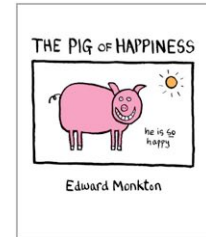


Easy Reads

The Pig of Happiness, by Edward Monkton

This book is a 2-minute read. It beautifully and simply illustrates how one can live out the wisdom of Ghandi: "As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him." It also perfectly proves the wisdom of Happiness Principle #7, Choose to Respond.

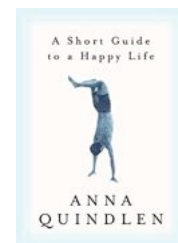


Happiness: it's never too late, By Patrick Lindsay

As you might imagine, I have been gifted over the years with many books with happiness in the title. This one remains on my shelf for two reasons: one, it's a pretty little book; and two, it's the kind of book I can open to any page and in 30 seconds find a lovely centering thought.

A Short Guide to a Happy Life by Anna Quindlen

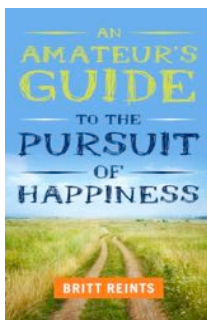
Of course, I had to look this one up when a friend sent me this title. This is a short, tiny book full of photos, short stories, and lovely reflections on happiness and choice. I thought I recognized parts of it, and sure enough—large parts of the text are from the Quindlen's "famous" never-delivered commencement speech at Villanova, which has been posted on the internet for years in various forms. There's much additional content/story here, still inspirational. Maximum 30-minute read, and one that can serve as a refueling break in a busy week. Note -- the book is \$10-something new OR buy it used on Amazon, where you can pick it up for as little as \$.10 plus \$3.49 USD shipping. And THAT's a deal to make you happy!



Hector and The Search for Happiness, François Lelord

A former client sent me this book—because Happiness. This is a lovely fable about a psychologist named Hector, who notices that no matter how well he takes care of his clients, he cannot help them be happy. Indeed, he's not even sure what Happiness is! So he visits a monk (of course!) then set off on a global search for the meaning of happiness. In the end, he returns with 23 truths about happiness and a new life. Light reading, deep learning.

An Amateur's Guide to The Pursuit of Happiness, by Britt Reints



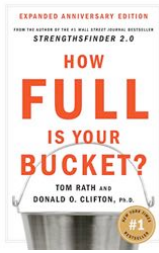
I've read so many books with Happiness in the title, and I thought I'd learn nothing new in this book—I was wrong. Britt takes many of the mainstream Happiness/Positive Psychology concepts and makes them very personal in this very simple and accessible guide, giving them fresh life with a new perspective. She weaves this all into a narrative about her and her family taking a trip, which turns into a reflective learning experience.

I first read this in 2013 on my three-year old Kindle, at which point I'd used the Highlight function maybe a dozen times. Well, I'd already highlighted over a dozen passages in this book before I finished the first section! I love Reint's use of story and her simple, non-academic ideas for building strength in one's happiness/gratitude/contentment muscles. Highly recommend the book, and

bring a highlighter (or learn that function on your e-reader!)



How Full Is Your Bucket? Positive strategies for work and life, Tom Rath & Don Clifton



About a 1-hour read. About how we affect others and how our treatment of other people affects us right back. Take the online Positivity Test mentioned in the book, and consider how if you are a bucket-filler or a bucket dipper.

Side note: I use this book all the time as a short intro for busy leaders to help them understand the notion of "positive culture." While the book is short and deceptively simple, it's based on deep research into workplace culture. If you're in Education, know there is an Educator's edition, and tons of grade-level appropriate activities available for classroom use, as well as a Kid's edition.

ALSO note: you can buy used for pennies, BUT each new edition includes a one-time use code to take the Clifton StrengthsFinder assessment, which is worth several times the price of the new book.

The 100 Simple Secrets of Happy People: What scientists have learned and how you can use it, David Niven.

Each "chapter" is 1-2 pages, very easy read, full of ideas, tips, facts, etc, about happiness and what really affects it and creates it in our lives. The entire book will take you an hour, but the beauty of it is you can open it to any page and in under a minute choose a reminder.

Happiness: Formulas, Stories, and Insights, Rabbi Zelig Pliskin.

