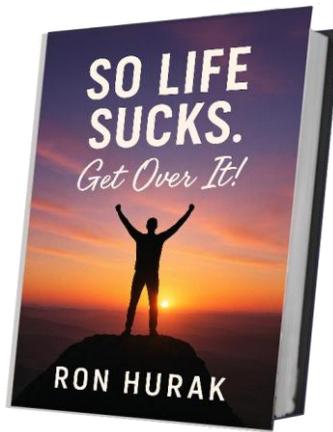


So Life Sucks. Get Over It!

Unsuck Your Life Workbook



You are just one decision away from changing your life!

Throughout the book I have provided some thoughts and suggestions to ‘unsucking’ your life. I think it would be a great idea for you to basically review each section again. Only this time, you’ll do it with the realization that there is an *exercise* for you to complete that will help you to reinforce the good ideas in your consciousness, and allow you to actually ‘own’ them rather than just ‘know’ them.

The difference between knowing and owning an idea is that by owning the idea, it means that an idea is ‘ingrained’ into who you are, and is now a part of your personality, your values, and your belief system. You use these kinds of ingrained ideas either subconsciously or consciously on a daily basis. They are a part of the who-you-are, and the fresh ideas will be a part of the new & improved you! *This is a book you can revisit anytime for positive advice about dealing with the times in your life that ‘just sucks’.*

Take your time thinking through each exercise. Don’t rush. Once you have reviewed all the exercises and given each one some special thought, then you might want to write your experiences in a

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personal journal. Perhaps over time, your journal can turn into a book. You can pass it along to your family and friends to share the values and beliefs you acquired while here on earth. And perhaps, it could even become your personal eulogy of sorts.

At its simplest, your journal is your message to yourself or the whole world. You can write it anyway you want, and in a way that makes you happiest.

The exercises listed below are presented in the same, basic order of the chapters of the book, but do not match by chapter numbers. You can start with any section, and follow whatever order you decide works for you.

Some exercises may not apply to you, if so just skip them.

I want to wish you 'all the best' on your journey to a happier life. Remember it takes time, and everything you do to create a positive life for yourself, is well worth your time and attention.

Exercise #1 – How your life got started. A trip down memory lane is what's required for this first assignment. The purpose is to evaluate the times in the earlier part of your life that have created your current values and beliefs, and have influenced your motivations and actions.

Are you happy today because of the loving and nurturing environment you were raised in, or are you bitter and angry because of your early life experiences?

Are there any specific events that you can recall, that really resonate or motivate you today?

What are your thoughts on entitlements or blaming others? Where did these beliefs start?

Are you happy with your choices today as it relates to your past decisions and actions?

I want you to create a starting point in your efforts to un-suck your life by realizing right away, the 'key' events in your earlier years that are still having an impact on your life today. When you are thinking thoughts about the things that make you unhappy, you are probably using your old, antiquated programming. It's time to reprogram!

If you are happy, then you can embrace these important times of your life. But if you are unhappy sometimes, you can start to remove a few old ideas from your thinking, and add new & improved ideas to make your thought process better and happier.

Creating a new, positive thought process will lead you to a happier place. And especially after you have used, CTL-ALT-DEL on the old ways you used to think.

Exercise #2 – What makes you happy? What have you been chasing most of your life that you thought would make you happy? Is it material possessions or inner peace? How's it working out for you so far? Do you still believe that happiness is something you can buy or acquire?

Think about what makes you feel the happiest so far in your life, and consider whether it still makes you happy today... then evaluate what you have, and ask yourself, if you actually got what you really wanted, would it make you happier?

Exercise #3 – Are you constantly changing for the better?

Getting stuck in the same routine is a recipe for unhappiness. If you had three wishes, what would they be? Do you have a vision for life? What does it look like? Write it all down.

Jot down your wishes, your dreams, and your aspirations and think about which ones would really change your life in a long-lasting, positive way, and make you happier than you are today.

