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20 Simple Rules For Happiness And Success

Happiness leads to success, not the other way around. Make sure you love your job! Daily life can be made happier. It is a matter of choice. It is our attitude that makes us feel happy or unhappy. It is true, we meet all kinds of situations during the day.

“Try to make at least one person happy every day, and then in ten years you may have made three thousand, six hundred and fifty persons happy, or brightened a small town by your contribution to the fund of general enjoyment.” - Sydney Smith

“Do what you love”. Passion is very important. It is important to enjoy what you do. It will be great if we always get to do what we love. There is only one small problem with that. Most of us don't know what is it that we love.

Here are 20 simple rule for happiness and success.

1.) Stop Worrying About the Future

The older people get, the less worried they become. As we gain experience in the real world, we realize most of our previous fears were unfounded.

Actually, only eight percent of the things we fret and age about come to fruition! 40 percent of the things we worry about never end up occurring; and 30 percent of the things we worry about are in the past and can't be changed. We are our own worst enemies.

It takes work, but you can retrain your brain to have peace and trust—rather than worry—about your future. You can have an absolute assurance that everything will work out for your good.

2.) Take an Ice-Cold Shower Every Time You Have a Negative Thought

So how do you train your brain toward the positive?

You protect the garden of your mind like a gorilla protects its banana. Yes, I really said that.

But seriously, your mind is a garden within a gate. You are the gatekeeper to the types of information that come into your mind. And the information, environments, and experiences you allow into your life nestle themselves deep into the soil of your soul, informing who you become.

You can nourish these thoughts and allow them to bear fruit—whether that be weeds, thorns, or something actually nutritious—or you can remove them entirely.

There's a folktale of a group of monks in India who, whenever they had a negative thought, would make a treacherous hike to large waterfall. They would stand underneath the pounding of the freezing water until the negative thought was washed away from them.

I've taken this clever story and adapted it to myself. But instead of taking a long sojourn to a distant waterfall, I walk 15 feet to my bathroom and take an ice-cold shower every time I have an unfruitful thought. It works wonders. Feels good too!

3.) Spend Your First 10 Minutes of the Day in Prayer/Meditation, Gratitude, Laughter & This Question

The first 10 minutes of your day are, without question, the most important. They set the tone for how the rest of your day will be. They reflect how you will show up to the world.

Will you be proactive or reactive this day?

Will you be in a hurry or purposeful?

Will you be guided and inspired, or tossed to and fro with every email, phone call, interruption, and distraction that comes your way?

Will you be in control of your time or will time be in control of you?

Will you be a leader or a victim?

Will you take risks or play safe?

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Will you attract abundance or scarcity?
Will you be the recipient of luck and miracles or disappointment and disaster?
Will you move toward or away from your hopes and dreams?

Robin Sharma, author of *The Leader without a Title*, spends the first 10 minutes of his day praying, laughing, and asking himself the question:

“If this was the last day of my life, how would I spend it?”

This question helps Sharma ensure his day is spent precisely how he feels it should be.

4.) “Wake Up With the Sun”

“Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.” —Benjamin Franklin

There are endless scientifically-backed benefits of waking up early, including:

Being a better student

Being more proactive

Being better at anticipating challenges and minimizing them effectively

Being better at planning and achieving your goals

Being more likely to exercise, which releases dopamine and reduces cortisol levels

Better sleep

Higher levels of optimism

Easier commutes

More family time because you’ve gotten your work done earlier and more focused than most
Extensive research highlights the fact that our willpower is like a muscle that gets fatigued with use. First thing in the morning is when our willpower is rested and strongest. Consequently, the morning is the best time to focus on your goals and dreams, which if postponed until the end of the day will probably never get done. The early hours of the morning are when the world’s most successful people turned their dreams into reality. You will never find better time for quiet, focus, and motivation.

5.) Become Unstoppable at Setting & Achieving Your Goals (and “Experiments”)

You can achieve any goals you want, no matter how big. Seriously.

