

# Chapter 1

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## Happiness Is Not a Luxury; It's a Necessity

*Being a mother is the hardest job of all. It's easier to be a doctor than a mother. Being a mother is a 24/7/365 job forever.*

—Victoria, physician and mother of three

As a working mother—no matter your circumstances—happiness is yours for the living, if you choose. Everyone needs happiness, and every one of us can afford and attain it. It's not a luxury reserved only for the wealthy with time and plenty of support.

Happiness is a responsibility and a choice that each of us makes. It's a gift, but not from someone else; instead it comes from within. As working mothers we owe that gift to ourselves, our families, and our jobs. Happiness, after all, helps us to be better at everything we do. Scientific, workplace, and behavioral studies support that finding. Happy working mothers prove it day in and day out.

By happiness, we don't mean sitting around giggling all day or singing feel-good songs. We mean the happiness that allows you to enjoy being your most fulfilled self—whether as a mother, lover, wife, coworker, boss, or all of the above.

Taking a pill or reading a book doesn't make someone suddenly happy, nor is happiness a sometime thing. Happiness starts in the way we view ourselves, our families, our work, and our everyday lives. It's a positive choice each of us can make every day, no matter our

## 2

**Happiness Is Not a Luxury; It's a Necessity**

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circumstances, and it will make a difference in our performance as a mom, in the workplace, and as a wife or a partner.

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**Happiness Tip:** Learn to love yourself as much as you love your friends and family.

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How you feel makes a difference to those around you. If you doubt that, try this. One day, act like you are in a great mood. Smile, offer to help people, be cheerful. Play it up but be believable. See how people respond. Most likely, they will ask you questions or share ideas with you. Then try the opposite. Put on a grumpy act. Tighten your face and let your body language say, “don’t bother me!”. Compare the responses and see how much your mood impacts others and the way they interact with you.

**A Mother's Story**

Beth, mother of three, works in a Wal-Mart distribution center in the Midwest. She likes her job, and the mood in her family is relaxed and happy. That wasn't always the case. When Beth worked in law enforcement—as a prison guard—she described herself as mean and negative, and that negativity would rub off on her family.

**You Deserve Happiness**

Happiness is a right of every working mother every day. We all can and should expect to enjoy life, career, relationships, and our kids. Whether we work for financial necessity, fulfillment, or both, we all have the choice of being gratified while balancing work and family or allowing ourselves to get caught up in the rat race. The stresses and strains of everyday pressures—from economics to workplace issues, kids' demands, familial duties, and household responsibilities—enhance our

need for happiness. They can also block our happiness if we chose to let them.

Nearly 7 out of 10 working mothers said they believe that they can “have it all” as in motherhood and a successful career, according to a 2007 study from Accenture, (NYSE: ACN), a global management consulting, technology services, and outsourcing company.<sup>1</sup> Looking at more from that online survey of 700 working mothers in mid- to senior-level management positions:

- ◆ Nearly 90 percent of working mothers like working and would want to stay on the job if there were no obstacles to their working full-time, part time, or in a flextime arrangement.
- ◆ More than 74 percent of working mothers are satisfied that their work/life balance is always or most of the time “right.”

Finding the right work/life, isn’t always easy. For many people, finding the right balance and achieving happiness is a question of adjusting your mind-set, and rethinking some behaviors. Let’s look more closely.

## What Is Happiness?

*Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.*

—Aristotle, 384 B.C. to 322 B.C.

Happiness means different things to different people. Happiness is the “overall experience of pleasure and meaning,” says Tal Ben-Shahar, Ph.D., a psychologist, author of *Happier: Learn the Secrets to Daily Joy and Lasting Fulfillment*, and instructor of a hugely popular happiness course, Positive Psychology, at Harvard University.

The what-happy-working-mothers-know definition of happiness is living a life aligned to your values and knowing how to find joy in simple things. Joy can be as simple as your child’s smile or helping an elderly gentleman across the street, or as complex as sealing a particular deal at work, or getting a promotion. Those are

all valid examples and provide a fleeting sense of satisfaction. But happiness, as we define it, is a long-term state of mind. Let's examine the reality of what motivates working mothers to choose to lead happy lives long term, and how you to can learn to achieve such a life, too.

### **Perspectives on Happiness**

Each of us defines happiness in our own way. Here's how one group of working mothers, with children ages 8 months to 23 years, answers the question: What is happiness?

