

# HAPPINESS in HARD TIMES



**ANDREW MATTHEWS**

Author of the million copy bestseller **FOLLOW YOUR HEART**

# **HAPPINESS in HARD TIMES**

**written and illustrated by Andrew Matthews**



**HAY HOUSE**

Australia • Canada • Hong Kong • India  
South Africa • United Kingdom • United States

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## **To the millions of readers of our books all over the world...**

I don't know where to begin or what to say, or how to express our gratitude for your loyalty, generosity and daily emails, because a mere *thank you* doesn't seem enough.

Andrew and I are overwhelmed and ever so grateful to you for keeping in touch with us. I want you to know that every email that you send us is read and appreciated. Thank you from the depths of our hearts.

To my dear friend Michael Rakuson – former director of Tower Books – thank you for encouraging me to produce *Happiness in Hard Times*. In your quiet, gentle manner, you persuaded me to create a book appropriate for the current times. Bless you, Michael.

To all of you who responded with your stories when I asked for help, I thank you with all my heart. You replied so graciously and promptly. You sent us thousands of emails. Each of your stories continues to inspire Andrew and me. I admire your strength and courage. I congratulate you on deciding to move forward, seeking happiness in spite of your challenges. This is the book you all helped to write, for everyday people going through everyday challenges.

To Annie Backhaus, Adrian Elmer, Alfred Engel, Mark Kenway, Geoff McClure, Rod Mudgway, Dianne Mulcahy, Moya Mulvay, Cherry Parker, Jenny Truran – to Alison, Craig, Greg, Hong, Joe, Carmen, Frank and Maria, thank you for sharing your experiences.

You bared your souls so courageously. You opened your hearts each time we spoke. You held nothing back. You shared your stories in the hope that your stories would inspire one other person to feel better. To all of you, I salute you!!

And to you the reader...this is the book for everyday people going through everyday challenges. This book is for you. This is a book for your friends, your family, your colleagues, your neighbours. This is a book for people you meet on your travels and for people you know who are going through troubled times.

*Happiness in Hard Times* is also a book for those of us who haven't been through hard times. It puts your life into perspective. It will get you back on track. It will make you realise that a better and brighter future is waiting – and remind you how to get there.

*Happiness in Hard Times* will inspire so, so many readers.

Your journey to peace and happiness has already begun. I wish you all life's very best

*Julie*

Julie M Matthews





# Acceptance

On a bicycle ride around the world, my friend Aden stopped awhile in a West African village to help build a bakery. He said:

*It took us several months to build the bakery. We made the bricks from crushed anthills. Every day the village children came to help. None of the kids had shoes but one happy little guy always wore one sock – no shoes, just a sock. He was about 10 years old. I called him One Sock.*



*Eventually my curiosity got the better of me. I said, “One Sock, tell me about this sock you always wear.”*

*He said proudly, “My Mum washes it every night. I wear it every day.”*

*I said, “Yes, but why do you wear one?”*

*He seemed surprised by my silly question, and then he smiled broadly and said, “Because I only have one!”*

Perhaps you are broke right now. Perhaps you have lost your job or lost a loved one. Maybe you are sick. You say, “I just don’t know what to do.”

Here is the first thing to do – and the only thing to do. You accept where you are.

To turn things around you first make peace with your situation. Forget about blame, forget about guilt, forget the “what ifs.” Progress depends on acceptance. Acceptance doesn’t mean, “I want to stay here.” Acceptance means: “This is where I am – and now I move on to what I want.”

Instead of, “My husband is a gorilla and I’m stuck with him,” it is more like, “My husband is a gorilla. What a perfect learning experience! I now realise I deserve better treatment.”

Instead of, “I’ve lost all my money. If only I hadn’t invested everything with Honest Eddie’s Equity Fund,” you say, “I am where I am. I made it once, I’ll make it again.”

Imagine you are overweight and you want to become thin. If you say:

- I’m not fat, or
- it’s my mother’s fault that I am fat, or
- my sister is *fatter*.

What happens? You stay fat.

But there’s another option:

- *I am fat. I like myself whether or not I’m fat. I now choose to lose 50 kilos.*

You accept where you are. Now you can move forward.

Acceptance isn’t *giving up*. Acceptance is recognition that, “This is a part of my journey.” Very often it means, “Right now *I have no idea* why this had to be a part of my journey but I embrace it anyway.”