Exercise #4 – How long do you take to make a significant decision? Start looking at your decision-making skills. Evaluate your effectiveness and efficiency. Are you confident in your decision-making, or do you dwell on choices for days, weeks or even months before deciding?

List your most recent decisions. Now ask yourself, how long did the preparation take prior to making the decision as it relates to the 'actual' time you took to just decide?

Exercise #5 – What scares you? List your greatest fears. Now ask yourself, *why*? Write down your responses.

Where did these fears originate? Do you let others control you with your concern about what they might think, say, or do? What can you do today to take back control of your life and your happiness?

Squash your fears with an updated review of reality now. And stop encouraging imaginary thoughts of doom and gloom! You'll thank yourself for doing so someday, I know I did.

Exercise #6 – Do failures control your life? Are your failures life lessons or a reason to stop? How do you approach situations that do not work out as your originally planned them?

Make a list of your recent ‘non-success’ actions. How did you react? Did you learn anything? What was really unsuccessful? Or did you just quit? Regardless of your answers, what do you think has influenced you when you do not succeed?

Exercise #7 – Are you a leader? How do you rate your leadership status? What side of the scale are you on, the group of 20% of leaders or the group of 80% of followers? Do you look forward to the challenges of decision-making, or do you avoid decision-making situations? How do you feel about your answer?

If you think you are in the 80% group, can you be happy with allowing others to control your life, because you let them make decisions for you?

What can you do today to start moving more into a leadership role? Make a list. Create a plan. Execute the plan!

Exercise #8 – What kind of automatic thoughts are programmed and swimming around your head?

Do you know why you place certain values or beliefs on certain things, actions, and people?

Does your thinking align with your caregivers, like your parents and grandparents, etc.?

Are you happy with your core values and beliefs?

Over the next week, write down those things that upset you or make you happy. Evaluate your reactions to specific events that created emotional responses, positive or negative.

Now, think back to when you started behaving in a specific manner to specific situations... are these responses creating happiness in your life, or making your life miserable?

What programs do you need to erase and which ones are you happy with? Make a list.

There is no right or wrong to any of your values or beliefs. The thing you want to know is, which beliefs are creating the life you want, and which ones are blocking you from your desire to be a happier person?

Exercise #9 – What are you teaching your kids? Their eyes are like a camera, and their minds are the screen, and their memories are always on record. If you are a caregiver in any capacity, then you are influencing someone's future.

What values are you instilling in those young minds that surround you? Are you creating the right environment for happiness? Over the next week, pay attention to your interactions with your kids. Notice what you are passing onto to them.

Question yourself about what you are teaching them and what will have a positive or negative impact on them, now or in the future. What are you passing onto your kids that where values and beliefs that were originally, passed onto you? Once again, there are no right or wrong answers here.

The question is, did your parents or care givers give you the appropriate environment for living a life of joy, peace and happiness? If you answer yes, then there is a good chance you are passing on valuable and positive programs to your kids. If not, think about what you are passing on that will create future challenges for them.

Exercise #10 – Who do you admire? Who influences you in a positive way? Make a list.

What can you read that will give you greater insights to who they are, what they cherish, and what challenges they faced to reach a position in life that allows you to admire them now?

If that someone is not famous enough to have an autobiography, then make the effort to meet with them and share a cup of coffee. Tell them that you would like to follow in their footsteps, and explain how any mentoring they could offer you would be greatly appreciated. Write down the life lessons they offer you, and then put them into action in your own life.

Exercise #11 – Do you feel you have been cheated from those things you want? If no, great! No exercise for a ‘no’ answer.

On the other hand, if it’s yes and you are blaming others or the world in general for your unhappy place in life, then some work is required on your part. To be happier you want to move beyond blame and entitlement. There’s an old saying, “There’s no free lunch.” It’s true, and anything worth having usually comes with a price tag of effort.

