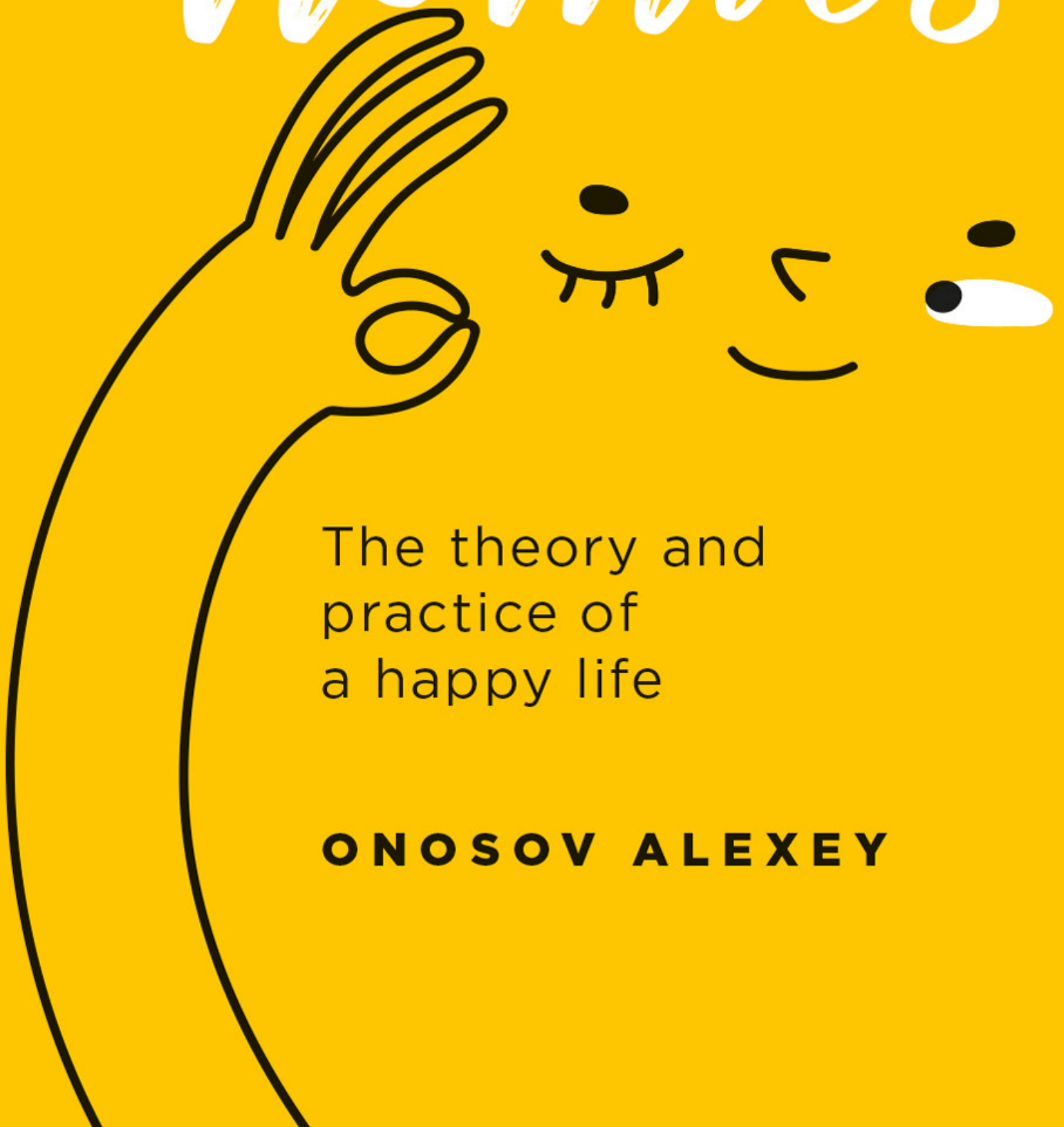


Happy nonnies



The theory and
practice of
a happy life

ONOSOV ALEXEY

Alexey Onosov

**Happynomics: The theory
and practice of a happy life**

«Альпина Диджитал»

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Onosov A.

