Free Extract of Happiness: Make Your Soul Smile by Katie Oman

So, here’s the thing…

We need to talk.

Ooo…there’s a sentence you never want to hear. That tricky little sentence normally strikes fear into the hearts of everyone that hears it, right? Four little words that normally lead to break-ups, dark secrets being revealed, and a shed load of nastiness.

Don’t panic, this is a positive book.

What we do need to talk about is…

Happiness!

I believe happiness is one of the most powerful, awesome, and magical energies in the whole cosmos, and it’s time we got some of this for ourselves. After all, it’s the thing we all want most in life, isn’t it? The thing we all chase, the purpose behind every word, deed and wish. We all want to be happy. And I’ll let you into a little secret: come closer…that’s it…let me whisper in your ear-

**Happiness is chasing you too!**

Look, I know it doesn’t feel like that. I know that most of the time life can feel tough and unfair; especially in our modern world. It sometimes feels as though every media outlet seems to be a competitor in a never-ending competition that has never actually been officially announced. The ‘*Let’s Scare the Crap Out of Everyone at Every Given Turn*’ competition. Whether it’s the TV news, panel shows, newspapers or internet- the whole media brigade seems to be on a non-stop mission to highlight the fear that’s seemingly all around us. And do you know what? I’ve had enough. I’m tired of being scared all the time. Tired of being suspicious of others, and tired of letting fear rule my life.

Surely there has to be a better way? I don’t know about you, but I’ve had enough of this consistent fear mongering. I’m tired of being afraid of the world, and worrying about worst case scenarios all the time. And I’m tired of being made to feel that those who are different to me are somehow bad or someone I have to worry about. I for one don’t want to live my life like this. I’m not naïve or daft by the way; I know terrible things *do* happen in the world every day. Unimaginable horrors that can shake you to your very core. I’m not suggesting that we stick our fingers in our ears and all live in a land of rainbows and sunshine. All I am simply saying is that we are out of balance with the world, and the way we have been trying to cope with things clearly hasn’t been working. A new way is desperately needed, lest things get any worse.

Neither am I walking around with my eyes closed to what’s really happening out there. The world *can* be a really scary place at times. There are things happening in the world so far off the scale of unfair and wrong, it’s downright terrifying. All I *am* saying is the way we are trying to deal with things clearly isn’t working. This fight mentality we all have of rolling up our sleeves and declaring war on anything that makes us feel scared is only bringing more of the same to our proverbial front door. The minute you engage in any kind of battle like this, you’re simply bringing more fear energy into your life. Hence why we’re all scuttling around like wide eyed rabbits, all afraid of our own shadows. This book is not a magic wand to wave over it all and make all that darkness disappear. How I wish I could do that for you! This book is attempting to restore some sense of balance within your own mind; to help you see that, despite the perceived saturation of fear in the world, you can still have happiness in your own life. Goodness knows you deserve it; we all do!

I know that sometimes, when you’re stuck in the depths of fear and crap, it can seem as if happiness has lost your contact details, and won’t be getting in touch anytime soon. But, I need you to understand that things aren’t as grim as they may appear. Happiness is your birth right- you deserve to be happy, and you’re worthy of it too. You don’t have to be a certain age, gender, weight, or have a certain job. You don’t need to be attracted to particular people, or have a body that’s ‘normal’. There really are no special criteria that determine whether you deserve to be happy or not. Simply by the fact you’re alive…that’s it! You have the right to be happy because you are here on planet Earth right now.

Everyone take a deep breath. Isn’t a huge relief to be told that?

But…

Yes, there’s another ‘but’ here. I’m sorry, I didn’t want to put one in either, but needs must and this has to be said. So, bear with me for a minute, and we’ll get back to the super happy, high-fiving mode in a second. Promise.

Happiness is a conscious choice you’ve got to make every single day. Granted, there are going to be times in your life where you can’t stop smiling because life feels so wonderfully incredible, but there will also be times when life is a bit more, well…crap. Days when you can’t pull up your inner sunshine from your soul no matter how much you want to, and the world feels nothing but mean/hard work/boring (delete as appropriate).