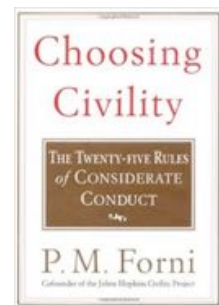
Contains 92 short chapters and many exercises-- Easy to digest in small bites. A wonderful book to spur conversation and thinking. Rabbi Pliskin has been writing in the happiness field for many years.

Happy for No Reason: 7 Steps to being happy from the inside out, Marci Shimoff.

Shimoff tried LIVING all the tips offered by the experts, so this is as much about her experience as it is about the practices that support Positive Emotional practices. She offers a holistic seven-step program that is in great part based on much of the research found in many of the titles by Seligman, Emmons, Lybormirsky, Fredrickson, and Ben-Shahar that are listed in the next section of this list. Very accessible, many action plans.

Choosing Civility: The Twenty-Five Rules of Considerate Conduct, P.M.

Forni, Cofounder of the Johns Hopkins Civility Project. I LOVE this book. It is, in the author's words, the 25 rules "that are most essential in connecting effectively and happily with others." On page 15 Forni reminds us: **"...our happiness doesn't spring from the events of our lives but rather from how we choose to respond to those events. If we have control over what we think about what happens to us, we have control over how we feel about it as well. This means, in turn, that we can be the makers of our own happiness."** *[Can you see why I love this guy?!]*



In April 2017 I wrote a blog that summarized the book and tied it into Happiness and Leadership, so if you want a quick review, [go here](#).



I close this section with my own book...

...(what do you mean, you've not read it yet?!)

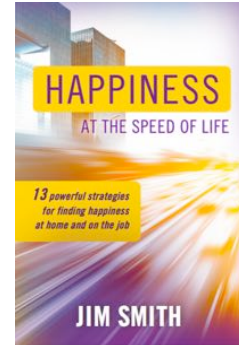
Happiness at the Speed of Life: 13 Powerful Strategies for Finding Happiness in Life and On the Job, by Jim Smith

Note: I've actually had a few people tell me this book is LIFE-CHANGING! So, what's stopping you from [getting your own copy](#), right NOW?! Also available at [iBooks](#), so no excuses (and the e-version is only half-price...). If you want the updated 2016 version in hard copy (only available from the author), click on the image and send me an email.

Excerpt from the cover: "We know we must eat well and work our bodies if we want to feel good. For overall health, we must also attend to our emotional "muscles." Just as our legs and arms grow stronger when we work out, so do our moods and emotions grow stronger the more often they are exercised.

Unfortunately for many of us, we exercise our worry, anxiety, and fear muscles every day, so they are quite strong. If we want to experience more joy and happiness in our life, we must consciously practice these emotional states every day so that, when we are under stress, our positive emotional muscles are strong enough to pull us through. This book is about taking a different approach to your life, and finding, building, and maintaining your 'Happiness muscles' in new and practical ways."

Inside you will find over 110 different tools, actions, or practices to help you... you will also find dozens of practices you can take to work to create a more positive workplace. Learn what it truly means to Stand Tall, Breathe Deeply, and Smile Often!



Want a Happiness Metric as a starting point for your reading? Grab a copy of my [HAPPINESS AUDIT](#), a 100-point checklist you can share with friends and family. The Happiness Audit will increase your awareness of the personal practices and beliefs that impact living a happy life – and how well you are living those today! You will review ten dimensions of Happiness and consider how balanced you are in your life approach. If you want to increase your level of happiness, this tool will help you identify actions and ideas that will create more POSITIVE in your life and work – and help you notice what to pay attention for in your Happiness reading!

https://www.theexecutivehappinesscoach.com/client_area/pdf/HappinessAudit.pdf



More complex reads

Many of the titles that follow are academic and well researched. You can skip the description of the research and go to the meat. Many of these researchers have written second or even third titles after the success of their first book; in my opinion (I emphasize, my opinion only), those books were written and published for the same reason that movie houses create sequels: because someone will pay for them, not necessarily because they have new or better ideas. In nearly every case, the original work contains the lifetime of research and the really good stuff.

Authentic Happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment, Martin Seligman

Seligman, the "Father" of positive psychology, examines the many factors that can affect happiness, and helps readers understand how and where they can take intentional action to improve their experience of happiness - past, present, and future. The book includes a wealth of assessments, most of which can also be taken and stored online at the website listed next.