- ◆ **“Flexibility and balance,”** says Lisa, who works part-time from home and has two grown children, ages 23 and 21.
- ◆ **“Being a role model; demonstrating that families can do things differently and still be happy,”** says Zoe, mother of two, ages 7 and 11.
- ◆ **“Being successful at home and at work,”** says Reveka, mother of a 9-year-old.
- ◆ **“Fulfillment as a mother, at work, as a spouse, and personally,”** says Maria, mother of two, ages 15 and 13.
- ◆ **“Knowing that others can grow based on my performance—especially so my daughter can see how to work on a team,”** says Elizabeth, mother of an 8-month-old.
- ◆ **“I can release control, and I don't have to do it all!”** says Margie, mother of two, ages 16 and 17.
- ◆ **“At the end of the day everyone has had a good day and we are pitching in like a team. It's that moment,”** says Sierra, also a mother of two teens.
- ◆ **“To me it seems decadent to be soul-searching. Happiness is being satisfied,”** says Susan, mother of four now-grown children.

## **State of Being**

True happiness is a state of being, an approach to living life that generates positive energy for you and those around you at home and at work. Some forward-thinking employers already are recognizing that happy employees make better employees and that happiness is reflected in the bottom line—happiness equals profit. It's the same when it comes to working mothers. We, too, can take many of the lessons from the boardrooms and corporate battlefields and make them work toward our own happiness.

“What you learn in the boardroom, you can apply in the home and in the community and vice versa,” says Benita Fitzgerald Mosley, a mother of two and president and CEO of Women in Cable Telecommunications. “It happens seamlessly. You learn from the experiences across your life, and they get better and better,” adds the 1984 Olympic gold medalist in track and field. “I have always enjoyed the integration of all these facets in my life that have made me who I am. I love being a daughter, a mother, and a career woman. I have been married for 13 years and have two children. I am very happy doing both roles as a mother and an executive.”

## **Abundance Mentality**

Happiness is a state of mind in which we focus on the positive things and the people in our lives—the things and the people we appreciate. As Mosley does, it's embracing the abundance (positive) mentality versus one of scarcity (negativity). It's about drawing on what's good not dwelling on what's not. It's the conscious choice to look beyond the imperfect and learn how to be happy.

Jenny is a single mom, a cancer survivor, a caregiver for her elderly mother, and works full time as a sixth-grade teacher. Yet every morning she wakes up with a positive approach to life. “My son is my pride and joy,” she says. “The kids at school can be a hassle, but I love my job, and if I help just one youngster to succeed, it's extremely gratifying. Being a mom and caregiver has made me more understanding and compassionate about the hardships many kids face. Being a teacher, on the other hand, has taught me greater patience with my own son and with my mom.”

## The "Perfect" Myth

To be happy, you first need to let go of the myth that you need to be perfect to be happy. Barbie is a doll, not a role model, and Debra Barone—the sexy, sassy wife and mother in *Everybody Loves Raymond*, who raises her kids (and her husband) while she deals with difficult in-laws—is a fictional mother. Wonder Woman was a figment of the TV imagination, too. As for that woman in the television commercial who brings home the bacon, fries it up in a pan, and knows how to please her man—needless to say, she doesn't exist. When you stop striving for perfection according to some fictional standard, you can redirect your energy to the things that matter to you.

Happiness is like good health. Without it, you may be alive but you won't be your best at home or at work, and likely neither will those around you. You control your own happiness much like you control your physical fitness. Happy people cultivate certain habits and practices that help them lead happy lives at work and at home—and often despite the trials and tribulations of their lives.

### Authentically Happy

If you are a naturally happy person, the inevitable dramas in life will not keep you down for long.

Sue is a longtime working mother, now a working grandmother, and still married to the love of her life (she married at age 18). She's faced her share of hardships, but is happily resilient and always sees the glass as half full.

The Philadelphian recently took in her 3-year-old granddaughter—the child of her divorced son (she and her son fought for full custody and they won)—after having successfully raised her own 20-something son and daughter. Sue takes care of her elderly parents, too. And she loves doing it all, while working a full-time job at a private school.

One of Sue's brothers died of hepatitis at a young age, and her father never recovered from the loss. Sue's mother has always

been the heart of the family, just as Sue is to her family that includes Mitch (a successful entrepreneur), daughter Lauren, and son Rick, a postal worker.

Sue loves nice things and so do her kids. Beyond that, though, she has tried to instill good moral and ethical values in her children.

Sue has struggled with weight all her life. At age 45, she had gastric bypass surgery, which almost killed her. But today she is the poster child for successful weight loss while battling diabetes, too.

Despite her hardships, Sue never gives up and always looks for the silver lining. She loves being the working "grandma" and would probably raise granddaughter Bella's kids, too, given the chance. Sue also helps her daughter, Lauren, by employing her at the school when she is between jobs. Despite such a schedule, Sue takes time for herself one day a week.

