

WHAT IS THE HAPPINESS CLUB?

Welcome My Dear Friend,

Introduction:

Are you one of those rare people who love their job, and whose relationships are perfect? If you're like most of us, probably not, and because things aren't going exactly as you want them, just these two factors—your job and relationships—can really affect your happiness...the wrong way.

What I discovered, though, is that things don't have to go the way you want in order to live a very happy life. Come again? How on earth can you be happy when things are not going well? This is where things get interesting. It turns out that happiness is something completely separate from whether you get your way in life, or not. But, how could that be? That's not what we were taught!

In fact, the funny thing about happiness is that, for most of us, it has been a mysterious thing. The only instructions we had on becoming happier were from our parents, peers, teachers, co-workers, and our culture, in general, and all of them suggest that you need all the latest gadgets, baubles, and trinkets, the perfect lover, house, and car to make us happy. We've all heard people say over and over, "I'll be happy when...."

What we all learned growing up is that our happiness was always conditional upon getting what we wanted: If we didn't accomplish our goal, we couldn't be happy. In fact, if everything wasn't just about perfect, we were doomed to unhappiness.

I'm here to tell you that this is all wrong, and that the reason Happiness Clubs are spreading like wildfire all around the world is that for the first time, happiness is available to us anytime we want. That's what the Happiness Clubs are showing people, and they love it!

Happiness is something you can have right now, and you don't have to wait. At the Happiness Clubs, we say, be happy first, and then do what you want in life. But how can I be happy if things aren't going my way? That sounds impossible, and if it is possible, why don't people teach this stuff?

Well, actually, people are teaching this stuff. That's exactly what Happiness Clubs are showing and doing. People ARE learning how to be happy regardless of their life circumstances. Happiness Clubs are places we go once a month to learn, to practice, and to share our experiences with each other on how we truly can be happy even in the worst of situations.

I'd like to just talk to you a bit before we get started. Then maybe I can answer some of your questions.

My observations are that very few people can say they are happy with their lives. In my earlier years, I found that as much as I tried to change things and events outside, I could not change them enough to feel happy on the inside. Since December 24th 1990 all that changed and I have been happy since that time. Sure things are not perfect, but I do the best I can with those things (called life) to change them if I can, and being happy takes care of the rest.

The decision to become a happy person has not only benefited me, but many of the readers of the articles I've written and the people who come to Happiness Clubs. You can be miserable or you can be happy. The reasons don't matter, the results really do. When you are happy everything works better. Your problems either get resolved or they no longer have a negative affect on you.

Why be happy? Why Not,? Life is short...Be Happy! You will possibly live ten years longer, reduce anger, have less stress and confusion, have better focus, better patience and self control, access greater intelligence, utilize wisdom, experience emotional competence, create inner peace, enhanced relationships, and enjoy your life while enriching others with your happiness. Learning to use happiness to make a positive difference in your life will positively affect the lives of everyone around you.

What is Happiness? My definition of happiness is an inner state of well being which enables you to profit from your highest: thoughts, wisdom, intelligence, common sense, emotions, health, and spiritual values in your life.

The advantages of happiness are not well known or commonly understood. Although they are simple, they need to be practiced. They need to be studied and practiced until they become habit. It is amazing how we let so much of

the negative creep into our thinking. We can learn to put ourselves first by putting happiness first. It enables us to put our best foot forward with others; to experience the very best life has to offer. It enables us to analyze a problem or difficult situation in a whole new manner.

Why is unhappiness a problem? When you are unhappy you are at the mercy of the negative things in your life. You allow them to have power over you. Being unhappy actually produces more negative effects in your life than the original negatives on which we blame your unhappiness. You experience the unfairness of life in a state of confusion. You take loss to an unhealthy level. You hurt, you suffer, you worry, you become fearful, you become helpless, and you're unhappiness will permeate your life.

What is the Happiness Club? It is an organization with the mission to promote the benefits of being happy through meetings, newsletters, happiness books and an informative web site, to the people in our community, and around the world.

