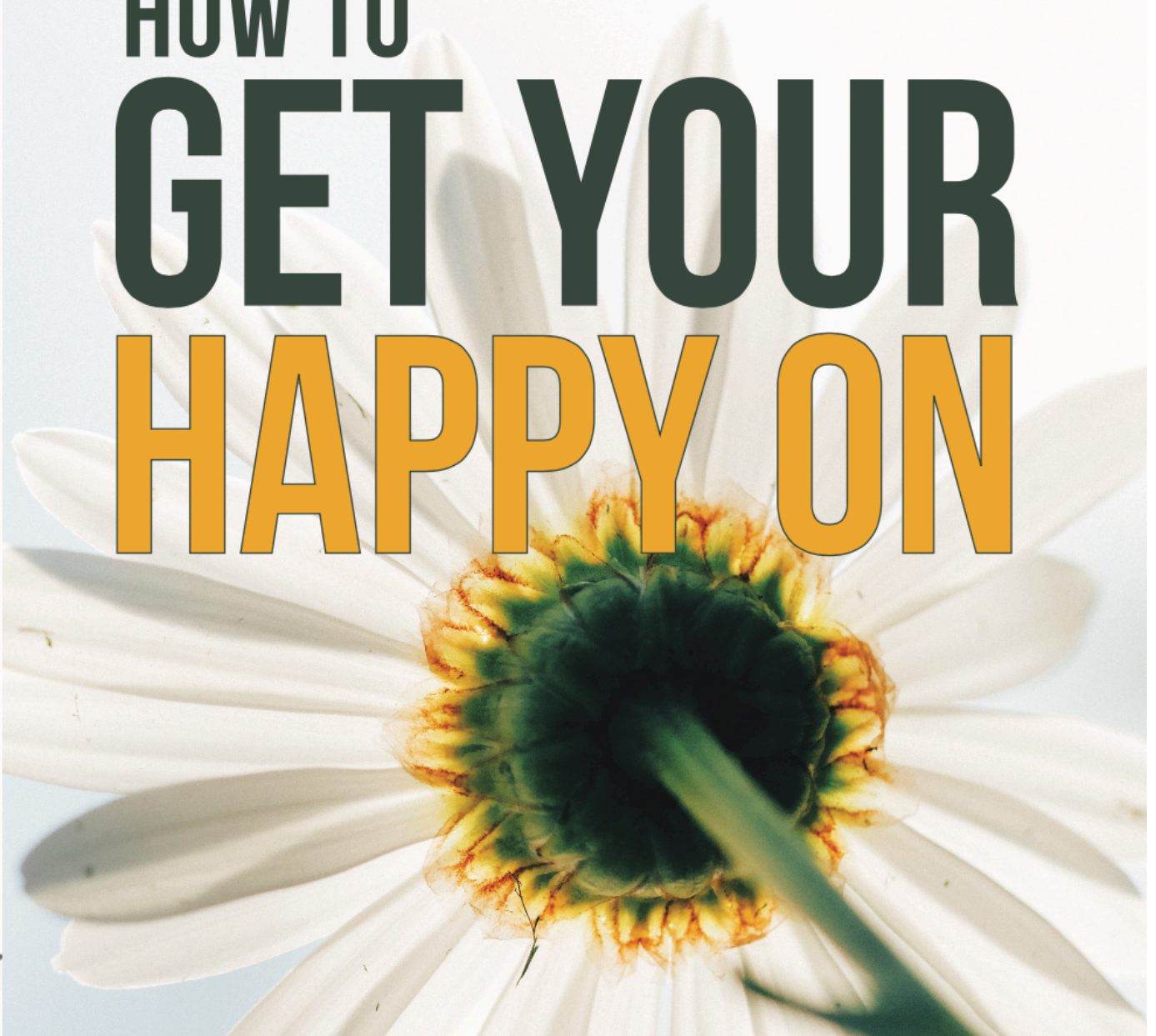


AN AWESOME MOM HANDBOOK

DEBORAH ANN DAVIS

HOW TO
GET YOUR
HAPPY ON



**HOW TO
GET YOUR
HAPPY ON**

DEBORAH ANN DAVIS



D&D Universe, llc

How To Get Your Happy On

An Awesome Mom Handbook

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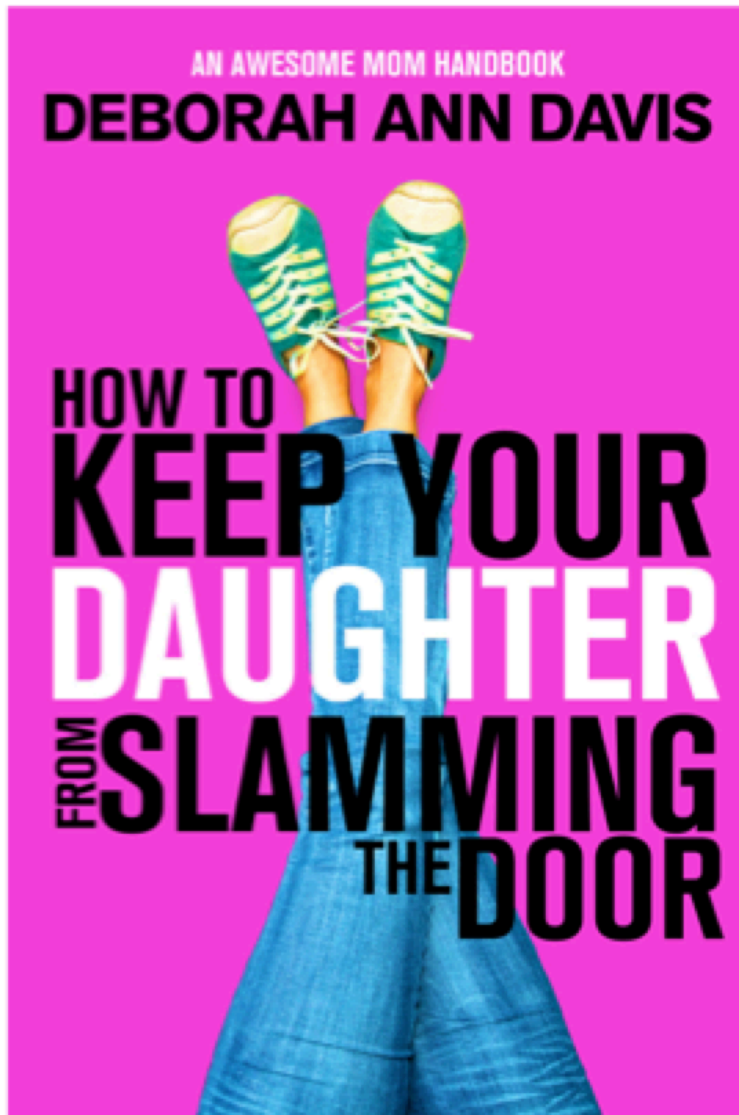
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SLAMMING the DOOR**
An Awesome Mom Handbook

