

The Secret to Happiness with Robert Mack

All right Thank you so much for tuning in to another episode of Un Therapeutic today I'm super excited We have a guest called Robert Mack and I I just cannot wait to dive into uh this this topic of happiness Uh He is an expert in this field and I'm gonna let him share uh a lot about just his research his his work in this space Um But this is a topic that affects us all I mean all of us on our day to day lives say hey we want to be happy right But what does it really take to be happy Uh So Robert tell tell tell everybody a little bit about yourself you know how you got involved in this this line of work and yeah just take it away First of all I appreciate you have me and uh invite me to conversation Uh Nick is just um really fantastic to like connect with like minded folks So I wanted to say that first Um Yeah so I work as a Ivy League educated positive psychology expert I'm a celebrity happiness coach a published author and uh TV personality and producer Um But really I'm just a guy that wants to be happy like everybody else and I really struggled with that when I was young you know from the age of about six or seven years old I remember just being stressed out and anxious Um I felt so sort of alienated I had an incredible family loving family but I just was deeply depressed and I just always thought I'd grow out of it you know you think you know you make some friends Yeah exactly I'll get good grade Maybe I'll eventually make some money and maybe um you know have a girlfriend or whatever And uh a lot of those things happen most of those things happened Um I didn't become a professional basketball player like I wanted but everything else don't worry it's all good We're doing ok nonetheless Um despite you know doing pretty well academically and athletically relation socially even financially I just continued to feel worse and worse and I got to a place where I was so depressed and I was experiencing suicidal ideation so often that I get um I decided to do some research and I looked at ways to kill myself and I just I was gonna my wrist So you know I went in the kitchen I got a steak knife and I dug into my uh wrist and um you know what's so strange is despite nothing on the outside changing again I had a pretty good life I just didn't feel great for having this great life Um when I rammed that knife into my wrist I just felt this sort of inexplicable peace and joy and uh well being and love and warmth just wash over me So I decided at the time I was gonna postpone the suicide for like 10 minutes It wasn't very long and like you know Yeah exactly And uh even that I wasn't fully committed to but I postponed it for 10 minutes and in that 10

minutes I started doing a different kind of research Guys were looking at what happiness was and unhappiness what depression was And then slowly but surely as I applied as much of what I was learning as possible I found myself digging my way out of this deep deep dark depressed hole that I sort of dug for myself And now I look back and it's been a few decades and uh boy I've learned so much and I'm so grateful for that So I'm really just in town sharing it Yeah Absolutely So you you know I definitely wanna learn about just everything that you've discovered in the research But let's let's kind of go back to that space In retrospect Is there anything that comes to mind that may have contributed to that depression Yeah So many things you know um really one thing ultimately but it was you know sort of perfectionism I was an empath you know I had an incredibly loving supportive family But there was a lot of stress like so many families Uh I think um part of it is I maybe it was wired high for anxiety My nervous system was always felt like it was wired pretty high Um But ultimately at the end of the day what it really was was an obsessive compulsive thinking and over analytical mind that just made a problem out of everything and really good at solving problems was also really good at finding problems and creating problems So at the end of the game is really over Yes exactly That's exactly right And so that was ultimately what it was for me And I think ultimately for most people if you dive deep enough you'll find that um there's often overthinking over analysis um that leads or lends itself to depression and helplessness and even suicidal Yeah You know the perfectionism I know so many people struggle with um especially people who are high achievers right It's again it's a gift and a curse right Because of the perfectionism you operate with a certain level of excellence but at the same time you you still feel inadequate even though you're doing exceptionally well you just nailed it That's absolutely right Nothing is ever quite good enough And uh even if you I remember so many times even getting a perfect exam or perfect scoring exam and still thinking you know I guess the number 17 though I didn't really know it you know you find the problem Exactly Exactly Or you think well next time I'm definitely not gonna be able to get it perfect again although I'm gonna try for it So you know it's interesting um often you know professionals can find themselves better off objectively So sometimes they do better off in the world like you said um because they strive for excellence and they don't stop until they're really you know crushing it in some space but they feel worse off subjectively and because they feel worse off on the inside that can get in the way of even better greater performance Uh you can