When did the club start? Lionel Ketchian taught a course on happiness at Sacred Heart University in 1999. As a result of that first class, the group wanted to keep meeting to learn more about happiness and keep practicing. We started our first meeting in January 2000, and have met every single month since then. The Happiness Club has been written up in hundreds of newspapers and many magazines. We have appeared on television and live radio talk shows.

What is the cost? We do not have dues or any other charges. All it will cost you is the time you spend to go to a meeting and learn about happiness instead of watching television for that time in the evening. It may, however, cost you your unhappiness. Ever wondered what your unhappiness is costing you?

When do you have meetings? Meetings are once a month. You can do more or less; it's up to you. We have found that once a month works the best. It helps people remember to be happy and keep on practicing it, without burdening one's schedule.

Meeting duration. Meetings last an hour-and-a-half to two hours. Having meetings on a monthly basis is good thing for consistency. People can take

the time in between meetings to practice the tools and methods presented during the meetings.

What are the benefits? Happiness club meetings give a rational, common sense approach to create a positive view of life and deal with the things we cannot change. Happiness Club meetings help make you more aware of the things you can control and choose to make wiser use of your energy. This will help make you a happier person. Happiness is the best self-improvement plan to becoming a better person and a friendlier one as well. It benefits your relationships and the world you live in. It has been proven that being happy also benefits your health.

What else will going to Happiness Club meetings do for me? When you're happy you can increase your endurance for dealing with life's problems. Happiness allows you to make decisions more easily, access the wisdom within you, become more loving, and experience greater peacefulness. Your entire attitude becomes one of greater strength. You become powerful and positive. People notice the change and it begins to positively affect them.

What benefits will I get out of running a Happiness Club myself? Does running a club yourself scare you? I'll address that in a minute. Just hear me out before you decide to recruit another person to lead the group. You and the other people involved in the club will get happier! It also provides you with the opportunity to socialize, meet new people and form friendships. You can have a wonderful time, smile, and laugh a lot! You do it to help people overcome some really tough times. You do it because you care about yourself and others. You do it because you want your life and other people's lives to be better. You'll benefit from it by empowering yourself with the strength you gain from learning to control yourself.

The first thing you can do is to make the decision. Is this something you want to try? Sometimes you won't know, unless you do it. If you are so inclined, it will be well worth it. While giving happiness away to others, you will be amazed at the positives, the opportunities, the rewards, and the joy that will come into your life.

Start a Happiness Club! If you're happy and you know it and you really want to show it, start a club! Around the country and around the world people have told me they wish they could come to Happiness Club meetings.

Now there's nothing stopping you from going to your own Happiness Club meeting. This is a chance for you to make a real difference. You may never know what good you do, but you will feel really good about what you are doing by giving people a chance to be happy. This is the most important benefit of all. Haven't you always wanted to make a positive difference, and leave a positive lasting impact on the world? Start now by opening your own club.

Anybody can start a club and be a facilitator! There are two choices. Either you can lead the club, or you can be the founder and get others to lead it. If you're a good speaker and you want to lead your local Happiness Club, more power to you. You can express ideas and topics for discussion within the club. Your job is to keep it positive and keep uncovering the tools and benefits of happiness. Get people in touch with their positive thinking. Give them options for making better choices in dealing with life's problems. Since happiness is what everyone really wants, your contribution will be very important to them because happiness is what we are all striving for. We'll be right there to help you.

On the other hand, if you don't want to take a leading role, start the club and then reach out to the most optimistic people in your life and community. You will find people who are passionate about happiness and they will champion the cause. You can find speakers to give talks to your club. Authors, positive psychologists, positive people all make excellent speakers for your club. Work together with the most passionate people you can find and tell them you are looking for ideal speakers. By doing this, you'll get to be the founder of a club that will have led your community to a higher place.

