

How to Use This Book (Read This First)

Dear Reader, This book is intended to give you the tools and strategies that will have a positive and lasting effect on your life, but there is real work to do.

Unlike most books, which tell somebody else's story or have purely an entertainment purpose, this a journaling experience that provides you with the tools and guidance to find your own success story and work through your personal obstacles. Each page is designed to help you explore your personal growth, challenge your beliefs, and create your own triumphant narrative. Be prepared to be vulnerable, open to new ideas, and willing to take risks. The benefits will far exceed the effort.

This book is designed to help you explore the depths of your inner world and reflect on your life's journey. It is based on an experiential learning process that will help you gain insight into the reasons behind your present and past experiences, as well as uncover any patterns that have been influencing your life. You will be encouraged to let go of old stories, beliefs, and behaviors that no longer serve you and make space for something new.

As you work through the exercises in the book, you may wish there were more stories and examples. However, I have intentionally included only a few examples, to allow you, the reader, the freedom to own the space, fill the air with your own feelings, unencumbered by external factors. This is a toolkit that supports your own personal transformation.

It may feel at times that some exercises do not apply to you or are too painful to go through. Glance over those sections and move on to the next part. Spend most of the time on the exercises that resonate with you. I am confident that you will find the majority of the exercises in this book beneficial. If you've skipped a section because it felt too painful, come back to it later and try it again. Don't suffer, but don't ignore what needs to be addressed either.

In my practice as a life coach, I use a variety of tools, and journaling is just one of them. It is a highly valuable technique, and it effectively complements the essence of our lives—stories. To get the most from this practice, you must be willing to commit to the process and be

open to discovering your own life story through your writing. With dedication and the right mindset, journaling can be an astonishingly powerful tool to help you design your life story.

Journaling can be an intensive exercise, and after engaging in one or several sessions, it can be beneficial to take a brief respite for a couple of days to let the effects of the process take root. Doing so can help to ensure the insights gained and the emotions experienced are adequately processed and internalized. Then, come back to the journal and continue to work through it. Finally, upon completion of the entire journal, consider starting again to stack up even more of the benefits of journaling.

For those who prefer to journal on separate pages, I have provided a link on HappinessComesInThrees.com to download specially formatted journal pages that correspond to the chapters of the book. Additionally, visitors to the website will find many other valuable resources and information.

If you have a story, journaling experience, or feedback and ideas to share, I would love to hear from you. Please send them to me via the book website. I take pride in personally responding to all messages, so please don't hesitate to reach out.

Part I: Change Your Story

Self-Stories

Our lives are the outcome of what we believe to be true about ourselves. Beyond the genes that we consequentially inherit, the family history that we can't change, and the past childhood environment that we can't influence lies the mighty power that no one can take away: the complete freedom of choice to give meaning to our lives.

Every one of us has a unique origin story, a narrative that weaves its way through our lives like the intricate threads of a tapestry. It is a mosaic of the events that have shaped us—from those we had no control over to those we chose for ourselves. Our minds demand the past to have a meaning that explains the present: a good or a poor state of health, a failed or successful relationship, and money success or troubles. The mind never stops piecing together this puzzle, searching for answers, filling in the gaps with assumptions, creating new stories, and rewriting old ones.

Everybody has a story to tell that explains how they became the person they are today. An abusive parent is the origin story of countless winners but also innumerable losers. An orphan's pain of losing a parent becomes the reason for becoming a country president or a jailbird. A disability can lead someone to becoming an inspiration for millions and another to suicide. And many of us have numerous obscure narratives that swirl around our heads and may prevent us from having a happy relationship, a more successful business or career, or a healthy body.

You've heard all the stories before. But *stories are just a clump of words until you give them meaning*. Knowingly or unknowingly, you've given meaning to many big and small stories about yourself. Hopefully, a lot of them have served you well. But if you feel that you are not

entirely what you are meant to be, if you feel that you could be more, do more, have more, at least part of the reason for not being/doing/having all that may lie within those stories.

