

Read Ebook {PDF EPUB} The Happiness Project by Gretchen Rubin



The Happiness Project by Gretchen Rubin.

A personality framework that divides all of humanity into four types.

Main Content.

The Four Tendencies Quiz.

One of the daily challenges of life is: “How do I get people—including myself—to do what I want?” The Four Tendencies framework makes this task much easier by revealing whether a person is an Upholder, Questioner, Obliger, or Rebel.

By asking the one simple question, “How do I respond to expectations?” we gain exciting insight into ourselves. And when we know how other people respond to expectations, we understand them far more effectively, as well.

We all face two kinds of expectations—outer expectations (meet work deadlines, answer a request from a friend) and inner expectations (keep a New Year’s resolution, start meditating). Our response to expectations determines our “Tendency”—that is, whether we fit into the category of Upholder, Questioner, Obliger, or Rebel.

Knowing our Tendency can help us set up situations in the ways that make it more likely that we’ll achieve our aims. We can make better decisions, meet deadlines, meet our promises to ourselves, suffer less stress, and engage more deeply with others.

Just as important, knowing other people’s Tendencies helps us to work with them more effectively. Managers, doctors, teachers, spouses, and parents already use the framework to help people reduce conflict and make significant, lasting change.

This short, free Quiz poses questions meant to identify your Tendency. It takes about ten minutes to complete; answers are confidential. More than 3 million people have taken it.

To learn more about the Four Tendencies, check out my book, *The Four Tendencies*.

The Happiness Project: Summary in PDF.

The Happiness Project is Gretchen Rubin’s one year experiment on becoming a happier woman with simple daily action and without crazy changes such as quitting jobs, moving to another continent or giving up all material possessions.

Bullet Summary.

You can become happier with a deliberate, daily effort To make yourself happy, make others happy The resolution chart was crucial to remind Gretchen daily of sticking to her goals.

The Happiness Project – Summary.

Gretchen Rubin says that when it comes to happiness, according to research, genetics account for 50%, life circumstances 10-20%, and all the rest is up to how we think and act (also read *The Power of Positive Thinking* and *As a Man Thinketh*). Her personal happiness project consisted in focusing each month on a specific area of her life she wanted to improve.

JANUARY: Boost Energy (Vitality)

Research shows that happiness energizes you, and being energetic gives you higher self esteem and the firepower to entertain activities that in turn make you happier, such as socializing. On the other hand feeling weak stressed and harder makes everything seem harder.

Gretchen decided to:

Go to sleep earlier Exercise better Toss, restore, organize Tackle a nagging task Act more energetic (studies show acting energetic gives you more energy)

The result? She was impressed by the mental energy boost she got.

FEBRUARY: Remember Love (Marriage)

In February The Happiness Project tackles the romantic relationship with her husband. The author reads Gottman books, such as *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*.

Rubin learns to argue well and to avoid the four horsemen of the apocalypse (criticism, contempt, defensiveness and stonewalling). She finds out that we all have a negative bias which makes having less negative experiences more crucial than having positive ones (the magic ratio). The author resolves to:

Quit nagging Don’t expect praise or appreciation Fight right No dumping Give proofs of love.

Gretchen Rubin says she wished her husband would listen more, care more or notice more about her changes and needs (indeed *The Man’s Guide*

to Women explains men's behavior is more important than women's in happy relationships). But overall, she was very pleased with the positive changes she could make single-handedly in her relationship.

At one point the author went full throttle: she decided that for a week she would go above and beyond in giving and asking for nothing. She dubbed it "week of extreme nice" (which is a great way to stop vicious circles BTW). It was difficult and she was a bit disappointed her husband failed to recognize and appreciate her for it.

Read More on Relationships.

As you can see, I researched a lot about relationships as well. If you want to master this area of your life check:

MARCH: Aim Higher (Work)

Gretchen knew from her research that challenge and novelty are key elements of happiness, and that's why she decided to launch a blog. Enthusiasm is also more important than innate ability in reaching mastery because it fuels your willingness to practice.