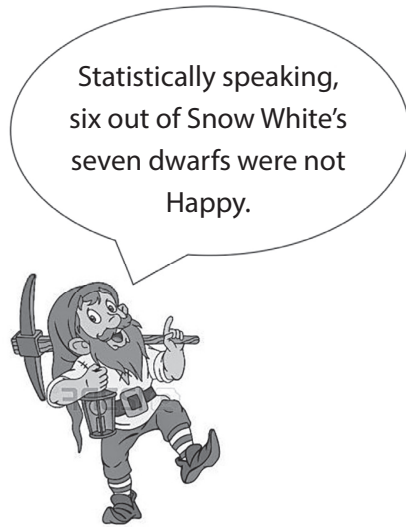
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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: What is Happiness?	10
Chapter 2: Embracing Your Inner Environment	13
10 Simple Ways To Get Your Happy On	15
Chapter 3: Revamping Your Outer Environment	22
Media: The Energy-Sucking Vampire In Your Life	22
Tools To Fight the Happiness Vampires	23
Seek Out Positive People	23
Supply Yourself With Plenty of Water and Unprocessed Foods.....	24
Surround Yourself With Uplifting Conversation	25
Submerge Yourself In Upbeat Music, Comedy, and Success Stories ...	27
Chapter 4: The Media and Me Experiment	29
Baseline Data	29
How Does My Playlist Make Me Feel?	30
3 Months of Movie Moods	32
What's Normal Anyway?	34
Stacking the Deck In Your Favor	39
Stack #1: How To Get Your Comedy On	40
Stack #2: How To Get Your Movies On.....	41
Stack #3: How To Get Your Music On	42
Let's See What Happens	43
Shows, Movies and Music, Oh My!	44
When the Mood Moves Me	46
Are You Absolutely Positive?	47
Chapter 5: The Musical Score for the Movie of Your Life (a.k.a., Your Life Playlist)	49
Songs For Getting Your Happy On	50
Create the Musical Score For Your Life	51
One Last Look Back	52
Bibliography	54
Bonus: Take Action and Change Your Life	61



Disney showed us the Seven Dwarfs dutifully going to work every day, but it begs the question, were those who were not Happy as productive as he who was Happy?

Numerous studies have been done to evaluate the effects of being happy on productivity at work. According to Daniel Sgroi, who conducted one such study in 2015, work productivity increases when we are happy. (Yay!) If happiness enhances your professional life, imagine the effect of happiness on your personal life.

We all feel happy part of the time, right? Have you ever looked at how often you're happy? Take yesterday, for example. How much of the day did you spend feeling happy? 50% of the day? 75%? 100%? (Answer: _____)

Perhaps yesterday isn't a good example due to extenuating circumstances. Let's look at last week instead. What percent of last week did you spend feeling happy? Were you happy most of the days? Part of every day? All seven days? (Answer: _____)

Would you like to up that a bit?

Actually, because everyone experiences ups and downs, when examining your general happiness level, the question to ask is not, "Did you have a happy month, or season, or overall year?" The question that matters is, "Were you as happy as you would like to be?"

If your answer is *No*, the important question to ask is this:

Would you like to enhance your level of happiness?

If your answer is *Yes*, then this becomes the important question:

Would you like to enhance your level of happiness?

“

"Happiness is not something ready made. It comes from your own actions."

Dalai Lama

”

That's right. It's the same question.

C'mon, people. Of course it's the same question.

Who wouldn't benefit from being happier?

What this book will do is help you tweak your life so it will become easier for you to deal with your problems. I'm not talking about implementing huge sweeping changes here (although the Ripple Effect can produce some awesome transformations). This is about small tweaks accumulating into something much grander.

What this book won't do is solve your problems. (I don't even know what they are, so how can I solve them?) That's your job.

Instead, this book looks at aspects of your lifestyle that may appear innocuous, but in reality create a subtle and continuous negative impact on you... because that's what they are designed to do. Take the media, for example. I'll bet you didn't realize advertisements are geared toward making you unhappy. The core purpose of advertising is to turn you into a customer, and the only way to do that is to make you discontented with what you already have. Once they create yearning in you, they keep you coming back for more, *and* you feel unhappy until you get it.

I'm a prime example.

When I was a young adult, I wasn't exposed to the world of advertising as much as my peers. As a science teacher who didn't watch TV or read the newspaper, I spent my evenings preparing lesson plans or grading papers, and my weekends running around with my friends, so I missed the commercials.

A lot changed after I married and became a new mom. With a new TV added to sleepless nights, plus a good measure of postpartum, I became depleted emotionally, and therefore more vulnerable to advertisements. I was susceptible to being told.:

- what my furniture should look like
- how to lose my baby fat
- what kind of car we needed
- how to dress my baby
- which clothes I should be wearing
- where to get quickie loans and credit cards to pay for it all

Once I measured our previously happy lifestyle against the norm endorsed on TV, I was mortified by my ignorance, but determined to catch up and become a better mother and wife. I started by subscribing to "better you" magazines, which led to clipping coupons from the Sunday paper, and then hunting for bargains on anything all the time. Every week I came up with additional, suddenly necessary things to buy, items which hadn't occurred to me before spotting them in weekend flyers. I chased down sales as a way to justify my increased spending. (My husband was not impressed that I could get a free can of beets if I spent \$10 on some company's products, especially since neither of us liked beets.)

“

Advertisements are geared toward making you unhappy.

”

As time passed, and nothing I did helped me catch up to the media's standards, my anxiety level crept up. Even expired coupons created waves of angst. After all, if I actually had mastered motherhood, wouldn't they have been used in time?

Ashamed, I strove to hide my inabilities and concerns. Asking for help was out of the question since apparently I was the only mother in our entire community—or, perhaps the entire state—who couldn't handle her household by herself. (Don't judge. I was a new mom. Never judge a new mom.)

Filled with self-recriminations, I greeted each day by whispering, "Please, just let me get through one day where nothing goes wrong. Just one day. That's all I need to get my feet back under me again." Did that day come? Nope.

Until, one evening my husband found me sobbing over a dishwasher overflowing with bubbles (yes, that was the day I learned dish soap and dishwasher soap are not the same thing). After cleaning up the kitchen and me, he began a conversation that took me years to understand, the gist of which was, *why does any of that commercial stuff matter when we have our healthy, happy family?*

His stellar suggestion to me? Stop reading the Sunday flyers.

Really?

After considering his advice, I thought, *well, why not? What have I got to lose?*

You know, that simple act actually made a significant difference. Looking back, I understand it had to do with reclaiming my power from the influence of the advertisers, but at the time, all I knew was that I felt better.

Inspired, I decided to exercise a little bit more power by tossing out my previously clipped coupons. Mustering all my strength, I refused to peek at the expiration dates, even in the face of the possibility of ditching some once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I heroically dumped them in the garbage can and walked away... and then came back to pour the rest of my salad on them to make sure I didn't fish them out again.

Taking it a step further, I gathered up all the weird on-sale foods that we never ate, and donated the whole lot.

But wait! There's more! I cancelled the magazine subscriptions that shared 5000 short cuts to a better me (which I never had time to try). I now reserve my magazine reading for whatever I find laying around in waiting rooms when I have an appointment.

Each change distanced me from the advertising world, and brought me closer to myself. Within a couple of weeks, my feelings of yearning diminished so much, I felt like I was emerging from a fog. Yes, my feet were back under me again. And just like that, *ta da!* I was released from the hamster wheel I had been stumbling on.

What did I do with all that extra coupon-clipping time I unexpectedly had? I spent it hanging out with my beloved husband and playing with our darling daughter.