do that with athletes you see that with artists you can do it with entrepreneurs and business people um with all people So yeah perfectionism uh looks like a good thing on the surface often But when you dig deep enough you find out very quickly that it gets in the way way of actually better performance Yeah it does it really does So so take us on this journey So you have this life altering experience and I I'm I'm so thankful that you waited 10 minutes to kind of think I am too You have this conversation otherwise Yeah seriously So if anybody who's out there just give yourself some time think about it right Uh But take us from this journey right So you have this life altering experience and then kind of what happens next Yeah So I started um to read I'd always been a reader and even before this experience a suicidal experience you know I had read some books like the uh psychotics was a book I remember reading and um how to you know win friends and influence people and things like that you know And so um I was sort of like returning to lots of this content and then I was being a little bit more specific and intentional around the kinds of stuff I was reading So in the beginning I found um that a lot of like the religious stuff that I was reading was not helpful And uh I wasn't quite ready for the scientific stuff but I was interested in some of the self help stuff and a lot of the new age stuff So I remember pretty early on in this journey finding like Abraham Hicks you know Abraham Hicks is extraordinarily helpful for me you know because it was just like a reminder that you deserve to feel good You can feel good Your birthright is feeling good and his happiness And um I leaned into that So I used to listen and wear out those CD si used to read all the books and it would lead me to one author and another author and another author And I was just becoming obsessed with reading and listening to these experts and I was applying as much of it as humanly possible And I was tracking it so I could a journal and the things that worked I tracked and the things that didn't I just like go off and I forgot and um you know later that actually became happiness from the inside out the first book I wrote Um but yeah it was mostly a journey of like two steps forward and then it felt like 13 or 300 steps backwards It was in fits and starts that it happened And I felt like I wasn't making any progress for a very very long time I felt like I was recreating the will Um Yeah you know with the learning about happiness you know because sometimes we become an expert but then on the practical side in terms of how it looks in our own lives there's a gap Did you experience any of that Like I know what it takes to be happy but still personally I'm struggling with the feeling of happiness uh spoken like someone who's

experienced some of this on Nick uh for sure you do and you have um Yes that's absolutely right You know on the surface and from the outside looking in you expect happiness to sort of look and feel a certain way And I experienced a lot of cognitive dissonance around that Like I should be smiling I should be happy I should be excited and fantastic And that wasn't my experience at all I knew everything to know about happiness Right Exactly Exactly Exactly So there was a huge gap for a very long time and the gap seemed so big that I never thought I could possibly Bridget you know Um but I also I sort of made a commitment that either I was going to live blissfully or not at all So that kind of single minded focus was extraordinarily helpful Um I just focused on that to the exclusion of almost everything else And I started making some relatively significant and drastic changes in my life as well So I said well this corporate job that pays so well that I hate so much uh isn't making me happier So I'm gonna let that go You know I was living in a cold city I knew I wanted to be in a warm city I moved Uh So I started making these decisions that I wasn't crystal clear about Uh but I was just doing my best to sort of approximate or guess what would be helpful based on what I had read and based on what was feeling on the inside but surely step by step things began to change And at some point I hit a tipping point and all of a sudden I woke up one day and I realized wow I haven't thought about killing myself for like a day or two big shift for me Do you believe that most people you know when you said you you made some steps like I'm staying in a cold city I need to move to a warm city You know I got this great job Let me change that Do you think most people know what those decisions are in their life I think they know one at least one of them So what I it's such a great question there when I was struggling with all this I remember being very frustrated that I didn't know what my purpose was and I was trying to figure out what to do with you know as far as a life purpose I didn't know what I wanted to do or should do professionally I didn't know what to do in terms of my relationships things like that you know But the one thing I knew for sure is I love warm weather and I love sunshine man I love beaches and oceans I always dream I'll live in Miami one day That would just be amazing just to live in Miami I just knew this one thing but I kept questioning that because I was like well how's that going to solve all these other problems And the truth is I couldn't see it from there and it didn't seem like it would solve any of those problems But it finally got an insight that was kind of like well if you hope or expect to receive more clarity or insight on what you should do next you should at least act on the