Launch a blog Enjoy the fun of failure Ask for help Work smart Enjoy now.

I found especially interesting how she tackles here the arrival fallacy, such as the idea that when X will happen we'll be happier. That's often not true and we should all learn to enjoy the destination instead.

APRIL: Lighten Up (Parenthood)

In April Gretchen realizes that it's true that acting the way you want to feel works. Singing in the morning was indeed proving a major driver of happiness.

Sing in the morning Acknowledge the reality of people's feelings Be a treasure house of happy memories (revisiting and remembering happy moments worked for her) Take time for projects.

MAY: Be Serious About Play (Leisure)

The Happiness Project tasks for May:

Find more fun Take time to be silly Go off the path Start a collection (didn't work for her)

Gretchen realizes that because something is fun for someone else, it doesn't necessarily work for you. Finding happiness with your happiness project is also about finding your own path and experimenting. And knowing yourself helps a lot.

JUNE: Make Time for Friends (Friendship)

The personal traits that most predict life satisfaction are the interpersonal one. Meaning: friendships, relationships and social interactions are some of the most important, if not THE most important elements of a happy life (also check social skills mastery).

Remember birthdays Be generous Show up Don't gossip Make three new friends.

Gretchen was focusing on making other feel good by "helping them think big" (also read *The Magic of Thinking Big*), which basically consisted in her telling people they should do and go for what they want. And as she did that, she reached her first magic breakthrough: to make yourself happy, make others happy.

She focuses here on making new friends and being better at socializing. She holds back on criticizing, make follow up questions, tries to understand when people are looking for opportunities to say more and she focuses on being warm.

JULY: Buy Some Happiness (MONEY)

The Happiness Project focuses here on the relationship between happiness and money. It's a complex topic, but you can boil it down like this: money does not and cannot buy happiness. But it can help.

Indulge in a modest splurge (worked for her only when done rarely) Buy needful things Spend out Give something up.

I really, really loved this part because it really spoke to me. Gretchen goes into some very key tenets of happiness for me which are:

Maximizers and satisficers (The Paradox of Choice)

Maximizers look to all possible options before buying. They waste time and usually end up more unhappy than people who buy as soon as they find something they like (satisficers). And they are also more regretful when they find new possible options they could have bought.

Underbuyers and overbuyers.

Underbuyers only buy when something is strictly needed. And that leaves them worried, for example, their toilet paper will soon run out. Overbuyers on the other hand have houses full of stocks they often end up throwing away.

Spenders and keepers.

Spender enjoy what they buy. Keepers keep things for some distant future. They often never use it until their beloved product has passed out of style, is expired or... They died. As a damn keeper, I am working on this. This is also true for ideas. For example Gretchen Rubin says she would think of a good idea for a post and then "save it" for the future. Much better to spend out, she realizes, and trusting in abundance.

Buyers and discarders.

Some people use things out over and over, trying to squeeze the last tiny bit of value out of dull razors, old underwear and ugly clothes they don't want to throw away. This creates clutter and baggages. Learn to remove and throw out, instead.

AUGUST: Contemplate the Heavens (Eternity)

August in Gretchen's happiness project meant focusing on spirituality.

Read memoirs of catastrophe (to enjoy what she has) Keep a gratitude notebook Imitate a spiritual master.

The gratitude book didn't work for the author as she was doing it every day and it felt forced. If you do the same, do it more rarely.

Admit Happiness.

Some people, says the author, are afraid of admitting happiness in fear of jinxing themselves. This only reduces their level of happiness though.

SEPTEMBER: Pursue a Passion (Books)

In the ninth month of her happiness project the author tackles the following mini-projects:

Write a novel Make time Forget about results Master a new technology.

The author talks to some people who doesn't believe you can pursue happiness and that simply focusing on happiness will make you unhappy. They followed John Stuart Mill quote:

Ask yourself whether you are happy, and you cease to be so.

But Gretchen Rubin, strong of her own personal successful experience of increasing her own happiness, strongly disagrees.

You're happy if you think you're happy.

