

Seven Secrets to Happiness!

Alan Allard, Ph.D.

www.alanallard.com

[Type text]

Copyright 2012 by Alan Allard, Ph.D.

All rights reserved under the Pan-American and International Copyright Conventions. This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, in any form or by any means electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information and retrieval system now known or hereafter invented, without permission from the publisher.

To order this book visit www.alanallard.com

Preface:

As a former psychotherapist in private practice, I worked with hundreds of people who essentially wanted to learn how to be happier with themselves and their life. Every client I saw was smart, capable and resourceful—but something wasn't working in their life. Naturally, they came in to talk about their problems and how to make them go away—and it was my job to help them—but how?

I discovered that I had to help my clients shift their focus to something *beyond* their frustration and pain—and that's how the *Seven Secrets to Happiness!* came about—from the real world of working with some of the most challenging problems in life. Over the past seven years as a personal coach, corporate coach, trainer and speaker I have continued to see how these seven “secrets” have transformed people and their circumstances.

If you are ready to jump in, let's start with my definition of the word “happiness”: *happiness is feeling positive energy about yourself and your overall life or feeling positive*

energy about the progress you're making in both of those areas.

Now that we have a working definition of happiness, let me ask you a question: When it comes to *your* happiness, which of the following statements do you relate to the most?

- **“I’m happy, *but...*”**

You are happy, but there are some things getting in the way and you would like to deal with them and live from a whole different level of happiness.

- **“I know I *should* be happier; I’m just not feeling it!”**

For whatever reason, you are struggling with consistently feeling happy. Maybe you have a list of reasons you *should* and *ought* to feel happier, but the fact is you don’t—and you’re not sure why.

- **“I’m unhappy...there, I said it!”**

It’s not that you are mired in unhappiness, but you feel unhappy more often than you would like.

I believe we were meant to be happy and that happiness can be designed and created if we know how. The fact is that happiness is largely a byproduct of your thinking, your choices and your behaviors—that means happiness comes from within. *Seven Secrets to Happiness!* will give you the insight you need to align your thinking, your choices and your behavior for a life of happiness, meaning and fulfillment.

“Everybody’s got a right to feel happy!”

–Mo Keb, Singer





Table of Contents:

Introduction: This Way to Happiness! 1

The First Happiness Secret: Your Perspective Is Your Reality! 5

The Second Happiness Secret: Your Vision is the Blueprint for Your Life! 11

The Third Happiness Secret: Master Your Self-talk, Master Your Life! 17

The Fourth Happiness Secret: Self-Confidence Rocks! 20

The Fifth Happiness Secret: There Is No Substitute for Self-love! 39

The Sixth Happiness Secret: Gratitude, the Great Happiness Multiplier! 48

The Seventh Happiness Secret: Action Fuels Your Happiness! 59

Bonus Chapter: How to Rise Above Your

Circumstances! 65

Wrapping It Up! 70

Introduction:

This Way to Happiness!

This book isn't about being happy—it's about learning to be *happier*. I assume you are happy to varying degrees about different aspects of your life. But if you want to experience deeper levels of happiness, fulfillment and if you want to thrive more in your life—this book will help you do that.

Life is about discovery, growth and mastery—it is meant to be lived with a sense of purpose, drive and excitement. But how?

If you want to be happier, there's no shortage of advice on how to get there. Some will tell you that happiness is your natural state and that you deserve to be happy. On the other hand, many are quick to say that life is difficult and your happiness will come and go depending on your circumstances.

Donald Trump seems to be happy with a lot of wealth, power and attention, while Bill and Melinda Gates are busy helping others have a better life. It begs the question, “Which way to happiness?” Will you be happier by *getting more* for yourself or by *giving more*? Better yet, is seeking happiness even a good idea or is the pursuit of happiness an exercise in frustration?

What does it take to make happiness a way of life? Many of us think more money is part of the equation. Despite the evidence that money can't buy real happiness, we still can't keep from thinking of what it *can* buy—not to mention the bills it would pay off.



Some would tell you your happiness is being smothered by all the “things” in your life and if you downsized your house, car or wardrobe and lived the “minimalist” lifestyle, you would be happier. Their philosophy is “Less is more!”

On the other hand, the “health and wealth” evangelists proclaim that “more is better!” And if you’re not “religious,” you can check in with author and international speaker Randy Gage who will tell you that it’s a “sin” to be poor. Did that get your attention or what?

And if you’re a little confused, you’re not alone.

Beyond the debate about money and possessions boosting happiness, many think the answer lies in finding their “soul mate.” There are plenty of books and coaches that will tell you finding the right person will somehow “complete” your life. If you find your soul mate, you will find your bliss.

But wait...someone else comes along and tells you that you aren’t happy because

you're self-centered. You selfish thing!
According to this thinking, happiness is to be found in a life of service to others. We all admire Mother Theresa, but I think there's more to the story.

What about your own needs? We've all heard "It's more blessed to give than to receive"—but what does that mean? After all, burnout is a serious challenge for professional "caregivers"—therapists, physicians, nurses, medical missionaries and teachers. What's up with that?

With so much conflicting and confusing information and advice out there, what can you do? Here's what: **You can figure it out for yourself... but you don't have to do it by yourself.** I'm going to help you rethink what you know about happiness and what it takes for *you* to thrive in life.

Begin by asking yourself if you are happy to the degree you know you can be and you know you want to be. My guess is you are happy to some degree but you intuitively know there is more to life than you have found. If so, read on.

The First Secret to Happiness: Your Perspective Is Your Reality!

The first secret to happiness is that *your perspective becomes your reality*. That means you can change your reality by changing your perspective. That gives you a lot of power—the power to choose *how* you think about the challenges and opportunities in your life—what I call *Perspective Power*.

Your perspective—or mindset—will make things easier or harder, bigger or smaller, impossible or possible. Perspective and mindset explains why certain situations stop some people and motivate others.

