

Little Happiness Handbook



**11 TIPS TO SMILE MORE OFTEN, LAUGH A LITTLE LOUDER AND
FIND HAPPINESS THIS WEEK**

Introduction

Happiness may seem hard to find.

In the modern world, the pace of life is go, go, go. Long workdays are the norm, you're constantly pressured to be more productive and your attention is flooded with ads, news stories and requests from friends and family.

Life may seem like a rollercoaster ride of neverending responsibilities.

You're always busy.

And happiness...well, there's just no time for it.

Yet, that doesn't stop every commercial, ad and guru from selling it.

If you just buy this product...if you just go on this trip...if you just find the right girl or guy....

Then finally.

FINALLY, you'll be happy.

Sound familiar?

Let me let you in on a little secret.

No product, no relationship, no amazing vacation will ever give you true happiness.

Happiness is not something you can find or buy.

And that's because happiness already exists inside you. You just need to know how to allow it to rise to the surface and transform into a smile on your face.

And that's what this little handbook is designed to do.

If you follow even just a few of the tips inside, you'll find a little slice of happiness this week.

That's my promise to you :)

As for me personally, I regularly practice 8 out of the 11 tips on this list every week. The others I make time for once every month or three. And the result is, there's not a single week in recent memory where I haven't experienced just a little bit of happiness. Usually, happiness visits me many times a week, and often every day.

I hope you can also make many of the following practices habits, so that happiness becomes a normal presence in your own life.

Thank you again for subscribing and being a part of Ordinary Dude Meditation. I feel fortunate that you've given me a small slice of your attention, and I hope my newsletter adds a bit more calm, peace and happiness into your life.

If you ever have any questions, don't be a stranger, dude. Feel free to shoot me a message at john@ordinarydudemeditation.com.

Happy meditating,
John



The myth of endless happiness: Why feeling happy all the time is impossible

Before we get into the tips, there's one thing you should know.

Being happy all the time is a myth.

Really.

Even people you may expect to always be happy, like the following enlightened dudes, are not. I've seen video of the Dalai Lama crying, read about Adyashanti's frustration with technology and heard Thich Nhat Hanh recount his anger during a speech.

Bad things happen to everyone.

Parents die. Relationships end. Successful, happy periods in life come to an end. It is the way of life. Nothing is permanent, and that goes for happiness as well.

So before you get into the tips, let me just ask you to bear this in mind.

Give up on the idea that you should always be happy.

Instead, enjoy happiness when it comes and create the circumstances in your life (which the tips below can do) that allow happiness to show up at your doorstep more often.

1. Do less. A simple life is a happy life

Society says you should have more. But does more really make you happy?

Some of the happiest people on earth, like the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh, live incredibly simple lives. They own few material belongings and are in high supply of the most valuable thing—time.

More things, more vacations and even more friends, can complicate your life. Why?

Because they all require time to plan and manage. What's more, they often require more money. Which means you'll likely have to work harder to pay for everything, sacrificing time and chaining yourself to a busy schedule.

As mentioned in the Intro, no matter what any advertisement or guru tells you, you cannot buy happiness. Happiness can't be forced. It can't be won through more effort, more spending or anxious searching.

But when you free up time in your life, there's suddenly room for happiness to make an appearance.

With more time, less things and a simpler life, you'll naturally be more relaxed. And that is exactly when you'll begin to notice yourself smiling more often as you begin to witness life's simple joys around you. And speaking of which...



2. Enjoy the simple pleasures (Acknowledge happiness)

We live during amazing times.

From the internet, to skyscrapers and even fast food delivery, the modern world is full of technological wonders.

It's simply mind blowing to me.

50 years ago, people would be awestruck at the advancements in today's society. However, things like smartphones, Uber and modern medicine are normal for you and me. Most people are simply too busy to stop and acknowledge how incredible our world is. And it's not all about technology.

There are many natural, small joys in everyday life. From knocking back beers with a buddy, to conking out in an afternoon nap and even lounging on a hammock outside, feeling the warm sunshine on your face as you enjoy the simple pleasure of being alive.

There is much to be grateful for in life, every single day of the year.

Happiness is right here. You just need to slow down enough to see it, appreciate it and experience it.

How can you develop a greater sense of gratitude and appreciation? Slowing down is one way. You can meditate or just set aside 30 minutes a day to relax and do nothing. But there's one other suggestion I have. And that involves taking a little field trip to put your life in perspective...