If you are blaming the world for getting in the way of the things you want, here’s a question for you, *'how's that working out so far'?*

Wishing and hoping is okay for lottery tickets, but realistic people don’t live their life with the expectation that they will actually win the lottery.

The same basic thing is true for happy people. Happy people rarely reach their level of sustainable happiness by expecting others to give them what they want, simply because they want it.

Make a list of the things you really want. Now ask yourself, what are you willing to do to acquire them? Keep in mind that material items are usually not what happy people strive for or ever the reason for their happiness. Material things can enhance your comfort and provide a certain degree of satisfaction, but most ‘things’ have a way of losing their glitter and the happiness attached to them. Choose carefully!

Exercise #12 – What can you offer others? Regardless of your current situation you can always find ways to improve your position by finding a need and filling it. Rome was not built in a day.

Even the luckiest people, the ones who seem to have it all, will usually tell you that they were a five, ten, twenty or thirty year ‘overnight’ success. So, what can you offer?

What skills can you provide that would cause others to reward you in ways that would satisfy your needs?

Do you need to improve in specific areas before you can obtain that which you desire? Remember this: Obtaining happiness can be the easiest of all possessions to acquire. You just need to give it to others first!

Exercise #13 – Half full or half empty? How do you view the world around you? Are you optimistic and excited sometimes by the challenges life sends your way, or are you generally depressed by the day-to-day drudgery of each day? Examine your approach to challenges for a day or two, or even a week or month. Do you see moving past obstacles and roadblocks as ‘the way’ to achieving your vision?

Do you recognize the opportunities that come up sometimes, when things go down? Or do you get down on yourself and your situation and think, “Nothing good ever happens to me!”

Take a moment a write down how your negative approach to a situation made it better. Or if you prefer, how a positive approach made the challenge easier to attack and overcome. See the difference?

Exercise #14 – Who are the people you use for comparison purposes? Make a list of everyone you compare yourself with... now ask yourself, “Why?” What makes them so special or not so special? My hope is that you will realize that you are incomparable.

Exercise #15 – What’s most important to you? Analyze a typical day with other people in your life and ask yourself, “Was I more interested in being right or more interested in maintaining my positive relationships with them?” How’s that working toward your goal of being a happier person?

Exercise #16 – Do other people see you as a happy person? Are you popular with others? Do you make friends easily?

Why?

If you are not the social butterfly you would like to be, try smiling more. Trust me, this is going to help.

For the next week, whenever you ‘catch someone else’s glance’ smile sincerely back at them and watch what happens.

Keep track of your results. How many people smiled back at you? Okay, some didn’t, but you did!

Being popular requires you to offer others an invitation to be friendly. The easiest way to start the process is to smile at people and let them know you are ‘friendly’. See how that works?

Exercise #17 – Counting to ten. No matter how positive you are or how much you smile, there will be times when confrontation with others will occur. For many of us our first reaction is ‘self-defense’ and then quickly drawing defensive lines in the sand.

It’s important to learn ‘how to’ control your immediate response to non-productive conversations. Counting to ten is the best way to disarm your own ‘fight or flight’ reaction to the situation, and pausing always gives you a chance to assess the right response.

The next time you find yourself in an awkward conversation, mentally step back, and physically if you like. Rather than reacting to the other person’s verbal abuse, tune out their words, say nothing, take a deep breath, and then take responsibility for what you are ‘catching’ from them.

Use the techniques I have suggested. Ask for clarification and discover what the real reason was for the other person’s rant. Write down the results when you learn something.

If the person is someone you must maintain a good relationship with, then continue to use a calming strategy to create a productive conversation. If the person is not especially important to you, then as gently as possible, let them go and move on. There is really no good reason to escalate a situation that isn’t that important to you.

Exercise #18 – Stay positive. What can you do to ensure positive communications with other people? Take some time to reflect on some of your recent meaningful conversations.