OCTOBER: Pay Attention (Mindfulness)

The author stops to reflect and enjoy the small things of life. Pushing her baby in a stroller, watching her play and savoring the beautiful daily moments with her family.

Meditate on koans Examine True Rules Stimulate the mind in new ways Keep a food diary.

I especially liked a passage in which she went to help her child trying to climb stairs. She wanted to take her newspaper with her to read and then she stopped herself. That was it, she thought: a beautiful summer day, the sun, her husband nearby and her daughter learning to climb stairs. That was it.

NOVEMBER: Keep a Contented Heart (Attitude)

The author forces herself to laugh out loud even when she didn't feel like it, but it often worked:

Laugh out loud Use good manners Give positive reviews (look for the positive in everything) Find an area of refuge.

The author realizes here that she has a tendency to being belligerent in conversation. When someone said something, she'd naturally look for ways why it wasn't true and for ways to contradict it. I have this same tendency, which is something that Tony Robbins calls "mismatchers", such as people looking for contrarian examples.

She realizes also that being critical can be addictive because it makes people come across as more intelligent and discerning as compared to people who agree and pontificate. She resolves to move beyond it and to only give positive reviews.

DECEMBER: Boot Camp Perfect (Happiness)

December is the recap month for the happiness project. Gretchen tries to put everything together and stick to all resolution she has done in the previous eleven months.

It's also a time for reflection. She realizes that the biggest boosts in her happiness came from eliminating all those behavior, feelings and pattern of thoughts that made her feel bad. Such as: too much clutter around, snapping, nagging, bad food, gossiping and "controlling her sharp tongue". She says she was able sometimes to stop mid sentence and change tone, or change tone before even speaking (this is emotional intelligence by the way).

But the most effective tool was her resolution chart. The resolution chart kept her focused and reviewing it everyday kept her goals present in her mind at every turn.

Real Life Applications.

Spend out! Use what you love and makes you happy.

Discard! Throw out what you don't like and don't use (sorry, let me fix that: give it away or sell).

Admit happiness! Don't be afraid of jinxing yourself. Admit when you're happy, celebrate it... And remind yourself of those moments.

Move past disagreement If you also tend to always look for counterarguments and counterexamples, only restrict it to areas where they will serve you well. Socializing is NOT one of them!

Resolution chart A resolution chart is different than goals. Goals you hit or miss them. A resolution chart pushes you to try to be your best and when you fail it's OK: there's still tomorrow to do your best once again.

CONS.

Research references? Gretchen Rubin often says "research says..." but never links and rarely quotes any research. I wish she did.

She never meditated The author said she never meditated because she didn't feel like it. If it's a project of trying new things though, I felt she should have forced herself at least to try. Especially after so many were telling her it's important.

PROS.

Natural, everyday tone I liked Gretchen Rubin's writing style: conversational and natural. It flows naturally and that makes it a crossover between a novel and a great self help book.

No talking down tone Grechen never pretends of being better than what she is and never lectures. She opens up on all the challenges and difficulties she faces, which makes The Happiness Project all the more valuable.

P.S.: she could use that same demure, everyday tone on her website too. "Blockbuster New York Times best seller" and "has an enormous readership" sound like unneeded self aggrandizing.

Humor The Happiness Project is not only an easy read, but also often funny. Here's an example that made me smile:

That night I did a better job, largely because I was so tired that I went to bed at nine. Being asleep is a great way to avoid being critical.

Lots of wisdom There's really a lot of wisdom here. You can see Grechen is a fellow avid reader and she has learned a lot. I learned a lot too, thanks to her. And I love that.

Powerful message: little things matter The Happiness Project shows everyone that to change for the better you don't need to change your life or move to another continent. The little, everyday things are what makes all the difference.

Review.

I loved "The Happiness Project". I wasn't thinking I could ever give 5 stars to a book that seemed very light and doesn't set out to improve you or teach you anything. But it doesn't matter what it sets out to do: it did improve me and it did teach me a lot.

If you're looking for ways to be happier, to improve yourself and even to get to know yourself better, chances are you will love The Happiness Project.