3. Take a field trip to the slums, or help those less fortunate

Disclaimer: Please don't put yourself in danger by spending a day exploring Chicago's south side, or the like. Before visiting any impoverished place, do your research. Make sure it's safe and you're not venturing into gang-infested turf or crime-ridden areas. If you choose to follow this suggestion, you do so at your own risk. Be responsible and, again, do your research.

To gain a new appreciation for your life...to realize how good you have it, sometimes you need to see the other side of the coin. And you can do that by visiting places and witnessing the lives of those less fortunate. Let me give you an example.

Three years ago, I spent a week in Kathmandu, Nepal—the absolute poorest place I've ever visited. The city was like a giant slum, with rundown buildings as far as the eye can see and thick, smog-filled skies. I used to always complain about how terrible Bangkok's air pollution was. But after my Kathmandu trip...never again. In Nepal's capital, you can get sick just from being alive and breathing. When I came back to Bangkok, I had a new appreciation for the cleaner air and also the luxuries I have access to—western food, craft beer and 24-hour electricity (blackouts are an everyday occurrence in Kathmandu).

The point is, sometimes you need to experience the life of those less fortunate, to realize how good you have it. I highly recommend international travel to third world countries. It's not as expensive as you think (a week long trip can cost less than \$1,000).

But you can also do something that **doesn't cost you a dime**, like volunteering at a soup kitchen, homeless shelter or orphanage for a day. Most cities will have all three. And by doing this, you'll not only feel good because you're helping people, but you'll also gain a new appreciation for your life and the luxuries you have that many people could only dream of.



A photo from a rooftop on my trip to Kathmandu.

4. Turn off the news

It's good to be informed. It's good to know what's going on. But the news has become an incredibly toxic force in the world.

It focuses on negativity, fear and exaggerating reality.

Most people forget that big news agencies are publicly traded companies (or subsidiaries of publicly traded companies). In other words, they are accountable to investors and therefore must focus on constant revenue growth. How do they do that?

With manipulative, highly-emotional headlines and toxic content that gets you to click. Because clicks are dollars.

The news constantly makes it feel like the world is about to end. But I suggest you turn it off and look around you. For most dudes, the world outside is just fine.

If you fear you'll be uninformed without the news, let me assure you that you'll still hear the news anyway. I always hear about the important things going on in the world via my wife, friends and family.

The images, stories and videos you put in your mind, dramatically affect your life

When I was a kid, I heard a story about a man who was diagnosed with a terminal illness and only had a few months to live. This man decided to flood his mind with laughter to see if he could cure himself. So he began watching funny movies all the time, every day, to bring more laughter into his life. After a few months of this habit, he went to the doctor and discovered some shocking news. He was cured.

While the story above may sound crazy, I've seen a similar phenomenon in my own life. A decade ago when I stopped constantly reading stories about global warming and politics, something amazing happened. I suddenly felt at peace. Worry no longer flooded my mind, my thoughts slowed down and I felt a whole helluva lot less angry.

The point is, what you put into your mind is what you get out.

Constantly watching funny movies can help you laugh more. Constantly listening to angry music can make you an angry person. And constantly filling your mind with negative, toxic news stories can make you very, very unhappy and negative.

So if you're addicted to the news, I highly suggest you slow your intake or cut it out altogether. You may be surprised how quickly you start feeling happier.

And speaking of negative influences...

5. Hang around with happy people

What are your friends like? The people you hang around with most, are they happy? Or do they complain all the time, blame others for their unhappiness and feel as though they're lives are out of their control?

Just like the things you watch, read and listen to, the people you hang out with also have a tremendous influence on your state of happiness. You've probably heard the saying, "You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with." I couldn't agree more with this expression. I've seen it play out in my own life.

It is critical you choose your friends wisely. Your happiness depends on it.

So ask yourself this, "Are my friends happy?"

If you hang around happy people, you will naturally start to become happier yourself. They will have a positive influence on your life—affecting your habits, behavior and state of mind.

There's no need to aim for perfection here. Remember, being happy all the time is a lie.

So just do an assessment of the closest people in your life and ask yourself if they're generally happy. If not, you may want to consider spending less time with them, and start keeping your eyes open for a new group of happier buddies.

Sometimes all you need to do is look for what you want, and you'll find it. You may be surprised how quickly happier people show up in your life when you're open to it.



