

Life is Easier Than You Think

**The Path to Clarity, Self-Acceptance
and Peace of Mind**

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Disclaimer

This book, *Life is Easier Than You Think*, is meant to help you on your journey to self-empowerment, selflove, and personal development.

This book deals with sensitive issues with which people struggle, and that often require more help than a book can offer. This book does not replace therapy. This book is only for informational and educational purposes.

The author cannot respond to questions or comments about any personal situation, diagnosis, or treatment, or otherwise provide clinical opinions. If you think you need immediate assistance, call your local emergency number or the mental health crisis hotline.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to Barry “Bears” Neil Kaufman and the incredible teachers at the Option Institute, including Samahria Lyte Kaufman, Clyde and Beverly Haberman, Raun K. Kaufman, and Stan Cohen.

Without your love, support, and gentle nudges, I would still be lost in a forest of self-doubt and insecurity.

And a special thanks to Glenna, Bill, Ramona, Sharon, and Wyatt for all your support. This book would not be what it is without all of you.

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Introduction

Are you overwhelmed with the challenges of life? Tired and emotionally exhausted at the end of a meaningless workday? Do you long for the relief that comes from a day off, a drink, or a kind word from a loved one? Are you barely holding your ship together on the stormy seas of life?

Sustainable happiness as well as personal clarity and empowerment appear elusive in these modern times. Economic upheaval, political unrest and personal challenges leave us depressed, angry, and anxious about our future. The industry supplying psychological medication is booming. Addictions are taking over the lives of family, friends and neighbors. The effects of stress on our physical health and intimate relationships leave us struggling to maintain a sense of balance in our lives.

Life is Easier Than You Think is a road map for finding your way home, a place where you're free to be yourself and not some version created by someone else's expectations – a place where you can be at peace and have confidence to face whatever life throws at you.

Fear and anxiety, frustration and anger, sadness and depression are not something you must live with. They do not have to be constant companions on life's journey. You

can know joy without having to experience emotional distress and unhappiness.

There is an easier path.

The Shift That Changed My Life

I, like many people, spent years longing for happiness and self-confidence. My journey has been one of endless hours of reading and reflection, involvement in religious and spiritual practices, and years of participation in personal growth seminars. My desire to get a master's degree and practice counseling was born out of the passion to grow personally, develop inner peace, and find sustainable happiness.

Although I'm still on my journey of personal growth, I've moved past many of the fears and insecurities that left me a victim of life's events. I know there are decisions I made that I wouldn't make again, and at the same time I accept myself for who I used to be. I'm walking on a path of ever-increasing wellbeing. I have developed a sense of inner strength I trust when facing difficulties. I actively utilize the perspectives and processes outlined in *Life is Easier Than You Think* and so can you.

We don't have to be victims of the unpredictable events in our world. We can learn to move through loss with grace, handle conflict with serenity and power, and meet any challenge with confidence and clarity.

Life is Easier Than You Think provides a profound shift in perspective that will:

- Help you understand where your point of power is.
- Assist you in letting go of the need to please others.
- Help you find your self-confidence.
- Provide understanding as to where emotions and behaviors come from.
- Allow for loving, non-judgmental self-reflection and personal ownership.
- Improve all your relationships, especially the one you have with yourself.

- Provide direction, personal clarity, and empowerment in the face of life’s challenges.

Life is Easier Than You Think

Staying focused on the path of personal growth and empowerment seems challenging, but the alternative can be devastating. The ideas and concepts presented here may appear simple. You might think, *Yeah, I’ve heard this before* or *That makes total sense*. While one may easily grasp the principles, individuals sometimes struggle to apply them. When applied, these tools can open up profound insights to assist you in taking life-transforming action.

This way of seeing the world may seem awkward, like trying on new clothes that look nice but feel uncomfortable at first. Give it time and allow yourself to grow as you practice this new attitude toward life’s challenges.

Why I Wrote *Life is Easier Than You Think*

I wouldn’t accept that life was painful and hard. In this book, I talk about my journey and the priceless gems of wisdom providing the foundation for the radical shift in perspective that changed my life.

I struggled with issues of insecurity, self-doubt, anxiety, anger, and depression. If it were not for the teachings of Barry “Bears” Neil Kaufman and the instructors at the Option Institute International Learning and Training Center, I would still be struggling. I am incredibly grateful for the personal insights I have gained, as well as the tools and concepts I learned while reading books authored by Bears. I also listened to numerous lectures and programs and participated in personal growth programs at the Option Institute.