The mind has marvelous abilities to delete, distort, and generalize, which allow it to take events and adjust them to fit into its model of the world. We can let these faculties of the brain act on their own or we can use them to our advantage. What that means is that *we can change the meaning of our stories*. The way you speak about your past, the choice of words, the tone of your voice, the emotions conveyed, all paint a picture that represents *your* interpretation of the stories.

You've heard of people who have changed course, changed their lives for the better, have seen the light, or turned a corner, and became a happier, more accomplished person. These people, possibly even yourself, have *found a way to change a self-defeating story*, which they have been telling themselves and was holding them back. That is what we are going to do throughout this book, for every area of your life that you wish to improve. We are going to do it with intention and with guidance, following a process, so that you can take control and guide your own life consciously toward the outcomes that you want.

I'm not promising that you will find everlasting happiness by reading this book. I am vigorously suggesting that if you put in the work that this book requires, you may take firm control over the direction of your life, be more often at peace, and handle stress better. The work required will significantly challenge you, it will demand your openness and even vulnerability in ways in which you may have never felt before, and it might even be painful at times. The reward is entirely worth it, but it won't be easy.

In this book, you will find novel ways to change your life for the better. You will work through exercises that will help you solve the buried riddles inside of you that other more successful people already solved. You will discover what is holding you back (the antagonists of your story, the "enemies") and learn how to strongly propel yourself forward (using the protagonists or "allies" on your side). You will literally rewrite your story through the journaling exercises scattered throughout the book in a structured, planned framework that guides you safely across the chasm between your current situation and the even better future you deserve.

I refer to those items that are made of past events, bits of family history, memories, and the assumptions and insertions that our own minds make as *stories*. The stories that attempt to justify a poor state in any area of our lives are *self-defeating stories*, while the ones with a

positive meaning are *self-empowering stories*. The process you will follow will help you turn self-defeating stories into self-empowering stories.

Sharpen up your pencil, find a quiet place where you can work undisturbed, and unleash your boundless desire to grow in any aspect of your life that you wish to improve.

Journaling

Journaling is as old as writing. Humans have had the need to express their experiences through drawings and written words since the dawn of civilization. Through drawing and writing they could remember their past, plan for the future, and understand the world they lived in. But by articulating their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, they could also understand their own identity and how they fit into the world.

As humanity evolved, the practice of writing developed into a powerful means to express our innermost feelings, delve into the mysteries of the human soul, and foster our personal development. Some of history's great minds have used journaling for personal growth, self-reflection, and the exploration of the inner workings of the mind.

Marcus Aurelius's nearly 2,000-year-old personal journal is now circulating as the popular book *Meditations* and is a fascinating read into the remarkable mind of the last of the five good emperors of the Roman Empire. He recorded private thoughts, personal lessons, and self-improvement notes that are a terrific model of journaling and how it can shape an impressive mind.

The Red Book, written by Carl Jung, is a highly influential work in the field of psychology and the study of the human psyche. It is a personal journal, a collection of Jung's writings, thoughts, and experiences over a sixteen-year period, out of which the foundations of his theories of psychoanalysis were created. That journal is now considered to be one of the most important works in the history of psychology.

Jung believed that keeping a journal was a way to stay in touch with the creative side of the psyche and to cultivate a sense of self-awareness. He believed that it was important to be honest and open in one's writing and not to censor or filter out any feelings or thoughts.

These great thinkers, as well as countless others, have demonstrated that journaling can take on many forms. It can be an unscripted discard of thoughts in the morning to reset the mind

and clear it up for a new productive day, or it can be as simple as a to-do list. Some may choose to write unrealized childhood dreams, a letter to their former self, or an imaginary conversation with a deceased friend or family member. Journaling can really be about anything.

I have used journaling myself for many years to change my state, find solutions to problems, or simply get myself organized to approach a problem. Most importantly, I have dealt with my fears, worries, and bouts of negativity and massive pain by journaling with purpose and employing relevant written exercises. I learned is that journaling is what someone writes to discover the truth, whether they realize it or not.