Here's how John Milton put it:

**“The mind is its own place and in itself
can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.”**

John Milton. Paradise Lost

Knowing the *Seven Secrets to Happiness* isn't enough; you have to apply them. To do that, when you think about your current challenges or opportunities, you have to remind yourself that you are not dealing with "reality." You are dealing with your perception of reality—and those are two very different things!

Just because you think you cannot find a job you love or your "soul mate" doesn't make it so. Unless that's how you see it—then, *you* will make it so. It will be your reality.

What is "reality" anyway? We use that word as shorthand for "This is how I see the situation." The problem is we *think that our perception of reality is "reality."*

But how we see things is not reality—**it's our hallucination**—the end result of

whatever passes through the filters of our beliefs—our past conditioning, fears and more. The fact is that we all have filters and our filters color and distort the “reality” we refer to.

If you want to be happier, the quickest way is to change your perspective—how you are looking at and thinking about your circumstances. And before you think I’m suggesting that you live in denial and pretend all is well, that’s not what I’m saying.

I’m saying that we often choose (subconsciously—without thinking things through) to view our circumstances and challenges in a way that makes them worse than they are. As human beings, we’re pretty good at three things:

- *Distortion*: distorting the facts and evidence (“There’s *nothing* I can do to make this better” or “I’ve done *everything* I can to solve my problem.”)
- *Deletion*: deleting facts and evidence (“Nothing good happens to me.”)
- *Generalization*: generalizing from specifics (“I failed to reach my goal” becomes “I’m not capable of success.”)

In short, when it comes to choosing our perspective (how we’re going to view our circumstances and challenges) we can make things easier (maybe not easy—but *easier*!) simply by choosing thoughts and perspectives that open up possibilities rather than deleting them. That requires conscious thinking rather than letting our brain and mind run on autopilot.

The next time you are in a bad mood or frame of mind, stop and realize you're letting your mind run on autopilot—it's running a mental program that is designed to create emotional states that will keep you stuck and frustrated.

Many intelligent, talented and capable people get hijacked by their emotions because they allow their circumstances to control their thinking—instead of adjusting and changing their perspective.

The good news is that your *state of happiness* doesn't have to be determined by your *state of circumstances*. We know this to be true because some people are *unhappy* even in the “best” of circumstances and some people are *happy* even in the “worst” of circumstances.

How do you explain that? The only explanation lies in the power of perspective. The fact is that when you change your perspective, you change everything—most importantly, yourself.

If you view your situation as static and unchangeable, that's the way it will be. It won't be reality—but it will be *your reality*—and you will be stuck and frustrated. But when you shift your perspective, you will not only feel lighter and happier; you will be able to take effective action to make your life better.

If you want to thrive and to own your world, despite what is going on around you, you have to master the first secret to happiness:

Your perspective is your reality.

*“Nothing is good or bad,
but thinking makes it so.”*

-William Shakespeare

Vision: The Blueprint for Your Life!

The second secret to happiness is that *your vision is your blueprint for the future*—it's what your subconscious mind uses to shape your life! Where do you see yourself in six months, one year and beyond?

Your vision of your future—short term or long term—is simply what you see happening in your mind's eye. Is the vision you have what you really want? How clear—and exciting—is your vision?

In case you are wondering why (or if) it's important to get clear on what you want in life, consider this: you will manifest what you want faster the more you keep your mind on what you want—thereby keeping it off of what you don't want.

Most of us have a difficult time keeping our mind *off* of what we don't want. The worries, fears and doubts seem to pop up without any prompting on our part! How do you keep your mind off of what you don't want?

The way to do that is to shift your mind to what you *do* want—your brain cannot stop doing anything—it can only *start* doing something else!

That's where getting specific and clear on what you do want comes in. It gives your brain and subconscious mind direction on what to focus on!

You know you want more for your life—but what *exactly* do you want? You simply cannot create or attract what you cannot identify and describe—your subconscious mind needs clarity. Too many people are on a plateau because they are not clear on what they *really* want.

You have to get crystal clear on what is important to you and what you want because your subconscious mind *will* manifest your vision. Here's how Lillian Whiting put it: "*The vision always precedes the reality.*"

If your life is lacking in some area, it's likely because *you have conflicting desires* (I want to lose weight but I don't want to change how I eat) *or because you don't believe it's possible.*

What is your current vision for your life? When you play a mental movie of your life vision, what do you see, hear and feel?

Do you see yourself doing work that is satisfying and fulfilling? Are you living from inspiration and joy? Are you surrounded by close friends and family who "get" you and you them? Are you enjoying not only financial abundance but an abundant and prosperous life?

Whatever vision you have, *that's what your subconscious mind thinks you want*. It's time to give your subconscious a vision worthy of your true self—and if not now, when?

To be happy you have to be motivated—and to be motivated you have to discover what's already inside of you that you are naturally drawn to. The vision of what you *really* want to achieve, to be and to experience is inside you—but you have to trust yourself in order to connect with it—for most, it is buried beneath hurts, disappointments and fear. You can breathe life into it.

If you want to be happier, get clear on what you want to be, what you want to do and where you want to go in your life. Make it as real as you can in your mind—like you were actually there.

The actor Jim Carrey tells the story of writing himself a *ten million* dollar check and putting it in his wallet to look at. He had

already earned a million dollars when he did that, so you might think that's why he could imagine ten-million dollars for one movie.

But Carrey had already practiced imagining what he wanted. At the age of ten, he sent his resume to the Carol Burnett show. Ten years old! Even at that age, Carrey was mentally designing his life and making it real to himself. What about you?

Knowing what you want and believing in your ability to bring it about makes you happy. It releases "feel good" chemicals in your brain and throughout your body. When you think about your future, what do you see?

- Do you see yourself "better off" three months, six months from now?
- Do you see yourself doing what you love and being fulfilled?

- Do you see yourself surrounded by those who love and support you while you love and support them?
- Do you see yourself healthy, fit and full of energy?

To get clear on what you want in your life, begin by writing out your life vision—and to make it simple, do a rough draft first.

Write fast and let your subconscious give you the “bullet points” of what you want your life to be like. Don't edit anything along the way; just get it down on paper. Suspend your judgment about what is “possible,” “realistic” or “right.” When your subconscious tells you something, just let it flow onto the paper.