Sue is the consummate mother. She's happy, too, and that's what really matters.

## Your Own "Perfect"

As human beings, each of us sets the parameters for our own happiness. **Happiness is** "self-actualization, feeling satisfied with one's accomplishments, having reached the goals you set for yourself financially, emotionally, and professionally," says Kathy, a wife and working mother of two in Shanghai, China.

**Happiness is** "essential for all of us. It's what gets you up every day. It's ridiculous to say, 'I don't have time to be happy,'" says Julie, a CPA in Tucson, Arizona, and mother of two teenagers, 14 and 17.

**Happiness is** "doing right by yourself so you are healthy, fit, and mentally awake. Doing right by your family. Doing right by society," says Nancy Laben, 46, Chicago-based deputy general counsel for Accenture and mother of two children, ages 16 and 14. "I think of it as concentric circles. I am the small circle in the middle. What makes me happy? Making my daughter happy and seeing her delight in

finding something just right. Volunteering is a happy moment. Taking time to think about what this life means is a happy moment. Happiness is made up of drops of time,” says Laben.

**Happiness is** “a sense of the possible,” says Robin, 44, mother of three (ages 10, 12, and 14), and executive director of a nonprofit. “You feel that things are possible. You feel bouncy. You want to pass it on.”

Although these women may be in different places geographically, economically, and personally, they all have the goal of happiness in common and have figured out what it takes to reach that goal. They know what they want, what matters, and they have chosen to pursue it.

### **Foundation for Your Happiness**

Ask yourself the following questions, and be honest in your answers:

- ◆ Do I have the foundation for my own happiness?
- ◆ Do the people in my life contribute to my happiness?
  - Do my family members/relationships support my happiness?
  - Do my coworkers support my happiness?
  - Do my friends support my happiness?
- ◆ If the answer to any of these questions is “no,” have you told them what you need them to do (stop doing) in order to support your happiness?
  - If not, why not?
  - If so, why haven't they done it?
- ◆ What kind of additional support do I need to be happy?
  - Are these things, people, time, energy, money, or something else?
  - How can I get them if I do not have them?
  - Can I do this myself or do I need help?
  - Is the help related to time, energy, or money?
- ◆ What next steps do I need to take to make my foundation for happiness a success?



## Wants, Needs, and Becoming Better

Working moms love what they do, whether happiness is on their minds or not. In fact, 78 percent of mothers say they're "fulfilled," according to "What Moms Want,"<sup>1</sup> a survey from Working Mother Media ([www.workingmother.com](http://www.workingmother.com)), publishers of the *Working Mother* magazine. Balance is a challenge, *Working Mother* reports. "But moms are making it work. That's not to say there aren't a lot of challenges and stress—there are—but our survey shows that moms are NOT giving up."

Ambitions are important to working moms, too. In the survey, 62 percent of women describe themselves as "very ambitious."

### **Self-Coaching Break: What Matters to You**

#### ***(Money, Time, and Energy)***

Happy people align their time to their values. This exercise will help you see where your time and values align and where they do not.

- ◆ List those values in life that have meaning to you. (See Figure 1.1A.)
- ◆ List each value separately.
- ◆ Pick the top five for immediate focus and review.
- ◆ Rank them in order of importance.
- ◆ List the percentage of money you spend on these values using 100 percent of your funds as a base.
- ◆ List the number of minutes or hours per week you devote to this value, then fill in the chart using a percentage of your overall time based on an average work week.
- ◆ List the amount of energy you invest in this value as positive (+) or negative (−) (e.g. it gives you a positive or negative feeling when you do it).
- ◆ Use the template to track your answers and demonstrate your awareness.

*(continued)*

**FIGURE 1.1A** What Matters to You

<i>Value (in order of importance before completing this exercise)</i>	<i>% of money you spend on it each week</i>	<i>Number of hours/ minutes you spend on it as a percentage of time each work week</i>	<i>Amount of energy + or –</i>	<i>Re-order by importance after completing this exercise</i>

- ◆ When completed, you should have a record of how your use of money, time, and energy match your values (See Figure 1.1B). If they are not aligned, consider changes you can make to bring them into alignment, and re-order your values as needed.