There is no right or wrong way to approach goal-setting, but science confirms that certain approaches are better than others.

Here’s what you need to know:

The more clearly defined your goal, the more likely you will achieve it

Write it down in detail

Write it again

Write it 15 times every day and in present tense

Make your goal public to add some “positive pressure”

Give your goal a time-line. According to Parkinson’s Law, people fill the time allotted to them. So if you have a lot of time, you’ll waste it. If you have a short amount of time, you’ll get to it.

According to psychological research, it takes 66 days to form a habit. So, do your goal every day for two months, then it will take care of itself and stop requiring so much willpower.

Although common wisdom would suggest having long-term goals, projecting your future more than a few years is little more than guesswork. Actually, to live at the razor’s edge of his potential, Tim Ferriss doesn’t have long-term goals. Instead, he does 3–6 month “experiments,” which he puts all of his energy into. He has no clue what doors may open as a result of these experiments, so why make long-term plans? He’d rather respond to the brilliant and best opportunities that arise, taking him in now unforeseen directions.

I’ve recently adopted Ferriss’ concept of doing short-term experiments. This has changed my approach to my work. For example, a few months ago I stumbled upon a personal development article that had been shared over 1,000,000 times on social media. I decided to perform an experiment to attempt creating an article that

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would also get 1,000,000 shares. The result was this article.

Although the article wasn't shared a million times, the results were profound and unexpected. An editor at TIME asked if they could syndicate the article. Additionally, the article brought several thousand new readers (including some of my heroes) and subscribers to my blog. Lastly, it brought on several new coaching clients.

That was just one short experiment that took a week to perform. Experiments are a fun way to pursue goals because they allow you to get innovative and bold. Because experiments are short-term—and thus relatively low risk—they should be “moon shots.”

Why play small?

So take your goal and 10X it. Make it audacious and even absurd. If it doesn't excite and even scare you, you're playing too small. If you 10X your vision, don't neglect 10X'ing your effort—which means overestimating what would be required to achieve your goal.

What's the worst that could happen? You waste a few months and learn a lot while doing it?

6.) Start Before You're Ready

In a recent interview with Success Magazine, Marie Forleo told Darren Hardy that one of the keys to becoming successful is starting before you feel ready. Get experience. Make mistakes. Stop thinking about it. Throwing yourself into the fire is the fastest way to learn and adapt to something. You're immediately exposed and naked. You're forced to quickly learn on your feet.

But most people hide until they feel ready—which is far after they should've started. “Perfectionism” leads to procrastination and often never doing or trying. Paralysis by analysis.

No more analyzing. Learn as you go. Then you're learning will have concrete context rather than abstract guessing. You'll never feel ready. You get ready through engaging in an activity—by getting your hands dirty—not by thinking about it.

“Every day you say ‘No’ to your dreams, you might be pushing back your dreams a whole 6 months; a whole year. That one single day. That one day you didn't get up could have pushed your stuff back, I don't know how long.”—Eric Thomas in Unbroken

7.) Spend 5–10 Minutes Each Day Visualizing Where You Want to Be

Michael Phelps visualized himself winning races every night before going to bed. Jim Carrey visualized himself becoming a successful actor. Amazingly, research has found that visualization is nearly as effective as actually practicing the behaviors we seek to perform.

ers, why not co-create your future together? To me, it's the best way to remain aligned and not move in opposite directions. Mental creation always precedes physical creation.

When visualizing your future, don't visualizing what you think may happen. Rather, visualize what you want to happen. As Abraham Lincoln masterfully stated, “The best way to predict your future is to create it.”

8.) Listen to Audiobooks on 2X Speed While Taking Notes in a Journal for 30–60 Minutes Per Day

Generally, I'd recommend reading for 30–60 minutes per day. But lately, I've been listening to audiobooks or podcasts on my iPod at 2X speed while taking notes in journal. When you first try listening at 2X, it's a little weird. But you get used to it. Then, listening at normal speed feels like slow-motion.