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As I constantly utilize these tools and grow, I'm moving personal mountains. I'm grateful to have a clearer vision of who and where I am. These simple yet powerful tools have become a natural process by which I live.

My hope is that you will dramatically change the way you deal with everyday situations and increase your ability to create happiness, peace of mind, comfort, and personal empowerment.

Life can be easier for you.

One of my favorite quotes from the book *Illusions* by Richard Bach is:

**“Argue for your limitations, and
sure enough, they're yours.”**

Change can be scary and challenging. If we're not willing to open up to change and growth, we hold on to our limitations. Let go of judgment and open yourself up to a new way of seeing the world.

Once you understand the ideas presented in these pages, there is no going back. Once you know how to read, you cannot unlearn how to read. Once you see and understand yourself from this perspective, you will no longer feel the need to place blame or see yourself as a victim.

I have witnessed firsthand the power of this process. I've been able to share these tools with individuals and couples in my counseling practice, and now I share this process with you. Here are testimonies from some of these individuals:

The belief exploration process has changed my life, allowing me to look at the truth behind my false pain and giving me a new perspective. Now I have a process that allows choice.

Thank you, Bob!

-E. L., Healing Arts Professional

When I came to Bob, I was mired in my own misery, shame, and self-doubt. I had convinced myself I deserved to feel terrible and allowed others to 'make me' feel bad. The belief exploration process showed me that I always have a

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choice. Bob has been my guide, my mentor in the process of rediscovering my life. Nothing can have power over me unless I allow it. I can never repay Bob for the gift he has given me. No matter what happens to me, I now understand that I have the power to meet it head on. This is truly the best time of my life. -D. M., Teacher

I have been in counseling most of my adult life and no other approach has been as profound as what I have learned working with Bob. The 'belief exploration process' has changed my life dramatically. I am forever grateful that I am a healthier and happier me. Thank you.

-K. L., Homemaker

Being a person who was raised in a very close family, it seemed natural to adopt their beliefs as my own. My dialogues with Bob have allowed me to realize that staying in a situation just because it's comfortable is being complacent. One of the most important concepts I've realized in working with Bob is to let go of what's comfortable and strive for what I want. It also opened doors to allow me to address and challenge insecurities and fears instead of running away or avoiding them. I've learned that I am in the driver's seat, which is very empowering. I am happy about the changes I've made and, more importantly, I'm excited for

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the continuation of this process because essentially, it's a never-ending process.

-E.C., Pharmacist

Life Is Easier Than You Think

We have been systematically taught ways of understanding ourselves and the world around us that have resulted in life being limited, difficult, and painful. These beliefs have been passed down from generation to generation. You are allowed to question these beliefs and free yourself to live life without the emotional pain that has been holding you down.

Join me on this journey toward happiness, personal empowerment, and peace of mind.



Section I

Man's main task in life is to give birth to himself, to become what he potentially is. The most important product of his effort is his own personality.

Erich Fromm



Chapter 1 The Challenge

Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is not safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.

Helen Keller

Have you ever found yourself wishing you could stop the emotional turmoil and constant feelings of anxiety, depression, and frustration in your life?

You may struggle with issues of anxiety and fear, or feelings of disillusionment, confusion, or lack of passion. You may also believe life can be better, but don't know how to improve it.

“Life is hard” seems to be today's mantra. We look around and gather evidence to support this message as we witness economic and political instability, pandemic, and personal challenges of conflict, inequality, and loss.

It seems that even when we turn to our spiritual, philosophical, and intellectual leaders, something's missing.

I remember the insightful books of Wayne Dyer and reading that there was a place of internal comfort and happiness, but not knowing how to achieve that level of emotional wellness. I couldn't find the bridge to the place of peace I felt separated from. It wasn't until I found the tools and attitudinal approach I share in this book that I could cross that bridge.

This process is the bridge that you can use to help yourself move toward emotional well-being, confidence, and personal empowerment. Once you understand this bridge, journeying to internal peace is a choice away.

We face challenges, uncertainty, and change nearly every day. As the philosopher Heraclitus wrote, “No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same man.”

Change in environment, relationships, livelihood, and health are part of the life experience. We find ourselves crashing down the river of life, making every attempt to hang on to people, health, and material possessions as they are swept away or suddenly ripped from our grasp.

What allows some people to face the storms of life seemingly unaffected while others are left devastated or adrift in hopelessness?

