

The Being Happy Podcast

001 Happiness is a Decision

Andrew tells the story behind his international bestseller “Being Happy!” and shares the one most important step to happiness.

I’m Andrew Matthews. This is podcast number one.

Here’s my goal for this series of podcasts – to share some happiness tips – and success tips - that will have you feeling happier - and perhaps succeeding in ways - that you never thought possible. I’ll be sharing stories and strategies ... I’ll be sharing some of my own mistakes ...

When I was 25 I didn’t have a very good attitude. I was a bit of a complainer.

But I had this neighbour, Caroline, and she always seemed to be happy. And here’s the thing – her life wasn’t perfect. Her house was falling apart. Her car was falling apart. Her second marriage had just fallen apart. And her mother, whom I know that she adored so much, had recently passed away due to cancer.

But Caroline always seemed to have this happy attitude. She always just seemed to look on the bright side. If it was raining, she was happy. If she was stuck in traffic, she was happy.

And she seemed to like almost everybody.

So I am in the supermarket one day and she comes bouncing up to me with this big smile on her face and she says, “Guess what happened to me today!”

And I said, “I don’t know. What, did you get a new job?”

She said, “No.”

“Did you fall in love?”

She said, “No.”

She said, “My car caught fire!”

I said, “What?”

She said, “My car caught fire! I’m driving down the road – and it just burst into flames!”

Now, who doesn’t get upset about their car catching fire? I couldn’t resist any longer. I said “Caroline, what is it with you? Why are you always so damned happy?”

And she said, “Because I got sick of being miserable!”

Now at the time I thought, she’s joking. I mean, you don’t just choose happiness – or do you?

Caroline's got me thinking. Could you choose happiness? I couldn't get her comment out of my head.

You see, I used to think that happiness was like influenza – and maybe you get it, maybe you don't.

So I started reading books about happiness and attitude – I read those classic books like **Think and Grow Rich** and **Psycho-Cybernetics**, **The Autobiography of a Yogi** and **The Power of Positive Thinking** – I read books about the subconscious, books about the brain. I read over two hundred and I made notes. I was on a mission.

I began to study successful people and gradually I pieced together some happiness strategies that worked for me. And six years later my first book **BEING HAPPY!** was published.

And **BEING HAPPY!** was the book that I wished I had had – in simple language – illustrated it with my cartoons. All books should have cartoons!

So, back to Caroline. Did she just get tired of being miserable and just hop on the highway to happiness? There is no highway to happiness but there is a road to happiness. And in this Being Happy! series of podcasts, we are going to explore that road. It's bumpy, sometimes you might even break down – and that's okay, so long as a part of you says, "I know that I am on the right road and I will keep doing what works."

Is happiness a decision? Well, we know that lots of bad stuff happens in life:

You get sick, you can't pay your bills, you get fired, people let you down – you do the work and your colleagues get the credit – you lose people you love.

So how would you choose happiness?

Here's what happens for many people.

And here's how it might happen for you: you reach a point in your life where you say, "From today I am going to be happier than I have ever been."

And that decision to be happier leads to a series of choices:

- you get up every day with the intention to be happy
- you complain less
- you look for good things in your job and in your family
- you make a point to connect with other people
- you make time for peace of mind or meditation or you spend time in nature
- maybe you eat better, maybe you exercise more
- and every day you look for one good thing that happened.

That one decision to be happier leads you to a series of positive decisions.

Life gets better. And now you're on an upward spiral.

And here's the secret that we will examine in later Podcasts – when you feel better about yourself, better things happen for you. You gather momentum.

We have far more control over our happiness than we may have believed.

You say – “Well, what do you mean by happiness?”

You don't have to be leaping about with a grin on your face.

It's not that you are never disappointed, or angry, or frustrated, or sad.

Here's how I define it: we quit beating ourselves up for not being perfect, we feel that our life has meaning, we are less fearful and we are more optimistic and we feel glad to wake up every morning.

(music)

I grew up thinking that as soon as my life got easier, I l'd be happy.

Then aged 25 I discovered something shocking ... I discovered that the happiest people I knew had much bigger problems than me.

And I suspect that you have noticed the same thing – that the most joyful people that you have come across, they have usually suffered disappointment or tragedy — they've come through cancer, they've gone broke, they've lost loved ones ...

Notice joyful people. They aren't joyful because they've had an easier life than the next guy.

They're joyful because at some point they decided that HAPPY is the only way to live.

That was Felicity Johnson's experience.

I received a message the other day on Facebook. If you haven't seen my Facebook page it's **Andrew Matthews – Author**. Join me.

I post happiness tips and cartoons. And lots of readers send me messages which I really appreciate: So **Andrew Matthews – Author**.

So Felicity from Queensland, Australia, wrote to me – and she said:

Hi Andrew, I just wanted to say a massive thank you ...

When I was 18, I had been severely depressed for many years, I had made attempts to end my life, I was blocking my family out, I was on medication.

I bought your book BEING HAPPY!

I still remember picking it up one Christmas Day, in my dark room, curtains drawn, and my family out in the lounge room celebrating.

