

What does it take to be successful and achieve happiness in the 21st century? The Life's Path workbook gently guides you, step-by-step, to answering this question. By following Dr. Blake's proven process, you will gain insight into yourself and your future.

### **Life's Path: Make A Choice That Brings You Happiness**

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# Life's Path

Make a choice that brings you happiness. <sup>TM</sup>



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## Introduction

What does it take to be a successful adult in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Financial wealth? Career achievement? Inner peace? Developing one's potential to the fullest? How should the family, the school, religious organizations, and community help the development of the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for success? For the past 100 years, the American society has moved from an economy focused on growing products, through making products and manufacturing things to one of service and information dispensing. Rapid social and cultural changes have become commonplace throughout the past century. Consequently, questions about success, human purpose and progress have become increasingly difficult to answer plainly.

Our culture is caught in a conflict of its own making. During earlier ages, people's lives were stimulated by natural cycles. They moved with the migratory food sources and gathered food as it was available. Civilizations planted in spring, harvested in fall; awoke at daybreak and quit work at sunset. People also developed relationships in natural ways through family, with neighbors, and trading with other tribes. This was the American perspective from the time of the first indigenous peoples, to the beginning of the industrial revolution and the dominance of industry in the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was optimistic that business could bring prosperity and that prosperity could bring enlightenment.

As our society moved into the industrial age, ordinary folks were persuaded to adopt the new technologies that might improve the quality of life. For example, with oil and electricity, people could extend their daylight activities into the night. The impact: before the use of electric lighting, the average American got nine hours of sleep a night. Now the average is less than seven and still going down. Specialization increased and peoples' lives became more disjointed and compartmentalized. In short, people's lives were separated and divided. At the same time, the average lifespan increased. For eons people lived to the age of 25 or 30 and most parents could expect to mourn at least one of their children. Today people live to 65 and in countries such as Japan and Canada, over 80. Per person income rose, global average income for centuries was about \$200 a year. A typical citizen of the world's richer countries now earns that much in a single day. Lifestyle option increases allowed more freedom. In the Middle Ages about one in ten Europeans could read. Today, with a few exceptions the rate is comfortably above eight in ten.

The twentieth century was seduced by the idea that people could advance as part of the group. However, individuals became separated from each other in their daily lives; from family as they went about their jobs and careers. Family could be isolated and lived separately from community; school and learning could be disconnected from work and livelihood. Scientific management and the assembly line broke jobs and people's activities into elemental parts. Effects could be studied in terms of minutes, days, or weeks rather than seasons or years. Countless other factors showed the power of the mechanistic worldview to change people's lives. Social roles or parts of people's lives, such as being a parent, a worker, or a citizen, could be assessed independently without considering the total pattern.

The modern age has belonged to material progress and a materials definition of success. However, economic progress, broadly defined, does not correspond to human progress. GDP does not measure welfare and wealth does not equal happiness. Wealth has been soaring over the half century. Happiness, measured by national surveys has hardly budged. Perhaps that is due to the status consciousness.

After people have filled their bellies and have a roof over their head people want more positional goods. As wealth grows, the competition for status seeking symbols only intensifies. Only one person can be the richest tycoon. The *Economist* magazine frames the issue of material progress:

Yet even the most solidest defenders of capitalism would, by and large, agree that its tendency to form cartels, shuffle off the costs of pollution and collapse under the weight of its own financial inventiveness needs to be constrained by laws designed to channel energy to the general good (p. 39, Volume 393, Number 8662, December 19, 2009 January 1, 2010).

Material progress and success does not seem to be delivering the emotional goods. People fear that mankind is not managing the planet and its resources properly. The result is that, in important ways, our children may not be better off than they are. The forests are disappearing, the ice caps are melting, social bonds are crumbling, privacy is eroding, and life is becoming a slog.

## **Material Rewards and Happiness**

Material rewards, do not necessarily provide the happiness we expect from them. The first reason is the well-documented escalation of expectations. If we strive for a certain level of affluence, thinking that it will make us happy, we may find that on reaching it, we become very quickly used to it. Then we start hankering for the next level of income, property, or good health. Several studies have confirmed that goals keep getting pushed upward as soon as a lower level is reached. It is not the objective size of the reward but its difference from our adapting to it that provides subjective value.

The second reason is related to the first. When resources are unevenly distributed, people evaluate their possessions not in terms of what they need to live in comfort, but in comparison with those who have the most. Consequently, the relatively affluent feel poor in comparison with the very rich and are unhappy as a result. This sense of being deprived seems to be fairly universal and well-entrenched. In the United States, the disparity in incomes between the top percentage and the rest is getting wider; this does not bode well for the future happiness of the population.