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Are you striving for greater happiness and life satisfaction, but you don't know where to start? Alexey Onosov, having conducted more than 500 interviews with successful entrepreneurs and studied mountains of literature, took out all the most valuable things from them and describes in detail all the steps to achieve sustainable happiness. His book is "Happynomics. Theory and Practice of a happy life" will give you a clear understanding of what happiness is and how to achieve it, as well as offer specific tools for working on yourself. After reading the book, you will be able to understand your true desires and take the first steps towards their realization. And if you are experiencing difficulties in relationships with yourself or others, then the practices presented in the book will teach you effective communication techniques and help you build a more harmonious relationship. You will be able to apply the practical tips, exercises and proven techniques offered by the author immediately after reading. After all, according to the author, happiness is not an accident, but a skill that can be learned through regular training and practice. Move from the position of victim to the position of creator of your life, take full responsibility for your happiness and actively work on yourself, regardless of external circumstances and the behavior of other people. The book has everything to ensure that you do not stray from your intended path and become a truly happy person! Why read it – The book will give a clear understanding of what happiness is and how to achieve it, as well as offer specific tools for working on yourself; – To understand your true desires and take the first steps towards their realization; – Learn to be happy. Features The practical focus of the book on achieving happiness through regular training and the use of specific techniques transforms happiness from an abstract concept into an achievable skill. For whom The book is for those who feel unhappy, even if everything looks good, for those who want to improve their relationships with themselves and the world around

them, develop awareness, learn how to manage their thoughts and emotions, as well as for all those who strive for personal well-being and harmony in life.

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and practice of a happy life

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Alexey Onosov

Happynomics

The theory and practice
of a happy life

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INTRODUCTION

One day, a young man asked a sage, "What is truth?"

The sage said nothing. Instead, he led the young man to a large mirror covered with a heavy cloth. He pulled the cloth away, revealing the young man's reflection.

"What do you see?" the sage asked.

"I see myself," the young man replied.

The sage covered the mirror again. "And now?"

"Nothing," said the young man.

The sage nodded. "That's truth. It's always right in front of us – but we often fail to see it. We cover it up with our fears, desires, and assumptions.

To truly see the truth, you must clear the mirror of your mind and be willing to look into it without distortion."

The young man stood in silence, thinking.

The sage continued, "Truth isn't what we want to see. It's what is. Only by accepting that can we begin to find real happiness."

Why does happiness matter so much?

If you're not happy, chances are the people around you won't be either. Our emotional state rubs off – especially on our kids. They pick up more than we think, and those feelings can echo through generations, creating a legacy of unhappiness. Is that really what we want to leave behind?

The idea for this book started taking shape back when I was helping run a business club. Over several years, I invited about a hundred successful entrepreneurs to speak at our events.

That's when something strange occurred to me. Not all wealthy, successful entrepreneurs seemed genuinely happy. It made me wonder: are success and happiness really the same thing? And if they're not, which one truly matters more? How do you achieve a lasting sense of happiness?

Looking at the sometimes tense or tired faces of our guest speakers, I wasn't always sure I'd want to trade places with them.

I started asking these questions to every successful entrepreneur I met. After three years, one thing became obvious: there were way more questions than answers. It bothered me so much that I launched my own business club and put a lot of energy into it for about a year. But eventually, I became frustrated with how little real progress I was making. The process just didn't feel effective.

For several years, I was on a mission. I tore through books like crazy. At my peak, I was reading up to 50 a year, sometimes even more. But strangely enough, the more I read, the less clarity I had.

What threw me off was that these respected, successful, and supposedly happy authors kept giving completely opposite advice. One would say "slow down, reflect." Another would say "push harder, never stop." It was all over the place. And honestly, it left me feeling more confused than inspired.

What bothered me most was that many of these books could be boiled down to a couple of short social media posts. To get to the one useful idea, I had to dig through layers of theory, case studies, and filler. And often, the gold nugget I was hoping for just wasn't there at all.

That's when I started dreaming about writing a book packed with value – no fluff, just concentrated insights that actually help.

Next, I turned to biographies of great people, thinking I might find some answers there. At first, it looked promising. But after going through about a dozen, I did the math. If one biography took 10 hours to read, and considering my schedule, I'd barely get through a few dozen a year. That just wasn't going to cut it.