**FIGURE 1.1B**

What Matters To Me	Money	Time	Energy
• Raising healthy, balanced children	33%	15 hrs driving kids	Negative (–)
• Doing interesting/useful work	5%	60 hours	Positive (+)
• Saving for retirement and job loss	33%	15 min planning	Negative (–)
• Leisure time (exercise, movies)	20%	5 hours exercising	Positive (+)
• Maintaining relationships	5%	2 hours	Positive (+)
• Contributing to community	1%	0 hours	Negative (–)
• Other	3%	5–10 hours	Positive (+)

## On-the-Job Training

Mothers, as the CEO and management of their families, set the tone and goals for their families just as at the workplace where the CEO sets tone and management goals for the company. Many working mothers are ambitious and that isn't surprising considering motherhood is good training ground for coping with the trials, tribulations, and challenges of the workplace. Motherhood makes women more effective in the workplace, too. "It gives you the experience of being totally in charge and you realize how capable you are," says Dee Dee Myers, mother of two, former White House press secretary for President Bill Clinton (the first woman to ever be appointed to that position), political analyst and commentator, contributing editor to *Vanity Fair*, and author of *Why Women Should Rule the World* ([www.deedeemyers.org](http://www.deedeemyers.org)).

As mothers, we have empowering information and experience, Myers adds. "We need to get women to believe that even in work circumstances, they can also be in charge. You also learn to trust your intuition more when you are a mother. Intuition is real and is a valuable tool. You should trust that voice. We should not be defensive about it," adds Myers.

### PROGRAMMED WIRING

Recognizing our power and strengths as women isn't always the way we're programmed. We're often raised to take a backseat to others' happiness, to please everyone else first. Society does little to dissuade us of that or to help working mothers cope with the demands of mixing work and family. That same society—worldwide, in varying degrees—often frowns on working moms. Despite some high-profile exceptions, the business world doesn't make it much easier.

Heather, mother of three—ages 7, 11, and 14—and a state senator, is a happy working mother today. That wasn't always the case. She consciously allowed her own happiness to take a backseat to that of her family's and stayed home full-time with her kids for six years. Although she adored being home with her kids, Heather longed to contribute to the world in other ways. Once her youngest started

school, Heather says she felt she could go back to work full time to gain the fulfillment she was lacking.

Individuals like Heather and Dee Dee Myers and others create their own happiness. As mothers and businesswomen, they've learned the behaviors that facilitate their happiness. As a working mother, you can transform your life even if you're not naturally happy. That's what Heather did. Even her desire to be a happy stay-at-home mom—the force of her will for happiness—wasn't enough to turn her life toward happiness. Instead, Heather says, "It's about knowing what makes you happy and building time in your life for those things. You need to pay attention to the small things that make you happy . . . to treat yourself to the things you enjoy."

In Heather's case, those happiness triggers include being back at work, feeling needed, having a role in something bigger than herself, and feeling purposeful.

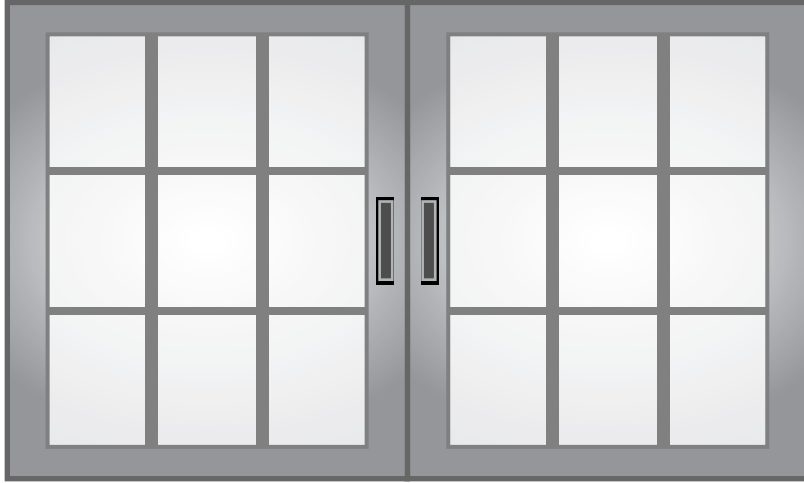
"I'm a glass half-full person," says attorney Laben. To achieve her positive outlook she learned how to recognize and appreciate moments of happiness. "It's a life skill," says Laben. "It's part of parenting."

What are *your* happiness triggers? What is it that lifts your spirit and helps you embrace the abundance mentality? Let's paint a picture in your mind of all that is good in your life. Create a happier view of your life (Figure 1.2), and then take the Abundance Audit Self-Assessment (Figure 1.3).

### **Self-Coaching Break**

Look at your life as a window and fill it in with the people and places in your life that contribute to your happiness. Use this window to view your happy life and make changes as needed. You can put in photos or the names of people and places. You can even post this on your Facebook page if you like.

Now, take the abundance Audit. Be candid and honest. Even little things that are good can and do add up.