one piece of data that you know for sure Right now And for me that was just moving to Miami Right All this fails Go to Miami Exactly And what's interesting is just like I think that Martin Luther King Junior quote you don't need to see the whole staircase You just need to see the next step And that was the next step for me So I took it and then when I was in Miami the next step lit up which was a career in a career in entertainment for a while So I just sort of stumbled upon you know modeling and acting career for like 10 years and and it's just weird how things sort of begin to unfold organically when you take that first step OK That's awesome I look look I gotta ask you Uh So the biggest difference from the modeling and acting career versus the corporate career what's what's the number one biggest difference for you Oh it was the freedom and the flexibility you know and the fun I was much more fun I was so much more free and I said much more of a flexible schedule Uh It was that piece Um It was also that I was getting to connect with people in a way that I felt was more personal and authentic I had a real difficult time being authentic in a corporate atmosphere It just didn't feel like me at all Um You know on the other hand not having a consistent paycheck was super scary anxiety provoking a little stressful you know you look up on the 13th and nothing hit your account Exactly Exactly And then I have to say that uh the people overall were probably a lot better looking as well in the modern acting world you know sometimes not as beautiful on the inside however um right that going on But yeah it was um really a quite dramatic shift in my life and I really enjoyed it so much Now look most of the time I didn't have enough money to really even buy meals and things like that I mean it was really tough you know Uh but I loved my life so much more and I realized I could be so much happier with so much less than I thought I needed I yeah that's I think that ended up itself Um I spent some time in Argentina and I realized that I came I I would I stayed there for six months and I remember having like all these suitcases and I'm like you know I literally could have brought a small luggage and stayed for six months you know the pressure we put on all this extra You you I just love that that share right there Nick That's exactly right Like when I moved to Miami to your point I had two beautiful German cars and corporate job I'm spending a lot of money and I got to Miami and then the corporate job went away and um you know I couldn't find a job for a while you know in between that the corporate job and the entertainment stuff I really couldn't find anything And I traded the cars in essentially for a scooter Ok Not even a best but I guess a brand name was best But I had the cheap cheap version and uh I was so much happier I had a

little studio apartment hardly any furniture in there but I was so much happier And I realized that clearly you don't need a lot to be happy That's it Speaking let let's go Let's dive a little bit more into happiness Um At a baseline how would you define happiness Because when I think about happiness I think about it in of it being something that's fluid Um Is there a universal standard for happiness Yeah So I would say our experience or our awareness of happiness is fluid and therefore we feel it as a fluid or free flowing sort of experience that sometimes up sometimes down sometimes more sometimes less uh happiness I think of is that thoughtless wordless faceless formless peaceful aliveness that exists within all of us at all times at all times It's always there It's your true nature It's my true nature it's our true nature and sometimes you're aware of it Sometimes you're not the only thing that really ever gets in the way of it is thoughts and the associated feelings uh that we have And so happiness is never out of reach You're it's always closer to you than your own hands and feet near to you than your own breathing And it's just a question of it occasionally being obscured by thoughts and feelings And so in the same way that the sun always shines just as brightly as ever in the sky but occasionally clouds obscure veil that sunshine and your experience of that sunshine happiness exists within you in this invincible summer within the eternal sunshine of the spotless mind So it always exists there not only within you but as you so I call happiness really a peaceful aliveness that exists um within behind beyond above and below all thoughts feelings sensations per perceptions and experiences Um So that's the way I define it a little differently Um And people would define it No but that's good though I wanna go back You said something about you know our thoughts what do you what is the biggest in your opinion What is the biggest obstacle for people kind of being happy you know in your experience and your research and your work with tons of people Like what have you seen gets in the way What what gets in the way most for people when it comes to them actually being happy Yeah just a belief just a belief that ever gets in the way Um an erroneous belief And um usually the beliefs sound like I say the most destructive or challenging thoughts and beliefs are the ones that say um that you are a mind or you are a body or you are your job or you are your relationships And essentially they all sound like you can't be happy without me Like you can't be happy without this thing This this will make you happy That's always everything and everybody in the world unintentionally um And unwittingly makes a promise that it cannot keep which is that I will make you happy whatever it is the money the health um the job uh the reputation