How did they turn out? Were your conversations positive or not so much?

Think about the ways you might have approached the same conversation for a better outcome. Write down different strategies that will help you next time, and give you effective ways to have better conversations in the future.

Keep this in mind. It's always your responsibility to make sure that what you offer to a conversation is accurately understood. Paying more attention to what you are saying will definitely improve all of your conversations.

There are three basic ways to look at a 'confrontational conversation':

- What we said immediately upon encountering the conversation.
- What we would have said if given the chance to think about it for a while.
- What we would have said after sleeping on it.
- The point is, when you are in a confrontational conversation, take your time.

Exercise #19 – Do you take mental breaks when you are listening? When others are talking directly to you, what are you doing?

For the next week, make a point of focusing ‘completely’ on what others are saying. Notice when you start to take a mental break or after you’ve stopped listening, and especially when you realize you don’t even know what the conversation is about.

Keep track of your results.

How can you expect others to pay close attention to you, if you are not doing the same for them? Everyone, me included, can be a better communicator by being a better listener. Make good listening a habit and you’ll see your happiness levels increase!

Exercise #20 – Are you a Group One or Group Two

individual? This might be the toughest assignment of the bunch because it will require you to be brutally honest with yourself. Are you up for the challenge?

It's very difficult to unsuck your life when you are hanging tightly onto old mental programs that are making you unhappy. If you were to ask others what group you fall into, would it be Group One or Group Two?

Keep this in mind: You cannot get to Group Two without realizing that you are in Group One and then, you must make the necessary adjustment to become a Group Two person. Although anything is possible, there are very few people who are Group Two from the very start of their life here on earth.

For the next week, rate yourself. Are you domineering, negatively parental, or childishly manipulating? Do you like to play head games with those around you or think of yourself as superior to everyone else?

If you answer 'no' to these types of questions, congratulations! It means you have, at some point in your life, made the necessary adjustments in your approach to life. You have a great chance of being happy and you can be counted among the Group Two people.

If you answer 'yes' then the next question you must ask yourself is, "Do I like who I am?"

If you are a happy person, and you are happy with your current thinking, even though it may appear that you are a Group One person, so be it! Live on!

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But if you are not happy with yourself and the life you are living, then hit the CTL-ALT-DEL on old mental programs are sucking up your life. It's time to start loading fresh programs into your head that will make you a happier person.

Start by writing down the mental programs you like and also the mental programs you want to throw away. Now, create a 'plan' that gives you a road map to changing the behaviors you dislike about yourself.

Remember, I told you might have to get brutal in your self-appraisal, and everyone does at some time if they want to be happy in life.

In most cases, your values, beliefs and the behaviors manifested in your thinking are not yours at all. For most of us they were inserted into our mind when we were too young to decide whether or not they were actually the values and beliefs we wanted to adopt.

The good news is that you are all grown up now. You now have the power of choice and you can flush out anything you no longer want swimming around in your head that doesn't help you to be happy and enjoy your life.

Exercise #21 – Measure Up. Make a list of all of the roles you play in your life. These would be the ‘what-you-are’ kind of relationships in your life.

How are you doing at being a son or daughter, sister or brother, parent, care giver, employee, friend, or any number of different roles you fill each, and every day of your life?

Start to rate yourself as honestly as you can, in each of the various roles you have written on your list. If your ratings are consistently on the higher side, then this suggests that your ‘who-you-are’ inner self is in pretty good shape. It means you are probably relatively happy in life.

Lower ratings would mean your ‘who-you-are’ inner self is in rough shape. It means your life likely sucks and you are usually unhappy.

Realize right now, that the reason you are unable to perform your roles effectively is based on how you feel about yourself. You will have a difficult time being anything or anyone special, if you don’t like or work with your inner self.

Can you pick yourself up out of the hole you appear to be in? Some people have the ability to pick themselves up on their own, and other people need help. I required assistance and I am really glad I realized it. I had the chance to become the person I wanted to be and eliminate the person I once was and didn’t like so much.