However, for years I secretly believed the reason I had lost myself in the first place was because of some stupid character flaw. Oddly enough, it wasn't until I began teaching Environmental Science that I learned the truth about that low point in my life, that the world of advertising had fueled my discontent *by design* (if you have doubts, check out *The Story of Stuff* by Annie Leonard on YouTube). Postnatal hormones and naivety kept me from questioning what I was being told by ads, so I got sucked in by their message, right along with everybody else whose discontent is driven by what they don't have.

Ever since I understood the power of this subtle outside stimuli, I've been diligent about what I allow within my sphere of influence. Once I got my happy on, I wanted to keep it on.

My current levels of contentment and happiness are deliberate, and by *my design*. I protect them fiercely... plus, life is more fun this way.

If you take a look at the background elements that influence your life every single day, especially the ones *that you don't even notice*, you can recognize, and then control their effects, even when other parts of your life may feel out of control. The truth is, making small changes can have a *huge* impact on your life, just as it did on mine. Happy or not, your happiness level will increase, and so will your power. Who wouldn't want that?

If you are ready to enhance your happiness by getting your happy on, turn the page.

“

If you take a look at the background elements that influence your life every single day, the ones that you don't even notice, you can recognize, and then control their effects, even when other parts of your life may feel out of control.

”

What is Happiness?

I looked up the definition of happiness for this book, entering “*define happiness*” into a search engine. It produced this:

hap·pi·ness
/'hapēnəs/
noun
the state of being happy

Seriously? Even a middle-schooler knows it doesn't help to use the same word you're defining in the definition.

The synonyms they provided, however, delivered far more info:

- bliss
- blissfulness
- cheerfulness
- contentment
- delight
- ecstasy
- elation
- enjoyment
- euphoria
- exhilaration
- exuberance
- gaiety
- glee
- good spirits
- jollity
- joviality
- joy
- joyfulness
- jubilation
- lightheartedness
- merriment
- pleasure
- rapture
- satisfaction
- well-being

Then there were the two examples they gave for how to use the word in a sentence. They took me completely by surprise:

"she struggled to find happiness in her life"

"trying to rediscover the happiness we once knew"

Really? These two negative statements are the best they could come up with for a happiness definition? Somebody definitely needs to get his/her happy on...

Wouldn't it be great if you could harness your happiness, and, in turn, positively affect the people you love, increasing their happiness in the process?

A Happier You
+ Happier Family
+ Happier Friends

A Happier Life

The first step is to reorient your outlook more towards the positive. That alone will affect the people around you, but it doesn't stop there. Their increased cheer will affect the people they hang out with. Those people, in turn, will positively affect their family and friends. The next thing you know, the whole neighborhood is reorienting toward the positive. Before you know it, the larger community will be affected.

Does that sound a little fantastical to you? To me, it's a clear case of the Ripple Effect – that's where the ripples of a small action reach far and wide, affecting other areas, and thereby compounding their impact. All we have to do is begin with ourselves, and let the joy spread organically. If cute baby videos can go viral, why not increasing your happiness?

There are two ways to categorize what makes you happy.

1. Your Inner Environment Stimuli – how you look at things, what you believe, how you feel.
2. The Outer Environment Stimuli – how the world around you treats you, influences you, and distracts you.

We'll begin by reframing how you look at your inner environment so you can increase your inner happiness and power, and then we'll help you modify your outer environment so it won't negatively affect your progress.

What do you have to lose? It's time to get your happy on.

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

– Aristotle

Embracing Your Inner Environment

There is no doubt that the media affects the way you feel about yourself. I'm not talking about the obvious intentional stuff, like mean-texting, cyber-bullying and advertising. I'm referring to more subtle influences from pop culture—movies, TV and music— that have the ability to enhance or destroy your mood, and that affect your well-being. You know what I mean if you've ever sobbed along with the heroine in one scene, and then cheered her on in another.

Don't get me wrong... I'm all in favor of a good tearjerker, but only occasionally, and not as a lifestyle. I'm very particular about what I allow to influence me because I enjoy feeling upbeat and cheerful. I enjoy being energized and powerful. I adore being in charge of my happiness.

In the same token, I'm also in charge of my unhappiness. I don't like the way unhappiness feels, and I don't like the way I feel about myself when I'm unhappy. If I let it continue unchecked, and don't deal with my unhappiness, I'll feel like a victim. Yuck.

The important words here are "deal with my unhappiness." I don't bury my problems in the back yard (let's face it... everybody's got them). I have to face them to get my power back. In doing so, I recover my happiness. And, when I purposefully decide not to wallow in my sad feelings, harnessing that control also empowers me.

It's up to me, even when life temporarily blindsides me, like when I had to live in a hospital for a good while after a car accident (a drunk driver hit us), or when Lyme disease laid me out for months. Those experiences actually taught me to be in charge of my happiness. Yes, other people and other things can contribute to my happiness, but ultimately, I'm in charge.

Kat: You say every woman has the exact love life she wants. Now, that seems like a pretty broad generalization... Do you honestly believe that I want to be single and miserable?

Nick: When you are ready to let go, to be un-single and un-miserable, you will. Until then...

The Wedding Date
(one of my favorite movies)

Did you know scientific research has confirmed that through intentional practices, we can actually change the neural pathways of our brain to become happier?

-ProjectHappiness.org

You can be in charge of your happiness, too. How do you start? By *thinking about it*. So, congratulations are in order! Obviously you've already begun the thinking-about-it process since you've picked up this book.

Your task now is to reframe your approach so you can better deal with the problems in your life yourself. Having said that, I'm a big fan of seeking help. Find someone to talk to about your problems. Putting them out there verbally is like opening a shaken can of soda. *Whoosh!* It's a great pressure release, even if it is messy. You can talk to:

- a BF (Best Friend)
- a clergyman
- an energy healer
- a hairdresser
- a neighbor
- a pen pal
- a psychiatrist
- a psychologist
- a relative
- a social worker
- a spouse
- a therapist

You get the idea. Or, instead of going it alone, find a support group geared toward your problem.

The supportive person or group you choose is not there to solve your problems, but rather to help you *explore* them so *you* can identify the solutions best suited to you.

"Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does."

– William James.

Meanwhile, there are so many ways you can purposefully and intentionally create a happier self. Here are ten of my favorite ways to get your inner happy on. Some of them may surprise you, but all of them contribute to your inner happiness. By fortifying yourself this way, you'll be better prepared to cope with the problems you and your supporters are tackling, and do it from a position of increasing strength and power.

I suggest you do any of the ten that resonate with you immediately. Do them in any order and as many times as you can. Repeat the ones you like and experiment with the others.

I hope you're excited. You're about to change your life!

10 Simple Ways To Get Your Happy On

1. Take care of your body. Believe it or not, the thing we tend to leave for last should be our first priority. Here's some *really* good ideas:

- Buy fish, fowl, veggies and fruits, and combine them yourself. (Don't buy any prepared foods with more than three ingredients in them).
- Stick with *cane* sugar, maple syrup and honey. (Stop using *all* artificial sweeteners).
- Drink filtered or tap water in a re-usable container. (Never drink out of a plastic water bottle, and never heat things in plastic.).
- Set a timer so you get up and move every hour. Run around the block, or walk to the bathroom. Either one gets you moving, and *all* movement makes you healthier, including laughing.

Even the most minor of pro-choices we make for our body has an automatic mini power boost associated with it. Why? (Glad you asked.) Because that seemingly insignificant decision is a proactive choice, not a passive option. That, in turn, contributes to your happiness level.