Neurologically, when you listen to something, a different part of your brain is engaged than when you write it down. Memory recorded by listening does not discriminate important from non-important information. However, writing creates spatial regions between important and non-important pieces of information—allowing your memory to target and ingrain the important stuff you want to remember.

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Furthermore, research has shown the simple act of writing something down increases brain development and memory.

It's becoming regular for me to have 15–30 pages of notes in my journal every morning during my 60 minutes of audiobook listening.

9.) Keep A Journal of Your Dreams & Desires

If you aren't keeping a daily journal, you're missing out. There are endless benefits of journal writing. And it doesn't need to be a long ordeal. Actually, it's recommended this activity take less than 5–10 minutes. And there's no right or wrong way to journal.

You can use it to record your history, to write down your daily goals and affirmations, to record insights and inspiration, or to clear your emotions.

10.) Spend 5 Minutes Each Day Purely Focused on Gratitude

Gratitude is having an abundance mindset. When you think abundantly, the world is your oyster. There is limitless opportunity and possibility for you.

People are magnets. When you're grateful for what you have, you will attract more of the positive and good. Gratitude is contagious.

Psychological research has found that people who practice gratitude consistently report a host of benefits:

- Stronger immune systems
- Less bothered by aches and pains
- Lower blood pressure
- Exercise more and take better care of their health
- Sleep longer and feel more refreshed upon waking
- Higher levels of positive emotions
- More alert, alive, and awake
- More joy and pleasure
- More optimism and happiness
- More helpful, generous, and compassionate
- More forgiving
- More outgoing
- Feel less lonely and isolate

Gratitude may be the most important key to success. It has been called the mother of all virtues.

11.) Work Toward Your Goals at least 3–4 Hours Per Day

“The only thing that I see that is distinctly different about me is I'm not afraid to die on a treadmill. I will not be outworked, period. You might have more talent than me, you might be smarter than me, you might be sexier than me, you might be all of those things—you got it on me in nine categories. But if we get on the treadmill together, there's two things: You're getting off first, or I'm going to die. It's really that simple.”—Will Smith

Genius equals redundancy and repetition. It's not sexy, but monotonous and difficult. If you want fun and sexy, don't try to become world-class at something.

Success is a numbers game. Time and again, the world's elite performers are rarely the ones with innate ability. Rather, they are the ones who spend the most time on their craft. The famous psychologist, K. Anders Ericsson, coined the term deliberate practice. His research was popularized by Malcolm Gladwell and has become known as the 10,000 hour rule.

Essential to sticking things out this long is having grit. Scientifically, grit defines the degree, duration, and quality of effort you invest in your goals. According to a host of independent studies, people who are gritty exhibit the following behaviors:

- They take on difficult and challenging goals
- They consistently achieve their goals

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- They have high ranking in their employment
- They seek new, fresh, alternative ideas and perspectives
- They are quick to re-assess, reroute or adjust their approach when it's not working
- They put intense levels of effort into their goals for long periods of time
- They have high levels of engagement and focus in their activity, and are slow to be distracted
- They have high levels of tenacity, relentlessness, and fortitude
- They move up in their socioeconomic status
- They have higher quality of life and overall health

Although the science of grit is still in its infancy, there have been some findings on how to increase your grit, including:

- Being optimistic helps you be grittier
- Believing intelligence and skill are learnable—rather than innate—helps you be grittier
- There's still lots to learn
- My take—grit comes from consistently showing up even when you don't feel like it.

12.) Fast At Least Once Per Month (preferably more)

One-day (24-hour) food fasts are a popular way to maintain health and vigor. Fasting leverages the self-healing properties of the human body. Radical health improvements occur when the digestive system is given rest and the organs get ample time to repair and heal themselves.

A regular practice of fasting can:

- Improve digestive efficiency
- Increase mental clarity
- Increase physical and mental vigor
- Remove toxins
- Improve vision
- Give a general feeling of well being

Like all the other habits, fasting gets easier with practice. I've been fasting for years and it's one of the best things I have done for my health, intellect, and career. Fasting is also one of the most recognized techniques in religious and spiritual practices. I also use fasting to get spiritual clarity and refinement. Honestly, I could go on for hours about this one. Give it a try. You'll never be the same.