Exercise #22 – Are you are team player? Do you enjoy the challenge of accomplishing goals with a group of people? Think about your most recent ‘team’ activity... were you using the three ‘Cs’? That would be cooperation, collaboration and communication. Or, were you threatened by being overshadowed by others on the team?

Did you want to hog the spotlight for yourself? Why do you think you felt that way? Self-analysis is a great way to recognize those things that are making you miserable and to begin making the choices necessary to improve your happiness.

What are the choices you can make today that would make you a better ‘team’ player?

You may prefer to do things on your own, but to be happy in life you have to be able to do things with other people.

Exercise #23 – How many real friends do you have? Make a list. Just one friend is fine. In fact it's awesome. More than one friend is beyond awesome.

Keep in mind that most of people you know are acquaintances and they are not friends.

A true friend is that person in your life that you would do anything for and they would return the favor. Think about the one or more of the friendships you have in life. What makes them so special?

List the qualities of your relationship with that friend or friends. Then ask, "What thing or issue would be so important to me that I would consider destroying this relationship?"

Hint: the answer should be nothing!

Ain't got no friends! (I know – that's a double negative) Why is that? Really? Think about it.

So what do you have to do to make friends with others, and within your group of friends, find a 'best' friend?

Exercise #24 – Are you a victim? Think about all of the times you may have felt victimized by other people. Is there any chance you got into that position because you were trying to rescue someone else? This exercise is about being prepared for the next occurrence when you have the urge to rescue someone. Don't do it!

Assisting someone in trouble is okay, but the most important thing is to remember... to avoid the 'Triangle of Pain'. Learn not to step into the triangle trap. You'll be happier for sure.

Exercise #25 – Watch your criticisms. Here's an easy assignment. Write down and track each and every time you criticize someone else. How did it all work out? What was the reaction from those you criticized?

Now write down each and every time you are criticized by someone else. How'd that make you feel? Were you jumping up and down with excitement and happiness knowing that you screwed up and being told about it by someone else? Hint: Think about the Golden Rule!

Exercise #26 – Do you love yourself? Warts and all! Being at peace with yourself and loving who you ‘are’ is a basic requirement for allowing others to love you, and for you to love them.

If this is not something you find easy to do, then look for assistance from professionals who have the experience to guide you through the process. Just the same, make a list of your best attributes and then a list of your ‘not-so-hot’ assets.

Looking at the good side of the list, you should realize that you have some very valuable aspects of ‘who-you-are’ as a person. Look at the ‘not-so-hot’ side of the list.

Now is the time to decide to eliminate aspects of yourself that you don't like. It's time to replace them with the opposite values, beliefs and behaviors, adopting more of the kind that you want to be appreciated for as a person.

Exercise #27 – Are you alone? Loneliness is by far the unhappiest place anyone can be in life. If you are not alone, rejoice in your riches. Be grateful for those who surround you, appreciate you and love you.

Avoid risking the relationships you value most, by making sure you are not holding on to some misguided belief that there is anything of more value, than the people who are willing to share their life with you. Pulling oneself out of a deep, dark hole of loneliness is a task that few people can accomplish alone. If you are all alone and there is no one else, seek professional help. It worked for me and thousands like me... and it can work for you!

Exercise #28 – What do you want to pass onto others? Make a list! Not material items, but the wisdom from your life experiences. Who would be your beneficiaries?

My book, the very book you are reading has its origins from this question. When my grandkids were growing up and with many birthdays come and gone, I thought writing down my thoughts about life and living might be of value to my family, friends, or anyone else who thought I had something to offer. Leaving a legacy of knowledge to those that would learn from your life's experiences is a great gift you can leave for others.