Pick 3 easy things to start you off:

A little proactive choice I can make today: _____

A little change I can make tomorrow: _____

A little Me Boost I can do next week: _____

Happiness Is Good For Your Heart – Harvard School of Public Health examined 200 separate research studies on psychological wellbeing and cardiovascular health. Optimism and positive emotion were found to provide protection against cardiovascular disease, to slow progression of heart disease and reduce risk, by around 50%.
 – ActionForHappiness.org

2. Count your blessings. Look for the good in people around you, and you'll be focusing on the positive, which of course, will make you happier. If you are a journaler, keep a journal where you list 3 good things about you, your day, your surroundings, your family, your job ... anything that comes to mind. Give thanks for those 3 positives. As it turns out, feeling grateful increases your happiness.

As a matter of fact, I try to say *Thank You* every chance I get. When I encounter a first responder (firefighter, ambulance driver, etc.) or a military person, I express my thanks for their service. It's not a big effort for me, and it might mean something to them. Besides, I've been rescued a few times in my life, so I'm truly grateful for them. It helps me appreciate my world, which helps me get my happy on.

List 3 things you are thankful for about *you*:

3. Do something for someone else. Any kindness is important, even something as seemingly insignificant as smiling at a person. As a teacher, I made sure I smiled and greeted every student I possibly could. Through my training, I had been reminded that for some of those children, my greeting might be the only connection they had with another person all day as they moved unobtrusively through the crowded halls. You never know how a smile will affect somebody.

"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted."

– Aesop

Choose someone you would like to do something for. What could you do for that person? Start with something simple:

4. Volunteer and/or donate. If you find something related to a hobby or personal passion that you can do for someone else, you'll get double the happiness benefits. For example, if you like to read, go read to patients at your local hospital, or at a senior

housing complex, or a kindergarten. You'll be happier because you gave your time, you'll enjoy their gratitude, and you'll get to read! Every organization of do-gooders needs volunteers, whether skilled or merely enthusiastic.

"People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.
– Maya Angelou

Name an activity that gives you joy, one which you would consider sharing with someone else:

5. Stay in the moment. Instead of worrying about the future, or obsessing over something in the past, focus on what you can do today, what you can enjoy today, or what you can listen to today. Center yourself. Zone out with some music. Meditate. Do a hobby (knitting, reading, painting) or a puzzle. Play a game with your kids or parents. All of this will make you happier because this is you taking a smidge of control.

If you think a single, solitary smidge doesn't matter, think again. Consider a single delicate snowflake. It doesn't have much impact by itself, but look out when a bunch of them gang up on you!

You've written down 9 smidges so far. Put them all together, and see what happens! (And, we're only half way through the list.)

Which method do you want to try this week? When and where will you do it?

6. Learn something new. I have you covered for today because you're reading this book. *Congrats!* (That's another smidge.) Next week, take a class, online or in person, free or paid. They have classes on computers, languages, dance styles, sports, crafts, healing skills, juggling, and almost anything else you can think of. Visit the library. Go to a seminar. Join Toastmasters.

Make a quick list of five things you would like to learn, and then circle the one you'd like to investigate next week:

7. Contact someone. Reconnect with an old friend. Call a relative. Make popcorn and snuggle up with your daughter in front of the fireplace with an uplifting movie. Compliment a colleague. Joke with the bank teller who waits on you. Thank the person who packs your *reusable* grocery bags. Make a date with your best friend. Get a hot drink with a new acquaintance. Pick anybody, but just make sure you do it yourself in person— no emailing or texting. If you can't be there in person, find a way to see their faces and hear their voices. A single rendezvous with a supportive friend or loved one will get your happy on, guaranteed.

Who are the four people you would enjoy (re)connecting with the most?

8. Have a goal or treat to look forward to. Sure, a reward is nice. You achieve something, and you reward yourself for it. But, let's not underestimate the power of a good, solid *treat*. A treat doesn't require any particular reason. Treat yourself because... just because. However, don't do it now. The trick to making a treat convert into *maximum* happiness is to schedule it for a specific time and date. Wait for it. Build anticipation. And, when the moment arrives, relish it, guilt-free.

What will your next treat be, and when will it be?

9. Be part of something bigger. Join something—a club, a cause, the PTA or PTO (or whatever your town calls it), an Earth Day movement, a political campaign, an organization for female executives or entrepreneurs, Weight Watchers, the neighborhood watch, the scouts, professional organizations (the Lions, the Elks, the Polar Bears or the Shriners), service clubs, community gardens... the list is endless. Go to a meet-up near you (MeetUp.com). FYI, most organizations allow you to attend a meeting before you join so you can check it out first.

What kind of group would get your happy on? And why would that warm your heart?

10. Explore your inner self. This is high quality Me Time in its purest form. You can do this on your own, or with some sort of counselor. If you don't know where to start, here are a few questions you can use until your momentum takes over.

A. What makes you happy? What interferes with your happiness? What guilt are you (inappropriately) hanging on to? (Any guilt you hold on to for longer than an hour is completely worthless, and interferes with getting your happy on.) Do you need to reorganize your life? Which of your relationships are sources of pleasure and comfort for you?

You might need a few more lines for this one. You can use the blank pages in the back of the book.

The simple act of identifying something to try, or exploring an attribute, has *great* repercussions.

- It's a pro-active move you are choosing for your betterment, instead of merely reacting to life.
- It nudges you away from victim-status, and toward empowerment.
- It puts you in charge of your happiness.

And, if you are a parent, what is the most important reasons for you to increase your happiness and make it a consistent part of who you are: *your kids and your family*.

If you are happier, your children will be happier, which will lead to a healthier, longer life for them. After all, isn't that what we all want first and foremost, for our children to blossom and thrive? Let's give them a healthy and happy you to lean on.

Which attribute do you wish to explore first? How are you going to approach it?

Meanwhile, let's explore some of the negative external influences in your life, and create a plan to neutralize them.

Happiness is good for your health, and vice versa. A review of hundreds of studies shows compelling evidence that happier people have better overall health, and live longer than their less happy peers... Taking care of your physical wellness may well be the most effective instant happiness booster of all.

– ProjectHappiness.org

Revamping Your Outer Environment

Can you control the outside influences on your life? Certainly not all of them (and for some of them, not all the time). You'll go crazy trying to control everything. It's better to learn how to be flexible in the areas that require flexibility, and to become empowered in the areas where you can make a difference.

Media: The Energy-Sucking Vampire In Your Life

Our lives are filled with media input from:

Billboards	Internet	Magazines	Social Media
Commercials	iPads	Movies	Song Lyrics
Computers	iPhones	Newspapers	Television
Flyers	iPods	Radio	
Gaming	Junk Mail	Signs	

The majority of the media message is negative, including advertising designed to make you yearn for more than what you have. Their objective? If they can develop discontent in you, they can create a client for themselves.

Listening to negative media is like being attacked by a vampire.

- According to legend, the bite of a vampire releases chemicals into the victim's bloodstream that turn the victim from a *bitee*, into a *biter*. Believe it or not, negative influencers in the media do the same thing to you (without the biting). When you are consistently exposed to negative influences, your brain tells your body to release chemicals into your bloodstream (the anxiety-causing kind), which make you unhappy, anxious, or angry, and turns you, so you become negative, like them.
- Just like vampires cannot enter your home unless invited (according to legend), negative media cannot enter your sphere unless you invite it in by turning it on. Replacing negative media with positive media keeps you from becoming a victim of constant pessimism.