So, I started looking for short, high-impact collections of entrepreneur biographies. Something snappy and useful. To my surprise, I found nothing like that in Russia or abroad.

All I could find were collections of quotes from famous philosophers – some of them translated into more than 30 languages, by the way. And then there was Tim Ferriss's *Tribe of Mentors* (2017), which came close to what I was looking for, but still wasn't quite it. It featured not just entrepreneurs but all kinds of famous and accomplished people.

I spent a long time thinking about what to do next. Then, one sunny day in Sochi, it hit me: what if I just did it myself? What if I interviewed 100 or more successful Russian entrepreneurs, sat down with each of them for an hour or two, and asked the one question that really mattered – how do you become both happy and successful?

If I couldn't find a condensed collection of real-life wisdom from high-level players, maybe I could create one.

At first, things went pretty smoothly. But after just 10 interviews, I realized the project was way bigger than I'd imagined. Still, I'm not the kind of person who gives up once I've started something. I decided to push through, no matter what.

Plenty of people told me I'd never be able to get in touch with these top-tier entrepreneurs. Their time, after all, could be worth millions of rubles an hour. Why would they talk to me about happiness?

But that's what kept me going. Almost every person I interviewed was genuinely interested in the idea. They appreciated what I was trying to do and thanked me for it. That gave me the energy to keep pushing.

I kept the title simple: *100 Business Heroes*. Statistically, only about 5 percent of businesses actually make it. And while that may not sound heroic in the classic sense, there's something undeniably heroic about building something from the ground up and surviving.

A lot happened while I was working on the book – the pandemic, business crises, family challenges. Life didn't just knock the wind out of me. It hit me with combinations – doubles, triples, even quadruples. More than once, I seriously considered quitting. The whole thing took a huge amount of time, effort, and money.

But after three years of sheer willpower, I finally published the book. It got great feedback from respected entrepreneurs and experts. Turns out, I really had managed to pack it with value. In fact, it's not the kind of book you can binge-read. The best way to go through it is one story per day – reflect, take something away, and apply it.

After publishing, I made it a habit to keep meeting with successful entrepreneurs. To keep the momentum going, I launched a YouTube channel called *Business Practices*. It grew quickly and soon gained hundreds of thousands of subscribers.

Once I found my stride, I put together another book – this time featuring members of a top-level business club. Then I got started on a project about something like Amazon in scale and reach^[1]. Honestly, that one was pure luck. It all came down to the right connections, and somehow I managed to get in touch with the marketplace's founder.

Over time, we ended up organizing nearly 500 meetings with entrepreneurs. And eventually, quantity started turning into quality. Slowly but surely, I began to realize something: happiness is actually a relatively simple thing – not easy, but simple. Like learning to play the saxophone or climbing mountains. It's a skill. And like any skill, it can be learned. It just takes time and consistent practice.

The deeper I went, the more I felt the urge to write about happiness. But then came the classic excuse – no time.

Then came our long-awaited trip to Morocco. I brought my laptop along, just in case. And something clicked. I realized this was it – my window of opportunity. I knew another one like it wouldn't come around anytime soon.

From that moment on, I was in full-on writing mode. Whether it was on a train, a plane, or a bus, I was glued to my laptop. I just kept going. In fact, almost the entire book was written during that trip to Morocco.

When I got back home, it hit me: I had to keep the momentum going. So, I told everyone I knew that the book would be out in a month. That was it – no turning back. I made a commitment I couldn't walk back from.

Then I started calculating the time needed for editing, layout, printing. And I panicked a little. I realized I was seriously up against the clock. I had to shift into high gear and give it everything I had again.

But it was worth it. I managed to release the book exactly on schedule.

CHAPTER 1 ON YOUR MARKS

A patient walks into the doctor's office and says,
"Doc, I'm ridiculously happy. Like, all the time. Is that... a problem?"
The doctor nods thoughtfully.
"Hmm. And how long have you been experiencing these... symptoms?"

I've always been curious about what was already out there on the topic of happiness. Turns out, there are thousands of books with the word "happiness" in the title, but almost all of them are fiction.

Finding serious, research-based material wasn't easy. And even when I did, it usually lacked substance. Most of the time, I'd come across case studies or abstract theories that didn't really connect to everyday life. Sometimes one idea was stretched across the whole book, padded with filler and buzzwords. A lot of it sounded more like quantum physics than something practical.

