

The Key to Unconditional Happiness

Marci Shimoff wants you to discover
how to be *Happy for No Reason*.

by Erin Casey



When it comes down to it, the desire to be happy is the root of almost every one of our actions. We are conditioned to believe that if we have the right car, a great career, perfect children, a dream house and a devastatingly handsome husband, happiness is sure to follow.

But reality and research tell a different story, says transformational speaker and best-selling author Marci Shimoff. While researching what it means to be happy for her new book, *Happy for No Reason*, she discovered the keys to being truly and unconditionally happy. She interviewed scientists from around the world to better understand the groundbreaking research into happiness that's under way. In addition,

“Go for the happiness first and all else follows.”
—*Marci Shimoff*



Shimoff interviewed 100 unconditionally happy people and learned about their happiness habits. These “Happy 100” offered invaluable insight into what it takes to create lifelong happiness.

What Is Happiness?

It should be obvious that money can't buy happiness. In America, one of the world's most prosperous countries, one out of five women take antidepressants, and each year 6 million men start taking antidepressants. We have more cars, bigger homes and more stuff than we have time or space for, and yet unhappiness is an epidemic in our society.

Earning more money and acquiring more *stuff* isn't the remedy. “Our conditions and circumstances don't determine our happiness,” Shimoff says. “Research shows that once you're living above the poverty line, your income has no correlation with your happiness.” She points out that it's natural to feel happy about achieving success or having good relationships, but those highs are temporary. When our happiness is derived from external conditions or relationships and those conditions change or are lost, our happiness dramatically decreases.

That's why Shimoff set out to learn how to be happy from the inside out. True happiness, she says, is “a neurophysiologic state of inner peace and well-being that isn't dependent on circumstances.” Rather than being determined by the external, happiness—lasting happiness—comes from within.

Turning Up the Dial on Happiness

“We have a ‘happiness set point,’” Shimoff says. “It's about 50 percent genetic and 50 percent learned through our habits.” She explains that this set point is similar to a weight set point. For most healthy people, the numbers on the scale stay pretty much the same from day to day. And unless we do something to change our metabolism, our weight remains consistent. “The same is true of happiness,” she says. “We have a general happiness range that we stay within unless we do something to raise our happiness. What's exciting is that we've cracked the code on happiness. We've found the ways that we can raise our happiness set point. So it doesn't matter what we were born with, you can still become happier no matter what your genetics or old habit patterns are. And just like you can raise the thermostat to get warmer on a cold day, you can raise your happiness set point to get happier.”

7 Steps to Being Happy from the Inside Out

In contrast to the thrill of finding the perfect job, mate or accomplishing a lifelong goal, being happy for no reason doesn't require waiting. While it's not an overnight process, research clearly indicates that by adopting new ways of thinking, eating the right foods and practicing other happiness habits you can raise your happiness set point in a relatively short time. But it's not about doing one or two things correctly. “Raising your happiness set point needs to be a holistic process,” Shimoff says. “You cannot just address it from one angle of life.” She believes there are seven areas of life that can specifically affect a person's happiness. Likening the process to that of building a home, these seven areas can build a home for happiness in your life.



1 Take Ownership of Your Happiness

Your happiness is up to you. The foundation of your home for happiness is taking personal responsibility for your life and your happiness. Recognize the habits you've developed that keep you from being happy, and make a conscious effort to develop new habits. One habit Shimoff cites in *Happy for No Reason* is to focus on the solution rather than the problem. For example, instead of worrying or complaining about your circumstance, focus your attention on the good in the situation and on finding a way to improve it. Empower yourself by taking responsibility for your happiness.

2 Don't Believe Everything You Think

The mind is the first of four pillars that construct your home for happiness. "Your thoughts are automatic habit patterns," Shimoff says. "We have 60,000 thoughts a day and 95 percent of them are the same thoughts we had yesterday. For the average person, 80 percent of those thoughts are negative. What we need to learn to do is to question our thoughts and change our thinking."

3 Let Love Lead

The second pillar is the heart. "My interviews with the Happy 100 revealed an important truth: *Happy people let love lead in their lives*," Shimoff says. "Although they have the same kind of fears, pains and disappointments as the rest of us, they simply have different habits that allow them to keep their hearts open

in their daily lives." One of the heart habits revealed in Shimoff's research is to live with and focus on gratitude. "People who are Happy for No Reason don't necessarily have more in their lives to be grateful for; they simply focus more often on gratitude throughout their day."

4 Make Your Cells Happy

The next pillar is the body. Taking care of your body is as important as taking care of your mind. Through what you eat, through your breathing, through the quality of your sleep, you can improve the quality of your health and your level of happiness.

5 Plug Yourself into Spirit

The fourth pillar is the soul. Through conversations with the Happy 100, Shimoff learned that regardless of their religious tradition, being connected to something larger than themselves was a common trait. "People who are Happy for No Reason don't always need to figure everything out to be in control; they live in the flow of life, trusting underlying benevolence and wisdom from that larger wholeness," she says.

6 Live a Life Inspired by Purpose

The roof of your home for happiness is understanding and living your life's purpose. "Do work that you love that feels meaningful to you," Shimoff says. Your career may be connected to your purpose, but your purpose shouldn't depend on your job. Living an inspired life is about discovering your passion and incorporating that passion into everything you do.

7 Cultivate Nourishing Relationships

A garden can welcome you home and provide a place to rest and reflect. The people with whom you surround yourself comprise the garden of your home for happiness. Those who are Happy for No Reason don't rely on others to make them happy, but by surrounding themselves with a nourishing support system, their happiness is enhanced.

Go for Happiness First

"If you take care of those seven areas of your life you will have a much greater happiness level, more inner peace and well-being," Shimoff says. "The one goal humans have always had is to be happy. The ultimate reason we want anything is that we think it will make us happier. So what I say to people is to go for the happiness first and all else follows." EW



MARCI SHIMOFF is the woman's face of the biggest self-help book phenomenon in history, *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. Her six best-selling titles in the series have sold more than 13 million copies worldwide in 33 languages. She's also a featured teacher in the international phenomenon, *The Secret*. Her new book, *Happy for No Reason: 7 Steps to Being Happy from the Inside Out*, offers a revolutionary approach to experiencing deep and lasting happiness.

A celebrated transformational leader and one of the nation's leading experts on happiness, success and the law of attraction, Marci has inspired millions of people around the world, sharing her breakthrough methods for personal fulfillment and professional success.