ways of restricting interaction with such distractions.

**6. Expressing gratitude.**

Gratitude is an integral element of happy people. They strive to achieve more, but they are also grateful to other people. They thank colleagues openly and acknowledge any kind deed or assistance given by others. The positive attitude attracts other employees who are willing to help. They win the support of the colleagues even in bad times. They focus on the positive moments in their life instead of complaining.

**7. Sense of humour.**

Happy people develop a good sense of humour and manage emotions well. They try to extract the maximum out of a situation, be it at home, play or work. They discover the change in emotions by recollecting humorous incidents or just smiling even if it is for no reason. They distract themselves by thinking of pleasant times.

Happiness defines the emotional or mental state of your well-being. It includes pleasant emotions and thoughts like joy and contentment. Several psychological, biological, philosophical and religious approaches have tried to define the concept of happiness and its actual source.

Modern lifestyle and a hectic schedule require people to devote a major part of their lives to the workplace. Hence, it is essential to develop amicable conditions at work to create happy employees and reduce the attrition rate.

A happy workplace gives you new opportunities to test your potential to the optimum. A happy employee can generate innovative concepts and drive the company towards success,

which in turn helps him/her find a meaning and purpose in life. Happy people enhance their productivity and engage themselves in work with full concentration.

Happy employees motivate their colleagues to give their best performance. They help other co-workers to resolve problems and greet others with a smile. They rarely fall sick and adopt healthy habits.

The best method adopted by happy people at the workplace is that they are not distracted by negative people. They maintain their focus on the assigned tasks and strive to complete their assignments within the deadline.

Happy people do not work only for monetary benefit. They want to learn new skills from their jobs and focus on contributing to and growing with the company. They give their best performance even if they do not receive due credit for their performance.

To achieve happiness at work, you must do your best, help others and maintain a positive attitude. You must not think about the failures as they are the stepping-stones to success. You must learn from your mistakes and never repeat the same. You must find a valid reason for switching your job. If not, try to find reasons to be happy at your current workplace.

Remember, if you are mindful and at peace, happiness and success will always knock your doors. After all, it's all a mind game!