You can give more thought to what you write out later—just get it on “paper.” If the thought of owning and flying a helicopter comes up for you, write that down without judgment. Your conscious mind will tell you

that you're crazy; that's fine, just tell it to hold that thought and you will come back to it later.

If your subconscious says you want to be a rock star (I know, crazy—right?) write it down! These are important clues for your conscious mind and you want to respect that. Go with the flow and write down whatever pops up for you...and enjoy the process.

This isn't the time to think about *how* you will achieve something. *It's time to listen to what your heart says.* The *how* will be revealed along the way as you take inspired action—**your job is to get clear on the *what* first; not the *how*.**

Tip: You can also create a “Vision Board” using words and images from magazines and putting them on a poster board, your refrigerator or—wherever—depicting how your life would be if it was freaking fantastic! You can even make a digital

vision board and you can have several vision boards; one for your overall life and several that are theme centered, such as for health or relationships or financial abundance.

Bonus tip: instead of choosing between *writing* out your Life Vision or *creating a vision board on poster boards or digitally*, you can do both if you like.

Your subconscious mind is powerful and your job is to fill it with a clear and exciting *vision* for what you want. Be an imaginative child again and daydream—then use the positive energy you get to take steps towards your dreams.

Remember, you don't have a choice about whether you have a vision for your life or not. Your current thoughts and beliefs about how your life will unfold in the near and distant future *is* your life vision.

So, you have a life vision, that's not a choice. But you do get to choose what that vision is. Make full use of the second secret to happiness: your vision is the blueprint for your life. Here are some things to think about:

“Dream lofty dreams, and as you dream, so shall you become. Your Vision is the promise of what you shall one day be. Your Ideal is the prophecy of what you shall at last unveil.” — James Allen

"Your imagination is your preview of life's coming attractions" — Albert Einstein

“If you limit your choices only to what seems possible or reasonable, you disconnect yourself from what you truly want, and all that is left is a compromise.”

— Robert Fritz

The Third Secret to Happiness: Master Your Self-talk, Master Your Life!

The third secret to happiness is *master your self-talk, master your life*. What is self-talk? It's simply your ongoing thoughts and inner communication. And here's why you have to master your self-talk to master your life: *self-talk leads to emotions, emotions lead to behavior and behavior leads to results*.

You master your life by mastering how you think because ultimately your thoughts (self-talk) create the outcomes in your life.

How important is your self-talk? We know that how we communicate with *others* is critical—but what about how you communicate with yourself? Your self-talk is the foundation upon which you build everything else and it is responsible for:

- What you *feel* (your emotional energy)
- What you *do* (how you perform in life, at work and in)
- The results you manifest in life

Your ongoing self-talk explains why you can feel “up” one minute and “down” the next. It also solves the mystery of why you take action on some things and procrastinate on others—you *literally talk yourself into something or you talk yourself out of it.*

Elite athletes know how important their self-talk is—that’s why most of them have coaches to help them with the psychological and emotional aspects of winning.

“Elite athletes know that their ‘*inner game*’ is as important as their physical training.”

You might not be an elite athlete, but how well you do in life has to do with your self-talk. If you think about what you *really* want in life—but then tell yourself that what you want isn't “realistic”—you will talk yourself out of what you want. Oops!

You are the most important person you communicate with—don't you deserve the best you can give yourself? If so, here's a question: Are you more careful in how you communicate with friends or strangers than how you communicate with yourself?

Most of us don't pay attention to our self-talk because we are so used to it. To become aware of your self-talk, I suggest you pick three times a day to pay close attention to your “inner dialogue.” It will revolutionize your life.

Start writing down some of your self-talk at least once a day to make it more concrete.

Begin to notice that how you talk to yourself affects everything from how you feel to what you do or don't do.

If you compliment yourself, you will feel good; if you criticize yourself, you will feel bad. Tell yourself you can do something and you are more likely to succeed; tell yourself you can't and you see what happens.

The WYSTTYBF” Test:

What if you talked to yourself the way you talk to someone you love and believe in? Here's an assignment: The next time you are overly frustrated or a little down, stop and pay attention to your thoughts. Write them all down and then ask yourself this question: “Would You Say That to Your Best Friend?” I call it The “*WYSTTYBF*” Test. (Sounds like “Wistibif”)

For instance, would you tell someone you cared about that they *should* be further along in life? That they *should* have handled a situation better? That if they wanted to succeed “bad enough,” they would find a way?

Some would call that tough love—but it’s not. I’m all for being realistic and even straightforward—but not for tapping into shame, guilt and judgment. So watch your self-talk and learn to be both honest and empathetic with yourself.

If you master the third secret of happiness by mastering your self-talk, you will take action quicker and be more resilient. Why is that?

Because *self-talk leads to emotions, emotions lead to behaviors and behavior leads to your results.*

Self-confidence Rocks!

The fourth secret to happiness is that self-confidence rocks! Nothing can replace self-confidence—especially when the odds seem to be stacked against you. Your happiness depends upon you believing you are capable of becoming and achieving what you set your mind to.

That raises the question “Why are some people more confident than others?” One reason is that they identify and build on their strengths—not their weaknesses—and that fuels their self-confidence. They know they will never eliminate their weaknesses and *they don't care*; instead they dance to the music of their strengths.

It's time to learn to unleash the energy of self-confidence that is within you. You

might be wondering “If I have this confidence inside, why don’t I feel it more often?” Because your self-confidence gets dampened by your doubts, fears and self-criticism.

Another reason we don’t feel more confident is because we get hypnotized by our circumstances and we view them as unchangeable—for instance, many feel stuck in a job they don’t love. They have a lot of reasons for not finding a better opportunity—what they don’t have is the confidence to solve their problem

Your confidence empowers you to see past problems, setbacks and difficulties. It moves you into action when logic and reason tells you to be realistic and admit defeat.