13.) Eat Smaller Portion Sizes

If you want to get more done in life, eat less food.

When you eat large portions of food, your body creates an overabundance of insulin which lowers your blood sugar. When this happens, you feel hungry—generally craving sugar—even when you're really not hungry. This is how people become overweight. More importantly, this is how people lose control over their energy levels which negatively impacts every area of life (e.g., sleep, work, & relationships).

Human beings are holistic. When your body is over-full, particularly on processed foods, your energy levels are low and your mind becomes dull. Conversely, research at Yale has found that being on an empty stomach helps you think and focus better.

If you want to feel better and perform better work, eat smaller portions. If you want to take it to a higher level, chew gum. Research has found that chewing gum can increase your concentration and mental accuracy. It also stops you from eating out of boredom—which is the primary reason for most eating. If you want to keep it even simpler, just drink more water.

14.) Eat Only Good Foods

The food we eat reflects our self-identity. Human beings are holistic. As James Allen wrote in *As a Man Thinketh*, "When a man makes his thoughts pure, he no longer desires impure food."

Success is the product of having high levels of energy and vitality. Thus, in order to succeed on the level you deserve, you need to be healthy. It turns out, health—like happiness—comes first, and then good things (like success) follow.

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15.) Spend 30–60 Minutes Per Week Mentally-Mapping Your Week (this will save you hours)

“If the ladder is not leaning against the right wall, every step we take just gets us to the wrong place faster.”—Stephen R. Covey

A short planning session once per week can save you several, perhaps even dozens, of hours each week. In order to maximize this planning session:

Be in a quiet place where you can focus and be open to mental-breakthroughs.
Spend a few minutes praying or meditating before you start to elevate your mindset and energy level.
Examine your overarching vision to provide context and motivation for this week’s goals.
Keep your week’s priorities/goals few. In other words, what one thing if accomplished would render all of your other goals easier or irrelevant? Focus on high impact—on effectiveness rather than busyness.
Determine what needs to be done to accomplish this week’s goals.
Who do you need to reach out to? (what relationships would rapidly move this process forward?)
What’s a new approach or experiment you haven’t tried yet?
What do you need to learn this week? (our learning should be relevant and applied or it is meaningless)
Visualize yourself crushing it. Visualize amazing things happening for you.
If you are open to prayer, pray for miracles to happen this week.
Get your schedule in place, so you’re not scrambling each day.
Make sure you put the “important” activities (e.g., learning, exercise, time with family) before the “urgent” activities (e.g., email, meetings, other daily obligations)

“If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail!”—Benjamin Franklin

16.) Restructure Your Time & Priorities to Protect the “Important” from the “Urgent”

Most people prioritize urgent activities—like answering emails, working toward deadlines, going to meetings, and putting out the various fires constant to life. The problem with this approach to life is that it speeds time up (aka: busy-mode!). The emails won’t stop coming to your inbox. The bills will always need to be paid. It’s very easy to get busy and wrapped up in the urgency of life.

But when you live this way, it’s easy to forego the important but non-urgent stuff—like your health, working toward your dreams, deepening important relationships, having fun experiences, and traveling. Busyness, at its core, is an escape mechanism for a frightened person whose hiding from what truly needs to be done.

“What is the ultimate quantification of success? For me, it’s not how much time you spend doing what you love. It’s how little time you spend doing what you hate.”—Casey Neistat

Highly effective people position their lives to almost exclusively focus on important stuff. They’ve automated or outsourced most of the urgent and busy stuff. Their time is spent on activities that most fully reflect their innate gifts, talents, and ideals.

In my coaching work, this is one of the biggest challenges I see in people’s lives. For example, one of my clients has the dream of writing Hollywood scripts that are made into movies. But he never makes time to write. Months and even years can quickly go by in the busyness of life without him doing any writing at all.