How do I actually start a Happiness Club? First, you should understand that it's not about how many people come to a meeting, or how many come back. (You could start your own Happiness Club meeting with just one other person.) This is about giving people an opportunity to learn more about using and creating happiness as a means of choosing how they live life and think back on it. There's no good reason for anyone to live an unhappy life and you can play an important role in many people's lives. Even if you help just one person, you have done a world of good.

What is a meeting like? Each club presents strategies to live our lives to the fullest by understanding more about using and creating happiness. We have discussions during each meeting, so you'll have a chance to learn from

others and express your viewpoint if you choose. The meetings are educational, and everyone takes something home with them to help create more happiness in their life.

Who comes to Happiness Club Meetings? Some of the people who come are happy and would like to meet others and become even happier, while others are looking for happiness. People from all walks of life and different backgrounds attend. We have people who are single, married, divorced, and widowed. We have people of all ages, from 12 to 104. We have a mixture of women and men. Many people come alone, but some bring friends. It is always a good place to meet new friends. Three generations, a grandmother, mother, and daughter have come to meetings. At one meeting we had a wonderful couple that were married for 50 years.

The great thing about meetings is that they promote friendship and a greater understanding of one another. You give people an opportunity to be in a caring atmosphere so they can share their hopes, problems and strategies. Meetings help direct the focus away from the negatives and toward the positive, uplifting ways for building happiness and one's sense of well being. The purpose of these meetings, like meditation, is to be in the moment, lighten up, and be more in tune with your innermost positive thoughts and feelings. We create wonderful evening experiences for people to take back into their personal, school, business, and community lives. Many of them just can't wait for the next meeting. Many friendships have been formed from these meetings. You know what they say about your closest five friends being a strong determinant of your own life...so who ya' gonna surround yourself with? Why, happy people, of course!

Where will you hold meetings? The easiest place is your own home, or a friend's home, but most of our Happiness Clubs are held in local libraries or Town Halls, which allow meetings for such purposes. You could also hold meetings at a place of business, after hours. The advantage of using a business is that it lets the community know about the business's location, and the positive impact they are having within the community. Since the medical profession is concerned with people's health, they should also be concerned with people's happiness as well. Many of our Happiness Club participants are doctors, psychologists, nurses, and so on. You can try your local hospitals, doctors and chiropractor's offices and health food stores. Anyone providing health care services might give you a meeting room and offer to support you in many other positive ways.

Churches, synagogues and other religious institutions are a good place to hold meetings. All religions want happiness for mankind because happiness promotes virtue. Our meetings are non-religious. This way, everyone better understands the benefits of happiness. Happiness is indeed, a spiritual path.

Be creative! Serve refreshments if you want, or hold your meeting in a coffee shop. You might want to have a meeting in someone's home, and then go out for coffee or a bite to eat afterwards. Meetings can also be held in a restaurant where dinner can be offered. People can eat together, while sharing a meal and listening to a presentation on happiness. The first Happiness Club met at a restaurant for a year before moving to the public library.

Here in Fairfield, CT, USA, we hold meetings in our public library. We do not charge anything for our meetings. Our meetings are very informal, and I have a number of handouts and free material for everyone to take. This enables people to read more about happiness and take it with them.

A Typical Meeting: I start a meeting by greeting everyone and welcoming them. Next, you can optionally, share how you feel with the group. Sometimes, I'll share something in the news about happiness with everyone. Then I'll introduce the speaker to the group. The speaker gives their presentation, and then we welcome questions and comments about the presentation. Many of the speakers are authors and professionals. Anyone you know who is using happiness in their life should be encouraged to make a presentation.

A very effective thing to try at each meeting is to speak about your personal experiences with happiness...your successes, and your failures. Tell people how you use the decision making process to enable happiness to work for you in making the best possible choices. While deciding to be happy is a very simple procedure, it's something we all need to learn and reinforce until it becomes a habit. To make it an automatic response we need to practice it so we use it as our *normal* response in any given situation, no matter what we are faced with. This is a really good point to talk about because it is at the core of understanding our human condition, as well as our power to deal with the problems we face.