- If you want to protect yourself from bloodsucking vampires, you gather your tools (stakes, garlic and holy water). In the same vein (pun intended), if you want to protect yourself from optimism-suckers, you must also assemble an appropriate arsenal.

Tools To Fight the Happiness Vampires

Those optimism-suckers disguised as pop culture — music, movies, and TV — this is the stuff you actually have control over. That's right. *You* have control over these external powers that affect your mood.

How?

Glad you asked! Prepare to get your happy on by stocking your arsenal with these four simple tools.

1. positive people
2. plenty of water and unprocessed foods
3. uplifting conversation
4. upbeat music, comedy, and success stories

It's easier than you think to revamp the environment that surrounds you.

Strategy #1: Seek Out Positive People

You don't have to be convinced about this technique. You already know how it feels to be around the upbeat, the happy, the cup-is-half-fullers, the believers, the supporters, and the complimentary. Their energy is infectious, their goodwill contagious.

On the other hand, how do the criticizers, complainers, naysayers, disbelievers, and downers make you feel? Usually, hanging with unhappy people makes you unhappy. And, in a bizarre twist, if you are immersed deeply enough, sometimes negativity can feel normal... making cheerful people seem irritating.

People always physically react to smiles, so go find the smilers.

- Get on a computer and look up *Happiness Organizations*. There's a Happiness Club near me. Perhaps there is one near you. (<https://www.happinessclub.com>)
- Do some volunteer work that requires you be around other people (community gardening; soup kitchen; make quilts for the homeless; knit hats and scarves for donations, etc.)

- If you know particularly nice positive people, tell them that you admire their outlook on life, and that you are trying to adopt a similar attitude. Then ask them their secret for maintaining a happy life. You may gain yourself a new friend in the process.

Strategy #2: Supply Yourself With Plenty of Water and Unprocessed Foods

You know how too much junk food (sweet snacks, salty snacks, and fast foods loaded with chemical additives) makes you feel sluggish and tired? Eating that way also contributes to you developing serious health issues. Just ask anyone from the 70% of the USA workforce who suffers from one *or more* chronic diseases (diabetes, cancer, asthma, arthritis, hypertension, lung diseases, kidney diseases, celiac, etc.). That's 70% of our workforce living with illness. Sadly, that means 70% of our beautiful children are destined for the same.

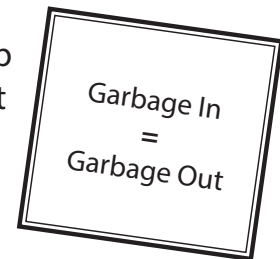
With that many people suffering from chronic ailments, it's almost guaranteed you know someone struggling to function despite his or her condition—your neighbor, a teacher, a secretary, an office mate, your boss. Observe what the ill people eat, drink and munch on, and ask yourself, are their choices making them healthier, or contributing to their condition?

Your body can only work with what you give it. If you keep ingesting harmful garbage, your body will try its best to clear it out, but eventually bad choices will overwhelm it, and you will become a member of the unfortunate 70% who fight their chronic diseases every day.

Hopefully, that hasn't happened to you, or yours, yet.

If, instead, you provide the nutrient building blocks your physical being needs (filtered water and unprocessed veggies, fruits, fats and proteins), your body will repair itself and build back up. Among the things that will benefit are:

- Your brain
- Your heart and lungs
- Your skin, nails and hair
- Your bones, muscles, ligaments and tendons
- Your mood and energy



Unprocessed
Veggies + Fruits + Fats + Proteins
+ Filtered or Tap Water
=
Healthy Brain, Heart, Lungs, Skin, Nails,
Hair, Bones, Muscles, Ligaments, Tendons,
Mood and Energy

It's your choice, but personally I'd choose clear skin, shiny hair and increased energy over fast food any day. (But that's just me.) Believe me, feeling healthy and looking healthy will definitely make you smile.

Strategy #3: Surround Yourself With Uplifting Conversation

If you deliberately feed your body the healthy things it needs, you'll increase your health. If you deliberately feed your intellect the positive things it needs, you'll increase your happiness. That includes everything from profound conversations to idle chitchat, whether verbal, electronic, or written. If, on the other hand, you allow the negatives of the world to bend your ear, that garbage will bring you down.

If you allow garbage conversations into your world, you will produce garbage conversations. Don't share damaging gossip, negative tweets, mocking messages, or mean emails. Participating in mean-spirited conversations to make someone feel badly so you can feel better (i.e., bullying) creates a negative vibe that will reverberate throughout your entire being.

But, what if you're at a gathering, and the conversation turns negative? How do you handle that? All you have to do is steer the topic in a more positive direction. If you can't turn the tide, simply step away. Otherwise, if you stay long enough, their negative garbage will contaminate you. (That's why brainwashing works.) You don't have to stand there politely letting the verbal garbage wash over you. Remember: Garbage In = Garbage Out.

Avoiding negative conversation was always a problem for me in the Faculty Rooms at my high schools. For example, as a first-time teacher, I was a young Connecticut Yankee in Atlanta, Georgia. The negative discussions in the Faculty Lounge had me shaking in my shoes before the first day of school. The other teachers basically convinced me that my southern students would be unruly, unreasonable and uncontrollable, and that my teacher training had not prepared me for what was to come.

So I over-prepared. When the first students crossed my threshold, I was ready for them. Boy, was I ready for them. Hogwarts' Professor Snape would have wilted in my presence. But, after a couple of weeks, I recognized I was in overkill mode. The students were wonderful, and the teaching experience sublime. I happily went back to what I already knew: (a) *all kids want to be liked*, (b) *students want to like the teacher*, (c) *everyone hopes they'll enjoy the subject...* and (d) *it's my job as the teacher to make it happen*.

That left the perplexing question of why I had received all that negative advice from those experienced teachers. It wasn't until the faculty holiday party that I finally asked why they thought so poorly about our wonderful students.

Their reply?

"The kids here *are* great. We were worried about *you*. You're the youngest looking teacher we've ever seen, and we thought they were going to devour you."

Oh.

Okay, so it was true I was barely twenty-two years old (although I looked like I was barely fifteen) and it was true that I was untested as a teacher. It was also true the veteran teachers actually meant well. While I appreciated their good intentions, they had conjured up all kinds of negative scenarios that never actually played out.

Even though that situation got sorted out, what continued to confuse me was the never-ending negativity persisting in the teachers lounge. Though it was not directed specifically at my classroom or students, it seemed to exist without purpose. Somebody was always complaining about something. My emotions drooped every time I went in there. It was always a relief to return to the kids in my classroom.

I learned to stay out of faculty rooms, but some schools housed the Ladies Room in there. When it couldn't be avoided, I would get in and out as fast as I could. Occasionally, I'd get snared into a conversation, but I learned to prepare so I could change the topic, or escape gracefully.

Surrounding yourself with uplifting cheerful conversation is not hard to do, but you do have to go after it with determination. Simply prep for it ahead of time.

My favorite topic redirection line: "My mother told me never to discuss politics, religion or [their topic] at a [party, school, work, etc.]." I then introduce another topic:

"Did you read..."

"Have you seen...?"

"Do you know how to...?"

Dodging the negative chatter keeps you available for positive banter with an upbeat someone else.