**FIGURE 1.2** Creating a Happier Life View**FIGURE 1.3** Abundance Audit Self-Assessment***Background:***

As working mothers we are faced with time constraints. As a result, we become focused on the negative rather than the positive. An example might include how we view our achievements or those around us, a loved one, like our partner or our children. Did we look at what is working, what went right or what might not have gone as well as expected? Are we realistic with our schedule, planning for activities, tasks at work, or expectations of ourselves and others? Applying focus and attention to the list of words below will help you understand what if any adjustments might be needed to help you maintain or achieve a higher Mentality of Abundance that is critical to better health, emotional wellness, and managing the talent you have as both a mother and in your career.

***Directions:***

Please read the statements below to help you understand the answers you may apply in rating yourself in Part I.

Think about how effective you are applying an Abundance Mentality using these statements.

**Part I.** On a scale of 1 to 10 (10=very strong, 5=ok, 1=very weak), rate or assess yourself in the areas below for Abundance in both your professional and your

(continued)

## 14 Happiness Is Not a Luxury; It's a Necessity

personal life. (Please read the definitions listed below before completing the scale).

<b>Establishing Rapport</b>	<b>Creating a personal connection or common ground with someone to make it more comfortable to have a conversation.</b>
<b>Listening</b>	<b>Shifting to deeper levels of listening where attention is fully on the other person, and being conscious of the impact of that listening</b>
<b>Developing Self-Awareness</b>	<b>Understanding and articulating your own perspectives, reactions, and assumptions to better understand the "lenses" through which you view the world.</b>
<b>Demonstrating Empathy</b>	<b>Accepting and valuing another person's perspective and showing a genuine interest in understanding the other person.</b>
<b>Asking Questions/Inquiring</b>	<b>Using guiding questions to help someone think through an issue of making a decision. Allowing the person to solve the problem him/herself.</b>
<b>Enabling</b>	<b>Encouraging someone to fully use gifts and talents in creative ways by being excited about his or her actions and progress and pointing to underlying shifts and growth.</b>
<b>Collaboratively Problem Solving</b>	<b>Finding value in someone's ideas and building on them to explore issues and jointly create solutions.</b>
<b>Providing and Receiving Feedback</b>	<b>Highlighting the impact of current behaviors and identifying new behaviors and actions that improve performance.</b>

1. Establishing Rapport

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

2. Listening

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

## 3. Developing Self-Awareness

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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## 4. Demonstrating Empathy

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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## 5. Asking Questions/Inquiring

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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## 6. Enabling

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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## 7. Collaborative Problem Solving

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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## 8. Providing and Receiving Feedback

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Look at the total number of times you circled a particular number (1-10) above. Using the overall scale below, circle the number that most closely corresponds to those numbers above. If you circled mostly 8-10 above, you are most likely having good results and demonstrate a highly effective Mentality of Abundance. If you circled mostly 4-7, you are probably doing well and are moderately effective with a Mentality of Abundance. If you circled 1-3 you are probably not as effective as you could be using and applying a higher level Mentality of Abundance. By examining some key obstacles in Part II below, you can begin to develop more of these skills.

**Part II.** What are 3-5 key obstacles in your life to building and exercising an Abundance Mentality? (e.g., no time, haven't had good role models and/or training, leadership in my firm doesn't seem to value these skills, my family expects me to make it all work, etc.) Continue with Part III.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

(continued)

**Part III.** List 5-10 adjectives to describe Abundance in both your professional and personal life (e.g., my talents, skills, strengths, good at relationships, problem solver, excellent communicator, I understand my children, people confide in me, I am trustworthy, quick learner, self-motivated, etc.). This section will help you include more “words” or phrases that will enable you to apply more Abundance in your life. Keeping this list in a visible place can help you simulate your Abundance Mentality (e.g., on a screen saver, on your cell phone next to names of “energizing” people, include them with photos for your desktop, car, or gym locker).

- |    |     |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6.  |
| 2. | 7.  |
| 3. | 8.  |
| 4. | 9.  |
| 5. | 10. |

**Part IV.** What do you hope to gain by demonstrating an appreciation for Abundance?

- Personally:

- For you
- For your family

- Professionally:

- For you
- For your team/firm/industry

## Why Bother with Happiness?

The presence of happiness changes the landscape wherever you are and in whatever you do. If you're happy, your personal relationships are more upbeat, your children more energized, and your work more



improved. The absence of happiness, on the other hand, exacts a toll on everyone around you and all you do.