The third reason is that even though being rich and famous might be rewarding, nobody has ever claimed that material rewards alone are sufficient to make us happy. Other conditions—such as a satisfying family life, having intimate friends, having time to reflect and pursue diverse interests - are shown to be related to happiness.

There is no built-in reason why these sets of rewards - the material, social and emotional - should be mutually exclusive. In practice, however, it is very difficult to

reconcile their differing demands. In reality, as many psychologists have observed, time is the ultimate scarce resource. The allocation of time presents difficult choices for all of us. We really can't save time; we can only use it wisely. How we use our time will eventually determine the content and quality of our lives. This is why professional and business persons find it so difficult to balance the demands of work and family. This also why people so rarely feel that they have not shortchanged one of these vital aspects of their lives.

We need to be guided by a more holistic paradigm when considering the individual, identifying our sense of purpose and living a unified life. Rather than focusing on a narrow image of achievements as a predictor of individual success, a person should be considered from a multidimensional perspective. We need to appreciate and recognize that each individual has many capabilities that extend across the many spheres of influence. All of our "social institutions" and experiences contribute to each of our development.

So, what does success mean in the 21<sup>st</sup> century if our lives have become so disjointed and fragmented? And is there *one* secret to success? Is there one strategy that – if you master it will – enable you to improve your abilities and character traits and thrust you to success?

The answer is, "No."

However, no matter your age or stage in your life you can discover ways to make the most of your potential to be whatever you want. That is the freedom we have. Like you, I operate in the complex and competitive real world. The practical techniques and ideas in this book take into the account the problems and pitfalls we all encounter and offer ways to deal with them.

There is no "one" secret to success just as there might not be one definition of success or happiness for everyone. There are many techniques you can use to build success and happiness in your daily life and make a choice for happiness as you define success for yourself. If you apply yourself to learning, reflecting and taking action you will excel quickly.

*When you try to understand everything, you will understand nothing. It is best to understand yourself, and then you will understand everything.*

Shunryu Suzuki

## Chapter 1: Living a Radiant Life

**D**o you view life as a problem to be solved? Or do you see it as a mystery to be welcomed? Now is your time to see it as both.

This book is about making a choice and taken action for happiness. It is also about tapping into the mystery of life. Jung defined life as, “a luminous pause between two great mysteries which yet are one.” Socrates said that an unexamined life was not worth living.

But what does that mean to you? How much do you want success? How do you define success? How far are you willing to go to achieve it? What are the mysteries in your life that you want to uncover and learn from?

If I asked you if you want to be successful, you would answer yes. Do you want to be happy? Who wouldn't? We dream about it. We say we want happiness. But maybe we aren't sure what it is. Maybe we aren't sure we want to pay the price. When it is time to act, we hesitate. When it is time to act, we may even retreat. Our words don't fool anybody. Not even ourselves.

The Life's Path framework in this book has been developed to address the major tenets of a holistic approach to help you move toward your definition of success and happiness. The complete integration of this framework is called: Radiant Living. Why radiant? Because if you can fully integrate these aspects into unity and wholeness, then you are truly a shining radiant star for others to see. You can be an example of how to live in the solution of happiness. Radiance shines a light on the mystery of life so we can see ourselves more fully and completely. We learn to see and accept ourselves while evolving and integrating. The process requires that we immerse our-self into the process completely to emerge our best-self

There are three critical issues facing us today: vision, character, and competence. Vision has to do with aspirations, dreams and goals of what is possible and desirable to do. Character deals with the habits or patterns of thinking, feeling, willingness, and behaving that relate to choices and consequences, to justice and equity, and to morality and ethics. Competence concerns the knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills that link to successful functioning. All three issues are intertwined and difficult to isolate.

There are three interrelated aspects of our human capability for happiness:

- Intrapersonal – inside ourselves. The way we relate to ourselves. The way we treat, talk, think and feel about ourselves.
- Interpersonal – the way we interact with other people. This includes family (mate selection, spousal relationships, parenting); friends (peer groups, interpersonal relations), work and career (arts and professions), wealth and finances (material wealth, sources of income, stewardship), and
- Social - the type, quantity and quality of relationships in our community; sociocultural (involvement with social/cultural issues such world peace, unity of humankind, gender and racial equality, etc.)

