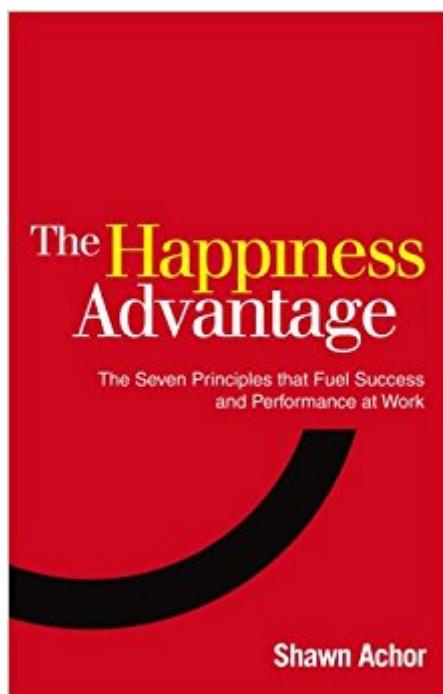


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# Happiness Advantage: The Seven Principles That Fuel Success And Performance At Work



## **Synopsis**

Most people want to be successful in life. And of course, everyone wants to be happy. When it comes to the pursuit of success and happiness, most people assume the same formula: if you work hard, you will become successful, and once you become successful, then you'll be happy. The only problem is that a decade of cutting-edge research in the field of positive psychology has proven that this formula is backwards. Success does not beget happiness. Based on the largest study ever conducted on happiness and human potential (a survey conducted by the author of more than 1,600 students), Harvard lecturer Shawn Achor shares seven core principles of positive psychology that each one of us can use to improve our performance, grow our careers, and gain a competitive edge at work. He reveals how happiness actually fuels success and performance, not the other way around. Why? Because when we are happier and more positive we are more engaged, creative, resilient to stress, and productive. The Happiness Advantage will appeal to anyone who wants practical advice on how to become happier and also more successful.

## **Book Information**

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: Virgin Publishing; 33746th edition (September 1, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0753539470

ISBN-13: 978-0753539477

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.6 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 1,051 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,506 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #4 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Occupational & Organizational #10 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Applied Psychology #14 in Books > Self-Help > Self-Esteem

## **Customer Reviews**

"Achor transports us to his virtual classroom, a journey along which we glean the seven secrets of happiness. "The Happiness Advantage" reveals the most important discoveries coming out of modern psychology." -- Rom Brafman, bestselling co-author of "Sway" and "Click" "Shawn Achor is funny, self-deprecating, and devastating to my notions of what his field is all about.... I'm butter to his knife." \* The Boston Globe \* "Achor bases his training on a burgeoning body of research on the

positive psychology movement, which emphasizes instilling resiliency and positive attitudes...." \*

Wall Street Journal \*

Shawn Achor is a lecturer at Harvard University, where he has studied with pioneers in the field of positive psychology. He is the co-designer of Harvard's 'Happiness' course, one of the most popular in Harvard history. He is also the founder and CEO of Aspirant, a research and consulting firm that uses positive psychology to enhance individual achievement and cultivate a more productive workplace. Its clients include American Express, KPMG, Microsoft, and UBS. He gives more than 150 lectures a year on the science of happiness and human potential, which have been covered in the New York Times, the Boston Globe, the Wall Street Journal, CNN, and NPR.

I saw Shawn Anchor's presentation on PBS where he explained a simple 5 minute technique called 'The 3 Gritudes'. I was brought up in a culture of pessimism and had 50 years of experience that was so deeply entrenched that I decided that I would be the perfect candidate for experimentation with such a simple exercise. I've never had much luck trying to change my 'default mode' of negative self-concept (no matter how much therapy I've had or how many self-help books I've read) so I was really on a mission to prove this man and his ideas wrong! I listened to the whole book on tape to make sure I was doing it as explained in the television presentation and this is what I did: It takes exactly 21 days to create a new neural pathway so you have to do the exercise everyday for 3 weeks. If you skip or forget to do it, you just keep going until you've done the exercise 21 times. If you find you're missing a lot it's just your old self trying to maintain the status quo. Tell yourself that it's less than 5 minutes a day and that you're out to prove the experiment wrong! (if you really find that you're resistant). You want to find the part of your routine in the morning where you have a moment (well, 5 minutes) (when you're having a cup of tea or coffee for instance). Keep a notebook in that spot (at your desk or kitchen table). You must write out the experiment.1). **THE THREE GRATITUDES:** Write down 3 things you are grateful for (no matter how simple or small). At first I could only write about the cup of tea I was drinking! It can be any three things big or small...As you get into this you'll get more creative and become strangely exuberant about what you feel grateful for.2). **THE DOUBLER:** Next you want to take one of those three things and elaborate on it a bit (just a few sentences) OR pick a new gratitude to elaborate on. If you have more than a little time, write as much as you like. 3). **THREE SMILES:** Smile at 3 living creatures today (guys have to be a little careful about this one...ladies, it's easier for you but just be genuine and really smile!). Smile at your doggie, smile at your kitty, co-workers, toll-booth workers, babies, kids, old folks...4). **THE**

FUN-15: This one is the optional one but will speed up the process: You want to get 15 minutes of fresh air and exercise...a lovely walk with some sunshine if possible (if you're NOT up to this yet, you can add it in after 21 days when you feel better). This can be done at any time of the day, afternoon, evening (separate from the notebook work). If you already work out, you're all set.5).