### **A Working Mother's Wisdom**

Paradoxically, a diagnosis of cancer often creates more happiness in the lives of cancer patients because they are forced to drop the trivial irritants. The change of perspective, emphasizing the preciousness of life, can actually make them happier. It enhances their ability to appreciate joy more accurately.

Loss can often help you experience joy. When you go to the end of the pain continuum, you appreciate the other end of the spectrum—which is joy.

—Victoria, M.D., and mother of three

### **In the Workplace**

Happiness equals profit in the workplace. If the costs of health care decrease, if employees take fewer sick days (including “mental health” days), and if the cost of employee turnover drops, companies decrease their expenses and increase their overall profit. That’s because when people work in a positive environment, they’re less stressed. Low stress means the different parts of the brain—the amygdala and the frontal cortex (we’ll talk more about them in the next chapter)—can work together optimally to make well-reasoned, ethical decisions. Just as stress causes high blood pressure and other physical health symptoms, low stress levels can reduce those symptoms, and the result is less employee time out for sickness.<sup>2</sup>

Fostering happy employees is the single greatest transformation a company can undergo to retain talent, improve its competitive position, and increase its top line revenue. It also has the potential to drastically reduce stress and medical-related workplace costs (and bottom lines in the process). Consider a few numbers on the cost of *unhappiness* in the workplace:

- ◆ Employee stress costs U.S. businesses more than \$300 billion annually from increased absenteeism, employee turnover, diminished productivity, and medical and legal costs.<sup>3</sup>
- ◆ As many as 2.5 million working parents are less productive employees because they're worried about what their children are doing after school, according to a 2006 study from the Community, Families, and Work Program at Brandeis University and Catalyst, a leading nonprofit research and advisory organization. "Our findings show that [parental worry about kids after school] can be very toxic to employee attitudes, work performance, and well-being," says Karen Gareis, a social psychologist at the Community, Families, and Work Program, and lead researcher on the study.<sup>4</sup>
- ◆ Worker fatigue—more common in women than men—affects nearly 40 percent of U.S. workers and costs employers an estimated \$136 billion-plus a year in health-related lost productivity, according to a 2007 study from the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine.<sup>5</sup>

**Cost of Unhappiness in Workplace = Cost of Health Benefits  
+ Number of Sick Days + Cost of Replacing Lost Talent**

### **Happy Employees = Productive Employees**

"If employees feel happy about what they are doing, they become more committed and thus complete their tasks more efficiently and to a higher standard," reports iOpener, a consulting firm in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and South Africa. iOpener was co-founded by Jess Pryce Jones, one of two working mothers with the purpose of helping companies improve their happiness quotient and bottom lines. "There is a particularly strong established correlation between happiness and productivity," iOpener reports ([www.iopener.co.uk/index.php](http://www.iopener.co.uk/index.php)). "Business has inherently always been about success, and happiness was assumed to be a welcome but unnecessary

by-product. However, as plenty of successful people would testify, success is not the same as happiness. We agree with this in that success alone does not lead to long-term business commitment, loyalty, or motivation, whereas being happy at work *does*.”<sup>6</sup>

Employee engagement—the emotional connection people have to their work or their level of commitment to it—is a strong indicator of a successful business. According to studies done by Hewitt Associates, high-performing companies are those with employee engagement of 60 percent or higher.<sup>7</sup> Happy employees are highly engaged employees. So, for a business to be considered a high performer in its industry, it needs happy and engaged workers.

Top executive coaches around the world work with all types and sizes of companies, government and private organizations, and even the military on how to foster a positive or happy approach everyday and how to motivate employees to higher performance levels in the process.

## At Home

A working mother’s happiness makes a difference on the home front, too. Just ask a child or partner of a working mother and they’ll tell you. Says Matt, teenaged son of a working mom: “You can definitely tell if Mom had a bad day at work. I know I need to give her space before I ask for anything or to go anywhere.”

Work energizes Britt van den Berg, director of Global Diversity and Inclusion/Talent Recruitment, Philips Corporation, and a full-time working mother of a 13-month-old. “It’s energy I give back to my daughter,” she says. Britt, her partner, and their daughter live in Holland, a place where women typically only work part-time after having children. After her daughter was born, Britt says she felt very somber and overwhelmed by the responsibility of caring for another human being even though her partner was there to help. The prospect of going back to work, however, lifted Britt’s spirits. “I’m a better

## 20 **Happiness Is Not a Luxury; It's a Necessity**

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mother because I work. I also feel very responsible for my job because I have a child to support,” she says.