There are also three core essentials (spiritual, moral character, and personal style) included in the above three categories. The three core elements are considered central to interpersonal and intrapersonal capability. Each element supports and is in turn, influenced by each of the other elements:

- Spiritual: deep and significant relationships to self, to others, to nature, and to the major unknowns of the universe, including its origins and the origin of life. This may or may not include a relationship with a Supreme Being or Creator.
- Moral character: the knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to reasoning, valuing, committing to, and habitually acting in accordance with standards of right and wrong;
- Personal Style: conceptions of temperament, intelligence, learning style, and personality that describe individual differences related to preferences in the intrapersonal and interpersonal spheres of our life.

The Life's Path framework also recognizes that the core essentials are developed in interaction with social and cultural influences. Interactions among the different people, beliefs, institutions, etc. form the social aspects of our lives and influence our development and behavior. Our first interactions, as a child, are with the family, school, religious organizations, and friends or peer groups. As we mature we become more aware of our global village, such areas include the culture and the global conditions that impact our sense of security and daily life.

There are many sources of knowledge about what it means to develop human potential and what we should use to define how to live a radiant life. Science, religion, philosophy, history, literature, and the arts each address different perspectives. Each has different standards by which to judge perceptions of reality, beliefs, values and principles. For example, history tells us what happened in the past while science identifies the concepts, principles, and laws that govern what happened. Religion provides a vision of what is possible and includes the moral code necessary to achieve it. The arts express history, science, and religion in creative and meaningful forms. Philosophy provides the organizing ideas that show the possibilities of connections among ideas. Philosophy can also show us related meanings and potential logical gaps or inaccuracies. Each of these can provide standards by which we can judge how to develop our human potential.

However, success in anything we choose to do is the result of:

- First developing a vision of what is possible.
- Developing written goals to achieve that desired outcome.
- Taking action and assessing results.
- Reflecting and making adjustments until desired results are achieved.

Developing our potential, making a choice for happiness, and then living in that solution is not any different. From this viewpoint, we can see ourselves as dynamic beings. We are self-organizing, living in relationship with our internal world (intrapersonal) and external (interpersonal and social) world. That is, internally we are simultaneously addressing

spiritual, physical, and social issues and needs. Externally, we are influencing and being influenced by the natural, social, and cultural contexts in which we live.

Why bother considering these things? Because we need to understand and appreciate, the whole picture if we are going to take personal responsibility for our success and happiness. If we are going to start doing something for ourselves, we need to go for it! We need to understand our world around us and seek the solution within.

We need to understand where we are given our life situation. We need to understand how we are dealing with the interrelated aspects of our potential for success and happiness. We need to understand how each aspect of our intrapersonal, interpersonal and social worldview is affecting us before we can change for our personal well being.

Life's Path approach to coaching is about unifying the whole person. Life's Path process and approach is not based on any pre-conceived theory or set of beliefs. It has evolved organically over a period of years in the field of personal and professional development. Our approach to the route of self-discovery covers every aspect of the whole person. As Charles Bentley, Ph.D., Founder of Life Coach UK and Unitive™ coaching explains:

- At the rational level, it works experientially to bring to awareness obsolete and redundant patterns of acquired behavior
- At the emotional level it seeks to reconcile spontaneous feelings with intellectual insight
- At a psychological level, it aims to empower individuals with self-knowledge and the strength of their unique authenticity
- At the higher, integrated level of intuition, its goal is to facilitate personal development on issues of imagination, spirit and creativity

There's an old saying, "We don't see the world as it is; we see it as we are". You'll never be able to see what's really going on in the present if your attitudes and patterns of behavior remain stuck in the past. If you want to become aware of whom you really are - to start feeling comfortable in your own skin - you'll need to examine your own habitual outlook on life. You will need to discover the hidden and negative functions at work within you and work to bring them up to date and find yourself relevant to present reality.

It's a demanding and often difficult task, but you'll find the rewards are enormous. Personal authenticity is all about experiencing each event in life in the light of present reality, instead of through the distorting mirrors of the past.

Once you've become part of that experience, your entire being - mind, body and spirit - will become an instrument for opening up receptive channels of communication. It's a magical process: experiencing the power of the present instead of just observing it.

Within yourself you have the potential to integrate your internalized conflicts into a unitive whole, greater than the sum of its separate parts. The ultimate goal of Life's Path (and Unitive™ coaching) is to facilitate this liberating insight and action.

*Orlando Blake, PhD CPT*

The Life's Path framework includes considering all these factors. The approach to coaching and personal development exemplified in this book is intended to integrate these factors as part of your journey to wholeness.