At times like that it may be hard to acknowledge that you deserve to be happy. Indeed, in that moment, it probably feels like you’ve sent happiness a friend request on Facebook. Not only did it ignore you, but it’s permanently blocked you, and reported you to boot. This book may feel like a smug ‘oh-look-at-me-and-how-happy-I-am’ slap around the face from me if you’re in this place in your life, but nothing could be further from the truth. I’m not happy all the time, despite assumptions to the contrary. I don’t go skipping through fields of rainbows and sunshine, hand in hand with my pet unicorn. Oh, that life was that easy.

My day starts out happy enough. I wake up in the morning and I visualise myself having a good day. I see everything running smoothly, and I picture myself with the biggest smile on my face. Not only this, but I always set my intentions for the day. I do this by focusing on how I want to feel throughout the day. It could be loved, happy, nurtured, or even like the true spiritual rockstar goddess that I am! By setting this intention at the beginning of my day, it gives me an inner guidance system that I can then align all my choices with throughout the next 24 hours; like a spiritual GPS. Let me give you an example- let’s say I’m feeling hormonal, and full of crappy that-time-of-the-month ickniness. In that moment, I am tempted to consume my body weight in chocolate; enough cocoa to sink an aircraft carrier. But my intention for that day was to nurture myself. I know eating several pounds of chocolate may make me happy for a nanosecond, but it’ll ultimately lead to feelings of nausea, shame, guilt, and weight gain- none of which hardly meet the criteria for a nurturing kind of day. I would never deny myself chocolate (that’s the path to misery my friends, don’t go there), but it’s all about balance. Buy one chocolate bar, rather than several.

Anyway, I digress. As I was saying before I got distracted by the brown, sticky yumminess of chocolate, I wanted to show you how my day starts with generally feeling pretty happy. I deliberately focus on raising the happiness levels in my own head by my words, intentions and visualisations. By the time I come to get the children out of bed, I’m normally feeling quite smiley. Shame it doesn’t last…

At the time of writing my three children are 14 and 4 (I have twins). I have to get myself and all three of them out of the door by 8:15am. Sounds easy you say? You clearly don’t have young children! By the time I leave the house most mornings I have magically transformed from serene goddess of happiness and positivity into a stressed-out banshee of stress who would frighten small children (just ask my kids). All in the space of 1 hour and 15 minutes. Believe me, I’m not centred in my happy bubble all the time; life has a nasty habit of getting in the way.

But… (there’s that word again.)

Years ago, I would’ve stayed in that stressed-out mood for the rest of the day. The manic hour would’ve left its fingerprints all over me and I wouldn’t be able to shake them off. I would allow it to dictate how I felt, even though the event had passed. I couldn’t change it, but I gave it power to spoil the rest of my day. It would’ve had a nasty impact on every relationship I had throughout the day, and the stressed feeling would’ve made me anxious and unsettled hours after the initial kick up the bum. Not good, and definitely not a strong foundation for lasting happiness.

I now take time to come back to my intentions, to choose happiness again. It may mean sticking some uplifting songs on to lift my mood, or to talk to trusted loved ones who help me get some perspective (and help me see the funny side). Coming back to my happiness is the best strategy to deciding to have a good day, every single day. Some days it may be harder than others to come back, but I always get there. Happiness is too precious, too wonderful, not to want it for yourself. Most of the time it’s not going to fall magically in your lap, but you can ignite its spark through the choices you make, and I’m going to help you do just that.