Maybe one out of every ten books, or even one in twenty, actually offered something useful you could apply in real life.

And even those were usually aimed at people who were already doing well emotionally, mentally, and physically. But what if you're not? What if you're barely holding it together and still carrying around a lot of unresolved trauma? In that case, even the best advice won't stick.

First, you have to confront your inner demons and rebuild your emotional strength. Only after that does the rest of the advice start to work.

I watched just about every video I could find on the topic. I even made it through Oscar Hartmann's¹ marathon-length podcast, the one where he talks about what people need in order to be happy.

While working on the 100 Business Heroes book series, I made a point of asking every entrepreneur the same question: What is happiness, and how do you achieve it? I asked that same question to every guest on my Business Practices YouTube channel as well.

The more I explored the topic, the more I realized how little clear and accessible information was actually out there. That surprised me and pushed me to keep going. It felt like I had stepped into a wide open space that barely anyone had mapped. It was a little intimidating, but also genuinely exciting.

Lately, I've made a habit of asking everyone I meet a simple question: What is happiness, really? And the wildest thing is, even people who've lived full lives, who've seen and done it all, still struggle to answer. Isn't that something?

Everyone on the planet wants to be happy, yet almost no one can clearly explain what happiness actually is. Most people just say it's a tough question, or that it means something different for everyone. But I rarely get a clear or satisfying answer.

One response that really surprised me came from a smart, successful, well-traveled person with a PhD and a wealth of life experience. When I asked what happiness was, they simply said, "I don't know." Sure, I've said the whole "I know that I know nothing" line myself. But when even smart, wealthy, and accomplished people can't explain what happiness is, it shows there's a serious gap in how we understand it. Some people say happiness is fleeting – you either have it or you don't, and there's nothing you can do about it. Like the weather. When the sun is out, we feel good. When it's stormy, we feel terrible. And we just accept that.

But what if that storm doesn't pass? What if it stays cold and windy not just for a day or a week, but for months or even years? What if depression settles in for a decade, slowly tightening its grip?

For many people, that's a reality. And often, there's no clear reason behind it. The circumstances might seem fine, but the emotional weight is still crushing. A bad mood that lasts a day or two is one thing. But when it drags on for years, it becomes something else entirely.

Later on, we'll take a closer look at what might actually be causing these kinds of emotional states.

On the other hand, sometimes it's the complete opposite. There are people with no arms or legs who are still genuinely happy and successful. Some even travel the world, giving talks and teaching others how to find happiness for themselves. You've probably heard of Nick Vujicic. And if you haven't, his books are absolutely worth checking out.

How you respond to the present moment is up to you. You can be like a weathervane, spinning in every direction with the slightest breeze, convinced that your happiness depends on outside forces – other people, random events, anything but you.

As long as your inner state is tied to what's happening around you, life will always feel unstable and out of your hands.

Or you can choose to believe that **you're in charge of your own happiness, and that you have the power to create it from within.**

Creating your own happiness is actually pretty simple. But simple doesn't mean easy. Think of it like lifting a 100-kilogram barbell. On paper, it sounds straightforward. In theory, both a professional lifter and a total beginner can do it.

But for one, it takes no effort. For the other, it requires years of training. That doesn't mean the beginner can't get there. They just need time, commitment, and daily practice. The same goes for happiness.

You can train it. You can build it. You can make it a habit.

But let's come back to the big question. What is happiness? Searching online didn't help much. I still couldn't find a clear answer.

And "success" wasn't any better. No one could define that either. Most answers seemed to suggest that you have to be successful to be happy. As if happiness means earning a million dollars, getting married, landing your dream job, buying a flashy car, getting six-pack abs, and so on.

But is that really it?

Think back to something you desperately wanted. Something you finally got. How long did that sense of true happiness actually last? An hour? A day? A week? A month.

Probably not very long. And then what? Chances are, you quickly felt that familiar voice creep in – "Okay, so what?"

Almost immediately, your mind starts shifting. "Maybe happiness isn't in this phone. It's in the newer one."

"It's not this car. It's the one that's ten times more expensive."

"It's not this yacht. It's the one that's twice the size."