## Chapter 3: An Unexamined Life

If you recall, Socrates said that an unexamined life was not worth living. Of course, there are those days where we might prefer to be relieved of that anxiety. However, sooner or later we must address those existential questions. On one occasion after a presentation, a man came to talk to me and asked, “Why should I think about these things? Why does it matter if I am happy?”

“Because,” I replied, “if you don’t you might be living someone else’s life.”

While I am not sure, I persuaded him to pursue fervently an examined life his response is one we all have made. In other words, we might respond to the prospect of examining our lives with, “Why bother?”

I think the response to that question is another question:

What would avoiding the questions do for you?

The real question is: What are the questions we need to address?

Is an unexamined life worth living? Here is an example of looking at that question from at least two perspectives:

I think it is pointless to examine your life, philosophically or otherwise. Hindsight is always 20/20. If you spend time brooding over your past, you’re not living in the present. What good does it do? It doesn’t change anything. It just keeps you from living now.

The alternate view:

If you don’t examine your life, you can never make changes that will make life more fulfilling here and now. You need to look at the decisions you made and ask, “How can I do better next time?” You don’t do it to feel guilty or to be hard on yourself, but to give today more meaning and clarity.

You may be asking or you may have frequently asked yourself, “Why can’t I just be normal and accept the fact that (jobs) (relationships) etc. are not meant to be all that fulfilling. Why can’t I just accept the fact that most adults end up abandoning their more youthful and idealistic aspirations?”

The answer is: Because life is not a dress rehearsal. Because you shouldn’t settle for less than doing exactly what you want to do with your life, despite the risks or because of the risks.

I don’t think you can examine your life in every way possible. You wouldn’t know every way possible and you would be overwhelmed in the attempt. You wouldn’t get around to doing the everyday business of life. The real secret is to allow yourself to be open to new ways of examining your life. That is, new perspectives and new methods. This openness allows us to experience the variety of alternatives and delve into the following questions honestly:

Why am I doing this?

What brings me to this work?

Why do I think I need to make this journey?

What is urging me to make a change in my life?

What is calling me?

What gives life meaning?

What gives my life meaning?

What is the meaning of life?

Whose life am I talking about?

What do I mean by meaning?

What can I do to give my life the kind of meaning that makes my spirit soar?

What can I do that makes me feel like I am making the world at least a better place to live in?

Instead of focusing on the outer cosmos, these questions ask us to journey within; our inner cosmos. You need to be in touch with that part of you that searches for something different, seeks meaning, explores and wanders. You can use these questions and the exercises in this book to open up new realms of self knowledge while at the same time exposing a great deal of error, superstition and dogma. Any question can be examined from different perspectives and their relevance to you. Sometimes you don't know what question will have the most lasting and significant impact until you take a risk and delve into them for a while.

## Chapter 6: Skills of Successful People

Why is it that some people experience life with passion and commitment? Why do some people have an easier time dealing with challenging situations and problems? Why do some people deal more easily with change? What is about some people that find meaning and connect to something that keep them going in the face of these challenges? What makes some people more effective than others? There are no simple answers to these questions.

Being the “best” at something preoccupies a lot of people’s time and dominates our culture. We try to be successful parents, workers, effective friends and spouses all at the same time. This emphasis on achieving one’s personal best has prompted many of us to re-examine the different roles of our lives to make each one as rewarding as possible.

Typically, we approach examining ourselves and our notion of effectiveness and success in two ways:

- By focusing on behaviors and actions – “What should I do to be more effective?”
- By focusing on attitudes and values – “What should I value to be more successful?”

The most effective way to increase your personal effectiveness and chances for success is to focus on both aspects.

By our nature, we seek security. We search for patterns in our world that will give a sense of routine. We rely on routine to make things predictable. Predictability then gives us a sense of comfort because if we can predict, we can control. Of course, this also translates into learned thinking patterns or beliefs. We create pathways in our minds in much the same way as trails in the grasslands where I live are created by cattle. Back and forth, they journey the same way, at the same time, to the stock tank every day. The trail through the grass is worn down to the dirt and the cattle follow the trail just like we habitually follow the trail of our ways of behaving and thinking; without thinking.

If we believe in these habitual ways of thinking, then life is just something that happens to us. We believe that these ways of behaving are “beyond our control” and we rationalize our responses to life situations. By viewing ourselves in this powerless perspective, we limit our potential and lock ourselves inside our mental prisons.

## **Reflection Questions**

What are we really in control of?

Are you willing to experience life as an inherently meaningful and fulfilling path to happiness?

Are you willing to experience happiness?

If so, then it requires a shift in your beliefs. It also requires action on your part to realize your potential. Now let's learn from what successful people do.