For, when all is said and done, you are not at the mercy of your mind. You have never been a slave to your thoughts, with no power to choose how you feel. As Glinda the Good Witch so eloquently states in the classic film *The Wizard of Oz*:

‘*You’ve always had the power, my dear, you just had to learn it for yourself.’*

Anytime you find yourself feeling stuck in negativity of any kind, know that it doesn’t have to be that way! You have the power within you to choose another thought; one of happiness and positivity. It’s not always easy, granted. Your mind will fight back harder than a cat trapped in a corner at first, but the more you practice and want it, the easier it’ll become for you. This book will be a tool of joy to help you along your way. If you are looking for a lift out of the gloom or a light in the darkness, this book will shine brightly for you. For truly, we all deserve nothing less.

So, you may be wondering what this book actually covers? After all, my claims and infectious positivity may sound exciting, but they’re hardly going to set your world alight on their own. You’ll be happy to know that there’s more to this book than vague promises…much, much more! Firstly, we are going to be exploring the uniqueness and beauty that is you! I’m going to show you why you need to stop trying to be like everyone else and start embracing yourself just as we are. There’s not much use trying to get happy for you if you’re too busy worrying what everyone else is doing now, is there?

From this loving kick up the bum, I’m going to explain how you can find something in every single day to help switch your mind to a more positive setting. And it doesn’t have to be the life changing, big stuff either! Yes, those moments are gold dust and should be cherished for what they are, but it’s actually when you start noticing the little miracles in each day that you start to become more positive. But, don’t worry your head about that right now, I’ll explain more when we get there, plus there’s my own personal list of happiness to inspire you to find your own moments too. This then moves onto some wonderful ideas that I’ve personally tried myself to bring happiness into my life in a tangible way. These magical practices will bring much light into your life, and I’ll run through everything you need to know to make them a reality.

The next key section of the book is a focus on one of my favourite things; gratitude. I will explain how training your own mind to become more grateful can actually lead you to find an abundance of happiness! I should note that when I say the word ‘training’, I’m not asking for you to head off to college or anything. This is something that will become part of your daily practice, but it’s an easy one to incorporate, and I will show you how. You’ll be beyond grateful that you did!

This is an incredibly positive and affirming read, but I am going to focus on five key things that we all engage with that are actually stopping us from being happy: trying to please everyone, fearing change, living in the past, putting yourself down, and overthinking. Each one is going to be explored in turn, and then I’m going to show you how you can flip these bad boys around to create a happier and more peaceful place to be. Believe me, once you’ve read this section you’ll feel as though a huge weight will have been lifted from your shoulders; it’s like a tonic for the soul!

The next section of the book is like I’m reaching through the pages to give you a big loving hug. I’m going to show you why it’s vital for you to start believing in yourself. This chapter is very personal, and I’ll show you what happens when you fall down the rabbit hole of not believing in yourself. As well as the anecdotes, I will give you key tips and advice that you can use to start believing in you. We are on this journey together after all, and you’ll soon see that reclaiming happiness has been (and still is) something I’ve worked through. My hope is, through revealing my own experiences, you’ll be able to see that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Mind, I did get tired of waiting for it, so I lit up the darkness myself (I can be a determined little minx when I want to be)!

Many people seemed to have developed the bad habit of putting off their happiness for some magical future time where they think everything will be perfect, but the next section will show how you can be happy right now! By focusing on the concept of mindfulness, I will examine how you can really start to live in the present moment and how, by doing so, you can shift your focus to start making your life one of happiness and fulfilment rather than wandering off into anxiety. There’s a special gift for you to explore at the end of this section: I will explain why music can really help to create happiness for you, and then I’ll give you my own happy playlist as inspiration for you to create your own.

An important and lovely practice to help you become happier is kindness, and I will explore why this is such a key tool to work with. Alongside this, I will also give ideas that you could potentially start to work with in your own life. Not only will this help to make you happier, but you’ll also be helping to lift others up as well! When the light from a candle is shared, the light from the original source is not dimmed. In the same way, kindness is a gift to all, and it’s a practice that I can’t emphasise enough. Even if I rolled it in glitter and had it riding into your life on your own personal unicorn!