*I am the barometer, and I set the mood for the family. . . . When I'm grumpy, everyone is on eggshells.*

—Jill, clinical nurse specialist, mother of three

Work makes Tatiana happy, too, and has a positive influence on her mothering. She's a mother of three—a daughter, 12, and twin sons, 10—happily married to a lawyer, and living in Great Britain. “Managing children is harder than managing a team at work,” she says. “Motherhood makes me better at multitasking and gives me a new perspective. I don't stress over the little things,” Tatiana says.

At the same time, her work skills make her a better mother, too, she says. Negotiation training, for example, has helped her manage the kids, motivating them, building their self-esteem, and recognizing their accomplishments. “My happiness is important to my family. It gives me more energy to spend with them and sets the tone for family.”

Tatiana and Britt aren't alone in feeling that working makes them better mothers and vice versa. That's a common theme among mothers in the workplace, whether they drive a forklift truck in a warehouse or steer giant corporations.

Motherhood has changed work for Dee Dee Myers, too. “I'm better at getting to win/win,” she says. “I did not appreciate before how important it is for everyone to be happy. I realize now it's important for people to feel they've been heard. I'm better at setting boundaries. My world view has changed somewhat, too. I always thought it was important for women to be involved in all aspects of public life. I feel that way even more now . . . I have a broader view of what it means to have meaningful work.”

### **Your Happiness: Luxury or Not?**

Happiness is a necessity, says Diana, 51, adjunct professor of law at the University of Arizona, wife, and mother of a 17-year-old. “You make the necessary changes to be happy. This is the only life we have, so we had better enjoy it.”

Diana understands that happiness is self-awareness—each of us understanding our needs; self-care (making sure our needs are met), and self-love (learning to accept ourselves for who we are—imperfections and all), and living in accordance with our values.

Happiness is a part of the life you make for yourself, agrees Debra, a licensed therapist, commodities trader, and divorced mother of two sons whom she co-parents with her ex-husband. “My happiness is paramount to my children . . . . If I act like a victim, that’s not healthy. I model boundaries and limits, and show that happiness is not something you have to wait to get. You should be happy now—every day . . . . If I’m miserable, that will trickle down to the boys.”

Not all working mothers have learned to be that self-aware, to accept who they are, and to live their values. It’s often easier to dwell on the negative especially when, as a working mother, you’re stretched thin. True happiness requires not only appreciating the good parts of your life but also this self-awareness of your needs and how to make sure those needs are met. It’s not solely about meeting the needs of your kids and your family.

Mosley, of Women in Cable Telecommunications, became the first African-American woman to win Olympic gold when she won the 100-meter hurdles at the 1984 Olympics. At the time, track sensation Mary Decker was the favorite to win the 3,000 meters, but collided with another runner and fell, so did not win in her event. Despite Mosley’s landmark victory, the media spotlight focused on Decker’s loss. Rather than feel bitter or resentful, Mosley focused on her magnificent accomplishment and walked away from the experience to succeed as a mother, wife, and businesswoman. Recalls Mosley:

“I remember that day in 1984 . . . all the media attention was on Mary Decker’s falling, not about Benita Fitzgerald (Mosley), the first African-American woman to win the U.S. gold medal in the 100-meter hurdles track and field event. After winning the gold, I was escorted to the press tent in Los Angeles for the media/press interviews. The tent was massive, like a wedding tent, and it was buzzing with cameras and crews from all around the world. When I arrived the press just looked at me and then looked over my shoulder—past me. . . . They were intent on waiting for Mary and getting the story of the day, how Mary Decker lost the 3,000-meter gold medal.

"I could have been regretful about the media coverage, but I was not. To this day I believe I was blessed to have my day in the sun, and if I had put all my eggs in that one little basket—my win at the 1984 Olympics—it would have probably made me very upset. But I went on with my life.

"I recall standing on the victory stand and seeing my parents' pride, and the joy of sleeping with my gold medal that night—going to sleep and knowing I had reached my goal in just 12.84 seconds. The media situation was disappointing, but there have been so many wonderful blessings in my life since that day . . . If I had a chip on my shoulder, I would have been an angry, unsuccessful individual for the rest of my life. I chose to be happy and proud of my achievement and to represent my hometown of Dale City, Virginia."

Such is the power of thinking in terms of the abundance in your life—all that is good—as opposed to all that is not. Mosley recognized then and now, 25 years later, that true happiness yields much greater rewards than its opposite, and that it was and is well worth the effort to achieve and sustain that happiness.

## **Achieving Your Own Happiness**

Like Mosley and other women, you, too, can mobilize your thoughts, feelings, and approach to life with happiness as the goal. Plenty of temptations and roadblocks stand in the way of your goal. We'll talk more about many of them in later chapters. But each is surmountable with the right tools, techniques, and support systems. If you're not naturally happy, we'll help you learn how to modify your behavior. This is change management on steroids. It's Six Sigma applied to your own life. You can learn to identify and improve the positive qualities that support a happier life, and by doing so, help decrease your level of negative emotions in the process that is your life.