Based on research by Dr. Robert Mauer, Director of Behavioral Sciences, Family Practice Resident Program, Santa Monica Hospital Medical Center (<http://www.scienceofexcellence.com/>) and author of *One Small Step Can Change Your Life: The Kaizen Way*, all successful people share certain behaviors and awareness's:

- An awareness of the need for attention as well as a generosity in giving and receiving appreciation.
- An awareness and respect for fear. A willingness to feel it and to reach for comfort; educational and emotional.
- When afraid, successful people have a “built in nurturing voice” that automatically and compassionately reassures them that “it’s okay to make mistakes, okay to be afraid and okay to ask for help.”
- A sense of mission or vision. Successful people are clear about their goals and the sense of purpose sustains them in crisis.

As Dr. Mauer explains, successful people get and give healthy attention and they are used to experiencing fear. They recognize fear is part of life and use it as a call to action. Every animal has an alarm system as part of their nervous system. The purpose of fear is to take us into action. Our alarm system is shut down or turned off when we are comforted.

To get comfort we need to reach out to others. That is, we need to go to people with our fears. We need to get an entourage or support system around us. Some people use sex,

drugs, alcohol or drive others away. Really, the only way to be comforted is to connect with other people and learn about how to be comforted and how to give comfort. Then go about practicing giving and receiving.

“Think about it.” he asks, “How does a person react to fear before romance? When a person is in a romantic relationship, they seek comfort from their significant other. Additionally, research clearly shows that having a partner correlates to a longer life.” We all have a need for recognition, attention and appreciation.

Get involved with people that will support your goals and ideas. Find people that share your high standards and have as much or more ability as you do to focus on your journey and your goal of happiness.

Successful people have a vision that they focus on in good or bad times. People without a vision stop what they are doing when things get tough. Without a vision, we are aimless. It is what I call the “Lizard Syndrome.” Lizards only move when it is hot enough. If you have a clear vision, you make it your way of life. Your choice is to get in and make it happen.

If we see ourselves as victims, we might be stuck in fear and worry. We need to find our passion connected to our vision and stay focused. We need to find ways to heal ourselves.

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) also studied successful people in their development of positive psychology. Positive psychology focuses on average people to understand what is going well in their lives. The focal point is to appreciate how individuals their lives are improving and how people live with purpose despite difficulties. The focus aims to create a shift away from psychology’s focus on repairing the worst things in life to studying its strengths and building positive qualities. Positive psychology is also concerned with people’s well-being, positive engagement with everyday life and the study of human strengths and virtues.

They found that successful people could tap into inner resources, strengths, potential and feelings of wellbeing. They could focus on their strengths and harness the power of positivity. This means that happiness is very much in our personal control. It is a state that must be prepared for, cultivated and defended privately by each of us. Even, very small increases in positive emotions can tilt the overall balance and lead to significant differences in the extent to which we flourish or languish.

In another study of happiness and successful people, Peterson and Seligman (2004) developed a classification system of strengths called Values in Action (VIA) Strengths Survey. Of 24 strengths, the five most closely associated with happiness are gratitude, curiosity, vitality, hope and the capacity to love and be loved. These are values that any of us can learn, cultivate, nurture and use to increase our happiness.

Consider this summary of significant points:

- Most lives go through the three states of the world every day: Fear, Healing, and Full Living.
- Recognize fear as a part of life. We need to get used to the experience of feeling fear and not let the fear immobilize us.

- Every animal has an alarm system that is part of their nervous system. The purpose of fear is to take us or compel us into action. Primate alarm system is shut down or turned off when comforted.
- The greatest cost to our lives is concealment – the belief that we can't tell the truth.
- To get comfort, reach out. Go to people with your fears. Get a support system around you.
- Choose to get in and find a way to make it happen.
- Look beyond survival. Choose to live in the solution not the problem.
- Making a choice to be happy means living at a different level than other people. It is choosing full living.
- It is possible to cultivate happiness and wellbeing, by choice.

## **Reflection Questions**

How do I acknowledge my own misgivings and vulnerability?

If I were to call someone else for support and help, whom would I call?

What specifically would I ask of someone else?

What would I do if I asked for help and didn't get it?

In what areas of my life do I feel vulnerable?

How can I receive support as well as give it? Give examples.

Finish these sentences:

I asked for help when...

I could have asked for help but didn't when...

I kept myself from asking for help by...

How do I respond when others offer help?

What does it take to be successful and achieve happiness in the 21st century? The Life's Path workbook gently guides you, step-by-step, to answering this question. By following Dr. Blake's proven process, you will gain insight into yourself and your future.

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