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# engineering happiness



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#### Review

"In approach and in its creativity, Engineering Happiness is one of the best books on happiness in many a moon!"--"Spirituality & Practice"

# From the Inside Flap

"This book is for anyone seeking to become happier. It provides a thoughtful, reasoned approach to improving one's happiness based on fundamental scientific research and case review. The authors' unique approach clarifies how individuals can, in essence, decide to be happy. They provide practical steps that are easy to follow and should result in a happier you."—Ralph L. Keeney, Fuqua School of Business, Duke University

"This book contains wisdom from many sources: findings in the social sciences, systematic ways of organizing useful concepts, memorable anecdotes, insights from different cultures and, most of all, good common sense. Reading this illuminating book is a first good choice. A second is to follow its recommendations to be happier. Bravo!"—Robin Hogarth, author of Educating Intuition

# About the Author

Manel Baucells is Professor of Business and Economics at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona. Rakesh Sarin is Paine Professor of Management at the Anderson School of Management at the University of California, Los Angeles.

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Manel Baucells and Rakesh Sarin have been conducting ground-breaking research on happiness for more than a decade, and in this book they distill their provocative findings into a lively, accessible guide for a wide audience of readers. Integrating their own research with the latest thinking in the behavioral and social sciences—including management science, psychology, and economics—they offer a new approach to the puzzle of happiness. Woven throughout with wisdom from the world's religions and literatures, Engineering Happiness has something to offer everyone—regardless of background, profession, or aspiration—who wants to better understand, control, and attain a more joyful life.

- Shows how a few major principles can explain how happiness works and why it is so elusive
- Demonstrates how the essence of attaining happiness is choice
- Explores how to avoid happiness traps
- Tells how to recognize happiness triggers in everyday life

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Most helpful customer reviews

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

Happiness equals Reality minus Expectations

By Joe Butson

It is a shame more people haven't read/reviewed this book since it is so easy to read and can help a motivated person understand how to improve their day to day happiness with some simple techniques. I suppose you could select a more academic approach to understanding cognitive theory, but why? Actually, if even Daniel Kahneman, winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics, keeps his groundbreaking tour of the mind in "Thinking Fast and Slow" as simple as the authors of "Engineering Happiness", then the key to appreciating the book is its simplicity.

The first discussion of the "Laws Of Happiness" reveals social comparisons the brain automatically makes, such as what we have vs. our peers. From how much you earn, to what kind of car you drive to the test results you received in school, your brain makes comparisons and your happiness is fundamentally based on these comparisons. For instance, back in your school days, chances are you were really happy to get a B in Statistics until you found out all your friends received an A. You were immediately, and negatively, impacted by the news of your peers grades and that good feeling you experienced was consigned to the rubbish bin. But should you have done that? Of course not!

The Laws of Happiness presented in the book around satiation, expectations and framing are simple to understand, share with others and use every day. It is important to understand how you think about happiness, especially if you want to improve how happy you feel. I was initially curious about the book and I couldn't help thinking about disappointments in the past, some quite recent, and how unhappy they made me feel. Understanding the role of "basic" goods in my happiness and the rules of satiation gave me a new perspective on how to go about every day in a new way.

The aforementioned book, "Thinking Fast and Slow" is equally accessible and is a much more detailed description of cognitive theory, but still very practical. I read it after "Engineering Happiness" and it made me even more appreciative of the authors "Laws of Happiness" approach.

If you want another interesting insight into how our brains affect our perspectives, happiness and how it manages complexity, read "The Black Swan" by Nichalos Taleb. Review his theory on our propensity for simplistic reductions of the complex events we experience. His ideas on how we think influenced Kahneman ["Fast and Slow"], and I found these books to be formative, helpful and well worth the investment of time. So get happy ;-)

12 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

Happiness comes from choices each one of us can make

By Bhagwan Chowdhry

The authors are engineers and decision theorists (full disclosure: one of the authors is my colleague at UCLA Anderson School of Management). I was aware of some of their work in the area already. But I was blown away by how many insights this book contains. What makes this book really special is the specificity of their advice - the advice you can implement almost immediately and observe for yourself its validity and its effects in your life. Chapter 9 on Basic Goods alone is worth many times the price of this book. Even simple

advice on how to structure your vacation is simple and easy to implement without making any change in what you spend on your vacation. And all the insights are based on a synthesis of years of careful research by many experts. Buy this book, read it, and start following their suggestions today. You will be happy you made this choice.

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Fantastic life advice I really appreciated and needed!

By rlm

I really enjoyed reading this. In the daily struggle that is life- I needed and got logical, evidence based (love that) helpful advice that I remind myself about when ever there is a difficult moment or hard decision to make.

The authors provided a great example on every page, but the 2 pieces of advice that I personally needed to apply on a daily basis were- stick with your original decision and avoid quick outbursts of anger.

I am not doing this justice, but in a nutshell:

Regarding the advice to stick with your original decision- Remind yourself that it is easy to forget why you originally decided to do things a certain way, and we often become susceptible to a new point of view at the last minute, etc. you need to remember that you made your original decision for good reasons. Your original decision may not always be the best one, but if you stick with it, you can more clearly determine your future needs and hone your own life code.

I am prone to quick internal anger outbursts. This sometimes results in saying things that are damaging to the people around me and therefore myself and my happiness. Their advice is that anger quickly dissipates and that studies show giving into anger often results in increased anger. This is a great nugget to keep in mind daily when the going gets tough- you will feel better soon and don't let your quick anger ruin the good long term relationships you have sought to build.

I highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoys a logical argument and wants to navigate life with increased happiness!

See all 9 customer reviews...

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