6. Evening or morning walks

Just like people and the news can have an influence on your happiness, so can spending time outside.

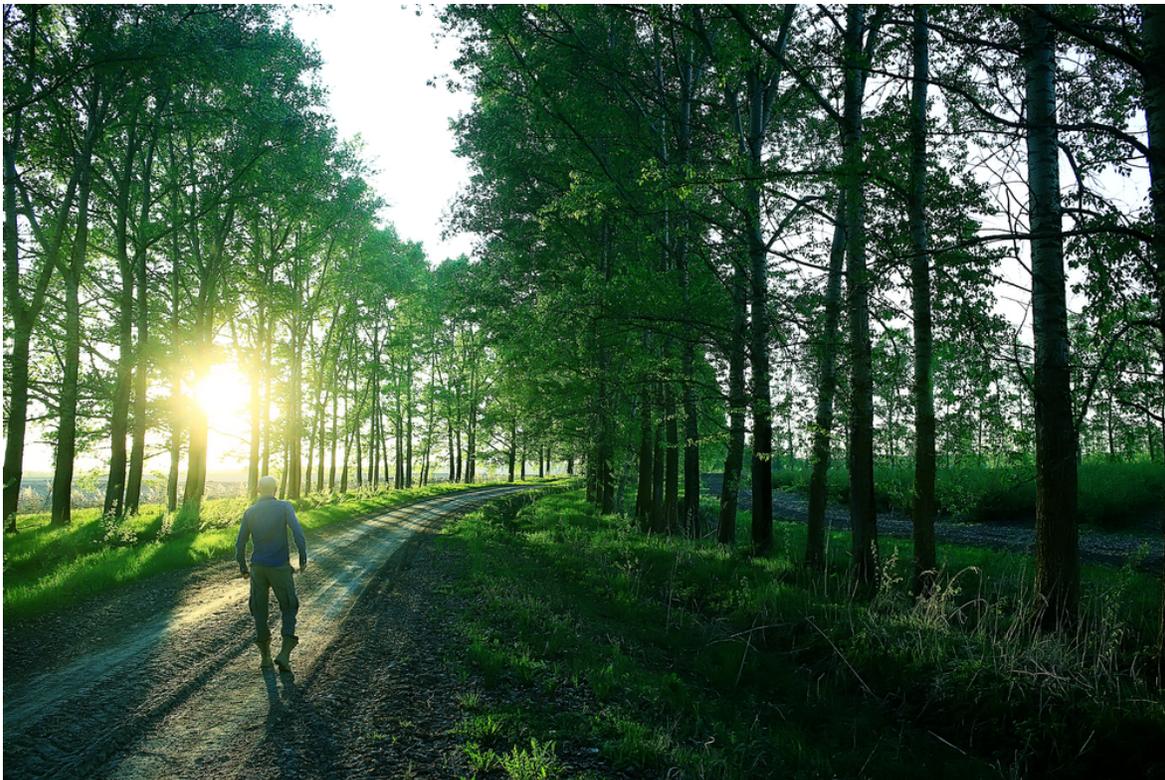
This is partially why I recommend a daily walk. Evening, morning or any relatively quiet time of day is ideal. Spend time in nature if you can.

If you live in a wooded neighborhood, or live nearby one, then you have a perfect opportunity to breathe some fresh air, be around trees and enjoy the peace nature allows. If you don't, consider driving to your nearest park for a walk. You could even do this on your commute home from work.

Before you start your walk, leave your phone and any kind of technology behind. Unplug.

I'm often asked what are some alternatives to meditation, and a daily walk in nature is one of my top suggestions. By doing one, you fill your mind with silence and the peace of the natural world.

Just like in meditation, this peace and quiet enables you to reflect. You'll naturally think clearer, destress and breathe a bit easier. Get into the habit of a daily walk, and you'll likely start smiling just a little bit more often.



7. Listen to the natural world around you

As just mentioned, the natural world has an amazing ability to calm your mind.

If you've had a stressful day, simply listen to the sounds of nature. The small act will help you unwind—having a soothing effect on your mind and body.

Little things, like listening to the wind, rain, crickets or birds can be incredibly relaxing.

And doing so will remind you that life isn't so complicated. The world in your mind isn't the only one that exists. There's a whole nother, simpler, natural place that surrounds you all the time. And if you listen for it in the sounds of nature, you will find it.