Refuse to be hypnotized into believing things will never change—instead, believe

in your ability to change yourself and your circumstances. Movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn had an amusing take on challenges when he said "*It's absolutely impossible—but it has possibilities.*"

Self-confidence isn't an esoteric or vague idea, especially when you are pushed to your limits. It's as practical as it gets because *self-confidence moves us into action and that creates even more self-confidence.*

I want you to take action now and choose an area of your life you want to improve: health, self-esteem, finances, relationships; you choose. Then list ten things—big or small—that will move you closer to what you want. Next, prioritize your list and begin today to take action on what is on your list.

Go over your list every day, take action and *notice your progress*. You will feel better from the start because you are telling the universe you are serious. The positive energy you create will then make it easier for you to take the next step and keep the momentum going. If you haven't taken action on making your list and prioritizing it, do it now or schedule a time to do it.

Now let's get back to your self-confidence: you didn't come into this world programmed to second guess and criticize yourself—you learned how to do that!

Early on, you believed in yourself, knew what you want, set goals and achieved them. That's how you learned to crawl and then walk—then before you knew it—you were off and running.

You didn't question your worth and everyone around you told you how great you

were—at least for a while! The problem is, even though most children begin their life with plenty of positive reinforcement, it doesn't last forever.

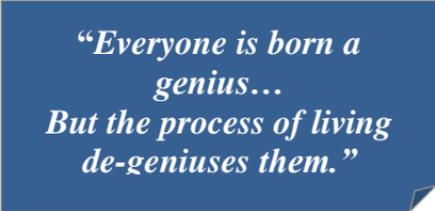
At some point, they began to get messages (mostly unintentional) that they were not good enough. They were taught to hate mistakes and to fear failure. They were taught to feel bad about mistakes and failures—and to ultimately feel bad about themselves.

They were taught that there is a right way and a wrong way for everything. They began to feel there was something wrong with them if said or did the “wrong” thing. And they were taught something is wrong with them if they failed to say or do the “right” thing.

They learned that when that they were “wrong,” someone was going to be unhappy with them—and slowly they learned to be

unhappy with themselves. Their self-esteem, self-worth and self-confidence took a hit. Over time, the good feelings got less and less...

Buckminster Fuller said *“Everyone is born a genius, but the process of living de-geniuses them”*

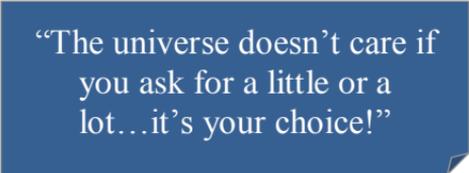


*“Everyone is born a
genius...
But the process of living
de-geniuses them.”*

Many years are spent teaching children to conform and to not ask so many questions. They begin to learn that some kids are special and some are not. They learn that it's dangerous to rock the boat and they learn to not question authority and so on.

As a result, their self-confidence smolders and they begin to expect less and less and to ask for less and less. Their natural instinct of curiosity, imagination and fearlessness takes back seat to settling for “the way things are.”

Children know what they want and they keep on asking for it until they get it. Then “life” happens to them and they began to tell themselves they don’t really want much. What about you?



“The universe doesn’t care if you ask for a little or a lot...it’s your choice!”

What is your self-confidence like? Is it like a roaring fire, smoldering coals—or somewhere in between? Has “life” dampened your inner fire? Have you been beaten up a few times by circumstances and

don't feel like you can really go for what you want?

You have to trust yourself enough to go inside and find your true self—that's where your self-confidence is.

The challenge is that we are bombarded with conflicting messages about trusting ourselves and believing in ourselves:

- “Don't get a big head!”
- “So, you think you're better than everyone else?”
- And here's the big one: “Pride goes before a fall.”
- And how about this one: “The bigger they are, the harder they fall!”

These warnings are lengthy and they create fear, uncertainty and hesitation—when what you need is more self-confidence! You might be thinking, “What about the ones who are *over* confident?”

My response to that question? That’s hardly the problem most of us face. *However, if you really do think too much of yourself* (which comes from a lack of confidence!) there are plenty of people willing to “take you down a notch!”

Your level of self-confidence drives your choices and behaviors, which explains why some people get ahead, some march in place and some fall behind. Think about what changes you would like to make in your life—and then think about how much confidence you have or don’t have to make those changes.



(Photo by [Robbie Grubbs.](#))

Believing in yourself is absolutely crucial to move to higher levels in your life. If you

What do you do when your problems and challenges seem to be so much bigger than you are? Here are three ways to get your self-confidence rocking:

1) Quit Comparing Yourself to Others:

How can you really compare yourself to anyone else when there is no basis for comparison—after all, there is only one you! It's about time you get how rare and valuable you are.

Far too many people live their life feeling they are not smart enough, good enough, capable enough or attractive enough because they fall into the trap of comparing themselves to others.

For example, think about the people who go to a weight loss group and feel bad because

someone else has lost more weight. They go away unhappy, frustrated and disappointed in themselves—all because they played “The Comparison Game.”

It’s fine to look at other people in a way that inspires you. Otherwise, *your progress should be measured against yourself; not against others.*

You are the only one in the universe that can make the contributions you can. When you own that, you will begin to own the world—or at least your corner of it.

2) Let Go of the Need to be Perfect—and realize that you won’t do it perfectly!

How many of us hear an inner voice speaking up saying something like “I *should* do better,” “I *need* to do better” or “If only I had more of ____.” That’s perfectionism at work.

If you feel you aren't capable of achieving what you really want—a better job, starting your own business, writing a book, losing weight, or whatever—the culprit is likely to be perfectionism. Not feeling good enough or capable enough is also driven and sustained by perfectionism.

Most of us could stand to ease up on ourselves and give ourselves a break. The problem is that when you're down on yourself (perfectionism) it's tempting to think you need to be harder on yourself!

That's when the self-criticism—a form of perfectionism—kicks in: *“What’s wrong with me?” “I just need to get off my rear end and do it!”*

When you get caught up in these kinds of thoughts, take a breath and remember:

“Criticism kills self-confidence.”

(Criticism and constructive feedback are not the same thing.)