Then, have everyone participate. You can go around the group and have everyone introduce themselves. They can answer the question, “What excites me about the Happiness Club?” Make sure you welcome new people. Volunteers can also give testimonials of happiness activities and successes from the previous meetings.

Where can I learn more about Happiness? Come to meetings, read books. You can go to the website: www.happinessclub.com and just click on the free Happiness Newsletter request.

The Happiness Newsletter and the Be Happy Zone articles are a good source of material for your meetings as well. We send the Happiness Newsletter once a month. It can be used in your meetings to foster discussions and answer questions regarding happiness. The many quotations in the newsletter can be read and discussed.

What is on the www.happinessclub.com, website? We have a large list of books on happiness and two free book downloads. There are over 100 half-hour TV shows on happiness. There is also information on upcoming meetings, seminars, and events, and you'll find over 200 articles that have been published in the newspapers. You can also listen to interviews with famous happiness experts and authors on our Virtual Happiness Club.

Happiness Books: Any of these books are great topics for your Happiness Club meetings. We have a free book download for 60 pages of *Gateway to Happiness* by **Rabbi Zelig Pliskin**. I consider this to be the best happiness book.

We have 20 of the best books listed on our website as well. If someone has read a book that is beneficial and relates well to understanding happiness, have them share some of those thoughts with others at your meetings.

You can promote the Happiness Club meetings: Free Press Releases! You can promote the Happiness Club meetings by sending a fax or e-mail to your local newspapers. A few weeks before a meeting I send an e-mail to newspapers in Connecticut. I just ask them to please put a notice (not an advertisement) in their newspaper. The papers will probably list your notice under community activities in their paper as a public service for their reader's benefit, since you are not charging anything for the meeting and it is open to the public. Send them the date and location of your meeting, along

with the topic to be discussed, and your contact information. Find out specifically whom to send it to at the newspaper and whether it is okay for you to e-mail your notice to them. (A few want it faxed.) This gives your entire town an opportunity to find out about your meetings. Many organizations want to know when you start a Happiness Group so they can promote it for you. Make them aware of what you are doing, and give the public an opportunity to find out about the meetings.

Here is a sample of a press release:

Fairfield Happiness Club Press Release

Mr. John Jones
Calendar Editor
The XYZ Newspaper
100 Post Road
Westport, CT 06880

Dear John,

Please put this notice for the Happiness Club meeting in your publication:

FAIRFIELD HAPPINESS CLUB MEETING

Our next Happiness Club meeting will have a presentation called: Creating Your World: A Proactive Approach for Achieving Happiness & Fulfillment by Dr. Marc J. Shulman, a Clinical Psychologist & Associate Research Scientist at the Veterans Administration of Connecticut Healthcare System and Yale University. Dr. Shulman is in private practice in Stamford, CT and is the founder of Positive Living, a program that offers a series of group and individual workshops rooted in the concepts of Positive Psychology, which provides people with practical tools to achieve happiness, success and fulfillment.

The meeting is on Thursday, June 5, from 7:00-9:00 P.M. at the Fairfield Public Library, at 1080 Old Post Road, Fairfield. Admission is free and everyone is welcome. For further info call Lionel Ketchian at (203) 258-7777 or www.happinessclub.com.

Thank you,
Lionel Ketchian
Fairfield Happiness Club
63 Unquowa Road
Fairfield, CT 06824
(203) 258-7777

If you follow this News Release and send it to newspapers in your community, you will attract many people to your meetings.

Decided to start a Happiness Club? I want to congratulate you! Please get in touch with me by sending me an e-mail at PRINTLRK@aol.com so we can break the news to everyone so they can support you. We are eager to share everything we have about happiness with you. We want to enable you to have a happier and more fulfilled life and be able to spread it to others. We want your Happiness Club meetings to be successful. You never need to walk alone on the Path to Happiness.

I am here to assist you in spreading your happiness experience to others!
Welcome aboard!

Sharing Real Love, Lasting Peace, Brilliant Health & Enduring Happiness with you,

Lionel Ketchian, Founder
Happiness Club
PrintLRK@aol.com