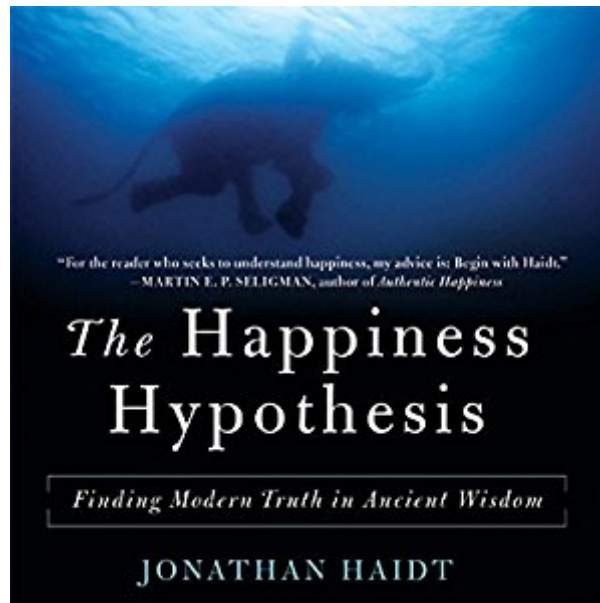




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The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth In Ancient Wisdom



Synopsis

Jonathan Haidt skillfully combines two genres-philosophical wisdom and scientific research-delighting the reader with surprising insights. He explains, for example, why we have such difficulty controlling ourselves and sticking to our plans; why no achievement brings lasting happiness, yet a few changes in your life can have profound effects, and why even confirmed atheists experience spiritual elevation. In a stunning final chapter, Haidt addresses the grand question "How can I live a meaningful life?," offering an original answer that draws on the rich inspiration of both philosophy and science. "The Happiness Hypothesis is a wonderful and nuanced book that provides deep insight into some of the most important questions in life--Why are we here? What kind of life should we lead? What paths lead to happiness? From the ancient philosophers to cutting edge scientists, Haidt weaves a tapestry of the best and the brightest. His highly original work on elevation and awe--two long-neglected emotions--adds a new weave to that tapestry. A truly inspiring book." -David M. Buss, author of *The Evolution of Desire: Strategies of Human Mating*

In this beautifully written book, Jonathan Haidt shows us the deep connection that exists between cutting-edge psychological research and the wisdom of the ancients. It is inspiring to see how much modern psychology informs life's most central and persistent questions-Barry Schwartz, author of *The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less*

In our quest for happiness, we must find a balance between modern science and ancient wisdom, between East and West, and between "left brain" and "right brain." Jon Haidt has struck that balance perfectly, and in doing so has given us the most brilliant and lucid analysis of virtue and well-being in the entire literature of positive psychology. For the reader who seeks to understand happiness, my advice is: Begin with Haidt.

-Martin E.P. Seligman, Director, Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania and author of *Authentic Happiness*

Haidt is a fine guide on this journey between past and present, discussing the current complexities of psychological theory with clarity and humor. . . Haidt's is an open-minded, robust look at philosophy, psychological fact and spiritual mystery, of scientific rationalism and the unknowable ephemeral - an honest inquiry that concludes that the best life is, perhaps, one lived in the balance of opposites.

•Bookpage --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

“Where does happiness come from? There are several different happiness hypotheses. One is that happiness comes from getting what you want, but we all know (and research confirms) that such happiness is short-lived. A more promising hypothesis is that happiness comes from within and cannot be obtained by making the world conform to your desires. This idea was widespread in the ancient world: Buddha in India and the Stoic philosophers in ancient Greece and Rome all counseled people to break their emotional attachments to people and events, which are always unpredictable and uncontrollable, and to cultivate instead an attitude of acceptance. This ancient idea deserves respect, and it is certainly true that changing your mind is usually a more effective response to frustration than is changing the world. However, I will present evidence that this second version of the happiness hypothesis is wrong. Recent research shows that there are some things worth striving for; there are some external conditions of life that can make you lastingly happier. One of these conditions is relatedness—the bonds we form, and need to form, with others. I’ll present research showing where love comes from, why passionate love always cools, and what kind of love is true love. I’ll suggest that the happiness hypothesis offered by Buddha and the Stoics should be amended: Happiness comes from within, and happiness comes from without. We need the guidance of both ancient wisdom and modern science to get the balance right.” ~ Jonathan Haidt from The Happiness Hypothesis That’s officially the longest intro quote of any of the Notes I’ve created so far but OMG. Makes you wanna read the whole book, eh?! :) Jonathan Haidt is a leading positive psychology researcher/professor at the University of Virginia and this book is an incredible look at ten Great Ideas from ancient wisdom that he brilliantly analyzes in the light of modern science while helping us apply the super practical stuff to our 21st century lives. It’s