Criticism comes at a terrible price and has a short shelf-life when it comes to improving your performance. On the other hand, self-acceptance and self-love creates the positive energy you need to perform at your best.

The Universe is patiently waiting on you to see yourself for who you really are underneath the labels, limitations and lies that your subconscious mind has taken in. Begin to question whatever labels and limitations you have accepted and then let them go as quickly as you are ready.

3) Build Your Own Fan Club:

Does the idea of having your own fan club seem a little whacky or maybe a little narcissistic? If so, think of it this way—if the people you spend the most time with don't really support you, then by default, they are dragging you down.

You want to hang out with those who “get” who you are and with those who are excited about the vision you have for yourself and your life—you want confidence boosters not confidence busters.

You don’t have to build a big fan club but if you want to be happier, you need the right people in your life—even if it’s a small number. Get them, love them and be their raving fan in return. That way, everyone wins.

Remember, the fourth secret to happiness is that self-confidence rock and the three ways to build your self-confidence are:

- **Quit Comparing Yourself To Others**
- **Let Go of the Need to be Perfect**
- **Build Your Own Fan Club of Raving Fans**

There Is No Substitute for Self-love!

The fifth secret to happiness is all about self-love because *it's impossible to be happy if you're not happy with yourself*. To become happier, love yourself more!

Why is it so difficult for so many of us to love and accept ourselves more? To answer that question we have to go back in time... to your earlier, formative years. I know...we're all adults now and we should forget the past and just move forward. That sounds good but it doesn't work that way.

Why? Because it's a lot easier to move forward when you take your foot off of your mental and emotional brakes. What brakes? How about fear, worrying, self-doubt and self-criticism? Where did these things begin? That's right—in the early years of childhood conditioning—where your inner foundation is formed.

Take a look at some of the ways we learned to put the brakes on our happiness:

- Self-criticism
- Ongoing self-doubt
- Criticizing others
- Self-neglect
- Fear and Anxiety
- Isolating ourselves
- Procrastination
- Suppressing emotions
- Narcissism (narcissism indicates a lack of self-love; not too much of it!)
- Passive-aggressive behavior
- Aggressive behavior
- Depression

All of us enter adulthood with our mental and emotional brakes on to some degree. Otherwise, we would be more free, daring and happy in life! But reality says that most of us are not quite there yet. The question is “Are you heading in that direction and at

what speed?” A number of things can keep us from thriving in our lives and careers. Fear, guilt and shame are common struggles but they often go undetected.

Have you ever thought “I *should* do better!” or “What’s wrong with me?” That’s guilt and shame at work and the solution isn’t to be “tougher” on yourself—after all, even machines operate more efficiently when they receive loving attention and care.

Do you struggle with procrastination or find it hard to get out of your comfort zone and take the risks necessary to live more fully? Have you ever made the connection between procrastination and fear—and the need to love and accept yourself on deeper levels?

What do we do when we are afraid? Too often we hesitate and pull back—we procrastinate. Then we criticize ourselves for not pushing past our fears—like that works!

We know intuitively that we need love and acceptance but we often choose to be self-critical or to drive ourselves harder instead. Even though neither is effective, it's what we know and what we're comfortable with. What can we do about that?

We can learn how to love and accept ourselves *as we are now* and learn to change our self-talk so we can make healthier choices. Fear, guilt and shame chip away at the foundation of our self-worth and self-confidence and that creates emotional pain.

Then we don't know what to do with that pain. If we talk about it, are we complaining—or worse yet, are we attracting even more pain into our life?

That's what many, if not most, of the *Law of Attraction* teachers would have us to believe. Many teach that thinking about or speaking of anything “negative” brings more of the same into our lives. There's some

truth to that—but I don't think it's the whole story!

We can certainly bring more misery into our life by focusing too much on that pain. But the solution isn't to smile and say “Everything is just fine, thank you,” when the truth is, it isn't.

Love empowers you to listen, empathize and validate your pain so you emerge with greater insight, compassion and with a sense of your inner power.

Berating yourself for what you call “negative” emotions—which many do—only creates more of the same. Don't criticize, suppress or deny any of your emotions; instead, *learn from them*.

Times of fear, worry, anxiety, shame, guilt, self-doubt and the feeling that we're not good enough can be opportunities for growth and development. It all begins with

learning to accept and embrace *all* our emotions.

We can talk about *all* of our emotions, not just the “positive” ones—because there is no such thing as “negative” emotions—they are all “positive” if we know what to do with them.

When talking about our challenges in life and how we feel about them, the important thing is our intent. Is our intent to just complain and blame or is our intent to gain more understanding, compassion and emotional maturity? See the difference?

Loving yourself, accepting yourself and valuing yourself doesn't mean you have to always stay positive and upbeat. We have a full range of emotions for a reason—our emotions are our teachers and will enlighten us—if we will listen.

The reality is that your happiness will rise only as high as your ability to love and accept yourself *as you are now*.

That being so, where do you begin? Here are my **Top Ten Ways to Love and Accept Yourself Now:**

- 1) Make a list of what you consider to be your *strengths* and positive characteristics—read at least several things on that list *every day*.
- 2) Forgive yourself (Can't think of anything to forgive yourself for? Are you sure?)
- 3) When you judge yourself, ask yourself if you would judge your best friend that way. Keep learning how to let go of the need to be perfect.
- 4) When you achieve something or reach a goal, celebrate it and reward yourself.
- 5) Start a list of all your past *achievements* (big and small) and allow yourself to enjoy reliving them in your mind.

- 6) Surround yourself with those who will bring out the best in you and stay away from those who undermine your self-confidence and self-worth!
- 7) Tap into the power of thankfulness and gratitude to heal yourself of past hurts
- 8) Develop your ability to pay attention to and manage your self-talk throughout the day.
- 9) Ask three people you trust and who know you well to write you a letter detailing what they love and respect about you.
- 10) Get a good coach or therapist that will help you rock your world.

The most loving thing you can do for yourself, those you love and for others is to keep learning how to support, nurture and love yourself. That's the fifth secret to happiness! With a nod to Tina Turner: "What's *Self-Love* Got to do with it?"