um all of those things and that's ultimately all understandable but not true So um really the primary thought is just an identification with the mind and the body If you think that you are a mind and you are a body instead of the fact that you have a mind but you're not a mind that you have a body but you're not a body that you're something that's aware of the mind and body that recognition itself already is happiness Um And it's already the awareness of happiness But most of us don't spend enough time in meditation or prayer or self exploration or in introspection or reading wise teachers and authors to really come around to not just knowing that intellectually as you mentioned before but having it slipped down into your heart So that's something you experience So it's exponential So it's existential really in a way so that you feel it viscerally Um that's an important piece Yeah You know so many times in in in in the counseling space I hear people come in and say well they're making me unhappy Right It's like I I'll I'll work with couples and I'm unhappy because of him and he and they'll say well I'm unhappy because of him or her or whatever right But it's always the other person that's kind of at the core in their mind as to why they're unhappy You nailed it I mean so um yeah any time we blame anybody or anything for our unhappiness or for the way we feel in general we render ourselves powerless to do anything about it If if they're responsible for the problem they must also be responsible for the solution So I'm all about empowering people um by reminding people that nobody and nothing can feel make you feel anything without your own consent Um So you're providing and always you have the power within you to choose what you think if you think how you feel Um That doesn't mean you always have um power immediately So sometimes thoughts just occur to you and then you can have a feeling and you can be true All those things are true But whether or not you feed and fuel and entertain those thoughts and feelings it's up to you You have choice around that Lots of choice and lots of power around that And so it's important to remember that no matter how valid you are and you're all valid we're all valid in what we think and feel Yeah of course that person cut you off in traffic Yeah of course that person stole money from you You know I don't wanna put you off you know it's just you perfectly fine like welcome to being you know human and welcome back to the human race again Um And you know just because it's valid to feel what you feel and just because you're legitimately feeling it doesn't do anything other than ruin your pre present life And it also begins to mess with your future life as well Right So it makes you feel worse and trust me most people that cut you off in traffic they're not thinking about you again

Meanwhile you're sitting there drinking that poison hoping that it kills them Kind of Exactly You go home like I still think about the guy in the blue truck Right Yeah Yeah And then as you know all of a sudden we've got all these cognitive biases built into the brain and along between selective attention selective perception confirmation bias behavior confirmation negativity bias you know all these biases and common diss sources that exist in the brain play into that And next thing you know you feel like everybody's cutting you off on traffic everything in advantage of you know like I wish someone would cut me off Exactly Exactly Just like exactly 100% Now you're cutting people off Right Exactly There you go Which is a great point too Which is that um you know that which we judge other others for we often have done to them or we've done to ourselves we've done to ourselves Made me mad Or you disappointed me No not true You disappoint yourself You made yourself angry about the thoughts you had about that person or about that thing Yeah You know in your book you talk about unconditional happiness and I I just I I love just just that the simplicity and unconditional happiness because when we think about happiness in a traditional sense we think conditional right Like things that make me happy or this relationship that makes me happy You talk about eight principles What are some of those principles Yeah So I'm a big fan of lazy intelligence That's what I call it these days Um At the time I think it was calling it the path of least um energy management Uh It's really the path of least resistance but the idea is how can you we all be way lazier but way smarter in our approach to life and in particular our approach to happiness So in other words instead of routing your happiness or how you feel through countless other people and things and activities can you go directly to the source for it Right So the most profitable business is the one that spends the least amount of money to make the most amount of money The most profitable person the happiest person is the one who spends the least amount of time energy and effort to get the most happiness Right So we're all these like little happiness industries joy industries running around and we don't think about it that way but ultimately whatever it is we want to achieve accomplish or a choir we only want to achieve accomplish and acquire it because we think we'll feel better for having it So instead of rounding it through all these middle people and middle things and middle activities go straight to the source for it and that source is always within you Of course Yeah I love it You know when you think about just your travels right And obviously you know here domestically um we see happiness and then we go to other places and we're like wow they seem so happy with so