I began to read your book and so many things began to "click" for me. The biggest being that being happy is a choice.

I put the book down and said to myself "I'm so sick of feeling like this, miserable, missing out on life.

I got up, I opened my curtains, went out and sat with my family and laughed the hardest that I have laughed in years.

And from that day on I woke up every day and made a conscious effort with my thoughts and my feelings.

I was choosing to be happy. And I had my good and bad days but slowly each day got easier and easier.

Here I am now 30 and very happy - and healthy mentally ...

Your book changed my path.

Here's how you might draw encouragement from Felicity's experience:

- she was in a very dark place
- she made a decision to see life differently
- she had good days and bad days but it got easier and easier.

And that's how life works.

And you might say, Andrew, that's fine for Felicity – but you don't know my problems.

And you don't know my boss.

And you haven't met my husband.

How do you choose happiness if you have got really serious problems?

Fair question!

In the last year or so I have shared the stage at three conferences with a young man called Nick Vujicic. You may have heard of Nick – or seen him on TV.

Nick was born no arms and no legs.

Nick spent years wondering why he was ever born.

He wondered, "Who would employ me? How will I ever find a wife?"

Life is tough enough when you have got a broken leg, or a missing arm or a missing leg. But what if you have no arms and no legs?

Nick shared in one of his books, ***“For the longest, loneliest time, I wondered if there was anyone on earth like me, and whether there was any purpose to my life except pain and humiliation.”***

He was relentlessly bullied at school, he contemplated suicide.

Then, when Nick was still in his teens, he began to change his focus.

He began to concentrate NOT on what he COULDN'T do, but on what he COULD do.

And what he could do was tell his own story, and inspire people. Nick has now written six international bestselling books. He is now one of the world's most popular speakers.

Nick, the man with no arms and no legs, now describes his life as “ridiculously good and ridiculously happy.”

He still has the same body – but what's different are the thoughts in his head.

(music)

People ask me how I got into writing books about happiness – and “was I hopelessly depressed?”

I didn't have the courageous struggle of Felicity - or a heroic journey like Nick.

I just felt that I had no excuse for being often grumpy. I was blessed with loving parents, I was healthy, I had opportunities – I wasn't very grateful for what I had and I wasn't very good company a lot of the time.

I had this sense that “one day I'll be happier, one day I'll really do something.”

And then there was a day in my life when I decided, “ENOUGH!”

I decided, “From today I am going to be happier, I am going to grab opportunities, I am going to accept invitations, I am going to get off my backside and go places, I am going to take some risks, I am going to put everything I have into everything I do.”

And I remember the date: it was October 19, 1983.

And that was the day that my life began to change.

Was it a miraculous transformation? No it wasn't. But I felt like I was on the right road. And like Felicity, I had my good days and I had my bad days. But day by day, things got better and things got easier.

And here's what I have come to understand – that when you make a decision deep within your soul that this is what I am GOING TO DO – NOT, this is what I will TRY TO DO – but this is what I WILL DO, it's like the Universe moves to help you. Opportunities arise. Coincidences happen.

W H Murray was a successful 20th century mountain climber. And mountain climbers know that very often you have to get serious if you want to come home ... alive.

I want to share with you a quote from his book, **The Scottish Himalayan Expedition**.

Now, I know that for many of you who are listening to this show –you are in Mexico or Vietnam or Hungary or Iran – English is your second language. So I if I may I will simplify the quote just a little here - and I will include the exact quote on my website, www.andrewmatthews.com

Here we are talking about the power of decision. This is the essence of what Murray says:

***“Until you are committed, there is always the chance to quit.
But there is one great truth that all successful people understand.***

***That the moment you commit yourself totally, circumstances move too.
All kinds of things occur to help you just because you made a decision.***

***A whole stream of events unfold from your decision.
All kinds of incidents and meetings and assistance come your way,
that you never would have dreamed would come your way.”****

What Murray is saying here is that when you are absolutely committed to changing your life or reaching a goal, the means to help you get there present themselves - people show up, friends lend you books, advertisements “jump out and hit you”, you find yourself in the right place at the right time ...

When you decide that I am going to be happy no matter what, and every day I will recommit myself, the Universe moves too.

Life changes when we change.

In future podcasts we'll look more pieces of the happiness puzzle:

- relationships
- how to be more confident
- the importance of goal setting
- bouncing back from failure and disappointment
- the importance of gratitude
- finding peace of mind.

In the next podcast, Podcast # 2, I'll talk about enjoying your work and finding meaning in everyday life – and what to do if you are feeling stuck.

This Podcast is about spreading happiness. And I need your help. If you think that today's message might help someone you know, please share it with

them.

If you think this message might help a lot of people, please share it on your blog or on Facebook or on twitter.

On my website www.andrewmatthews.com/podcasts under Podcast # 001 you'll find the transcript for today's episode, you'll find a link to my facebook page and you'll find links to my books.

And if you liked today's podcast, please rate it in iTunes.

You rating helps to keep us visible in iTunes and Google.

Until next time, I wish you success and happiness.

music

W. H. Murray's Complete Quote:

“Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth that ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now.”