Edit : Eventually I demoted it to 4 stars. As good as it is, time showed me that it didn't leave a mark. Still highly recommend, though!

The Happiness Project by Gretchen Rubin.

Do you want to be happier, healthier, more creative and more productive...but don't know where to start?

Ten years ago I did my first "happiness project," and I wrote a book about my experience that hit #1 on the New York Times bestseller list—and stayed on the list for more than two years.

As you might know, a "happiness project" is an approach to changing your life.

First is the preparation stage, when you identify what brings you joy, satisfaction, engagement, and growth, and also what brings you guilt, anger, boredom, and remorse.

Second is the making of resolutions, when you identify the concrete actions that will boost your happiness.

Then comes the interesting part: keeping your resolutions.

I created this experience for you, to provide the structure that will allow you to focus on a different area of life each month, and to keep the resolutions that will boost your happiness. I'll help you identify your own specific resolutions, encourage you along the way, and guide you through reflections to help you learn from that month's resolutions.

Maybe your schedule is full, but you want to make some small, thoughtful changes each month to be happier. Maybe you're feeling really stuck and need to shake yourself up. Either way, The Happiness Project Experience is designed for you.

This Course Is For You If...

- ✓ ...you feel stuck and want some structure and support to make changes in your life.
- ✓ ...you know you could be happier and healthier if you made a few small changes, but you're not quite sure what changes to make or how to start.
- ✓ ...you've tried to do a happiness project, but struggled to stick with it.
- ✓ ...you want to be intentional to make time for yourself this year.
- ✓ ...you want to make steady progress all year, instead of just making too many unrealistic resolutions in January that you don't keep.
- ✓ ...you got off track with your healthy habits in 2020 and want a jumpstart.
- ✓ ...you want to connect with other people who are prioritizing their health and happiness.

The Happiness Project by Gretchen Rubin Analysis and Summary.

Life gets busy. Has The Happiness Project been gathering dust on your bookshelf? Instead, learn some of the key ideas now.

We're scratching the surface here. If you don't already have the book, order the book or get the audiobook for free on Amazon to learn the juicy details.

Synopsis.

The Happiness Project covers a year of Gretchen Rubin's pursuit of what she wants to obtain from life: happiness. Therefore, as a form of scientific research, she spent a whole year trying to maximize her degree of happiness. For each month, she allocated herself tasks to engage with that she believed would make her happier. The Happiness Project summarizes the tasks that worked for her so you can also follow your own happiness project.

Gretchen Rubin's Perspective.

Gretchen Rubin is a writer on subjects of habits, happiness, and human nature. She is the author of the New York Times bestsellers *Better Than Before*, *Happier at Home*, and *The Happiness Project*. Rubin's books have sold more than two million print and online copies worldwide in over thirty languages. On her daily blog, GretchenRubin.com, she reports on her adventures in pursuit of habits and happiness. On her weekly podcast, *Happier with Gretchen Rubin*, she discusses good habits and happiness with her sister Elizabeth Craft, a Los Angeles-based television writer.

"The belief that unhappiness is selfless and happiness is selfish is misguided. It's more selfless to act happy. It takes energy, generosity, and discipline to be unfailingly light-hearted, yet everyone takes the happy person for granted. No one is careful of his feelings or tries to keep his spirits high. He seems self-sufficient; he becomes a cushion for others. And because happiness seems unforced, that person usually gets no credit." – Gretchen Rubin.

How to Create a Happiness Project.

Identify what brings you joy, satisfaction, and engagement. Then, make resolutions that include concrete actions that will boost your happiness, and finally, keep your resolutions. Focus on a different subject each month. Twelve months in the year provide twelve slots to fill. For the first month, attempt only January's resolution. In February, add the next set of resolutions to the January set. By December, you'd be scoring yourself on the whole year's worth of resolutions. Use Gretchen's 12-month happiness project as an inspiration to create your own personal one.

January: Energy.