My favorite negative conversation exit line: "I'm going to let the experts duke it out." And, then I step away—to refresh my drink, help the hostess, powder my nose, get some fresh air, grab some food, greet a newcomer, make a new acquaintance, etc.

Go ahead. Use my lines. That's what they're here for. Set your intention, create a couple of conversation starters, and head for the happy people. They'll rub off on you. (You'll thank me later.)

Strategy #4: Submerge Yourself In Upbeat Music, Comedy, and Success Stories

How does music move you? How about movies? Or, books? Most people are affected by the plight of others, so media that dial into those types of emotions make it very difficult to stay centered, despite your best intentions.

The thing is,

- we watch what's popular
- we seek what's trending
- we listen to the Top 40 songs
- we follow the news

But, we don't filter what reaches us. Unwittingly, we allow everything in, and so everything and anything can influence us, our mood, and our outlook.

"What came first, the music or the misery? People worry about kids playing with guns, or watching violent videos, that some sort of culture of violence will take them over. Nobody worries about kids listening to thousands, literally thousands of songs about heartbreak, rejection, pain, misery and loss. Did I listen to pop music because I was miserable? Or was I miserable because I listened to pop music?"

-High Fidelity. 2000

We don't need to completely insulate ourselves from the external influences, but we sure can be selective about our exposure. Imagine life with upbeat music playing in the background, constructive comedy as your go-to entertainment, and dozens of success stories (some of them yours) at your fingertips. How do you think that would make you feel?

The Media and Me Experiment

I am a Self-Confessed Science Geek (and proud of it). That's why there is a random science experiment coming up next. You're going to test how media influences your mood by taking a look at what you surround yourself with, i.e., what you allow into your sphere of influence. There is no room for judgment here. This is simple fact-finding research.

We'll begin by checking out your current music and movie choices. Then, we'll look at your screen time. Finally, we'll take a peek at your moods. Once you have all this baseline data, the real fun can begin.

Ready or not, here we go!

Part 1: Baseline Data

If you have a playlist, sort out the first 20 songs on the next page. If you don't have a playlist of songs, list 20 tunes you would like to listen to in the following chart. Describe how they make you feel. Tally up the various moods the songs create at the bottom, and then look for patterns.

How Does My Playlist Make Me Feel?

Title of the Song and Artist	How the Song Makes Me Feel (energized, sad, romantic, peaceful, happy, indignant, sensual, tearful, etc.)

Continued on next page...

Title of the Song and Artist		How the Song Makes Me Feel (energized, sad, romantic, peaceful, happy, indignant, sensual, tearful, etc.)	
Most frequent emotion:	2 nd most frequent emotion:	3 rd most frequent emotion:	4 th most frequent emotion:

What do you hypothesize about how your music choices relate to your mood? Yes, I said *hypothesize*. (What? I'm sure I mention I'm a Science Geek, right?)

Music is not the only form of media that has a subtle effect on us. Why don't you sort out the movies you watched over the last 3 months, too? How do the movies leave your emotions? At the end, tally up the frequency of the emotions produced. It should point to the type of movies that attract you.

3 Months of Movie Moods

Name of Movie and Genre	How Did It Make Me Feel?

Continued on next page...

Name of Movie and Genre		How Did It Make Me Feel?	
Most frequent emotion:	2 nd most frequent emotion:	3 rd most frequent emotion:	4 th most frequent emotion:

Using baseline data — and not judgment — how does the media affected you in general?

Part 2: What's Normal Anyway?

Let's test *how much* you are affected by what you listen to.

For 1 week, keep track of a couple of things:

- (a) What you listen to and/or what you watch
- (b) Your mood

Fill out the two charts that follow. The first is a place to list everything you watch or listen to on electronic devices (anything with a screen, including your phone). The second chart is for recording your mood before going to bed, and how you feel right after you wake up. Cut out the second chart. Keep it next to your bed so you can fill it out the minute your eyes open, and again, right before you go to bed. ***(Work on Part 3 while conducting this part of the experiment.)***
















Electronics I Use & For What

Date/Time	What I Used & For What

Continued on next page...

Date/Time	What I Used & For What

Tally up each of the emojis. How many of each emoji did you record this week? Write the number underneath its picture for mornings, nights, and overall.

	Morning Totals	Evening Totals	Today's Totals
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			

How would you describe your overall mood(s) over the past couple of weeks?

In general, how does your morning mood compare to your evening mood?

In general, what would you prefer your mood to be like?

Part 3: Stacking the Deck In Your Favor

While you are in the middle of working on Part 2, you'll need to get ready for what's coming by collecting a few things. This research section will prepare you for Part 4, so make sure you ask your friends for their suggestions.

Now that you have gathered your Baseline Data and your 3 Stacks together, it's time to experiment. Are you ready for Part 4?

I was just wondering...

How did you feel while hunting for uplifting songs? _____

How were you affected when finding old favorite shows? _____

What did the search for comedy or feel-good movies do to your mood? ____

Part 4: Let's See What Happens

What do you think would happen if you immersed yourself solely into positive media?

Let's test that for the **next two weeks**,. Make sure you are selective about what you allow in. Step away from the news and newspapers. I know it will be hard, especially for you news junkies, but *take it one day at a time*.

Choose only music, shows and movies that contain feel-good messages, or that make you laugh. You just assembled plenty of media to keep you distracted. Dip into your new stacks to find something positive to watch. Listen to as much positive, uplifting music as you can.

Again, take it one day at a time. Tell yourself, "I'm not going to listen to or watch the news, *just for today*." If you slip up, no problem. Simply resume immediately.

Keep track of your progress in the chart that follows.

Shows, Movies and Music, Oh My!
















Date/Time:	What I Watched/Listened To:

Continued on next page...

Date/Time:	What I Watched/Listened To:

Are You Absolutely Positive?

Below, tally up each emoji type you recorded (from the previous chart) after the two-week increase of positive input into your life. Record the morning and evening totals. Then combine them for the day's totals. Do your results reveal a pattern?

	Morning Totals	Evening Totals	Today's Totals
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			

Compare this chart of emojis to the one you filled out a couple of weeks ago. How would you describe your mood(s) over the past couple of weeks as compared to before you started the experiment?

Compare your morning moods to your evening moods. What changes do you see now?

What conclusions can you draw from this short experiment?

What do you think would happen if you conducted this experiment for a month... or more?

The Musical Score for the Movie of Your Life (a.k.a., Your Life Playlist)

You've had two weeks of intentionally filling your space with positives, so what's next? That depends on how you want to move forward. You have two basic choices:

1. Go back to the way things were. Let background negative noise and random music continue to influence you, affect your mood, and steer your outlook.
2. Capitalize on what you've learned here. Design your own personal upbeat positive outlook, and use things like music, books, movies, people, and inspirational recordings to reinforce it. That means *you* influence *you*, *you* affect your mood, and *you* steer your outlook.

Personally, I vote for #2. If you want tomorrow to be different than today, you have to make a change today. You can start by creating your own personal music score.

Think of your life as a movie, starring *You* in the leading role. <cue applause> Every movie has background music running through it designed to evoke specific feelings, and the movie of your life should be no exception. Some films use original music; some employ iconic classical music; others select music beloved by pop culture. Choose whatever makes sense to you, the music that touches your heart and soul, the lyrics that calm you down, or raise you to new heights, the songs that get your happy on. It's your life. You deserve an award-winning musical score.