Even if you imagine reaching every goal you've ever dreamed of, pulling up to Monte Carlo on a ridiculously expensive yacht, you'd expect to feel like you've made it, right?

But that feeling lasts only until a mega-yacht glides by, towering over yours, and a group of gorgeous people on board gives you a smug little smile.

Suddenly, your yacht doesn't feel so special anymore. And now, you're craving something even bigger.

It's like chasing a carrot on a stick. Or running toward the horizon. No matter how far you go, it's always just out of reach.

So why does it matter to define happiness clearly?

Because until we know exactly what we're talking about, it's just a vague idea. We won't know where to begin or what we're aiming for. It stays a moving target.

Ideally, we could treat it like a real field of study – a science of happiness. There’s definitely room for that. We need better tools, clearer language, and more practical methods. Some great work has already been done, but we’d benefit from a more structured, systematic approach. Imagine if there were actual training programs designed to help people get better at being happy. That’s something truly worth building.

CHAPTER 2

TRUTH

A wise guru was once walking along the shore of a vast ocean when he saw a strange man trying to fill a bucket with a spoon just a few feet from the water's edge. The guru, curious, asked what he was doing. He received a rather astonishing reply: the man was simply trying to empty the ocean. The renowned guru burst out laughing and started pointing at the madman, exclaiming, "You're insane! That's impossible! You think you can scoop out the entire ocean with a spoon and fit it into that little bucket? You're wasting your time!" The man, without looking up, simply said, "Don't bother me," and went back to filling his bucket.

The guru couldn't just walk away from something like that, so he started arguing with the madman, trying to get him to stop this senseless activity. After about half an hour of fruitless arguing, he was exhausted and sat down beside the man to rest. It was only then that the man with the spoon began his revelation:

"You are trying to understand a truth that is immeasurably greater than the capabilities of the mind. The ocean is much larger than this bucket, but the universe is significantly, far more significant than the mind – many times over, thousands, millions, billions of times larger.

And you are trying to grasp the universe using thoughts, expressing them through words, which are even more limited than the mind itself – like the bucket and the spoon, but on a much bigger scale.

It's impossible. Even if you spent a thousand lifetimes, you couldn't do it."

Alright, so here, as is typical in these kinds of parables, the guru achieved enlightenment right then and there.

What's the point of all this? Well, naturally, we're trying to find truth in this book. But grasping it is inherently impossible. Though we will be giving it a shot.

You can't truly know truth; we can only strive to get closer to it as best we can. Let's just accept that as a given for now.

To get a bit of a handle on this whole issue, we're going to introduce a few more givens – some additional axioms.

Truth is a "map" (our perception) that most closely reflects the "territory" (the reality of the world). Ideally, our "map" would perfectly align with the world around us. However, when the 'map' diverges from the "territory", we must prioritize the "territory" itself and adjust our "map" accordingly. The challenge, of course, is that the "territory" is constantly changing.

We can't fully explore the world as it truly is, due to the inherent limitations of our bodies, senses, and minds. For instance, we lack X-ray or thermal vision, can't hear ultrasound, can't touch molten magma without harm, or dive into plasma. This means... **Absolute truth is unattainable, but we can continuously get closer to it by refining and adding detail to our "map".**

Trying to find absolute truth is like a tiny cell trying to understand the massive creature it belongs to. Our awareness, limited by human experience and how we see things, tries to make sense of the Universe's incredible complexity. We're like that cell, struggling to comprehend the whole, with access to only a tiny sliver of information, and limited by our cognitive abilities. Every discovery simply expands the horizon of the unknown, revealing just how deep and vast reality truly is. Truth is like an endless ocean stretching far beyond our perception, and the more we learn, the more acutely we realize the limitations of our knowledge.

Furthermore, due to human imperfection, all our thoughts about truth will also be imperfect. This means that in every single one of our statements, there will always be a component of misconception mixed with a portion of truth, a truth we will be infinitely approaching.

