Let Go, Forgive and Set Yourself Free!

Unit 3-Set Yourself Free!

Workbook

Darian Slayton Fleming

Certified Happiness Trainer and Licensed Clinical Social Worker

office@embracehappiness.me

Written Exercises

Focus on Gratitude

Focusing on gratitude is another habit associated with "The Pillar of the Heart." Gratitude is the antidote to negative emotions such as anger, resentment, shame, and guilt. It opens the door to healing.

The world's foremost expert on gratitude, Robert Emmons, defines gratitude as a sense of wonder, thankfulness, and appreciation for life. Gratitude can be an external, visible behavior such as thanking someone. It can also be a more private, internal process such as acknowledging and reflecting on the positive aspects of life. The practice of gratitude has been linked to lower rates of depression and stress while enhancing optimism, joy, and tranquility.

Three Good Things

Try these Three Good Things Exercise for 10 minutes daily for at least two weeks (taken from The Mindfulness Toolbox.) In this exercise, you'll take time to notice and appreciate the positive experiences that happen throughout your day. Over time, practicing gratitude will weaken the negative neuropathways in your brain and strengthen more helpful thought patterns.

Each night before you go to bed, write down three things that went well for you. These things can be trivial details or more significant events. Follow each entry with an explanation of your contribution to it or why you think it happened. Consider challenging yourself further by not repeating items on subsequent days.

As you continue to practice this skill, you will notice a shift in your mindset. By becoming more able to notice and savor good things as they occur, you will cultivate a deeper sense of inner peace and wellbeing.

Three Steps to Gratitude

Instructions:

1. Get as emotional as you can. Emotions are the ignition for the universe.
2. Write down or make mental notes about ten things you are grateful for.
3. Spend five minutes asking for guidance for the day.
4. Send love to three people who are bothering you including yourself.

Values Clarification and Committed Action (ACT-Based)

Purpose:

Reduces suffering from painful emotions by aligning behavior with personal values.

Instructions:

- **List your core values (e.g., honesty, kindness, growth).**
- **Identify one small action you can take today that reflects these values, even if you're feeling guilt or shame.**

Why it works:

Helps shift from emotional avoidance to value-driven living.

Citation: Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K. D., & Wilson, K. G. (2012). ***Acceptance and commitment therapy: The process and practice of mindful change*** **(2nd ed.). Guilford Press.**

The Most Loving Things Exercises

Most of us have a habit of paying attention to everyone else and taking care of everyone else, and then we end up running on empty. Women especially have been trained to focus on everyone else rather than themselves. The following simple practice is a way to show ourselves self-love by paying attention to how we feel.

If I Loved Myself

Instructions:

- **Before making a decision, ask: “If I truly loved myself, what would I do?”**
- **Then write or reflect on the answer.**
- **Use this prompt during stressful moments or when you feel lost.**

Purpose: Guides decision-making from a place of self-love.

Why it works: Trains your inner voice to become kinder and helps you take actions aligned with self-respect.

Inspired by: Ford, K. (2018). ***The self-love experiment: Fifteen principles for becoming more kind, compassionate, and accepting of yourself*****. Tarcher Perigee.**

The Most Loving Thing Exercise

Instructions:

- **Write the following question on a Post-it note: "What's the most loving thing I can do for myself right now?"**
- **Put that question on your computer, in your kitchen, or on your mirror.**
- **A couple of times per day, stop what you're doing and ask yourself, "What's the most loving thing I can do for myself right now?"**
- **The answer might be to get a sip of water, step outside for some fresh air, phone a friend, speak more lovingly to yourself, or anything else.**
- **Then, do that action and see how your happiness set-point rises.**

Look for the Lesson and the Gift

The Foundation: Take Ownership of Your Happiness

1. Sit quietly by yourself. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths.

2. Recall a specific situation that has caused you to feel wronged or to blame others.

Picture the person or people involved, the setting, and what was said or done.

3. Imagine taking several steps back and observing the situation from a distance, as though you were watching a movie on a screen.