"Happiness is an inside job," says Lisa Kamen, a mother and founder of the What Is Your Happiness project and an award-winning filmmaker. She shares her perspective on happiness globally in her documentary, "The H-Factor: Where Is Your Heart."<sup>8</sup>

It will take time to find your own happiness. Think of the abundance in your life whenever that wave of “overwhelmed-ism” gets ready to swamp you. Take time to talk to your kids, tune out the negativity around you, turn off the TV, breathe deeply, and then start again on your quest to happiness. You can do it.

## **Living the Dream**

We all have dreams. Often they begin when we are children with fantasies of adventure or wealth or fame. We’re never too old to dream, either, and to work toward achieving our dreams. Even if a dream is only that, the pursuit of that dream can provide great joy. The path toward the dream also may provide new opportunities you otherwise could not see.

Sometimes, however, we forget that to achieve a dream, it must be grounded in reality. The reality of being in relationships with your children with other adults is that you need to nourish them with your time. You also need to allow time for yourself to re-energize.

Many women dream of achieving certain milestones in their careers while, at the same time, having a spouse and raising children. And why not? In today’s cyber-world people can work from anywhere. You can live on a mountaintop in Idaho and telecommute to New York every morning if you like. It’s important, though, that the dream be set at a realistic pace and that it includes time for everything—time with your spouse, time with your children, time with your friends, and time for you. Otherwise, you may get to the top—whatever that top happens to be—and discover that all you had envisioned simply isn’t so.

*Move over, diamonds; happiness is a girl's best friend.*

—Cathy Greenberg

## **Follow Your Dream**

While following your dreams, take into account all of the elements that comprise a happy life: work, family, life, friends, relaxation, exercise, and the freedom to grow and change.

*(continued)*

Ask yourself the following questions; listen to your inner coach, be positive with yourself; and help yourself see how you can achieve the dream.

- ◆ What is the grandest possible dream you have for yourself at this time?
- ◆ How long do you think it will take to achieve the dream?
- ◆ Who will you need to be successful (family, friends, business partners, or networks of talent or people)?
- ◆ What skills, capabilities, experiences, or competencies will you need to be successful? How will you get the skills that you do not yet have?
- ◆ Who is most excited to see you live this dream (you, your family, your friends, or colleagues)?
- ◆ What will most enable your success (your knowledge, networking with others, financial assets, time)? How can you get those resources?
- ◆ Who needs to be a part of your success for you to feel you have truly achieved the dream (only you, your family, friends and colleagues, others)?
- ◆ What obstacles, if any, do you need to be aware of when planning to achieve your dream? How can you overcome those obstacles?
- ◆ What are you willing to give up to achieve your dream (leisure time, money, security, other)?
- ◆ How will you know when you have reached your goal? What milestones will you have passed in the process?

That's a lot of questions, but we hope your answers to them will help you direct your energies toward the right dream with an appropriate time frame in mind. Carefully understanding your responses will help you remain true to yourself, your values, and your motivations, and ultimately will keep you on the path to success you have charted for yourself today and in the future.



True happiness springs from honesty with yourself. Making the best choices for you in key elements of your plan is an essential part of achieving your own happiness with no regrets.

*Deciding what matters the most to you is vital, so take the time to listen to your own inner voice is extremely important—otherwise you might miss your own message.*

—Sherry Brennan, mother, and vice president, sales strategy & development, Fox Cable Networks

### **Bottom Lines: Exercises to Try**

#### **WRITE YOUR HAPPY STORY**

Take a few minutes to write down a happy story about you. It can have happened anytime in your life. Use the story to remind yourself of when you felt your best and modeled the kind of happiness you would like to feel often.

#### **MAKING CHOICES**

Ask yourself these questions:

- ◆ What do I need to know about myself as a mother and a worker to be able to make the best choices for me?
- ◆ Will my happiness be affected by these choices and how?
- ◆ Will the choices I make have a long-term or a short-term impact and how?
- ◆ Can I redirect my choice if it does not work for me?

*(continued)*

- ◆ Who can help me with this choice?
- ◆ What can I do to make the choice work for both my family and my work?
- ◆ What future choices will this choice affect?

Knowing yourself is critical to your happiness. Taking the time to understand yourself, your values and what is important to you as you think about your happiest life is vital. Making the right choices for your happiness is essential for creating a long-term plan and a strong foundation for your own happiness.