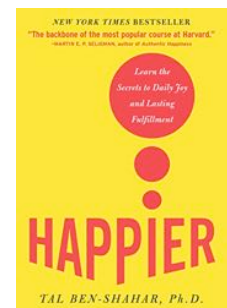
NOTE: I list this book first because it was the main text used in my Authentic Happiness Coach training program thru U Penn in 2003, and because this book "introduced" the world to the study of Happiness and positive psychology. Nearly all the books that came after were made possible by the success of Seligman's tome.

www.authentichappiness.org is a companion website that goes with the above book, hosted by the University of Pennsylvania. People can discover their top five character strengths, take the Optimism test, the General Happiness Index, etc. – pretty much all the assessments included in *Authentic Happiness*. Once you set up an account, the system stores your results -- and you can return again and again and compare your ratings at different times (I've got comparisons for myself that go back to 2003, so I can track my own Happiness over 15 years!)

Happier: Learn the secrets to daily joy and lasting fulfillment, Tal Ben-Shear, PhD.

Back-story: Tal Ben-Shahar, a professor at Harvard studying positive psychology, proposed in the early 2000's a course on Happiness. To humor him, the college put it on the course schedule and booked the class into a seminar room – which holds 20 people. When 150 people signed up, they had to move to an auditorium. His became the most popular class at Harvard, with 1 of every 5 students taking the course. WOW! The book is a distillation of the course content, shared with the rest of the world since most of us are too busy to hang out in Boston for 15 weeks to take the course on campus!

Though Ben-Shahar's book contains the requisite amount of research and mind-numbing data that college professors (by universal decree) must put into any book they write, I was thrilled with how accessible his theories are. And the exercises! ***Tons of very useful exercises to help the reader, student, client, etc., built more resilience and strengthen those positive emotion muscles!*** Of the many academic tomes published in the initial flood of Happiness a decade ago, this is the one I most recommend, probably my top pick in this section. His writing, even when he's citing academic research, has a certain joyful lightness to it.



Even the book cover makes me smile!



The How of Happiness: A Scientific approach to getting the life you want,

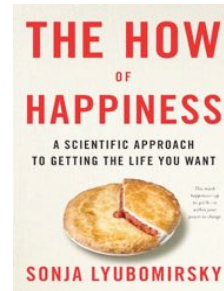
Sonja Lyubormirsky, PhD

I have heard Ms. Lyubormirsky speak, and she was on the faculty of my program in Authentic Happiness. She's well known for her research into the impact of Intentional Action – specifically, **how what we DO can shift how we think, feel, and react**. She begins by reminding us that part of our emotional predisposition is genetically pre-determined – we have a genetic “set point” or base thermostat, so to speak. We can't change the 50% of who we are, or the 10% of our happiness that comes

from our life circumstance. Ah, but the other 40% we CAN change, if we pay attention to what we do and how we do it.

She presents a dozen specific strategies for increasing one's capacity for happiness. My favorite aspect of the strategies is that they often integrate body, heart, and head – staying active and fit (read that as, 'keep your butt moving!') is just as important as practicing optimism, an activity that's mostly in the head. Happiness is holistic, and self-perpetuating – for instance, people who take better care of themselves feel happier, and people who feel happier tend to take better care of themselves, and on and on.

Of note: The last chapter addresses the issue of depression – the D-word we don't speak in our society. Lyubormirsky talks about why it happens, and how happiness practices can help to alleviate many of the active symptoms of depression. So this book is NOT just for happy people seeking more of the same. ☺



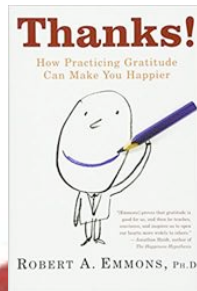
The 50/40/10 “Pie of Happiness”

Stumbling on Happiness, Daniel Gilbert.

This one is a cross of psychology, cognitive neuroscience, philosophy, and behavioral economics. Gilbert looks at the oddness of human nature and how we often pursue the wrong path to what really makes us happy (thus the title...implying that when we do find happiness, it's often a result of stumbling across it by accident versus nurturing it with intention).