4. What part of what happened can you take responsibility for? Did you ignore signs that should have clued you in that there was a problem? Did you act in a way that might have provoked the situation? Did your thoughts or actions escalate the situation?

5. What's your lesson to learn from what happened? Do you need more patience or better boundaries? Do you need to listen more, say less?

6. Ask yourself: If this were happening for a higher purpose, what would that be?

Can you find the gift?

7. Write down the most important thing you can do differently as a result of finding the lesson or the gift.

Experiential Exercises

Experience Happiness: Secret Formula

In Chapter 2 of *Happy for no Reason: 7 Steps to Being Happy From the Inside Out*, Marci Shimoff gives us a secret formula for experiencing happiness.

The Formula: Intention + Attention – No Tension = Flow and Happiness

Highlights from Chapter 2:

1. **Intention**
    - **Set a clear, positive intention to be happy.**
    - **Happiness starts with choosing it as a priority, not waiting for external circumstances to create it.**
    - **Intention is like planting the seed.**
2. **Attention**
    - **What you focus on expands.**

- **By noticing positives, practicing gratitude, and directing thoughts toward what uplifts you, you feed happiness.**
- **Attention is like watering the seed.**

3. **No Tension**
   - **Release the need to force, control, or worry.**
   - **Happiness can’t be pushed into existence — it grows naturally when you create the right inner conditions.**
   - **"No tension" is like giving the seed space, trusting the process.**
4. **Flow & Alignment**
   - **When intention and attention are aligned without strain, life feels easier, synchronicities happen, and happiness arises more effortlessly.**
5. **Practical Applications**
   - **Daily affirmations or declarations of intent (e.g., “I choose to be happy today”).**

- **Mindfulness practices to gently guide attention back to what matters.**
- **Relaxation, meditation, or letting go of over-effort to allow happiness to blossom.**

Takeaway from Chapter 2:

Happiness is cultivated from the inside out. It grows when you decide (intention), focus (attention), and trust (no tension).

Emotional Body Scan

Purpose:

Connect physical sensations to emotional pain.

Instructions:

- **Sit or lie down in a quiet place. Breathe slowly.**
- **Scan your body from head to toe. Where do you feel tension, pressure, tightness?**
- **Ask:**
  - **“What emotion lives here?”**
  - **“What is this part of me trying to say or protect?”**
- **Gently place your hand on that area and say: “It’s okay to feel this. I’m here for you.”**

Compassionate Body Scan

Purpose:

Connects you to your body with gentleness and gratitude.

Instructions:

- **Lie down or sit comfortably.**
- **Bring your awareness slowly to each part of your body, starting at your feet and moving upward.**
- **As you focus on each area, send appreciation (e.g., “Thank you, legs, for carrying me today”).**

Why it works:

Replaces body criticism with love and reinforces self-connection.

Based on: Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Bantam Books.

Imagery Rescripting

(for shame and guilt)

Purpose:

Reprocesses painful memories by imagining alternative, empowering outcomes.

Instructions:

Recall a painful memory involving shame or guilt. Now imagine the situation unfolding differently — with support, protection, or a kind response from a figure (real or imagined). Visualize yourself responding assertively or being nurtured.

Why it works:

Helps change the emotional meaning of past experiences.

Citation: Arntz, A. (2012). Imagery rescripting as a therapeutic technique: Review of clinical trials, basic studies, and research agenda. *Journal of Experimental Psychopathology, 3*(2), 189–208. https://doi.org/10.5127/jep.024211

Spread Loving Kindness

Try the following exercise, brought to you by Marci Shimoff, author of *Happy for no Reason: 7 Steps to Being Happy from the Inside Out.*

This exercise expands your capacity for compassion by guiding you through the process of wishing lovingkindness to yourself and others.

1. Find a quiet place and sit comfortably. Close your eyes.

2. Take slow, deep breaths, being aware of the breath as it enters and leaves your body. Let your thoughts come and go easily.

3. Repeat the following phrases silently:

- **May I be safe.**
- **May I be happy.**
- **May I be healthy.**
- **May I live with ease.**

Continue feeling these wishes toward yourself for a minute or two or until you experience a sense of peace inside.