It turns out...so much that it's the fifth secret to happiness! Here are some things to think about:

“You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection.” ~Buddha

“Of all the judgments we pass in life, none is more important than the judgment we pass on ourselves.” ~Nathaniel Branden

“People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in their true beauty is revealed only if there is light from within.” ~Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

“All things splendid have been achieved by those who dared believe that something inside them was superior to circumstance.” ~Bruce Barton

Too many people overvalue what they are not and undervalue what they are. ~Malcolm S. Forbes

Gratitude: The Great Happiness Multiplier!

The sixth secret to happiness is that *gratitude is the great happiness multiplier*. Think about this: It's impossible to be unhappy when you are grateful and it's impossible to be happy when you are not grateful.

Gratitude is almost magical in its ability to transform your life because when you notice the wonder and magic in life, you get more of it.

Martin Seligman, Ph.D., known for his pioneering work in positive psychology found that gratitude is a powerful antioxidant for depression even in the tough

cases. (Just because something is simple doesn't mean it's easy.)

When we focus on what is “right” in our lives and on what we can feel thankful for—even on a small level—our happiness naturally increases.

Gratitude isn't the entire answer to the challenges of life but it is part of the equation that is often overlooked. Why? Because we are so busy and because it's easy to take what we do have for granted. Now is always a good time to ask yourself what you have in your life to feel good about.

**“What do you have in your life
to feel good about...now?”**

There are times in everyone's life when it seems that everything has gone wrong and the future looks bleak. That's when it's important to be mindful of anything and everything there is to feel good about—you have to take charge and tell your brain and subconscious mind what you want it to notice and focus on.

Seeing what's wrong and focusing on what we don't have seems to come easy. When I was a psychotherapist, my clients never had any trouble telling me about their frustrations, problems and heartaches.

They needed my help to shift their focus from where they had been in life to where they wanted to go and to shift from what was wrong in their life to what was right in their life.

What we focus on tends to grow—so ask yourself what you have been growing more of in your life. If we focus on what others haven't done for us we will become resentful and push people away. If we focus on what others *have* done for us, others will sense our appreciation and want to give even more.

I know what it's like to be betrayed by a best friend and I know what it's like to have a business partner spread lies about me (and others) before I knew what was going on.

When those things happen we have to decide what we're going to do with them. We can allow them to consume and destroy us or we can deal with the pain and become wiser, more loving and more in love with the preciousness of life.

It's a matter of focus. That might seem harsh, but it's the way it works. If you want to develop a stronger *gratitude consciousness*, start simple and learn as you go. Why not stop right now and write down three things that you are thankful for (no matter how small):

1)

2)

3)

If you haven't written three things out, please take a few seconds and do it now. If you have already done so, pause and notice the positive effects of doing something so simple. Did it change everything and right all the tragedies in life? No, but it's a beginning and it can change your life.

To continue to build on your gratitude consciousness, here are four things you can do:

1) Keep a simple gratitude journal:

This can be as easy as writing down three things a day you have to be thankful for. Start your three things with “I am grateful for...” and finish the sentence. You can use other phrases such as “I am thankful for ___ or perhaps “This makes me feel good:”

The things you list can be anything from being thankful for your eyesight to feeling good about exercising that day or to appreciating a compliment someone gave you ten years ago.

The point is to do it and develop it into a habit—one that pays off big time.

2) Write a thank you note:

Write a short thank you note or letter to someone who has impacted you in some way. The time you take and the love you invest in your note or letter will probably make that person's day—and yours as well! From time to time, why not write a thank you note to yourself! It might feel strange at first, but it will do wonders for you over time.

3) Express your appreciation to at least one person a day:

It doesn't matter if that person is a friend, family member, work colleague or a stranger. A simple, "Thank you, I appreciate that" when someone compliments you or does something small for you will do. Or you could tell someone what you see in them that you like, respect or admire. And guess

what—the person you choose for the day can even be you!

4) Do something once a day for someone—even yourself:

Doing something nice or helpful for someone (or yourself) is a way of expressing gratitude. Before and after you do whatever you decide to do, *tell yourself* you are doing it as a way of expressing your gratitude and to give back.

Even if you are in the habit of doing something every day for a family member or for yourself, the key is to notice it and to *become more conscious of why you are doing it*—to express your gratitude.

Remember that gratitude is the great multiplier of happiness. There are few things you can do to increase your joy, happiness and sense of fulfillment that is simpler or easier than focusing on what you are thankful for. It takes little time and it doesn't happen by accident; you have to be intentional about gratitude.

To help you grow in your gratitude consciousness, here are some quotes on gratitude to meditate upon:

“Reflect upon your present blessings of which every man has plenty; not on your past misfortunes of which all men have some.” Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

“Gratitude is a vaccine, an antitoxin and an antiseptic.” John Henry Jowett (1864-1923)
Presbyterian Minister and Writer

"Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what

you don't have, you will never, ever have enough." Oprah Winfrey

"He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things which he has not, but rejoices for those which he has." Epictetus (AD 55-AD 135) Greek Philosopher, born a slave

"A thankful person is thankful under all circumstances." Baha u llah (1817-1892) Persian Founder of the Bahai Faith

"Let us rise up and be thankful, for if we didn't learn a lot today, at least we learned a little, and if we didn't learn a little, at least we didn't get sick, and if we got sick, at least we didn't die; so let us all be thankful." Buddha (563-483 BC)

"A thankful heart hath a continual feast." W. J. Cameron (1879-1953) Journalist and Businessman

"It is only with gratitude that life becomes rich." Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) Lutheran Minister

"When you arise in the morning, think of what a privilege it is to be alive." Marcus Aurelius (121-180) Roman Emperor

“I have always been delighted at the prospect of a new day, a fresh try, one more start, with perhaps a bit of magic waiting somewhere behind the morning.” J. B. Priestley (1894-1984) Writer and Playwright

“At times our own light goes out and it is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each one of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.” Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) Nobel Peace Prize-Winning Medical Missionary and Philosopher

“Silent gratitude isn’t much use to anyone.” Gladys Bronwyn Stern (1890-1920) Novelist

“Praise the bridge that carried you over.” George Colman (1762-1836)

“We can only be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures.” Thornton Wilder (1897-1975) Novelist and Playwright

“Who does not thank for little will not thank for much.” Estonian Proverb

Action Fuels Your Happiness!