### **In a Nutshell**

Acceptance is power.



## Quick Quiz:

Imagine that in the last week you:

- tattooed your backside
- thumped your neighbour
- got married
- robbed a bank
- donated a kidney
- had botox
- joined a monastery
- devoured a huge pizza in three minutes *and*
- leaped off a very high bridge.

Okay, so you had a busy week.

Question: What do each of the above have in common? Answer: These are all things that you might do to feel happier. Really! In fact, it's a trick question because I could have put *anything* on the list. The motivation behind *everything* you do – and the motivation behind *everything everybody* does – is to feel better.

Don't take my word for it. Ask the psychologists or read Plato, Aristotle and Sigmund Freud. There is a lot of debate about *the meaning of life*. There is broad agreement about *why we do what we do* – we want to be happy and stay happy.



You devour an entire pizza in three minutes. Your thought is, “This feels good. I want to be happy now.” You hire a personal trainer and eat lettuce for six months. Your aim is, “I want to like my butt – and this will make me happier.” You quit alcohol. Why? “If I do this I will feel better.” Whether you donate to Red Cross or belt your neighbour, your motive is, “If I do this I will feel better.”

Mary says, “I donate to charity because I want to help people.” Sure, Mary, but would you donate if it made you miserable? Fred says, “I punched my neighbour because he came at me with a spade!” Correct, Fred. You made a hasty decision, “To be happier in the very short term I need to break Larry’s nose before he whacks me with a gardening tool.”

Different people do *different things* but the objective remains the same – *if I do this I will feel better*.

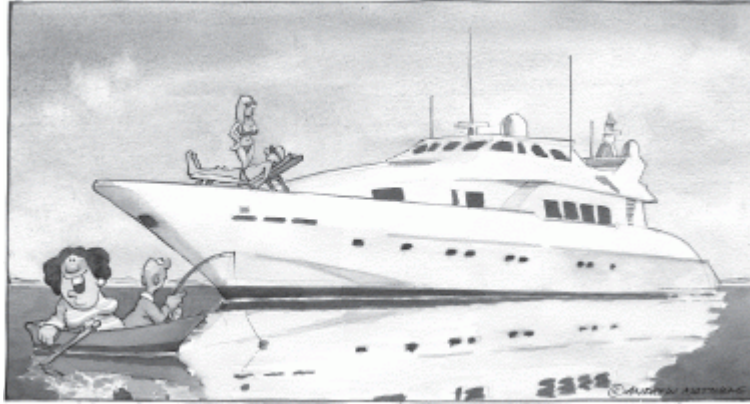
You study accountancy for four years to please your Dad. You say, “I did it to make *him* happy.” No you didn’t. You did it because you feel better *doing what he wants* than you would feel *doing what you want*.

Whether you sacrifice for your kids, whether you marry or divorce, whether you get a tattoo or join the priesthood, the ultimate goal is the same. Even if you leap off a very high bridge, it is an attempt to feel better – “I’ll be happier dead than alive.”

## **Is it Selfish to Pursue Happiness?**

Here’s what’s crazy. We all chase happiness – it’s automatic – but some people worry that it is selfish. So they feel guilty – and that makes them unhappy!

It’s not selfish to seek happiness. IT IS SELFISH TO BE MISERABLE! Happy people are more thoughtful and more considerate. It’s *unhappy people* who are preoccupied with *themselves*. Happy people make better friends, better lovers and better employees.



***“They’re not happy. They just **THINK** they’re happy.”***

Studies prove that if you are happy you are more likely to:

- volunteer at a soup kitchen
- carry a stranger’s groceries or
- loan people money.

If you are miserable you are more likely to:

- complain about your ulcer
- steal from your boss or
- kick a dog.

So for the sake of everyone you know – and for the benefit of all the dogs in your neighbourhood – let’s get one thing straight: the *happier* you become, the better off we *all* will be!

Hard times can mean *no money*. Hard times can mean *no friends, no job and no hope*. Hope is what we need most. The good news is that it is possible for you to climb out of the deepest hole. If you are unhappy with your life right now, you may look back in a few months and see how these difficult times helped to prepare you for something better.

Most of us start out life believing:

- mistakes are bad
- the happiest people have the easiest lives
- the smartest people are the most successful