4. Now, move onto your friends and family. Picture one of them as you send the following wishes silently:

- **May you be safe.**
- **May you be happy.**
- **May you be healthy.**
- **May you live with ease.**

Continue sending these wishes until you feel a flow of love in your heart.

5. Now send these wishes to all the living beings around the world. Continue until you feel a sense of expansion in your heart.

The 30-Day Kindness Challenge:

Core Practices

1. **Say Nothing Negative:**

   Refrain from speaking negatively about the person you're focusing on, both to them and to others. This includes avoiding sarcasm, complaints, and subtle digs.

2. **Praise Them to Others:**

   Each day, find at least one positive attribute or action of the person and share it with someone else. This practice reinforces positive perceptions and encourages a more appreciative mindset.

3. **Do One Kind Act:**

   Perform at least one intentional act of kindness toward the person daily. This could range from small gestures like making them a cup of coffee to more significant acts like helping with a task they find challenging.

Emotional First Aid Kit

Purpose:

Build coping strategies when shame/pain arises.

Create a kit with:

- **A list of affirmations.**
- **A grounding object (stone, essential oil, soft cloth).**
- **A playlist of songs that soothe or uplift you.**
- **A list of people you can call or text for support.**
- **Breathing exercises or calming techniques.**

Incline Your Mind Toward

The Daily Happiness Awards

1. Throughout the day, look around you with an eye to giving out awards.
2. Be creative. For example, as you look at flowers, notice the one that could get the “Most Unusual Color” award or find one that’s had the hardest struggle to survive, but made it, and give it the “Best Blossom of the Day” award. Look for extraordinary smiles, efficient service, or ingenious solutions to everyday challenges. There's no limit to the type or number of awards you can give in a day.
3. Invite other family members or friends to play this award game, and at the end ofthe day, tell each other the awards you’ve given out.

Joy Sunning Practice

The Sunning Practice is a simple yet powerful way to reset your serotonin and melatonin balance, which helps you get better sleep and experience more happiness. This practice is from Gilles Marin.

Basic Sunning Practice

- **Do 3x/day for 3-5 minutes each time.**
- **Face the sun with your eyes closed, glasses off. Breathe deeply. Absorb the sun's light through your closed eyelids, via your optic nerves into your brain. Run the energy down your central nervous system and radiate out through the rest of your body.**

This stimulates your body to produce serotonin, which turns into melatonin at night to aid with sleep.

NOTE: If you do not have access to direct sunlight (it must be direct, not filtered through a window), then you can also use full-spectrum lighting.

For a more expanded sunning practice email Darian at office@embracehappiness.me

Surround Yourself with Support

Practices The Garden

Cultivate Nourishing Relationships

Follow-up Support Group Guidelines:

If you choose to participate in the support group component of this course, here are some guidelines to keep in mind.

Support Group Meeting Format:

1. **Form your group by finding 5–7 people you trust and respect.**
2. **Determine your meeting times (once or twice a month is recommended).**
3. **Alternate who will lead each meeting.**
4. **Decide who will keep track of the time during the meeting.**
5. **Begin the meeting with the leader sharing an invocation or an inspiring quote.**

6. Each person takes 3 – 4 minutes to share with the group his or her “wins” and accomplishments since the last meeting.
7. Each person takes 10 – 15 minutes to share with the group his or her goals or intentions or to ask for support from the rest of the group.
8. Each person states an action he or she will take before the next meeting to move towards his or her intentions. (For example, you will exercise three times a week for 30 minutes.)
9. Let the leader close the meeting with a statement of gratitude and positive intention.
10. Leader shares the next meeting date and time.
11. You will receiver meeting reminders with the date, time, and Zoom Link.
12. Attend as faithfully as possible. Support is offered in the group format.

Follow These Important Guidelines

1. **listen without interruption.**
2. **Avoid victim (blame/shame/complain) behaviors.**
3. **Offer suggestions only when solicited.**
4. **Keep everything shared completely confidential.**