She decided to start the year by focusing on energy with the reasoning that more vitality will make it easier to stick to a resolution. That included more sleep, more exercise, mental and physical decluttering. Outdoor activities raise our energy level and help us improve our thinking. It's been proven that light is good for the psyche and stimulates serotonin and dopamine production, two hormones responsible for feelings of happiness. Rubin also found out that one of the best ways to lift your mood and boost your mental energy is to engineer an easy success like tackling a long-delayed chore. The happiness associated with these successes should energize you. Subsequently, feeling energetic will improve your self-esteem and ability to engage with more tasks.

February: Marriage.

A good marriage is one of the factors most strongly associated with happiness since it shapes one's daily existence. It provides support and companionship that everyone needs. Your marriage doesn't have to be in trouble for you to focus on nurturing it. Over the years, we all fall into

some bad habits that better be changed before they become destructive. For Gretchen, these habits were nagging, criticizing, asking for praise but not giving one, snapping, being less considerate to her partner than she was of other people, focusing on details that annoyed her. When thinking about happiness in marriage, you may have an almost irresistible impulse to focus on your spouse and emphasize how they should change to boost your happiness. Still, the fact is you can't change anyone but yourself. Initially, Rubin expected her husband to listen more, care more, and notice her needs more. However, she actually realized the changes she could make within the relationship significantly improved her relationship. When you give up expecting a spouse to change, you lessen anger and resentment. This creates a more loving atmosphere in the marriage.

March: Work.

Happiness is a critical factor for work, and work is a critical factor for happiness. First, a human being needs to be productive to be truly happy. Second, work occupies so much of our time. Another person's happiness project might even focus on choosing the right work. For Gretchen, it was focusing on work that brought her more energy, creativity, and efficiency to work-life. To have more success, she embraced the fun of failure and accepted it as part of being ambitious and creative. She also fought her impulse to pretend to know things she didn't know and learn to ask for help. Instead of choosing an area where she had an innate ability, she decided to engage with blogging. She was enthusiastic about this field. Rubin believes that enthusiasm trumps innate ability, as enthusiasm fuels your willingness to practice. Hence, Rubin suggests:

Launching a blog. Enjoying the fun of failure. Asking for help. Work smart. Enjoy now.

April: Parenthood.

Our children give us the happiest moments of our lives and, at the same time, are also a tremendous source of worry, irritation, expense, inconvenience, and loss of sleep. Gretchen's goal for the month was to become more tender and playful with her daughters. She wanted a peaceful, cheerful, and even joyous atmosphere at home. She knew nagging and yelling weren't the way to achieve that. She found out that singing in the morning had a cheering effect and made it easier to take a light tone with her children. She resolved to make her family a treasure house of happy moments and give it the time it needs. Rubin concludes this chapter by offering several approaches she adopted, that you could also adopt, to lighten parenthood:

Sing in the morning. Acknowledge the reality of people's feelings. Be a treasure house of happy memories. Take time for projects.

May: Leisure.

Regularly having fun is a critical factor in having a happy life. Work on your play. These are the activities you do in your free time because you want to do them for your own sake, which has no economic significance and doesn't lead to praise or recognition. Take time to be silly. Don't let yourself become a gloomy, boring, sad person. Remember that something another person finds enjoyable won't necessarily work for you. Finding happiness with your happiness project is also about finding your own path and experimenting. For May, Rubin suggests engaging with the following Happiness Project tasks:

Find more fun. Take time to be silly. Go off the path. Start a collection.

June: Friendship.

No matter what they're doing, people tend to feel happier when they are with other people. Plus, the strongest predictor of life satisfaction is your interpersonal relationships. You need to nourish long-term relationships. You need to confide in others. You need to belong. One of the best ways to do this is by helping others to think big and feel good. Essentially, Rubin focused on telling people they should do what they want. In doing so, she learned the most effective way of making yourself happy is by making others happy. Rubin suggests the following tasks to engage with in June:

Remember birthdays. Be generous. Show up. Don't gossip. Make three new friends.

July: Money.