After discovering the immense value that journaling can offer for self-development, I began to guide my students, who are groups or individual coaching clients, in using it. Many of them initially felt intimidated by the blank sheet of paper or screen and sought guidance on how to incorporate writing into their routines. To help them, I provided exercises tailored to their individual needs. Over time, I noticed that they had similar questions about the process, and the answers to these questions became a set of specific exercises that could be used by anyone.

An idea arose: What if we embraced the power of journaling to rewrite our own self-defeating stories and create a more meaningful and fulfilling life? The guided framework would embed a sturdy anchor of self-reflection in our foundations. By taking the time to intentionally reflect on our experiences anchored through the act of writing, we could shape our lives in more meaningful, positive ways.

Like an artist creating a masterful painting, we could craft our lives with vibrant colors and intricate details, taking the time to explore the depths of our memories, emotions, and thoughts, and thoughtfully placing them on the canvas of our lives. We can then step back and admire our own unique creation, recognizing that it is something that only we could create.

And by doing that right here in this book, we will work together to identify and replace the self-defeating stories that have been holding you back. With the guidance of these pages, you'll discover the remarkable allies at your disposal and the self-empowering narrative that will help you create the future you want. Through journaling, you will be able to reflect on the stories that shape your life and find the courage to create a narrative that brings out your best. Together, we will uncover the inner strength to make your dreams a reality.

Because, after all, it's all about being happier.

The Three Pillars of Happiness

I watch the night sky sometimes and take in the immenseness of the universe. The oh-it's-so-beautiful stage wears off, and I become aware of the atomic size of my life and the indiscernibly small, practically zero impact I have in that immenseness of space and time. Do I matter? A wave of emptiness surges through me. Silence.

What is the purpose of it all? There *must* be a purpose. *This* cannot be without reason.

I wait patiently. I will only accept the truth. It feels as if I am poking into the edge of my understanding, the frontier of my ability to ration, and it is frightening and solemn and imperative to know. My mind keeps searching. “If I had an answer, what would it be?”

Timidly, from the silence, the answer comes. *I must be happy. I am here anyway, I am given this wonderful experience we call Life, I may as well enjoy it. Enjoy it responsibly but enjoy it. Happiness is the purpose.*

This may seem selfish at first if a fulfilled life for you—like for myself—is about service and empathy and compassion. But think about it: would your service be better received if you have done your work already and found happiness? No doubt, individual happiness makes a community stronger, and I believe that it is our duty to take care of ourselves, be content, make the most of our opportunities, and feel loved and give love. And by doing that, we might be happier, not only for ourselves but also for the benefit of those around us.

You will uncover in this book—which we are writing now together—what happiness means to you and the pursuit to get it. Spoiler alert! It will come down to three fundamental points: being healthy, having love, and living your purpose. These are the three aims that everyone strives for. Your mission is to score big in all three. Along the way, there will be surprises and obstacles. Three adversaries stand in your way and will do anything to stop you. And you will call upon three allies eager to gear up and crusade in your support. Every one of the goals, adversaries, and allies will have three aspects, which we will explore individually in detail.

You are the hero of this story, and the universe is your oyster. You will depart the familiar world that you inhabit now and embark on a journey to reach your dreams and solve your pains. Along the way, you will gain new skills and knowledge that will help you make your life and the lives of those around you better. This is an ever-evolving story, and after completing it, you may come back to it again and again, continuing to strive for your goals and reach new heights in

your life. Embrace your thrilling journey and use the blueprint in your hands as a guide, but remember that you have the power to rewrite your story in infinite ways. The universe is in your hands; seize it.

You can seize control over your life story with the help of a miraculous tool: the gift of writing. By harnessing the power of writing, you can unlock limitless potential to transform your life. Although writing can seem daunting, with some practice and dedication, and with the clear steps and guidance of this book, you will be able to use writing to improve your life and reach your most towering goals.