Let's re-emphasize a crucial point: **there will always be an element of error and an element of truth in all of our statements.**

Besides, even if someone did manage to grasp the truth (which, as we've shown, is unlikely), they'd probably struggle to communicate it. Truth is more than just a concept; it's expansive, multi-dimensional. Words, on the other hand, are likely one-dimensional. Trying to convey a complex, three-dimensional meaning with such a limited tool is simply not going to work fully. **The best we can do is create countless one-dimensional 'projections' – much like the three blind men who each touched a different part of an elephant, drew different conclusions, and were each partially right and partially wrong.**

There's even a sense that truth and love are two sides of the same coin, just as error and pain are.

CHAPTER 3

HAPPINESS

A boy was wandering in the garden when he spotted a beautiful butterfly. He decided to catch it and chased it for a long time, but the butterfly always managed to flutter away just as he was about to grab it.

Tired and disappointed, the boy sat down on the grass. To his surprise, the butterfly flew over and landed on his shoulder.

The boy's grandfather, who had been watching him, said, "That's how happiness is, my child. When you try too hard to catch it, it slips away. But if you're calm and open to the world, it will come to you."

The boy smiled, realizing that true happiness comes when you don't chase after it, but simply enjoy the moment.

Defining happiness is tricky. It's a complex concept, while human thought and language are much more... well, flat. Think of it like this: from any 3D object, you can create endless 2D projections. And that's exactly what we're about to do, with relish.

HAPPINESS IS PLEASURE. The more pleasure in our lives, the better. Simple as that. Just do what feels good, right? The catch is that something might feel good in the short term but be a terrible idea long term, and vice versa. You could eat cake every night, but your health would suffer after a month. Or you could run three kilometers every morning, which might suck at first, but after a year, you'd see a major positive impact, and that would feel amazing. So, the strategic goal is to balance our actions to maximize our overall "pleasantness" over our entire lives.

HAPPINESS IS JUST A RELEASE OF NEUROTRANSMITTERS, OR STIMULATION OF CERTAIN BRAIN AREAS. Dopamine, serotonin, all those "-ins" that flood our brains in specific situations. The question is, how can we regulate these neurotransmitter levels ourselves, without resorting to dangerous substances that could harm us?

Apparently, scientists have been able to induce happiness in lab animals simply by injecting chemicals into their bloodstream or applying electrical signals to certain brain regions. For example, there's the famous experiment with the rat who had an electrode implanted in its pleasure center. It was taught to send impulses to that center, and it pressed the button until it died.

That being said, neurotransmitters are often released when we achieve significant goals. Like, you worked for 10 years and built an awesome house. During that time, you were miserable, denying yourself everything, thinking about how great life would be after the house was done. You finish the house, neurotransmitters flood your brain, happiness lasts a day, a week, a month, maybe even a year, and then you start thinking: "Now what? Was it even worth it?" And the house isn't even that great: this is crooked, that's off, and it's not what you really wanted anyway.

Why isn't achieving happiness this way very effective? You develop a tolerance, and you need to put in more and more effort to get the same emotions. The first time you go skydiving, it's an incredible rush of adrenaline and euphoria. Many people are so impressed by this experience that they start skydiving regularly.

However, over time, even such an extreme activity may lose its sharpness. In pursuit of new sensations, skydivers begin to look for more risky options: jumps from lower altitudes, flights in wingsuits, or base jumping. And sometimes this escalation of risk can lead to very dangerous consequences, if you do not realize in time that true satisfaction lies not in constantly increasing the

dose of adrenaline, but in improving skills and finding a balance between the pursuit of thrills and safety.

HAPPINESS IS MOVING FROM A LOW POINT TO A HIGHER ONE. Imagine you've been walking through a scorching desert all day without food or water, and finally, as evening approaches, you find a bottle of water. That's likely to be one of the happiest moments of your life. Or you jumped from a bungee or with a parachute – at first it was scary, but then – pure delight of flight. Or you avoided mortal danger – a tiger jumped on you, but missed and flew with a wild roar into the abyss, which was neatly behind you. In all these cases, happiness will simply go off scale. The greater the delta between the negative and the positive, the higher the level of happiness.

Logically, this definition implies that happiness is impossible without unhappiness. No matter what level you reach, sooner or later everything gets boring. And even achieving what you want will not lead to long-term happiness (hello, the law of diminishing importance). Reaching the "next level" is always significantly more difficult than the previous one. And there is the easiest way to experience happiness is to go "down," "suffer" a little, rise to a higher level, and experience happiness again.

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