In addition, his health has been steadily declining for years. But he hasn’t prioritized his health. I recommended he spend the first 2–4 waking hours of his day focused exclusively on his health and script writing.

His phone must be on airplane mode, he can’t check his email, make phone calls, pay bills, or do any other “urgent” stuff until after he has spent sufficient time on those things which matter most to him. And this is how most people begin the transition from a life structured around the urgent to a life structured around the important. They wake up a few hours early to go to the gym, to create their life vision, and to take steps toward their dreams.

This is self-respect. This is building your life around your highest ideals rather than the other way around. A key strategy for making this happen is, instead of procrastinating the important stuff, begin procrastinating the urgent. Put the urgent stuff off until the very last minute. Spend as much possible time and energy as you

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can on the important. Put as little time and energy as you can into the urgent. Interestingly, most of the urgent stuff will “take care of itself,” or stop mattering all together.

It's a beautiful way to live. It's the only way to live life on your own terms.

17.) Stop Living Like You're Going to Live Forever: Develop the “Deathbed Mentality”

At the heart of living life in an “urgent” manner is the notion that today doesn't matter, and that there will always be tomorrow.

Tomorrow won't always be around. And waiting for tomorrow only guarantees wasted yesterdays.

If you believe most of your life should be spent “grinding it out,” that's your reality. But it's not the reality of highly effective people. Reality is perceived. We get to frame and reframe it. You are responsible for how you see and live in the world.

But it is completely possible to live each moment of each day in a way that resonates with your highest ideals. And yes, sometimes that means putting out fires. Sometimes that means bad things happen that are out of your control (like getting rear-ended).

But you control what you can control. And it turns out, you can control a lot.

18.) Keep Commitments To Yourself: Do What You Said You'd Do When You Said You'd Do it

People with self-respect keep commitments to themselves. As Harvard business professor, Clayton Christensen, has said, “100 percent commitment is easier than 98 percent commitment.”

If you plan on waking up at 6 a.m. to go to the gym, don't press snooze. If you plan to spend 30 minutes on Sunday night planning your week, don't skip it for something else.

In order to keep your commitments, you must have the courage and conviction to say no.

My favorite example of this is Stephen Covey. He had planned a daddy-daughter date with his 12 year old daughter, Cynthia. She would watch the last hour of a presentation he was giving from the back row. At the end of the presentation, he would rush to the back without talking to anyone and they'd be on their way. Their elaborate night together included plans of catching a trolley to Chinatown, eating their favorite food (Chinese), shopping for souvenirs, seeing the sights and catching a movie. After that they'd grab a taxi back to the hotel where they'd jump in the pool for a swim.

They had discussed this all several times. The anticipation was part of the pleasure of it all.

Everything was going on plan, until Stephen ran into an old college friend and business associate while leaving the convention center. They hadn't seen each other in years. They embraced and his friend said, “I'm so glad you are doing some work with our company now. We want to invite you, and of course Cynthia, to get a spectacular seafood dinner down at the Wharf!”

Stephen replied, “Bob it's so great to see you. Dinner at the wharf sounds great!”

But Stephen continued, “But not tonight. Cynthia and I have a special date planned don't we?” He winked at Cynthia, grabbing her hand and ran out the door to continue on an unforgettable night in San Francisco with his daughter, just as he'd promised.

19.) “Happiness is not something outside of me, but flows outward from me.”

Most people are chasing happiness. They believe it's on the other side of success. That you must first do or have something before you can be happy.

Shawn Achor, a prominent scholar on the science of happiness, explains that most parents, teachers, leaders, and people in general believe the following about happiness:

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“If I work harder, I’ll be more successful. If I’m more successful, then I’ll be happy.”
The problem with this approach, Achor says, is that it’s “scientifically broken and backwards.”

