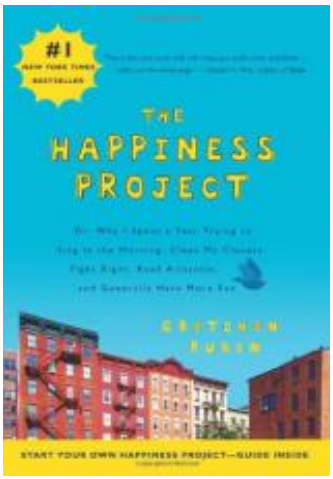
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The Happiness Project

by Gretchen Rubin



About the Book

Gretchen Rubin had an epiphany one rainy afternoon in the unlikeliest of places: a city bus. "The days are long, but the years are short," she realized. "Time is passing, and I'm not focusing enough on the things that really matter." In that moment, she decided to dedicate a year to her happiness project.

In this lively and compelling account, Rubin chronicles her adventures during the 12 months she spent test-driving the wisdom of the ages, current scientific research, and lessons from popular culture about how to be happier. Among other things, she found that novelty and challenge are powerful sources of happiness; that money can help buy happiness, when spent wisely; that outer order contributes to inner calm; and that the very smallest of changes can make the biggest difference.

Discussion Guide

1. Gretchen argues throughout **The Happiness Project** that striving to be happy is a worthy, not selfish, goal. Do you agree? Do you think that Gretchen was right, or not, to devote so much time and attention to her own happiness? Do you spend much time thinking about your happiness?

2. The Happiness Project is packed with quotations. Which quotation resonated most with you? Do you have a quotation that has been particularly meaningful in your own life --- that you?ve included in your email signa¬ture or taped to your desk, for example?

3. One of Gretchen?s resolutions is to ?Imitate a spiritual master.? Do you have a spiritual master? Who is it? Gretchen was surprised to realize that St. Therese of Lisieux was her master. Do you know why you identify with your spiritual master?

4. Gretchen observes that ?Outer order contributes to inner calm,? and many of her resolutions are aimed at clutter-clearing. Do you agree that clutter affects your happiness?

5. One of Gretchen?s main arguments is that ?You?re not happy unless you think you?re happy,? and she spends a lot of time thinking about her happiness. However, many important figures have argued just the opposite; for example, John Stuart Mill wrote, ?Ask yourself whether you are happy, and you cease to be so.? What do you think? Does striving for happiness make you happier? Or does it make happiness more elusive?

6. Did reading this book make you want to try one of the resolutions? Which one?

7. A criticism of **The Happiness Project** might be that writing a ?year of?? book is gimmicky. Did you like the ?experiment for a year? approach, or did it strike you as a cliché? Why do you think so many authors are drawn to this structure?

8. Many memoirs recount the author?s struggle to be happiness in the face of a major challenge like cancer, divorce, an unhappy childhood, massive weight loss, and the like. In the book?s opening, Gretchen admits that she has always been pretty happy. Did you find her reflections on happiness helpful, nevertheless? Or do you think it?s more valuable to read an account by someone facing more difficulties?

9. Gretchen writes, ?Everyone?s happiness project will be different.? How would your happiness project be different from Gretchen?s? How might it be the same?

10. What was the one most valuable thing you learned from **The Happiness Project** about happiness --- for yourself?

Author Bio

Gretchen Rubin is one of the most thought-provoking and influential writers on the linked subjects of habits, happiness and human nature. She?s the author of many books, including the blockbuster *New York Times* bestsellers BETTER THAN BEFORE and THE HAPPINESS PROJECT. A member of Oprah?s SuperSoul 100, Rubin has an enormous following, in print and online; her books have sold more than two million copies worldwide, in more than 35 languages; and on her popular daily blog, she reports on her adventures in pursuit of habits and happiness. She also has a highly ranked, award-winning podcast, "Happier with Gretchen Rubin." Rubin started her career in law, and was clerking for Justice Sandra Day O?Connor when she realized she wanted to be a writer. She lives in New York City with her husband and two daughters.

Critical Praise

"For those who generally loathe the self-help genre, Rubin?s book is a breath of peppermint-scented air. Well-researched and sharply written?Rubin takes an orderly, methodical approach to forging her own path to a happier state of mind."

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