I find it hard not to smile and feel happy when I listen to nature.

It is one of the most peaceful things you can do. And if you practice this for as little as 10 minutes at a time, a few times a week, you'll start to be just a little bit happier.



8. Discover what makes you happy

Do you know what makes you happy?

I'm not talking about big things you can only do once in a while—like a vacation or Christmas time. Instead, I mean the little things that give you happiness every month, or even every week.

What are they for you?

In Ramit Sethi's excellent book *I Will Teach You to Be Rich* he explains the concept of big wins.

Let's face it, some things make us happier than others. And big wins are just that—the few things in your week or month that have the power to raise your happiness levels through the roof.

For me, my big wins are a cup of gourmet coffee, pizza and a delicious bottle of wine. These things make me very, very happy. So every week, I try to incorporate one or several of them into my life. I don't think about the cost. Instead, I splurge and "pamper myself," so to speak. Indulging in these little pleasures makes me incredibly happy.

Now when you have big wins, you also need to cut back on other things (at least if money is an issue for you).

That means you need to examine your finances and realize where you're spending most of your money. Cut back on everything else but your big wins.

Big wins need not be food or drink (like mine are), and they also don't need to cost money.

Your big wins could be going on a hike once a week. Or it could be hanging out with your best friend once a month. Another big win could just be taking afternoon naps every weekend.

The point is, discover what makes you happy.

Think about it, write it down and then start incorporating these things into your life every week.

9. Find your how

Have you ever heard the saying “Find your why”?

If you’ve read the popular Simon Sinek book that goes by the same title, or my book *An Ordinary Dude’s Guide to Habit*, you’re undoubtedly familiar with the concept. If you’re new to it, finding your *why* basically means to find your life’s purpose, or the reasons that drive you toward a goal and motivate you to push forward when the going gets tough.

Having a *why* is great, but I believe a *how* is even better—at least when it comes to happiness.

What is a *how*?

A *how* is the way you approach life. When you interact with the world, people or even walk down the street, how do you do it? In a gentle way, a leisurely way or a peaceful way? Your *how* is your way about you.

This is important when it comes to happiness because happiness isn’t about the end goal (your *why*), it’s about the journey (your *how*). If you destroy your health, working yourself to death so you can become a millionaire, is it worth it? Is it worth it to sacrifice a single moment of pleasure (the goal) for a much, much longer moment (the journey)?

The journey is your life. The journey is where happiness happens.

There’s nothing wrong with having goals, I have plenty myself, but remember that how you get to your goal is just as important, if not more important, than getting to the goal. As the author of *Anything You Want* Derek Sivers says, “When you sign up to run a marathon, you don’t hire a taxi to take you to the finish line.”

Life is about the journey because that’s where happiness exists.



10. Constantly improve yourself: Why being better brings more happiness

Most people are startled by today's incredibly fast pace of life. Things change all the time, and you may struggle to keep up. Constantly leveling up your skills can be exhausting.

But, I encourage you to look at the process of learning a wee bit differently.

Learning can be such a joy.

To explain why, I want you to think back to when you first learned how to ride a bike or swim.

It probably was an incredible challenge. You likely failed a lot, perhaps got a scraped knee or swallowed a bunch of water. But you kept with it, and you eventually caught on. Can you remember how great you felt when you finally got it? When you finally rode your bike all by yourself without falling, or swam that first lap without any help from your floaties, teacher or swallowing any water? I bet it was a pretty incredible feeling. I know my experiences were.

When you constantly get better, you feel good about yourself. It gives you confidence. You feel more empowered that you're in charge of your life. You are in control. This is a great feeling, and I'm sure it will bring you happiness if you always seek to learn and get better.

Now this doesn't mean that you try to learn at the unhealthy, crazy pace society suggests.

But certainly you can find a little bit of time in your life for learning each day. I know I do. Whether through reading a book, taking a course or even debating with someone who believes the opposite of my views.*

The point is, pace yourself with your learning. Don't learn because you want to keep up with society's demands. Learn because learning is fun. It feels good to wake up each morning knowing you're just a little bit better than you were yesterday.

When you can finally enjoy the process of learning, your happiness will grow.

**You can learn much from debating with others who disagree with you. Debates like this have a great power of poking holes in your arguments and beliefs, ultimately helping you refine your perspective and see the world just a little more clearly.*

11. Learn to accept and love life's imperfections

Perhaps the most important tip in this little handbook is this: realize that, by nature, life is imperfect and will always be imperfect.