Exercise #29 – Do you forgive and move on or do you hold a grudge? I bruise easily. I am very sensitive to criticism and for a quite some time I allowed others to control my happiness by embedding their criticisms into the mental programming of my very being. But I finally realized that many of the criticisms I held in my thinking were unfounded. Even more importantly, they came from people I really didn't care that much about. So I did a few things.

First, I made sure that in the future when I was criticized, that I would check to see if the criticism was coming from someone I respected. Did they have a valid point about something I did or how I behaved?

Next, regardless of who they were, I would immediately decide, whether it was meaningful criticism or not, and that I was not going to dwell on it for any more than a few minutes. I would not allow what someone else says about me to affect my happiness. If the criticism was constructive, I decided I would make a note and put into action whatever adjustments seemed necessary.

Today when a criticism comes from a 'Group One' individual I purge it from my memory, I don't catch it, and at a minimum I don't let it stick. The last thing I decided was to remember that after the emotion of the bruising settled down inside of me, I would forgive the person for their behavior and move on.

So here's the exercise. Record your feelings when you find yourself in a situation where others are taking mental swings at you and you feel criticized. Analyze your responses. Evaluate whatever was hurled your way. Think about it.

Does it have any constructive value? Do you care? Was the punch

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from someone you respect and trust? Can you purge it from your memory and move on? Can you forgive?

Exercise #30 – Listen to music. Make the music you listen to positive, the more positive the music the better! Let music be a form of therapy that will soothe your soul whenever you like. Take up music as a second language. Learn to play an instrument. Express yourself through the sounds of music. There are so many benefits to listening, enjoying and creating music.

Exercise #31 – How do you handle worry? Spending your time worrying about anything can be a real happiness killer. I realize that life can be a challenge, that there are many roadblocks, and obstacles to attaining inner serenity.

How you approach all of life's challenges will determine whether or not you are in control of your emotions, or some 'thing' or 'someone' is in control of your emotions. Make sure you take control.

Start a list of the things you seem to be constantly worrying about. Then, ask yourself, "Are these 'things' real or imagined?"

Regardless of whether or not they are real, are the things you worry about within your control? For example, consider the global economy. The economy may suck, but can YOU change it? Can you possibly expect to change what's happening in the entire world?

Part of being happy is about having an idea, the realization of who you are, and to know that you can function in the world around you. Worrying about imaginary outcomes, or about events that are not within your control is exactly how we get involved in the 'hole digging'. The deeper the hole you dig, the less likely it is that you can pull yourself out. It's always important to stop digging, and either pull yourself out of the hole or get professional help to guide you out.

Replace your thoughts of worry with thoughts about what you can control. Listen and read positive material that can help you to counterbalance the negativity that surrounds all of us and is difficult to avoid. Turn off 24/7 news channels. Make a decision that you will not let other people or events stand in your way of

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being positive and happy. Doing this will make a big difference and you will be happier.

You have to think about something, so it may as well be something that can bring you peace, joy and a love of life. So, be positive and worry as little as possible every day.

Exercise #32 – What perceptions can you change? Your belief in something is your reality about that ‘thing’. Whether or not your perception of something is true or not true is irrelevant to your perception and what you think. You simply think it, right or wrong. If you are not in the middle of an emergency situation, it’s okay to think about everything in a positive way.

If you think someone is your enemy, even though they would never cause you harm, then they are your enemy. If you think you can’t, regardless of your abilities to succeed, then you can’t and you are already beaten. Perceptions are what you believe and more importantly, the information you act upon! Act on the good things in life to create more good things to enjoy.

What perceptions are you living with each and every day? Which ones are right or wrong? How many are actually yours versus those programmed into you by other people? Are your perceptions providing you with the life you want for yourself? Are you happy?

Once again, a self-evaluation is the exercise and writing down what you perceive is the task. Doing this for better understanding of your self is an ongoing assignment that will probably never be completed.