You don't have to wait endlessly for happiness to come to you. And happiness is not a far-off, mythical creature either, that you must spend your life chasing after. Happiness is something you can invite into your life by holding yourself to higher standards, having patience, and learning to appreciate its simple beauty. When you have done the work, you can experience what it feels like to be in control of your own happiness. This is where you do the work, and the blueprint will be neatly organized.

First, you have been blessed with the trinity of your body, mind, and spirit. To ensure your happiness, it is essential that you nourish and tend to all three of your building blocks. It's harder to be happy when you're sick. Do whatever it takes to stay fit and healthy, to stay sharp mentally, and to be spiritually at peace. That's happiness.

Second, the key to a meaningful life is to surround yourself with love. There are moments when you wake up next to a loved one, or when you sit by a fire and admire the stars, or when you laugh so hard that your drink spills out of your nose. You may have the chance to share meaningful conversations with your friends, to have enlightening learning experiences, or to cuddle with a child or pet. These are the moments of joy and happiness of love.

Third, your purpose on this earth is to make a positive impact on the world and to leave something behind. Everyone has something special that they are meant to create, teach, heal, or entertain. Pursue your legacy with passion and excellence, and you will feel a profound sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. When you live with purpose, let your happiness encompass it. Let your purpose be an integral part of your identity and support your roles as a partner, a parent, a friend, and a mentor to those around you, and you will find happiness.

All you ever wish for, and your entire happiness, depends on these three important components of your life: good health, deep love, and meaningful purpose. Any suffering you experience can be attributed to deficiencies in one or more of these three elements of your life.

If you see someone who's mostly happy, it is likely that they've taken care of all three parts: health, love, and purpose or they had recent wins in at least one of them. Conversely, if one or more of these elements is missing or not well-served, the individual may be sad, depressed, or even lose their will to live.

Throughout your life, you may have made many plans related to these three areas of life. To create a baseline for the endeavor of this book, we will start by looking at recent goals that you have worked on. Your goals may have been written down or simply recorded in your mind as a mental note. Even though organizing them in the health, love, and purpose categories may be novel, let's attempt to place them in the respective categories.

This is the first time in this book that you are required to write down your thoughts, and it may be daunting. But we're easing into it with a simple recording of recent facts. It is extremely important that you take this opportunity to participate in the experience and write.

Let's begin by looking at recent health goals. In recent months or years, what health-related goals did you set for yourself? These could have included any of the following: achieving a certain weight goal, increasing your level of physical activity and exercise, improving your blood test results, scheduling regular doctor visits, and taking daily medications and supplements. Regardless of having achieved the goals, try to remember and write down the significant goals that you might have had.

In recent months or years, what were your goals for love and relationships? These could have been related to your romantic relationships, family, and friends, such as starting a new relationship, strengthening an existing one, making new friends, or reconnecting with a family member.

Finally, in recent months or years, you likely set goals for yourself with your life purpose in mind. These goals may have included starting or growing a business, achieving a career advancement or transition, enrolling in new courses or other educational pursuits, reading professional books and learning new skills, and setting financial goals related to savings and investments. Note them here, focusing simply on the goal you had, not the results.

It will be essential to your self-improvement to accurately assess the results achieved for each of the goals you just recorded. Analyze which of them were accomplished and which were not achieved. Consider if any of them were achieved beyond expectations, and which were only partially fulfilled. If the results were below your expectations, reflect on what prevented you from reaching them. Consider if there were any external factors or if any of the factors were in fact within your control but not exploited as well as they deserved. Analyze what could have been done differently or better. Objectively look at the past, and record the thoughts that come to mind, regardless of any success or lack thereof. This exercise is simply a baseline, to prepare the ground for the systematic work that's coming in the next chapters. Use the space that follows if you need extra space to write down your reflections.

Well done on reflecting on your past plans and goals, whether you accomplished them or not. Now it's time to examine any self-sabotaging narratives you may have. Get ready to work, be vulnerable, and stretch your mind and your soul.