a great blend of intellectual rigor, philosophical wisdom and nuts and-bolts practicality that I highly recommend. If this Note resonates with you, I *definitely* think you'll love the book. I put it up there with Sonja Lyubomirsky's *How of Happiness* and Tal Ben-Shahar's *Pursuit of Perfect and Happier* as some must-read positive psychology goodness. Here are some of the Big Ideas: 1. The Rider & The Elephant - Learn to ride your elephant! 2. Epiphanies - And lasting change. 3. Meditation - The magic pill. 4. Cognitive Therapy - It works. 5. Pulling the Splinter - The joy of taking responsibility. Let's get clear on our ultimate purpose and move toward it, lest we step in other people's elephant poop, yo! :) More goodness including Philosophers' Notes on 300+ books in our "OPTIMIZE" membership program. Find out more at [brianjohnson . me](http://brianjohnson.me).

I very much enjoyed this book and have recommended it to friends. Upon 2nd reading, I highlighted many of the passages and refer to them often. When I originally saw the title, I thought it might be a new age, somewhat simplistic, "how to be happy" book. But it's not. Haidt, a social psychologist who has done his homework. This is a serious book based in psychological experiments throughout the 20th (and 21st) century, and how the results of those studies compare to ancient philosophies of what makes a happy person. The main metaphor of the book is that our brains have a "rider" and an "elephant;" with the rider being our conscious rational mind, and the elephant being our instincts and base emotions. The first 1/3 of the book focuses on neurology and brain chemistry. Personally, I like that stuff. But if that's not your bag, hang tight, because the next two-thirds of the book delves into how our biology, our outlook, and our actions can affect our happiness "set point"; and how we can work to adjust that happiness range. The author is able to take complicated topics and turn them into interesting stories about the way we behave and what is the psychologically-based path to happiness.

In reading this book, I increasingly felt that this book wasn't a prescriptive note on how to be happy. That to a large degree, given the generalities & varieties of circumstances it has to be applicable to, it is; but it is much more. By & large, this book tries to build up three different points of view - the scientific, the philosophic, & the sacred. These are applied to the ways we live our lives & the ways we behave (love, reciprocity, fear, our self-view, disposition, meaning & greater purpose at work etc.) In taking this approach, Haidt ensures that the happiness formula is but an incidental byproduct of a larger phenomenon. There are aspects to being happy that we can help, then there are those that we cannot. Many reviewers note what these are, so I would not go into that. However, what I

found really interesting are specific discussions that illuminated age old questions. A chapter, for example, dwells on adversity. While adversity can be good for you, if you overcome it, it can also be debilitating. Our belief about adversity governs how we parent which is in turn governed by the love we feel towards our children. Another chapter illuminates the contradictions between theorizing about morality & defining it in intellectually satisfying terms while also dwelling on the fact that it makes for better, stronger character if you live in a well-defined group with common values that you see prescribed & lived, though some or much of such values may indeed be logically inconsistent. The chapter on the sacral dimension is another important one & discusses our manifest lives (what we do, how we live, our social circle etc) as it aligns/does not align with our views about divinity. I've re-read many of the chapters in isolation to assimilate such diverse discussions for this book packs a lot. I'd say that so far it is the most riveting, most involving book I've read this year & I'd recommend it very highly.

Very interesting book - I can't finish it because my husband has stolen it away and is busy taking notes as he reads it - and he hardly ever reads any books of this genre.....very interesting and full of information.

What I loved most about this book was being presented with so many new/different ways of looking at the human condition. I got one for \$1 at a thrift store, loved it, passed it on to my best friend, then ordered a new one for myself. This one I'm highlighting!

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