The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less, by Barry Schwartz

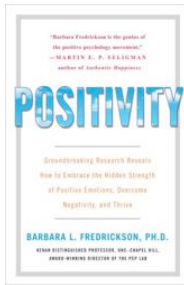
Barry Schwartz created the concept of the Paradox of Choice – that as we experience more options in all aspects of our life (which is what we SAY we want), many of us find ourselves increasing stressed by choice-making. He posits there are two types of people in the world: Satisfiers and Maximizers. Satisfiers survive in an environment of limitless choices by doing 'just enough' research to make a good decision, and then let it go. Maximizers can become paralyzed by analysis; even worse, once they execute, they can agonize for months by second-guessing their decisions. Schwartz lays out options for both types for living and making decisions in this world, mostly by finding ways to limit our choices. I often use this distinction in my coaching – it is helpful to understand your own decision-making style!

Thanks! How the new science of gratitude can make you happier, Robert Emmons, PhD.

Emmons spends much time detailing his research, which may or may not interest you. I encourage you, however, to pay special attention to Chapters 1 (The new science of gratitude) and 2 (Gratitude and the psyche) and the final Chapter, 7, in which Emmons details nine practices that have proven effective in building a feeling of gratitude -- leading to increased happiness! Gratitude is the foundational emotion in the Positive Emotional family, and Emmons' work has informed most of the other researchers in the field of happiness, so this is going to the source for things you'll see cited in other academic works.



Positivity: Groundbreaking Research Reveals How to Embrace the Hidden Strength of Positive Emotions, Overcome Negativity, and Thrive, by Barbara Fredrickson, PhD



I first “met” Barbara Fredrickson in 2003 when she was a faculty member of my Authentic Happiness Coaching program. Dr. Fredrickson is behind some of the most powerful research in positive psychology, including the power of simple exercises practiced daily. Funnily enough, she eschews use of the words Happy or Happiness, as she claims they are too generic. **Positivity, she says, has ten forms: Joy, Gratitude, Serenity, Interest, Hope, Pride, Amusement, Inspiration, Awe, and Love.** Her research supports the importance of the Gallup Organization’s oft-cited 3:1 ratio – to thrive in life, you must experience at least 3 moments/acts of Positivity to every 1 of Negativity. The second half of the book spells out a very basic strategy: to

live a better life, you should Reduce Negativity and Increase Positivity (well, duh!). She lays out 12 practices you can use to increase Positivity. Be warned – she’s a PhD, so there’s lot of research cited, along with 32 pages of End Notes!

Why Good Things Happen to Good People: The exciting new research that proves the link between doing good and living a longer, healthier, happier life, Stephen Post, PhD, and Jill Neimark.

These authors approach positive emotion from a totally different angle – they make it about GIVING TO OTHERS. Not money, but time, consideration, and respect. This book shows us that a happy and fulfilling life is within our grasp – but we have to get outside of ourselves – and express love to others -- in order to experience the joy that comes from making a difference to others. **The authors outline ten ways of Giving: Celebration, Generativity, Forgiveness, Courage, Humor, Respect, Compassion, Loyalty, Listening, and Creativity.**

One cool thing about the book is the setup: each chapter is further divided into several “lessons,” and at the end of each chapter is another segment of an assessment. By the end of the book you’ll have a complete profile of yourself in a dozen different dimensions, and thus the data you need to create an action plan.

FLOW: The Psychology of Optimal Experience, by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

People enter a flow state when they are fully absorbed in activity during which they lose their sense of time and have feelings of great satisfaction. Csikszentmihalyi (pronounced: cheeks-sent-me-high), a pioneer in this field of study, clearly explains the principles of “flow” and shows how it can be introduced into every level of your life. I listened to the book on audio (narrated by the author in his delightful accent!). Martin Seligman (reference above as the father of Positive Psych and one of my teachers) considered Csikszentmihalyi one of his main mentors.

Flow is considered one of the positive emotional states, so I also include this title:

The Power of Flow: Practical ways to transform your life with meaningful coincidence, by Charlene Belitz & Meg Lundsom

It’s based on a study of 50 “flowmasters”—people who have developed the ability to “go with the flow” (the state of effortless, natural movement toward what we want) with remarkable wholeness and harmony in their lives. Having studied these “flowmasters” for common beliefs, attitudes and actions, the authors shared the results-- 9 attributes and 14 techniques—with a test group of 98 people...and found that they, too, experienced being “in the flow.” My copy of this book is much underlined and tabbed. The nine attributes are: Commitment, Honesty, Courage, Passion, Immediacy, Openness, Receptivity, Positivity, and Trust. See the connection to Happiness? ☺