Every time your brain has a success, you change the goalpost of success. For example, you get good grades, now you need better grades—you made a good income, now you need a bigger income. Every time you hit a target, the target moves. Thus, “if happiness is on the opposite side of success, your brain never gets there. We’ve pushed happiness over the cognitive horizon as a society,” says Achor.

But our brain works in the opposite order. If you can be positive and happy in the present, you’ll actually show up better in life. Thus, happiness is what actually leads to success. No the other way around.

Stop trying to pursue happiness. You’ll never get there.

Instead, deploy strategies that will increase your brain positivity now. When your brain is positively positioned, you have an increased flow of dopamine which makes you happier and increases all the learning centers of your brain (e.g., creativity, problem solving, etc.).

Scientifically, the following behaviors have been found to create lasting positive change to your brain functioning:

Write down three new things you’re grateful for each day. This will change your selective attention toward the positive in the world rather than the negative.

Journaling about one positive experience you’ve had that day allows you to relive it.

Exercising everyday teaches you that your behaviors matter—and that they dramatically impact you and those around you.

Meditating each day helps you overcome the cultural ADHD of constant distraction. It helps you focus on what’s really important.

Random or conscious acts of kindness every single day. This could be as simple as sending a kind email to someone, smiling, or giving a compliment.

By spending just two minutes per day on each these activities for 21 days, you can rewire your brain toward the positive. As a result, you will live from a more optimistic and creative approach.

20.) “I fully realize that my future is bright and powerful.”

Free-will is a tricky subject. Both spiritually and psychologically, the whole notion is complex and conflicting. Do we really have free-will?

To what extent do we determine the outcomes of our lives?

The majority of psychological theories would suggest that human beings do not have free-will; but rather, that we are nothing more than the clashing of genes and environment—no room for consciously deciding either of those things.

In similar fashion, many religious philosophies promote a God hardly worthy of worship, who despite having the power to save all predetermines a select few—leaving the rest to spend eternity tortured without explanation or reason why.

Clearly, internal wisdom discerns both of these ideas as wrong, if not radically incomplete.

But is our ability to act absolutely independent? Surely not. If I were to jump off my back porch in attempts of flying, I would most certainly be acted on by gravitational forces. Indeed, there are constraints on our freedom to act.

However, the flexibility of those constraints is proving to be quite malleable. We can consciously change our environments. And science is even coming to grips with the fact that we can manipulate our genetic expression. Our free-will is contextual, yet we have the power to manipulate the context (including our beliefs about that context); and thus, we have limitless options regarding the course our lives take.

In the movie, *The Adjustment Bureau*, the main character David Norris (played by Matt Damon) learns about a

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hidden society of “angels” (known as “the Adjustment Bureau”) who ensure every person’s life goes according to “the plan.”

According to David’s plan, he isn’t supposed to be with Elise, a woman he feels an innate and deep connection toward. The members of the Adjustment Bureau do all they can to ensure David and Elise’s paths don’t cross. But with a touch of luck, and dogged determination, David decides he’s going to have Elise regardless of what “the plan” dictates.

After risking everything to have the person he loves, David inspires a member of the Adjustment Bureau, who then takes David’s case to the Chairman—the creator of each person’s plan. David’s determination and love inspire even the Chairman, who then makes David and Elise’s “plan” blank.

The film closes with the following narration by one of the members of the Adjustment Bureau:
“Most people live life on the path we set for them, too afraid to explore any other. But once in a while, people like you come along who knock down all the obstacles we put in your way. People who realize free-will is a gift you’ll never know how to use until you fight for it. I think that’s the Chairman’s real plan: that one day, we won’t write the plan, you will.”

Brilliant things begin to happen when you take extreme ownership over your life. When you’re in complete alignment with yourself, you find that God has given you the power to choose for yourself. And if you so choose, that God will help you along your way.

Matured at this stage, you don’t need to wonder or worry about how your future will turn out. Instead, you are completely confident about certain realizations. These realizations which you decide, although not yet manifested, have already happened. Thus, they are as real as anything else. Your life then becomes the natural unfolding of something you’ve consciously created in your mind.