Exercise #33 – Do you use any affirmations? Make a list of your favorite affirmations. The kind of phrases you reassure yourself with at times when life is challenging to you. Search the Internet and find new favorite quotes and affirmation statements to memorize and remember when times are tough. Focus on collecting new positive thoughts all the time that you can use to shoot down negative attacks by your occasional unhappy thinking patterns.

Exercise #34 – Laugh more! Take time to smile and laugh. Find time to laugh and smile more often.

Read funny stuff, watch a great comedy movie, or a humorous television series. Add more laughter into your life whenever possible. Feel the healing you experience every time you laugh, and notice that you usually feel much better afterwards.

Exercise #35 – What lies do you tell? Make a list! You don't have a list? What about the lies you tell yourself? Stop lying but especially to yourself! Break the habit of saying anything that isn't true. Lying makes us unhappy, and we all know it, too. Learn not to lie anymore, and you'll be a lot happier in life.

Exercise #36 – What are your expectations? Are your expectations balanced and realistic, or not? Think about it. Are your expectations filled with entitlements about things you believe you deserve? What about the expectations you have for others, and their expectations of you?

This next exercise just may be the life-long one of the bunch. The one you want to remember, and start on today, and right now would be really good for you.

Make a plan to talk to everyone you know and associate with regularly. Make a list. Then find the time to talk with each one of them to define what the ‘expectations’ are in your relationship with all of them. All of your relationships should be on your list, including your work associates, friends, and of course, your family members.

The task here is to fully understand what the people you know are looking for in their association or relationship with you.

The next task is to list your expectations for life and living! Your expectations include your wishes and dreams, along with everything in life you think is important. With your list created, now ask yourself, “How can I achieve these expectations?”

Make a plan for yourself, be realistic but also be certain about what you want. Read about other people who have already achieved what you want in your life. Create a visual scrapbook with pictures and other visual material that will allow you to focus on your desires. Use a bulletin board to save new entries you want to put into your scrapbook.

Develop a list of affirmations to enforce your belief that you can achieve whatever you put your mind to doing. Be a member of the

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20% club! Be in the group that gets more done than most people.

Exercise #37 – What causes you stress? At the end of the day, what was it that really stressed you out? Write it down. Describe what happened. Do this exercise for the next week. Then step back and ask yourself, “What created all that stress?”

Better question, “Who created the stress?” Who is in charge of your emotions? Are you handing them over to something or someone else or are you in charge?

Stress is not all bad. Good stress motivates us. But if the stress you experience makes you unhappy and is sucking up your life, then a new approach to stress is necessary. Sometimes, you just have to laugh things off and go your merry way. You just have to be a little more Teflon-coated and let other people’s actions or life events slide off you into the ethers of the universe.

Be responsible for ‘what you catch’! Here’s the big question, “How does stressing out make your situation any better?” If you don’t have a great answer, then why are you doing it?

Exercise #38 – What do you do to cope with you life’s ups and downs? I don’t care who you are -- life can be very challenging at times.

But the happy people are the ones who realize that in every dark cloud there is usually a silver lining. The truth is, even when you don’t recognize the good in something bad, it’s still there. You just missed it.

If you are in a dark place filled with horse manure, chances are there’s a pony in there somewhere waiting for you to find it! “Yea, it’s a pony!” See how that works? Some of the best lessons in life come from the adversity we survive. So when things are not going as well as you would like, remember the affirmation, “Everything happens for a good reason, even when it would appear no good reason is currently visible.”

Coping is nothing more than realizing that everything ‘will pass’. And coping is about remembering you believe in yourself and are capable of taking on all challenges.

Also realize that other people, some that you may or may not know, are waiting in the wings to assist you -- if you ask them for help! So what’s the exercise again?

- Create a new toolbox of coping skills.
- Talk to others about how they deal with life’s pressures.
- Read about others who have come through adversity.
- Make a list of positive affirmations that you can use to counterbalance negative thoughts that you may have when you’re feeling challenged by life.