Gretchen decided to buy herself some happiness by indulging in a modest buying splurge from time to time. Her favorite was a children's book collection. This month, she concluded that if money is to enhance her happiness, it must support aspects of life that bring happiness to you. Rubin differentiated between underbuyers and overbuyers. Underbuyers are people who only buy when they need something, while overbuyers fill their house with things that they often end up throwing away. Similarly, Rubin also differentiates between spenders and keepers. Spenders enjoy what they buy, while keepers aim to keep objects for the distant future. However, this means keepers do not enjoy their purchases until they are outdated or they have died. These concepts are not only relevant to money but also ideas. Rubin admits she used to be an idea keeper. She would have valuable ideas and save them for the future. However, she learned it is better to spend your ideas and trust your ability. Finally, Rubin differentiates between buyers and discarders. Buyers try to squeeze every tiny bit of value out of products. Alternatively, discarders remove objects when they no longer provide value. Try to learn to be a discarder. Rubin discovered that, for her, a significant part of her energy was sucked up by junk that was sitting around for ages, waiting for her to sort it out and just piling up higher and higher. One study claims that sorting out unnecessary details regularly saves up to 40 percent of housework.

August: Eternity.

In August, Gretchen turned to the spiritual realm. She decided to heighten her awareness of the brevity of life by reading memoirs of people facing death. As a consequence of reading these accounts, she found herself with a significantly increased appreciation for her ordinary existence. Every day in life seems so permanent and unshakable, but a single phone call can destroy it. The realization that the days are long, but the years are short, made her strive to live fully in the present and appreciate the seasons of her life. Rubin suggests the following tasks to engage with in August:

Read memoirs of catastrophe. Keep a gratitude notebook. Imitate a spiritual master.

September: Pursue a passion.

Recognize your passion. Make time for it and find ways to integrate the activity into your ordinary days. Dedicating the month to a passion means treating it as a real priority instead of an extra to be fitted in at a free moment. Suppose you feel overwhelmed by identifying your passion. In this case, consider what you enjoyed doing as a 10-year-old. Alternatively, consider what you do on a free Saturday afternoon. In Gretchen's case, that meant everything related to books, reading, writing, and making things with her hands. Rubin recommends the following mini-projects for September:

Write a novel. Make time. Forget about results. Master a new technology.

October: Mindfulness.

The cultivation of conscious, nonjudgmental awareness brings many benefits in terms of happiness. One highly effective way to practice mindfulness is through meditation. Gretchen couldn't bring herself to do it. She sought to find other strategies that would help her pay attention, stay in the moment, and keep away from automatic behavior. She experimented with all sorts of practices: laughter, yoga, hypnosis, and drawing classes. Although she couldn't find her way in October, she still recommends you find your own way. The monthly tasks for October are:

Meditate. Examine true rules. Stimulate the mind in new ways. Keep a food diary.

November: Attitude.

"When I thought about why I was sometimes reluctant to push myself, I realized that it was because I was afraid of failure – but in order to have more success, I needed to be willing to accept more failure." – Gretchen Rubin.

In November, Gretchen focused on her attitude. She wanted to cultivate a light-hearted, loving, and kind spirit. It's easier to complain than to laugh, easier to yell than to joke around, and easier to be demanding than to be satisfied. Hit on several specific aspects of your attitude that you want to change and work on cheerfulness. The monthly tasks for November are:

Laugh out loud. Use good manners. Give positive reviews. Find an area of refuge.

December: Bootcamp-Perfect.

After piling on resolutions for 11 months, Gretchen would follow all of her resolutions all the time, aiming for perfection in the last month. It was challenging and demanding. She didn't have a single perfect day during December. Still, she kept trying because her resolutions made her truly happy. The process of continually reviewing resolutions and holding yourself accountable each day has a huge effect on your behavior.

Concluding Quote.

"It's about living in the moment and appreciating the smallest things. Surrounding yourself with the things that inspire you and letting go of the obsessions that want to take over your mind. It is a daily struggle sometimes and hard work but happiness begins with your own attitude and how you look at the world." – Gretchen Rubin.

Rating.

We rate this book 4.3/5.

Comment below and let others know what you have learned or if you have any other thoughts.

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