less to your point when you kind of put them all together is there one trait that stands out more than any other trait in terms of people who are happy I would say that it's an internal locus of control where it is right So um the one thing we know um about well I mean we know lots of things about happy people So break it down a little So um the one thing we know for sure about happy people is that they know and they live out this truth that success doesn't lead to happiness So they don't seek their happiness in success And that doesn't mean they're not successful because at the same time that that happy people don't chase success and don't seek their happiness in success their happiness and the fact that they're happy without the success leads to them being even more successful than their unhappy counterparts So in other words they live 6 to 7 years longer they make \$600 700,000 dollars more on average of of course their entire lifetime than their unhappy peers They get married earlier stay married longer and happier and all the relationships even if they're not married Right Right Whether they're married or not So in other words success doesn't lead to happiness Happiness does lead to success and happy people intuitively know that even if they don't know the research around it there's a very strong good sense within them that happiness is up to them and it's their choice And so they actively actually practice leaning into more constructive more supportive thoughts and stories about everything that's happening to to to them or you know happening in their life So yeah I would say that there's uh that that for sure they don't believe or think that happiness is in the future and in the world they know it's in the present and it's within themselves Yeah And and this you you kind of already answered it but it's almost the reverse the people I mean what's the number one thing among unhappy people Right Is it the exact opposite in terms of them kind of putting their happiness on these this future you know when I get here or or when this happens or if this person like these contingency clauses almost you're absolutely right I mean I think Einstein um said it in a very complimentary way Uh two point said one of the most important questions maybe the most important question you can ever ask yourself is do you believe that you live in a friendly universe or not part of it Right For lots of us we think that the world and other people are against us You know they have it out for us that we can't trust them And folks that are happy generally don't think of it that way They don't necessarily leave their doors unlocked and hand out their credit cards and social security numbers to everybody right But but they at the same time they say hey it doesn't matter too much what the other people people are up to I'm gonna stay in my own lane do my

own thing and focus on my own happiness And then interestingly enough we also know based on the research happy people end up being more charitable and kinder and more generous They donate more time and money and energy and blood to other people or social causes But also when they're doing that it makes them happier So yeah So it's essentially interesting because happy people focus on their own happiness but not in a way that they become self absorbed or self consumed It actually allows them to step outside themselves and share that happiness or whatever else they have with other people So yeah you can feel um I think at the end of the day it's clear with my experience at least that any time I'm outsourcing my happiness to anybody or anything else I'm gonna find myself very unhappy Like other people are terribly unreliable Sources of peace love and happiness if you haven't noticed I have Yeah Yeah Yeah Yeah For anyone that let's just say is suffering with depression or just kind of in this low place in life or just wanting to be happy right You know they they're doing all these things What's what's one piece of final advice uh for anyone who really wants to be happy who really wants to kind of take themselves out of this dark place What what advice do you have for them Yeah Um I just want to compliment and reflect back to you Nick That's such a phenomenal question And I would even say that's another way of answering that previous question to have These people are deeply dedicated and committed to being happy above all else And they know that's the real prize Everything else is a consolation prize right Yeah So um for the folks that are really dedicated and committed to being happy and so the first thing is um remind yourself over and over again that that is your top priority that happiness is your top goal that everything and everyone is ultimately for the purpose of happiness to remember that you won't find yourself outsourcing it or routing it through other people places and things love it too And last but not least where can people find you Yeah So folks can find me uh Rob Mac You can find me at my website at coach Rob mac dot com You can also find me on all social media platforms including probably most notably Instagram at Rob Mac M A C K official And you can find both of my books Happiness from the Inside out and love from the inside out everywhere Great books are sold including Amazon Barnes and Noble Yes And we will put links to those books uh in the in the show notes and then also on our social media as well Hey Robert I appreciate you joining us today Um Listen I look I I'm learning I'm like hey I need to be more happy and you're also a teacher that there's no question about that My friend I appreciate you so much And I mean this like it's conversations like these and

it's people like you that um prevented me essentially encourage me to not kill myself right It's your it's your teachings it's these conversations and it's the work that you do So Thank you so much for that and thank you so much for having me Awesome Thank you so much guys for tuning in to another episode of UN therapeutic