The seventh secret to happiness is that *action fuels your happiness!* We are wired for achievement and growth; not mediocrity and stagnation. Yet, many of us do not have what we really want because we are good at thinking and planning but not so great with implementation. That can change!

As important as it is to know what you want, it is equally important to go after what you want—**until you *do* something, you are just wishing.** For many, there is a *knowing-doing gap* and their happiness gets lost in that gap.

You might have heard of the bestselling book and “movie” *The Secret*. There is a lot of good in the book but it fails to address the need to take action on our desires and

dreams. That's ironic, because we know that Rhonda Byrne didn't sell over 200 million dollars of her DVD alone just by visualizing what she wanted and believing it would happen.

After all, the book didn't write itself and the "movie" didn't produce itself. And what about all that brilliant marketing that was done? Byrne had to *do something!*

*Decide what you want
and take action to get it!*

Action—or anything else—isn't *the* secret to success, fulfillment and happiness; yet how can you be happy if you're not taking action towards meaningful goals. Think about an area of your life that you have been thinking

about—but not taking action on. It could be saving money, exercising regularly, reading something constructive every day, telling your significant other how much they mean to you or making that list of your strengths.

Pick something and get started. The very act of getting started will inspire you and keep you going. If you are having difficulty getting started, check out your self-talk and make whatever adjustments you need to make—because your self-talk has to support and fuel action towards your goals.

Everyone says they want to make more money—then they entertain thoughts of lack and struggle or complain about what they don't have—forgetting that what we focus on attracts more of the same.

What do you need to take action on or take more consistent action on? Perhaps the most important action for you to take now is to learn how to adjust your self-talk so that it works for you rather than against you. Or maybe it is something else.

Do you need more support of some kind? Take action and get the support you need! Do you need help seeing the possibilities in the midst of your challenges? Take action and talk with someone that can help you shift your perspective—better yet, get a coach. Whatever you need, take action and get it. *Your happiness depends on it.*

I list action as a secret to happiness because when we are too frustrated or discouraged, we forget how powerful action and implementation is. There are plenty of intelligent people who flounder because they

don't take action. They *know* but they don't *do* and they get stuck in their mind, so to speak. If you find yourself in that place from time to time, here's a suggestion:

Make a list of at least ten action steps you can take on a certain challenge. *Then pick the easiest one and get started.* That will give you momentum and you will be in the game. Any action you take—no matter how small—is powerful because it sets you up for more success. Remember that *success begets success.*

Honor yourself for taking the smallest of steps and then celebrate each step along the way—even if it's just to congratulate yourself! Then pick another step, however small, and take that step. You will feel better with each step you take. Why? Because the

seventh secret to happiness is that action fuels your happiness.

“Action is the foundational key to all success.” -Pablo Picasso

“Action is the real measure of intelligence.”
-Napoleon Hill

“Action may not always bring happiness; but there is no happiness without action.”

-Benjamin Disraeli

“Action expresses priorities.” -Mahatma Gandhi

“There are risks and costs to action. But they are far less than the long range risks of comfortable inaction.” –John F. Kennedy

“An organization's ability to learn, and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage.” –Jack Welch

Bonus Chapter: How to Rise Above Your Circumstances!

Have you ever wondered why some rise above their challenges and others are crushed by them? We could spend a lot of time discussing why that is so, but one thing is clear: *how you view your challenges and setbacks* determines what happens next.

If you think of a challenge as the stimulus in the stimulus-response equation—between the stimulus and your response there is always a choice—always.

Happiness is a choice in the sense that we either decide to be happier and learn how to do so or we live on autopilot. Rising above circumstances demands conscious awareness and thoughtful choices—because happiness depends more on your state of mind and on taking effective action than it does on your state of circumstances.

If you *think you can* change your circumstances, you probably will—but it all begins with thinking you can. You have to take charge of your perspective and your mindset.

Mindset, attitude, belief system, perspective; whatever you want to call it—it explains a lot in life. Your mindset is not everything but it tips the scales of happiness one way or the other.

“Your mindset tips the scales of happiness one way or the other—your choice.”

I say mindset isn't everything because genetics plays a role in happiness as well; up to 50% according to some experts. But genetics isn't the deciding factor; your mindset is.

Your mindset isn't just powerful; it is subject to your control. You are the only one who can determine what your mindset will be. Because that is so, you can directly influence your happiness levels. To do this, you have to understand that...

How you feel about and react to your circumstances comes from your thoughts and beliefs about your circumstances; not directly from your circumstances.

It's not that your circumstances don't matter; it's that your perspective matters more! That's why two people facing the same circumstances can respond very differently—they face the same situation but with very different perspectives.

One ends up being proactive and making progress and the other one ends up complaining and doing little to nothing.

Most of us—by far— have been taught that “good” circumstances make us happy and “bad” circumstances make us miserable. At first glance, that makes sense. But it doesn’t when you really examine the evidence.

Think back to when you were talking with a friend who was in a “bad mood.” Being a good friend, you listened and empathized with them, asked a question or two or made a comment, and somewhere along the way their mood shifted. What happened? It’s deceptively simple—their perspective changed. It’s amazing how that works.

There is one thing we know for sure: **Our thoughts lead to our emotions.** That means if we think depressing thoughts we will feel depressed and if we think confident thoughts we will feel confident.

The late Norman Vincent Peale put it this way: “Change your thoughts and you change your world.” If you want your outer world to

change, you have to change your inner world of thoughts, beliefs and expectations.

Magic happens when we realize that we can choose our emotions by choosing our thoughts, beliefs and perspective. That realization gives us the power to change our lives, to change our destiny.