Loving What Is: Four questions that can change your life, by Byron Katie

Note: This is a great book **MUST READ for coaches!** Not about happiness, per se, but read on to understand why I put it on this list:

A member of my coaching Mastermind group recommended the title, almost as an afterthought as the call was ending. I picked up something in her tone, and ended up buying the book. VERY POWERFUL stuff for coaching, whether you are a coach or are dealing with your own issues. Byron Katie (Katie is her last name) presents a very simple yet powerful process for helping us work through our assessments and negative thinking about others... and ourselves. She calls it The Work, and in its simplest form is four questions and a reversal. She begins the book with the premise that **"all suffering is a result of arguing with what is."** Hmm...Interesting. She lays out a case that it is our thinking – which, by the way, we cannot control – that determines good/bad, suffering or not, etc. Of course, this makes total sense to me; as a coach, I'm often working with a client's language, assessment, and the stories they tell themselves that get in the way of their Happiness. So The Work snuggled into my coaching toolkit beautifully. I've use the approach in many powerful conversations.



Just to give you a simple preview, here's how The Work addresses a negative assessment:

- Is it true? (*very juicy conversation about the "shoulds" we carry in our thoughts!*)
- Can you absolutely know that it's true?
- How do you react when you have that thought? (*examine your "programmed" responses*)
- Who would you be without that thought? (*discovering new options*)
- Turn it around (*this is where the real coaching magic can happen!*)

To 'get' that last piece – the turnaround – you have to read the book – there are dozens of ways to turnaround and examine one's thinking and the truth in it.

To learn a bit more about The Work and how I apply it, see my Blog Post, [Watch Your Language](#). I also encourage you to go to [YouTube.com](#) and search for "Byron Katie." You'll find dozens of video demonstrations of her applying The Work to issues of prejudice, relationships, self-esteem, value systems, abuse, addiction, parenting, and so on.

The Happiness Track: How to apply the science of Happiness to accelerate your success, by Emma Seppala

Seppala's book is more recent (2016) and does not introduce new theories about Happiness; rather, she takes a lot of the research you'll find in prior titles on this list and looks at them thru the lens of using them in a crazy, busy work world focused on moving ever faster. She uses a lot of stories from Silicon Valley (naturally, since she teaches at Stanford) and essentially debunks the value of working insane hours and sacrificing personal life to pursue "happiness" in the form of professional success. She's also done a number of short [TED talks](#) about slowing down to find Happiness. Some of her chapter titles—Stop Chasing the Future; Step Out of Overdrive; Manage Your Energy; and Get More Done By Doing More of Nothing—give you a sense of her message. **To me, the real value of this book is that it pulls Happiness into the workplace and challenges our (especially western) mythology around what really makes for success.**



What Happy People Know: How the New Science of Happiness Can Change Your Life for the Better, by Dan Baker and Cameron Stauth

In a nutshell, the book taught me to question my own "fear." I became mindful of my fear. In other words, when I sense feelings of fear, anxiety etc., I ask myself the question, why am I afraid, then test the waters and remember to congratulate myself for success. Fear is often not true (**F**alse **E**vidence **A**ppearing **R**eal) yet it can be paralyzing – and to get past it feels empowering. Note: *This book was published in 2002 and still resonates. I also recommend Baker's corporate-application sequel, **What Happy COMPANIES Know**.*

The Happiness Advantage: The seven principles of positive psychology that fuel success and performance at work, by Shawn Achor

Achor worked with Tal Ben-Shahar at Harvard to create and teach the Happiness courses there (see prior title, *Happier*, on page 5). So Achor's core concepts are not new. But where other authors focus on what we can do to achieve Happiness, Achor focuses on the VALUE of being happy. He turns the proposition around to demonstrate that **it's not success that creates happiness, but Happiness that fuels success—thus, the Happiness Advantage**. He also ties in some of the great work on Habit formation that's emerged in the past few years, encouraging readers to NOT shoot for the moon all at once. Instead, set tiny, achievable goals, one at a time, to build strength in your habits and behaviors. Of course this resonated with me, since that's a core principle in my own coaching approach. ☺

The final title in this section is NOT a book on Happiness, but it is one of my most favorite non-fiction books of all times – and when you read my review you'll understand the happiness connection.