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- Consider your 'blessings' and realize there are millions of people who can't imagine the life you live and would give almost anything to have it!
- Be grateful. Have an attitude of gratitude.

Exercise #39 – What ‘nice’ thing have you done recently?

Being nice doesn't require a lot of time, money, or effort. A brief smile, a friendly comment, a positive compliment, or a helping hand can move mountains in someone else's life. You may never know the amazing impact you have had upon another person who receives your kind gesture.

In the earlier part of my life, there were people who were nice to me. Given where I was mentally and physically at the time, they had no idea the positive impact their kind deeds had on me. I am positive that at times, kindness from other people saved my life.

We live busy lives. I get that. Some people may have more to give than other people. But if we were to do what we can do, think about the world we would help to create. Amazing... isn't it?

Here's the great news. Being nice has an immediate payback. It makes you happy!! The exercise is to be nice, as often as you possibly can for the rest of your life.

In the situations where you feel an immediate payback, take a moment to reflect and enjoy the feeling you get. Write it down for future reference. Reading through your journal and being reminded of your good deeds and the feelings you experienced, may be just the ticket for you anytime you need a lift in life!

Exercise #40 – How do you express your gratefulness? Most happy people believe there is something greater in the world, than the physical world they experience each and every day. Some may express their beliefs within an organized religion. Others may do it privately in their daily thoughts and actions. You have the choice to believe in whatever you want.

But if you do your research, you won't find many happy people who are not grateful for a higher order and the blessings in their life. On the other hand, you will probably discover that many of the most miserable people in the world are also atheists. Not all, but lots of them. As I said, it's your choice.

Here's the exercise, "What are you grateful for?" Make a list. Review it often. Revise it from time to time. Keep it where you know where to find it.

Being grateful for what you already have is a great way to take on life's challenges, staying positive, believing that 'this too shall pass', and living a happier life.

Exercise #41 – Track your activities. It's time to take some life measurements. Write down the six 'life segments' I listed in the chapter on balance:

1. Health/Body and Mind
2. Family
3. Spirituality
4. Work
5. Play/Social
6. Financial

You can have more segments if you wish. Create one page for each segment. Now make regular entries into your journal stating with how much time you've spent on improving your health, your relationships with your family, your version of spirituality, working, and finally socializing with others.

My list is in no particular order of importance.

This exercise is best accomplished just before you retire at night. Reflect on your day's activities. The log you keep can be as simple as a date and the percentage of time you devoted to each segment of your life. After a while, say in a month or so, evaluate your daily log.

Do you see a trend? Does your activity need some adjusting? If today was your last day here on earth, what would you have wanted to spend more time doing?

Keep up this assignment forever!

Exercise #42 – What are your visions for life? If you are not someone who finds it easy to write down what you want in life and plan for its attainment, then this assignment is not a simple one. It's time to take a course on it! Planning your future is important!

With the far-reaching ability of the Internet today, you should be able to find a thousand offerings on the subject of determining your vision for life, with a quick search or two. Happy people are the ones that love to achieve their dreams or visions. They crystallize their desires, focus on their target, and execute a strategy, no matter how long it takes, to make it a reality. Happy people are productive!

Exercise #43 – Do you need a little help? Just like Joe Cocker, the rock and roll star sang in his song, "I can get by with a little help from my friends."

Not everyone has the ability to climb out of the hole they find themselves in. Many times, people find themselves in a hole they didn't necessarily begin to dig themselves, but they are still in a deep hole and on their own. There's no question that I needed professional assistance to get my life back on a positive track.

Of course, I first had to want to improve my life. So, if you find yourself in a hole and you really want to get out, improve your chances for success by reaching out to others. You could be surprised by who comes to your aid when you begin looking for help.

Perhaps you can talk to other people that you know who seem to have made significant improvements in their life. Or, you could get involved in a group that specializes in assisting others who want to create a happier life. Make a decision to change. Then go do it!