One way we make life hard is by attaching happiness and unhappiness to ever-changing events, situations, people, and interactions. We hold happiness hostage, only allowing ourselves to be happy if certain things happen.

Another disempowering message we hear is, “We’re such complicated creatures!” We talk about how mysterious we are and give up trying to understand ourselves, as if knowing why we feel or behave the way we do is too difficult to comprehend. Thinking of ourselves this way leaves us feeling overwhelmed. If we and others are so complicated, how can we possibly make meaningful change in our lives?

Most of us spend energy looking to people and situations outside ourselves to make change in hope of finding meaning,

clarity, and inner peace. When we do this, we ride the emotional rollercoaster of highs and lows based on external events.

Must we experience sorrow to know joy? Take the bad with the good? We can divorce ourselves from the idea that we are emotional victims of events. Challenges are a natural part of life. We can know happiness in spite of, not because of, those challenges.

We experience and cherish precious moments of happiness. What we fail to understand is, we paid for those moments with emotional pain and distress. We believe we have to be satisfied with those fleeting moments of joy and wellbeing, thinking they just show up in our lives and are beyond our control.

Not only do we attribute happiness to circumstances around us, we're suspicious of being happy in the first place. We see it as something to be pursued, as described in The Declaration of Independence. Happiness is also associated with a sense of being unaware, naïve, or thoughtless.

Leo Buscaglia wrote, "If you're an advocate of gentleness, you're simplistic and naïve. If you're an advocate of despair and hate, you're sophisticated."

There are unspoken social rules stating that we can be *too* happy or happy for *too* long. Individuals who appear consistently happy may be viewed as foolish or Happy Idiots. It's certainly not okay to be happy during certain events, such as funerals. I remember discussions on late night television following the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Centers and Pentagon. There was a struggle to know when it would be appropriate to reincorporate comedy into talk shows.

We can challenge these perspectives as we reach for what we all want. We can maintain personal happiness during life's challenges without looking like naïve fools.

I read a story of a boy whose father, in a fit of rage, poured kerosene on the boy and lit him on fire. When he woke in the hospital, he said, "I'm alive! I didn't miss out on living!" Yes, this boy faced years of surgeries and challenges after having suffered severe burns to his body. What could possibly elicit that kind of response from him?

Many thoughts went through my mind: *How could someone do this? What kind of world do we live in where people treat each other this way? How do we stop this from happening? How could someone experience this and still be happy?*

Most of these questions are directed at the chaotic unpredictable world around us, one we are desperate to change. The final question is the most valuable because it points us in the direction of possibility.

We're all looking to make the world a better place and help ourselves feel at peace, but it's extremely challenging given the limited control we have in the world. We trap ourselves by attaching happiness to events and the ever-increasing amount of information we face every day.

We're caught thinking we need to change the world. The question isn't how we can make the world safer, more loving, and kinder, but how we can make *ourselves* safe, loving, and kind. We must start where we have control—with ourselves. As Gandhi said: "Be the change you wish to see in the world."

We see advertisements for medications to help with anxiety, depression, and other mood disorders. We're offered programs

for everything from addiction to anger management and relationship advice. We can only conclude that we're not in control of ourselves and need outside help to regulate the distressing feelings and behaviors we experience.

We have systems of rules and laws to encourage us to operate in ways society deems right and acceptable. The systems that use judgment and punishment to elicit change and compliance ultimately create a false sense of safety and balance in the world.

I'm here to offer an alternative.

I want to help you free yourself from this *hard* and challenging way of existing in the world. And, by doing so, model a way of living life that elevates you to a higher level of emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. This way of living may ultimately influence other individuals, which could result in a more harmonious existence.

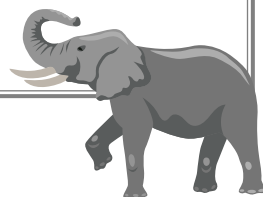
Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are

liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

Marianne Williamson: *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles*

Key Takeaways

- Life is not as hard as we think.
- We are not as complicated or mysterious as we think.
- Life appears challenging and chaotic.
- People want to be happy yet find sustainable happiness unattainable.
- We limit ourselves when we attach happiness or unhappiness to people and events outside ourselves.
- We can be happy.



Exercise:

Take 10 minutes and write down as many situations in your life on which you base your happiness or unhappiness. These can be work related, financial, political, global, health related, or people related. Ask yourself, “What am I pointing to as the cause of my happiness or unhappiness?”