There’s a place that can keep you stuck firmer than a moose in a glue spillage. What is this strange place? The comfort zone! And I will be exploring how, although this place can seem familiar and safe, it actually holds you back in so many ways. I will help you to break out from the sticky place, so that you can start to be the master (or mistress) of your own destiny. Alongside this, I’ll set all the lights on the fact that many of us (myself included) are not great at being the assertive force of nature we sometimes we need to be, or having clear and defined boundaries. But these are key in helping to establish you as being happy, and I’m going to share some exercises with you that will give you your power back; She-Ra style! (Cue 80’s nostalgia moment…)

It’s easy to love the parts of yourself that you perceive to be the more positive aspects of the self, but the seemingly negative parts need some loving too. I’m going to take a nosedive into the shadow side of self, and help you to give it all a big squishy hug in the process. Yes, it may not be the most comfortable section in the book, but do you know what? I guarantee it’s the one that’s going to truly send shockwaves through your life, and set you on the path of establishing some long-lasting happiness. I’m also going to be looking at something truly shocking…it’s okay not to be happy all the time. I know that may sound strange in a book that’s all about getting happy, but it’ll become crystal clear when we get there; promise.

We all have stories we tell others and ourselves about who we are and the lives we have lived up to this point, but these stories can actually stop you from living a life of love, abundance and happiness. I’m going to show you that stories are just perception, and how you really do have the power to write a new story of happiness for yourself in every moment. Not only this, but it’s time to a close up and personal look at how we are all drawn to drama in some way. It is a natural part of who we are, but when it starts to become bordering on obsessive it can really suck the happiness out of you. I can show you how you can start to withdraw yourself from being overly connected to drama, so you can make room for happiness in your life instead.

There are two more key elements you may not have realised are important for helping you to become happier: non-attachment and forgiveness. Both are essential for helping you to live a happier and more fulfilled life. Both issues are going to be examined to show how they can pull you down if you don’t welcome them into your life, before showing how you can start to really utilise them to bring untold benefits.

It’s easy to see failure as the end of the world, as well as taking it really personally, but this mind-set doesn’t do anyone any favours. Instead, it may be possible that you weren’t meant to head down that path, and there’s something better in store. This is the focus of this next section of the book, and I will show you how sometimes it’s better for you to go with the natural flow of life, rather than fighting it every step of the way. Let’s be honest anyway, having a permanent fight mentality is beyond exhausting, and I can certainly think of better ways to spend my time. How can anyone have the energy to focus on being happy if you’re too busy trying to make life fit into the perfectly shaped box you’d picked out specially? Life is full of twists, turns and surprises, and I will help you to accept this more than you may have ever done before.

Self-care has become something of a buzzword in modern life, but many people are still resistant to the idea; or may not even fully understand what it means! The concept of self-care, the different aspects of it, and how it can really bring happiness into your life are the focuses of the next section. I know it’s something I’ve struggled to bring into my life at times, but when I do I feel myself smiling from head to toe, and I aim to give you the same beautiful gift for your own life. By the same token, I have found a great many people have issues around money that stops them living a full and happy life. These issues are going to be examined in turn, before considering how you can turn your core beliefs about money around to something much more positive.

Relationships are another key factor in all of our lives, but they can also bring the biggest fears and heartache. The next section considers why relationships are actually our biggest teacher in life about what happiness really means, and how you can help to make each of your relationships a healthier and happier place to be, regardless of whether it’s with a partner, friend, family member or colleague. And, speaking of key factors- why we are here is one of the biggest life questions we all ponder at some point. We all like to think that we are here for some greater purpose, but this thought can also lead many to end up with untold fear and anxiety. I will examine what the true purpose of life is, and how you can use this knowledge to move towards a life more closely aligned to what your purpose may be.

Finally, the book concludes by summarising each of the key points that have been covered, so the important messages are really highlighted for you to take away and use in your own life. Ultimately, this is your life, and you should spend it being as happy as you can.

Sound good? You ready to set your facial muscles to the smile position? Ready to get your happy on?

Let’s do this!