

# The Happiness Advantage

## What You Know About Happiness Is Broken

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### Excerpt of the core text

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If you observe the people around you, you'll find most individuals follow a formula that has been subtly or not so subtly taught to them by their schools, their company, their parents, or society. That is: If you work hard, you will become successful, and once you become successful, then you'll be happy. This pattern of belief explains what most often motivates us in life. **We think: If I just get that raise, or hit that next sales target, I'll be happy. If I can just get that next good grade, I'll be happy. If I lose that five pounds, I'll be happy. And so on. Success first, happiness second.**

**The only problem is that this formula is broken.**

If success causes happiness, then every employee who gets a promotion, every student who receives an acceptance letter, everyone who has ever accomplished a goal of any kind should be happy. But with each victory, our goalposts of success keep getting pushed further and further out, so that happiness gets pushed over the horizon.

Even more important, the formula is broken because it is backward. More than a decade of groundbreaking research in the fields of positive psychology and neuroscience has proven in no uncertain terms that the relationship between success and happiness works the other way around. **Thanks to this cutting-edge science, we now know that happiness is the precursor to success, not merely the result. And that happiness and optimism actually fuel performance and achievement—giving us the competitive edge that I call the Happiness Advantage.**

Waiting to be happy limits our brain's potential for success, whereas cultivating positive brains makes us more motivated, efficient, resilient, creative, and productive, which drives performance upward. This discovery has been confirmed by thousands of scientific studies and in my own work and research on 1,600 Harvard students and dozens of Fortune 500 companies worldwide. In this book, you will learn not only why the Happiness Advantage is so powerful, but how you can use it on a daily basis to increase your success at work. But I'm getting excited

and jumping ahead of myself. I begin this book where I began my research, at Harvard, where the Happiness Advantage was born.

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## Discussion Questions

1. Reflect on your own experiences. Can you think of a time when achieving a certain goal did not bring the happiness you expected? How did that affect your motivation moving forward?
2. The traditional formula suggests "success leads to happiness." How has this belief influenced your life decisions, career choices, or educational pursuits?
3. Discuss the implications of the "Happiness Advantage" theory in the workplace. How might companies benefit from fostering an environment that prioritizes employee happiness?
4. Consider the role of schools and education systems in perpetuating the traditional success-happiness formula. How can educational institutions incorporate the findings from positive psychology and neuroscience to better support students' well-being and success?
5. The text mentions groundbreaking research in positive psychology and neuroscience. Why do you think these fields of study have historically been overlooked in discussions about success and achievement?
6. "Waiting to be happy limits our brain's potential for success" - Discuss how this statement reflects your understanding of the relationship between mindset and achievement. Can you think of personal or observed examples that support or challenge this idea?
7. How do you think societal values and norms have shaped the conventional success-happiness formula? Discuss the potential challenges and rewards of adopting the Happiness Advantage perspective in a society that values achievement and productivity.
8. The author plans to share ways to use the Happiness Advantage on a daily basis to increase success at work. Speculate on what some of these strategies might be, based on your understanding of the relationship between happiness and success.
9. Reflecting on the mention of scientific studies and research at Harvard and Fortune 500 companies, discuss the importance of evidence-based approaches in challenging and changing long-standing beliefs about happiness and success.
10. Finally, how might individual and societal perspectives on happiness and success change if the Happiness Advantage theory became widely accepted and implemented?

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## Glossary of Key Terms You May Need

- Formula - A fixed way of doing things that is expected to achieve a certain result.
  - Definition: A set method or convention that is generally followed.
- Subtly - In a manner that is not obvious or direct.
  - Definition: Done in a way that is not easily noticeable or apparent.
- Success - Achieving what you wanted to achieve, such as goals or targets.
  - Definition: The accomplishment of an aim or purpose.
- Happiness - The feeling of being happy, content, or satisfied.
  - Definition: A state of well-being and contentment.
- Motivates - Encourages someone to do something or to act in a certain way.
  - Definition: Provides a reason for doing something.
- Victory - Winning or achieving success.
  - Definition: A success or triumph over an opponent or obstacle.
- Goalposts - Literally, the posts that form the goal in sports, but used metaphorically to mean the objectives or targets we aim for.
  - Definition: Metaphorically, the changing aims or objectives people strive to achieve.
- Precursor - Something that comes before another and indicates its approach.
  - Definition: A forerunner or predecessor that leads to or influences what follows.
- Optimism - Hopefulness and confidence about the future.
  - Definition: The belief that good things will happen in the future.
- Performance - How well someone does a task or activity.
  - Definition: The manner in which someone or something functions.
- Achievement - Something accomplished, especially by superior ability or special effort.

- Definition: A thing done successfully with effort, skill, or courage.
- Resilient - Able to recover quickly from difficulties.
  - Definition: Strong and not easily damaged by being hit or stretched.
- Creative - Having the ability to create, often producing something new or original.
  - Definition: Using imagination or original ideas to create something.
- Productive - Achieving a significant amount or result.
  - Definition: Yielding good or useful results; efficient.
- Evidence-based - Relying on data, research, and scientific methods to make decisions or draw conclusions.
  - Definition: Based on information that is supported by proof.