



his is the rare book that will make you both smile and think—
often on the same page.” —Daniel H. Pink, author of *Drive*

THE HAPPINESS PROJECT

Or, Why I Spent a Year Trying to
Sing in the Morning, Clean My Closets,
Fight Right, Read Aristotle,
and Generally Have More Fun



GRETCHEN
RUBIN



START YOUR OWN HAPPINESS PROJECT—GUIDE INSIDE

YOUR HAPPINESS PROJECT

Each person's happiness project will be unique, but it's the rare person who can't benefit from starting one. My own happiness project started in January and lasted a year—and, I hope, will last for the rest of my life—but your happiness project can start any time and last as long as you choose. You can start small (putting your keys away in the same place every night) or big (repairing your relationships with your family). It's up to you.

First, to decide what resolutions to make, consider the First Splendid Truth and answer the following questions:

- What makes you *feel good*? What activities do you find fun, satisfying, or energizing?
- What makes you *feel bad*? What are sources of anger, irritation, boredom, frustration, or anxiety in your life?
- Is there any way in which you don't *feel right* about your life? Do you wish you could change your job, city, family situation, or other circumstances? Are you living up to your expectations for yourself? Does your life reflect your values?
- Do you have sources of an *atmosphere of growth*? In what elements of your life do you find progress, learning, challenge, improvement, and increased mastery?

Answering these questions provides a good road map to the kind of changes you might consider. Once you've decided what areas need work, identify specific, measurable resolutions that will allow you to evaluate whether you're making progress. Resolutions work better when they're concrete, not abstract: it's harder to keep a resolution to "Be a more loving parent" than to "Get up fifteen minutes early so I'm dressed before the kids wake up."

Once you've made your resolutions, find a strategy to assess your progress and to hold yourself accountable. I copied Benjamin Franklin's Virtues Chart to devise my Resolutions Chart. Other approaches might be starting a goals group, keeping a one-sentence journal marking your progress, or starting a blog.

Another useful exercise is to identify your personal commandments—the principles that you want to guide your behavior. For example, my most important personal commandment is to "Be Gretchen."

To help you with your happiness project, I created the Happiness Project Toolbox Web site, www.happinessprojecttoolbox.com. There, I've pulled together many of the tools that helped me with my happiness project. You can record and score your resolutions (individual or group), keep a one-sentence journal on any topic you like, identify your personal commandments, share your happiness hacks, share your Secrets of Adulthood, keep any kind of list, and create an inspiration board of your favorite books, quotations, movies, music, or images. Your entries can be kept private or made public, and you can also read other people's public entries (which is fascinating).

If you'd like to start a group for people doing happiness projects, e-mail me at grubin@gretchenrubin.com for a starter kit; I can also let you know if a group has already formed in your area. If you'd like to join the conversation about happiness, please join the Facebook Page or follow me on Twitter, @gretchenrubin.