Turn the page for a list of songs to get you started.

Songs For Getting Your Happy On

- "All About That Bass" by Meghan Trainor
- "Beautiful" by Christina Aguilera
- "Born This Way" by Lady Gaga
- "Brave" by Sara Bareilles
- "Can't Stop The Feeling" by Justin Timberlake
- "Control" by Janet Jackson
- "Don't Rain On My Parade" by Barbara Streisand
- "Fight Song" by Rachel Platten
- "Fighter" by Christina Aguilera
- "Girls Just Want to Have Fun" by Cyndi Lauper
- "Good Woman Down" by Mary J. Blige
- "Happy" by Pharrell Williams
- "Hold On" by Wilson Phillips
- "I Just Want to Celebrate" by Rare Earth
- "I Will Survive" by Gloria Gaynor
- "I'm Coming Out" by Diana Ross
- "Move (Keep Walking)" by TobyMac
- "Respect" by Aretha Franklin
- "Shake It Off" by Taylor Swift
- "Stronger" by Kelly Clarkson
- "The Middle" by Jimmy Eat World
- "Unpretty" by TLC
- "Unwritten" by Natasha Bedingfield
- "Walking On Sunshine" by Katrina and the Waves
- "Who Says" by Selena Gomez

Create the Musical Score For Your Life

Okay, it's your turn. Find 25 more songs that create positivity, motivate, inspired and energized. If the music and lyrics make you feel like a better version of yourself, the song belongs on your list.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____
- 7 _____
- 8 _____
- 9 _____
- 10 _____
- 11 _____
- 12 _____
- 13 _____
- 14 _____
- 15 _____
- 16 _____
- 17 _____
- 18 _____
- 19 _____
- 20 _____
- 21 _____
- 22 _____
- 23 _____
- 24 _____
- 25 _____

Go back and circle the songs from my list that move you. Add them to your musical score, and go enjoy some well-deserved Me Time with your favorite songs. You've got your happy on!

One Last Look Back

You now have an arsenal equipped to handle the inadvertent exposure to negative media and negative social media influencers. Armed with your positive playlist, your list of feel-good movies, your humorous shows, and your personal movie score, you are now ready to protect your body, mind and soul, and get your happy on. You will be a victim of the media no longer! You are now in charge of your happiness. Congratulations!

You choose how you are going to react to the world. *You* decide not to allow your emotions to be jerked around like the strings of a marionette. *You* purposefully elect to strengthen your positive emotions.

Jot down any additional insights and epiphanies you gained from this process. If you feel like sharing them with me, I would love it. Email me at Info@DeborahAnnDavis.com, or hit me up on social media.

May you look back on this year and say, "This was the best year ever!"

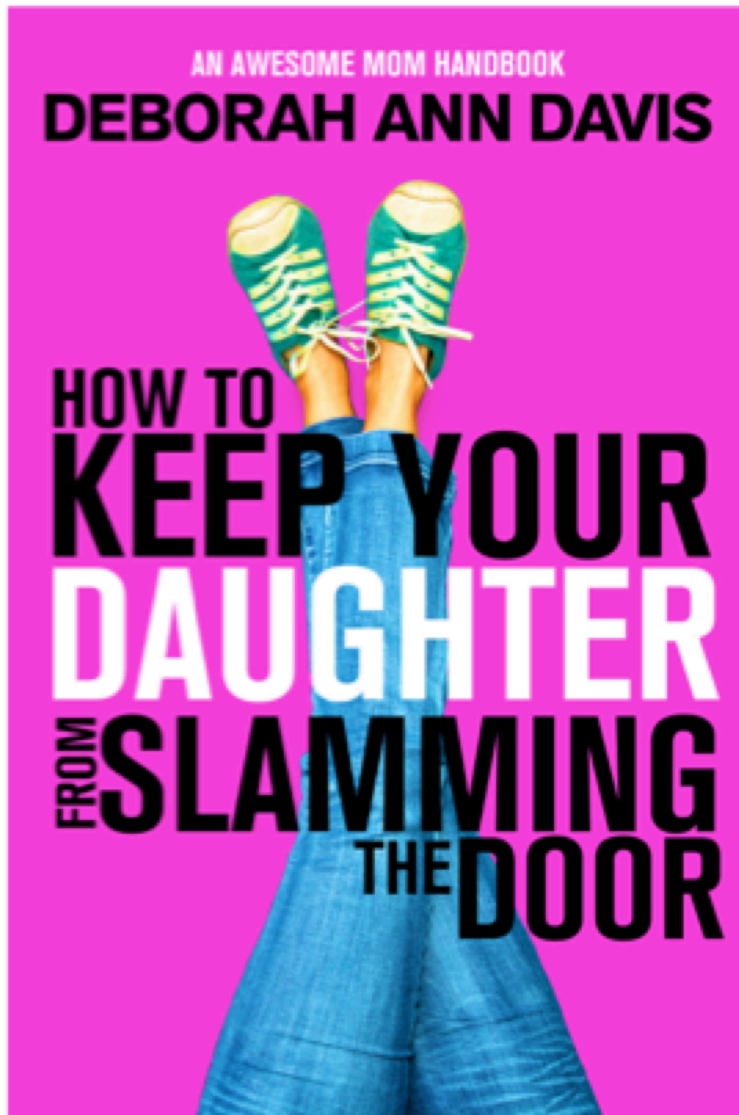
Happiness is good for your health, and vice versa. A review of hundreds of studies shows compelling evidence that happier people have better overall health, and live longer than their less happy peers... Taking care of your physical wellness may well be the most effective instant happiness booster of all.

– ProjectHappiness.org

Now, go be happy!



From Award-Winning Author and Founder of the Awesome Mom Tribe



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**HOW TO KEEP YOUR
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Appendix

From Deborah to You

Dear Reader,

Thank you for reading ***How To Get Your Happy On***.

Book reviews are an author's lifeline. If you enjoyed ***How To Get Your Happy On***, please leave an honest review at your place of purchase or on GoodReads. Help others by telling them why you enjoyed this book and what it did for you.

But wait! There's more!

If you enjoyed this book, you'll love the next one. Click below to grab a copy of ***How To Keep Your Daughter From Slamming the Door***.

Barnes and Noble:

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/how-to-keep-your-daughter-from-slamming-the-door-deborah-ann-davis/1129808224?ean=2940155863892>

Kobo

<https://www.kobo.com/us/en/ebook/how-to-keep-your-daughter-from-slamming-the-door-an-awesome-mom-handbook>

Apple iBooks

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/how-to-keep-your-daughter-from-slamming-door-awesome/id1454577592?mt=11>

Thank you, Awesome Mom, and I hope we meet again.

Make it a remarkable day!

Happily,
Deborah

May you look back on this year and say, "This was the best year ever!" (so far...)

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About Deborah Ann Davis

Award-winning author and acclaimed speaker, Deborah Ann Davis has touched thousands of people, coaching them towards solutions that make everyday life more manageable. She spent 27 years in the classroom, taking six years off somewhere in the middle to have her daughter with her husband/childhood sweetheart.

It wasn't until she was bitten by the writing bug that Deborah left teaching – only to discover that she missed the classroom. Her solution? The Awesome Mom Tribe, a series live events for moms and their teenage girls.