CONNECT: Connect with one person today. It can even be an electronic connection...so, if you email your Mom or text a friend or your Sister, it still works! That's all you have to do for 21 days. I started doing this about a year ago last February and after 21 days (I did not skip because I was out to prove the author wrong) I felt better. I felt a lot better. I decided that it had to be the placebo effect so I kept doing this exercise for 3 months! After 3 months I figured there was something to this neural construction thing (or whatever it's called) and I kept doing 'The 3 Gritudes' straight through till August. I kept waiting for the music to stop but it didn't. In September I decided to experiment and I stopped doing the exercise just to see whether I would go back to default (after 7 months of being a happy, optimistic, creative and grateful person). It has now been 7 more months of NOT doing The 3 Gritudes and I've maintained 70-80% of the gain. This month I have started doing the exercise again just because I WANT that 20% back! The only time I've slipped back into feelings of real pessimism was one week when I had the flu but it lifted as soon as I started recovering. It is interesting to note that the old neural networks still exist and don't go away but if you REPLACE them with better ones you can override the old belief system. I've told my son, family members and a few friends about this marvelous phenomenon but no one is interested. I'm sharing this because it would be wonderful for me if someone could benefit from trying this too. I think people are reluctant because it sounds so corny! almost unbelievable and possibly outside some imagined comfort zone. All I know is I have a studio full of paintings and I feel kind of like that exuberant art-making kid before anyone told her that her world-view was wrong. If anyone has luck with this please leave me a message...I want to hear! P.S. Thank you Shawn Anchor.

This is probably one of the most impactful books I've ever read. It's not a book that just tells you to think positive thoughts and your world changes. It's a description of why mindset is so important in dictating your future rather than a byproduct of other outcomes. It gives you practical tactical tools to begin to develop your own happiness and additional resources to help you in your journey. Worth the time and effort to read, even if you don't want to try out any of the ideas on your own.

While it may read like Åœpop psychologyÅ• at times, The Happiness Advantage is a joy to read, full of scientifically-grounded ways to help us live ÅœhappierÅ• lives. Achor strikes a

nice balance between self-help and science, as he writes towards the beginning: “Books about how to get ahead in the workplace can be inspirational but are often full of unproven strategies. On the other hand, science can be fascinating but is often impossible to understand, much less translate into action. My goal in writing this book has been to bridge that gap.” (pp. 33). I wish more self-help literature adopted this approach. There were a few times when I questioned the studies he cited or the conclusions he drew from them (for example, he cites one fascinating study about the effect of mindset on our external reality that only had 13 subjects – not a very high sample), but overall I feel Achor was very fair and thorough in his research. Furthermore, the ideas he suggests don’t feel like gimmicks, as is often the case with self-help literature (though the results he promises – “almost always from research” – sometimes sound a little too good to be true, with “happiness” coming across as a panacea for all life’s ills). While not as philosophical and deep as Jonathan Haidt’s *The Happiness Hypothesis*, which I also enjoyed and would recommend, *The Happiness Advantage* is an important addition to the growing pantheon of books on happiness, and certainly one of the most easily applicable.

It’s true when they say that your thoughts dictate your actions. Reading this book has given me a great perspective on life. I was introduced to it when a friend shared Shawn Achor’s Ted Talk. The topic interested me and I decided to buy the book. It was a mind-opener. I don’t think it was intended to be a self-help book but learning about positive psychology really helped me think about more positive things, which eventually lead to a much better quality of life for me.

What is important in life? Happiness or Success? Out of the two listed above, which comes first? Happiness follows success according to primary belief. Is that true? Does success follow happiness or is it the other way around? Shawn Achor believes the latter is true. If you are happy, then you will eventually have success. How is happiness important? How can we achieve happiness? Shawn Achor uses this book to answer these questions. Shawn Achor has structured the book well. In the first part, he tells us how happiness is essential and the various personalities who embraces the advantages of happiness. Without going into too many details, Shawn outlines the main findings from this field. In the second part, he explains the seven principles for achieving the Happiness Advantage. These principles have real-life stories associated with them. The real-life stories make the book captivating. As a result, we do not want to let the book go. If you have read other self-help books, these principles are not new to them. But Shawn compiles them in such a manner, these

principles make perfect sense. The final part is the conclusion. The book is perfect as a three-act drama. At the same time, the book provides a wealth of information on how to improve your professional and personal life. You might want to buy this book. You should not only buy the book but also read it occasionally to ensure you are not straying from the path.

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