That is okay. And, in fact, there's no need to fight it.

Our society today is hung up on the idea of perfection. You need to have flawless skin, make a certain amount of money, have kids and look like some dude in a magazine.

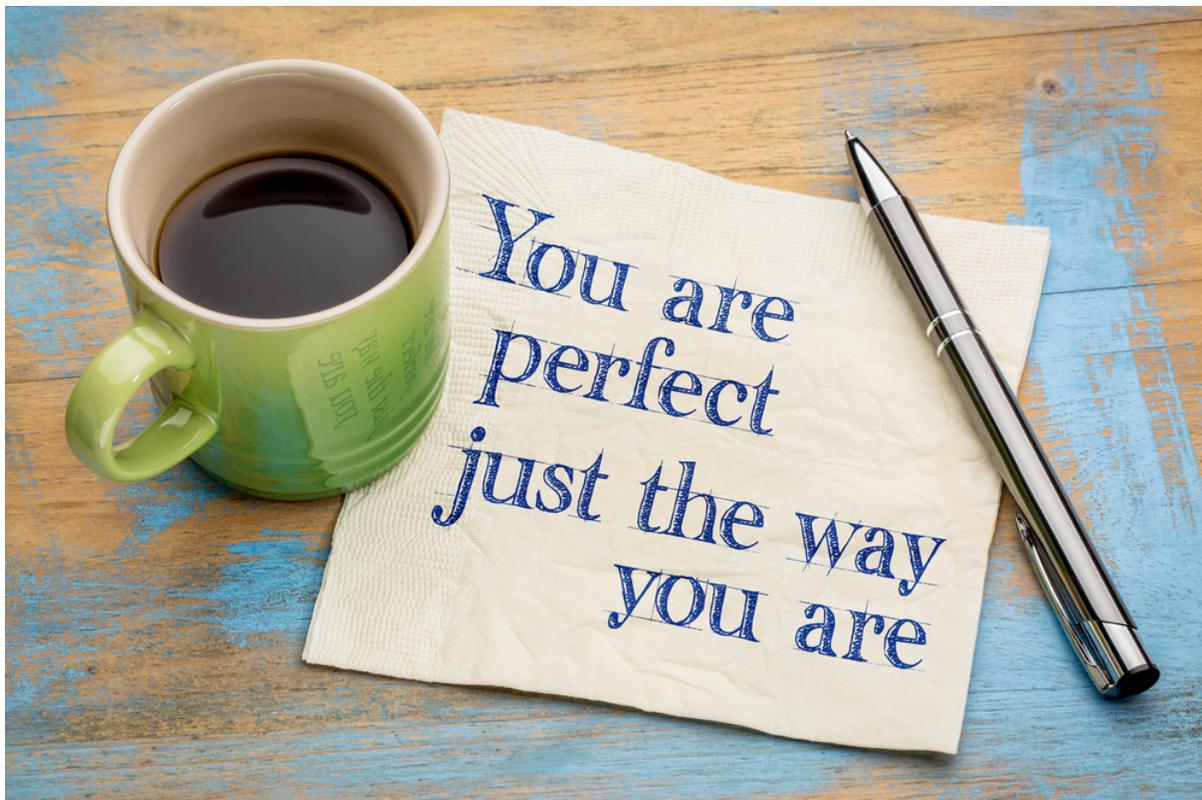
It's just bullshit.

Society's standards belong to society—not you. And believing everything must be perfect, is a recipe for unhappiness.

So let go of this idea of perfection. Stop trying to please everyone or live up to society's unattainable standards. Just say no. **In your own imperfections, you are already perfect.**

That doesn't mean you can't get better.

As mentioned last section, focus on improvement, but realize you will never get to this imaginary place of perfection. The only place life exists is right here and right now. Don't forget to enjoy it.



Thank you for reading this little handbook

I hope by doing so, it made you just a little bit happier.

I will say, writing this for you made me very happy. It reminded me of how fortunate I am, the simple pleasures in my life and that helping others find their happiness makes me very happy.

I hope this guide did that job.

Feel free to drop me a line at john@ordinarydudemeditation.com and say hello. And be sure to keep an eye on the blog, as there will be plenty of other happiness, mindfulness and meditation tips to help you live a calmer, more peaceful and enjoyable life.

Happy meditating,
John