Tiny Beautiful Things: Advice on love and life from Dear Sugar, by Cheryl Strayed

Dear Sugar was the online advice columnist pseudonym used by Strayed when she was writing for free just to keep in practice – and before she became famous and could earn a living for her writing (*Wild* had not yet become a best-seller and movie). The letters come from people with challenges that range from tiny issues (disagreements with friends, petty jealousy) to crushing life challenges (like death, estrangement, and identity). Strayed holds every one of them as a sacred, wise, human being who simply need to be reminded that they already have what they need, if they can only see beyond their anger, or fear, or whatever emotional chaos is playing out in their life.

Sometimes she dispenses life wisdom with a story, other times with a baseball bat (albeit one that is wrapped in cotton and love and compassion).

In my view, **Tiny Beautiful Things is filled with exquisite writing, deep emotional pain, and a frequent celebration of the life learning that can only come from falling into the depths and crawling back out of the hole.** I include the book on this list because it plays in the field of Positive Emotions and the outcomes that come from speaking the (hard) Truth.

In the end, Strayed rarely gives advice; instead, she fiercely holds the space to examine multiple perspectives and challenges the letter writers to notice their own stuckness while also looking at the situation from the perspective of their nemesis. In this regard, she seems to have the soul of a coach: *I'm not going to tell you what to do, but I will help you expand how you're seeing the situation, then support you on the way to happiness.*

[Warning: *the book contains some explicit content and raw language, so if that does not resonate for you, skip this book.]*



Really Deep reads

These final few were, for me, books that required I read, take notes, set the book down to ponder and process, then return to read more.

The Art of Happiness: a Handbook for Living, His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Very rich in philosophy and spirituality, and contains a very worldly view of happiness and society. I had to stop often to “process” the learning. I love the audio version of the book, myself. It is read by the co-author, Howard Cutler

Happiness: A Guide to Developing Life's Most Important Skill by Matthieu Ricard

Ricard is a former Buddhist monk, so there is a solid philosophical thread throughout this book; in world filled with happiness junk food reading, this one hit me as having a soul. Drawing from works of fiction and poetry, contemporary western philosophy, Buddhist thought, current psychological and scientific research and personal experience, Ricard weaves an inspirational and forward-looking account of how we can begin to rethink our realities in a rushed modern world. As the world keeps moving even faster, Ricard's insights feel timely and essential, especially today as evidence grows of well-being's profound and measurable effects on the mind and body. He “got it” long before science “proved it” to be true.

Language and the Pursuit of Happiness: A new foundation for designing your life, your relationships, and your results, Chalmers Brothers.

This is a deeper, philosophical read. Not for the light reader, but wonderful for people who like to think deeply about language, meaning, and the connection of mind, body, heart, and soul. The book also serves as an introduction to Ontology and Ontological distinctions like Speech Acts, the role of our “Observer” in creating our reality, etc. This serves as a core course textbook for two of the coaching schools where I serve as a mentor coach.

A General Theory of Love by Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, and Richard Lannon

A General Theory of Love is a powerfully humanistic look at the natural history of our deepest feelings, and why a simple hug is often more important than a portfolio full of stock options. The authors’ grasp of neural science is topnotch, but the book is more about humans as social animals and how we relate to others – for once, the brain plays second fiddle to the heart, and this book is a great companion piece to current studies in Neuroscience. The book is credited with having introduced us to the term, **“limbic resonance.”**

I first read this book in 2007, and review it every few years since, each time “hearing it” in the context of two more years of coaching training and experience working with emotional resonance and the mind-heart-body connection. It deals beautifully with our human need to connect, looking at the subject from an evolutionary perspective to help us understand how and WHY we behave the way we do. IF YOU ARE A COACH, I can't recommend this book highly enough. It is not an “easy read” yet it is incredibly rich. *My copy of the book is much underlined and coffee-stained and has many pages folded over and tabbed so that I can find and use the richness within.*





About the Curator of this List

Jim Smith, PCC, is The Executive Happiness Coach®, a global provider of life and executive coaching and workplace culture change facilitation. **His passion is to create a Happier world and workplace, one Leader at a time.**

Jim has coached leaders from 29 countries and six continents, touching the lives of over 18,000 people through his work on Positive Emotion, Leadership, and Coaching

Secretly, Jim worships the Forces of Darkness—Dark Coffee, Dark Beer, and Dark Chocolate—and he deeply believes that Happiness is a Decision, not an Event!

Learn more and join his tribe at JimSmith.Coach