Today she provides the benefit of her wisdom and experience, with compassion and humor (in the form of workshops, day-long seminars, and weekend getaways) and through her books, the upcoming *Ultimate Girl Guides* (for teens), and *Awesome Mom Handbooks* (you guessed it...for moms). If you enjoyed this book, you'll love *How To Keep Your Daughter From Slamming the Door*.

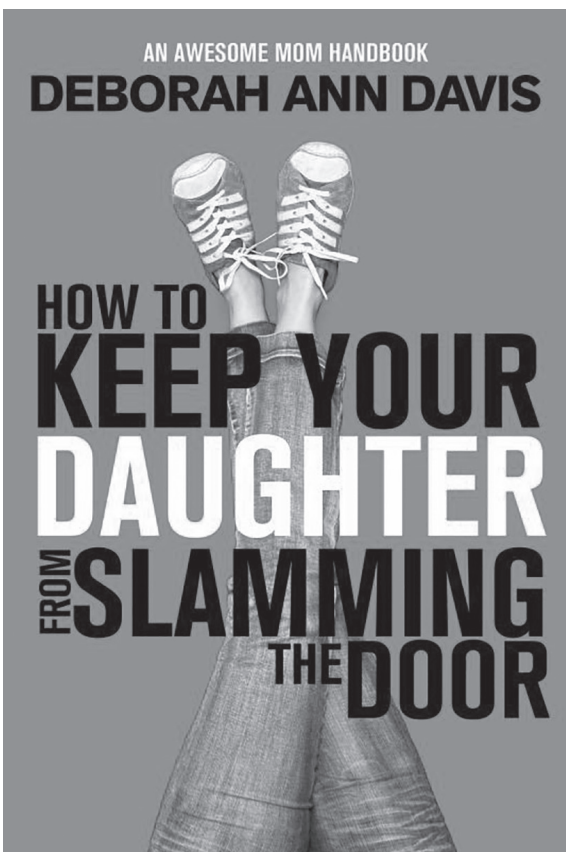
Deborah would enjoy hearing from you. You can reach her at Info@DeborahAnnDavis.com, or stop by her website <http://DeborahAnnDavis.com> for tips and ideas to help remind you how awesome you are. Sign up for her monthly newsletter. You can even preorder her next book!

Sneak Peak

Enjoy this sneak peek snippet from the middle of the first chapter of ***How To Keep Your Daughter From Slamming the Door: An Awesome Mom Handbook***.

The Warning Bell: How To Recognize Derailing Pressures

... Now For Your Daughter



If you can find a way to reduce the pressures your daughter is swimming in, her life will be so much saner, which, in turn, will quiet your life. Letting her know your intentions up front gives her a lifeline to reach for.

Homework: Sharing Your Mission

If your relationship will allow it, share your intentions with your teachable teen. It will help orient her, and keep her from being surprised, and therefore alarmed.

Say This: "I am on a mission to reduce the pressures in our lives so we can both be happier and healthier." Show her the lists of pressure's symptoms from this chapter, and the notations you made on them. Ask her what she would like to add that you may have missed.

Showing her your lists will convey your current awareness of her burdens. Giving her a chance to contribute to the lists of pressures invites her to make you aware of the others. That will help alleviate some tension in her because you're showing her support, simply by listening.

Hints For a Smoother Conversation

The following tips should be shared before your discussions to make sure you are both on the same page:

- As she adds things to the list, don't interrupt her to offer solutions, no matter how much you want to. She needs the opportunity to purge her pressures. You can problem solve later.
- If she brings up something that belongs on your own list, quietly write it down for later. Discussing your pressures at this moment will only add to hers.
- Don't comment, protest or argue about anything she reveals.
- Let the conversation flow where it will.
- Listen objectively. This is about raising awareness in you and in her, and not about placing blame.
- Don't take it personally if she wants to add things to your list.
- Don't take it personally if she puts you or your actions on her list (more on that later).
- There is no place for guilt here. Guilt is an unfortunate habitual—and highly inappropriate and unproductive—reaction to your daughter's distress. This process starts the first of the four steps for eliminating guilt (more to come on that shortly).

Once you are both clear on her issues (at least the ones she shares with you), you can reassure her that together you'll help her get through them.

Say This: "If I don't know the answer to any of these issues, I will find someone who does."

If the strain on your relationship makes it uncomfortable for you to approach her, especially if you anticipate she will reject your efforts,

Say This: "I'm working on a way to reduce the pressures in our lives, and I want to bounce something off you. Do you have about ten minutes to sit with me now, or would tonight after supper be better?"

The advantages of this script include:

- It gives her a choice, and therefore some power.
- It clues her in about the topic.
- It raises curiosity about what your new idea is.

- *Ten minutes* sounds like a short enough amount of time to prevent damage from occurring.
- By giving her a choice of *now* or *later*, there is no opportunity for a “No” response.

You can also try approaching from the side door.

Say This: “How do you think your best friend is handling the pressure of ____? I think her mother is worried about her.” This gives her the chance to share her opinions on emotional topics without feeling like she’s in the hot seat.

Whatever you do, **don’t disagree with her opinions.** They are *her* opinions, and she is entitled to them; and for a teenager, they can change as quickly as the weather. Using noncommittal responses will keep the conversation flowing.

Say This:

- “That’s an interesting way to look at it.”
- “I understand what you are saying.”
- “What does your best friend think about that?”
- “Did you feel that way when you were younger?”

Pick up your own copy of ***How To Keep Your Daughter From Slamming the Door*** today, or gift it to the mom of your favorite eye-rolling teen!

Strained Relationship with Your Teenage Daughter?

You're not alone. The landscape is cluttered with unhappy concerned mothers who are trying to figure out why their darling tween or teen girls snarl at them over insignificant topics.

What if there was a roadmap that would help you go from being the force opposing your daughter, to joining forces with her? Both trust issues and hormonal influences can cloud the picture, making it difficult to navigate your tumultuous relationship, but now there is help.

Meet Deborah Ann Davis and other like-minded moms at an upcoming live event. Spend a unique day at a seminar, for moms, with moms and by moms, away from the distractions of home, exploring tools for navigating and negotiating an edgy relationship with your daughter (who is impatiently waiting for you to figure it all out).

Better yet, spend an entire weekend with your daughter at the

*Rx for the 21st Century:
Moms & Teenage Daughters
Weekend Live Event*

where you both will gain insights to yourselves, your relationship, and each other!
Walk away with:

- Strategies you can implement today
- An arsenal for tomorrow.
- Expansion of your own personal Awesome Mom Tribe

Send a request for information to Info@DeborahAnnDavis.com.



Bonus: Take Action and Change Your Life

Take the momentum you've generated here to the next level. To insure you stay positive, you need to create a plan of action to keep positivity in your life. Otherwise, you will fall back on old habits before this becomes a habit itself. All the great thoughts, ideas, intentions or plans in the world are absolutely no good unless you take action. You don't have to start big. Small steps will set you on your path...you just have to take the next step.

No matter how ambitious your goals, or how brilliant your plans are for achieving them, if you're not prepared to take regular consistent action to reach them, they're not really goals at all —they're just wishes, fantasies, and daydreams.
— Jack Canfield

Use this worksheet to lay out your action plans, both the beginning steps, and the year-long plan. Post it some place where you can refer to it daily. Highlight all your accomplishments along the way.

The First 3 Things I Will Do Immediately...

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

My 7-Day Action Plan...

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