William James, considered by some to be the Father of American Psychology (1899-1944) wrote that he considered the greatest discovery of his generation to be that **“Human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.”**

Easier said than done? Sure—sometimes it’s harder at times than others because some challenges are more difficult than others. Maybe you are in a tough situation right now and it’s been getting the best of you.

That's when you need what we're talking about the most. It might not always be easy, but it always pays off—always.

You rise above your circumstances by rising above your old thoughts and beliefs and by thinking in new ways and on new levels to transform your circumstances. “As within, so without.”

Remember: your circumstances matter, but your perspective matters more.

Wrapping Seven Secrets to Happiness Up:

Happiness is created from the inside out and while outer circumstances certainly influence us they don't have to control us. You were meant to live a happy and fulfilling life but that doesn't mean it just

happens. You have to create the happiness you want from within.

You will be happier when you make a commitment to yourself to live from the *Seven Secrets to Happiness*:

- (1) *Your Perspective Is Your Reality!*
- (2) *Vision Is The Blueprint For Your Life!*
- (3) *Master Your Self-talk, Master Your Life!*
- (4) *Self-confidence Rocks!*
- (5) *There Is No Substitute for Self-love!*
- (6) *Gratitude: The Great Happiness Multiplier!*
- (7) *Action Fuels Your Happiness!*

You have taken action to achieve more happiness by reading this book—that's a start. Read this book ten times, applying what you learn, and you will be surprised at what changes will take place—spaced

repetition and action are key to retaining what you learn, including how to be happier.

Your subconscious mind doesn't change just because you tell it something one or two times. Your subconscious mind is like a garden and you are the master gardener.

You have to plant what you want in terms of your beliefs, thoughts, goals and desires...and then you have to nurture and care for your mental, emotional and spiritual garden.

Let me know how this book has helped you in any way. If you have questions about personal coaching or consulting for your organization, I am here for you. You can find additional resources for help and information about my work as a personal coach or corporate coach, trainer and speaker at <http://www.alanallard.com/> . I wish you all the success *and* happiness in the world.

Alan Allard, Ph.D.

For more information, go to:

<http://www.alanallard.com/>

What Others Are Saying About Alan:

From Scott Watson, Regional Sales and Operations Manager:

"When I think about what great coaches do, they have one thing in common. They bring out the very best a person has to offer. Alan has a very keen ability to discover, unlock, and foster those talents within. His specific and customized approach has been extremely impactful in my life.

As a result of working with Alan, I have been the beneficiary of an increased level of confidence, much more effective communication and the ability to bring both

my personal and professional life into high definition.

The most exciting results for me however, lie in the gains that have been produced within my relationships and ability to lead individuals in a large and complex environment.

In today's business when truly positive sustainable results are at a premium, I can think of nothing that has been more rewarding to that end than the coaching I have received from Alan."

*From Doug Hart, Former President
SEU Local Union # 1, Chicago:*

"When I was transitioning from the number two position to President and CEO of my organization, Alan's coaching and insight was great in helping me make that transition more successful."

From Nick Osborne, Author and Marketing Expert:

“So how about coaching? Is it an effective way to get ahead? Can paying a business coach to talk with you over the phone really make a difference?”

I must admit to having a small demon on my shoulder when it comes to coaching. It's probably a second cousin to the demon who whispers in my ear when confronted by a therapist. Part of me is just daring the person to utter that awful phrase, "How does that make you feel?"

Recently I went through a few months of coaching.

And here's the bottom line:

I will make twice as much during the second half of this year as I did during the first half. And next year is looking even better. So how does this weird magic work? How can

talking with a business coach make that kind of a difference? My coach was Alan Allard.

He's a patient man. I probably spent the first two sessions introducing him to my demon. After all, the guy used to be a therapist himself. And I think he came perilously close to asking me how I felt on a couple of occasions.

For the first few sessions at least, I had very little idea of what he was trying to do with me. I couldn't quite figure out the process he was following. As it turned out, that didn't really matter. In fact, the entire experience was like trying to grab hold of mist. What he did, with his cauldron and frogs and eyes of newt, was re-awaken a level of self-confidence I had somehow lost. Not just in myself, but in my work. (And no, I had no idea I had lost that level of self-confidence. That realization came as quite a shock to me.)

Feeling good is one thing. Feeling good in a way that one can directly apply to one's work or business is quite another. In other

words, he didn't just sugar coat me with a cloud of ethereal, feel-good encouragement. He gave me something I could take to the bank.

I have no idea when or how it happened, but he quietly opened a couple of doors deep inside me and then stood back and waited. And I guess that's his skill. To open or re-open doors. To enable people to tap into strengths and depths which they either never knew they had, or had somehow forgotten.

Perhaps Alan won't thank me for describing him in a pointy hat with a large cauldron. I use the analogy simply because I can't unravel the mystery of how he made his magic. All I know is that it worked.

So if you have a feeling that you're not moving ahead in your career as fast as you could, or that your freelance business should be booming, but isn't, consider engaging a business coach. And if you want to speak with Alan, he's a great coach and an outstanding person."

*From Mark Sanders, Professional Speaker
and Author:*

"Participating in your workshop, 'Creating Continual Patterns of Success' was refreshing and enlightening. The atmosphere was warm and genuine.

I found your material to be cutting edge, and I wanted you to know that I began implementing ideas from your workshop immediately. Your grasp for the subject matter, humor, and heartfelt stories made the workshop most interesting. I plan to attend other workshops presented by you in the future, and I have already told several colleagues about the workshop."

From William Pyritz, Lucent Technologies:

"Thank you for the inspiring and motivational 'Maximum Achievement' seminar that you presented...I have been applying many of the principles that were presented and have found them to be

applicable not only on the job but in all aspects of my life.

It is clear to me that the presentation of the material was enhanced greatly by your insights and personal skills. Your ability to understand and communicate how human emotions and thought processes function to make us who we are made the material come to life and find its application.

Thanks again for a most enjoyable and profitable seminar!"

Sign up for Alan's newsletter and blog at:
<http://www.alanallard.com>