

How to Work Toward True Happiness - With Robert Mack

Frustration depression isolation These are feelings that have rippled across the country since COVID-19 hit so close to home In many cases we need to rediscover positivity when times get tough here to help us is Robert Mac coach speaker author also called the celebrity happiness coach Good to meet you Nice to meet you Is it like a switch that can be turned on and off happiness positivity You know it's a good way of putting absolutely you know we're born with a genetic predisposition for happiness or unhappiness but it's totally changeable and malleable Unlike hair color or eye color you can change your happiness level So absolutely It's something you can do a lot about Some people thrive when times are tough You know they pick themselves up from their bootstraps they face their challenges head on while others want to just crawl under a rock and be depressed and never see the light of day So so why do others take that more pessimistic approach to life and how do they change that Why should they change that Yeah such a great question You know we know that post traumatic stress disorder gets most of the attention these days when somebody experiences trauma or adversity they often experience post traumatic stress disorder But what people don't know is that actually post traumatic growth is a much more common and consistent outcome For most of us even those of us who don't consider ourselves very resilient And lots of what we learned you know through the science of positive psychology is that you can learn to be more optimistic It's an optimistic explanatory style You basically practice telling a better feeling story based in truth about everything and everybody in your life including yourself And so it's just something you begin practicing you know you want it to be honest you want it to be true but you also want to begin to vet for a better feeling story right there So it's just something you practice I it's like meditation you know meditation is something that you have to practice It's not something that you're just gonna pick up But what is applied positive psychology Yeah In short it's the study of uh in science of happiness you know So most psychology historically like business as usual psychology was really focused on what's wrong with people So applied positive psychology is really the study in science of what's right with people and how to make it even sort of better how to make your life even better And so it's a science that grew out of the University of Pennsylvania It's only about 20 years old

Interesting Why do you think it took so much time to get to that place where we're now kind of focusing on happiness I think in just pop culture in general if you're not appearing happy you don't get attention from people you don't get the kind of fame you always have to kind of put that happy foot forward Yes it's so true You know we have a negativity bias that's actually built into the brain And so it takes about five positive experiences for every one negative experience in order to compensate or make up for all of that negative sort of aspect that you feel as a result of simply one negative review one negative criticism one negative experience And so this negativity bias that's built into the brain means that our brain is really design designed or built to help us survive not necessarily make us happy And so it's something we do have to work at And so generally and you know sort of you see it consistently in society you see it out there in the world in politics The news mostly the problem gets all of our attention because based in cave man and cave woman days it was critical to focus your time energy and attention on solving problems So you stayed alive Oh That's really interesting All I can say though is that when times were tough for me whenever I heard that song Happy Come on the radio it drove me nuts It's like ok you may be but I'm not what's wrong here Stop And I just changed the channel I went through a period like that I mean that's why I became a happiness coach because I was severely depressed and suicidal for over two decades And you know and I'm like the happiness guy now but it was ironic that I would come sort of to this happiness career through the long sort of scenic path of being so depressed and suicidal That's unbelievable I I truly I I can't even believe that And you talked about practice and I want to hear more about how you broke through all of that and what people can do to practice to be have a happier mindset So we're going to do that after the break Don't go anywhere Welcome back We've been chatting with Robert Mack He's a coach speaker and author who's also called the celebrity happiness coach And in a time when everyone's suffering to some extent or another whether it's isolation depression COVID-19 has had a terrible effect on a lot of people's psyches there It's hard to feel that happiness that you once experienced in your life And you're wondering am I ever going to see the light at the end of the tunnel And before we went to break we were talking about the song Happy And if you're going through a tough time that's the last thing you want to hear it Doesn't really cheer you up You feel almost envious that you can't be as happy as the person singing that song Um You revealed that you went through a very difficult time before you found your happiness Can you talk a

bit more about that and how what that journey was like Absolutely I feel like I was born a very unhappy like depressed kid I don't know I came out of the womb and I felt like I was unhappy I remember being happy unhappy at like age 456 years old And I always thought I would grow out of it but that didn't exactly happen It actually got worse over the years You know I thought I'll do well athletically do well academically maybe I'll even have a girlfriend one day and I'll you know feel better as a result of all that But that's not what happened I became more depressed so depressed that I eventually began to research ways to kill myself And I decided I was going to slit my wrist So I went to the kitchen I got a kitchen knife I rammed it into my wrist You can't really see on the screen probably But I still have the test marks on my wrist and something really strange and unpredictable happened in that moment for no good reason Without anything objectively changing I felt subjectively on the inside I felt different I felt a level of peace and love and even joy that I'd never experienced before It was wild to me And so in that moment I decided to postpone the suicide for like an hour Now that sounds almost laughable because it's such a short period of time But for me it felt like a very tall order It felt like forever And quite frankly I wasn't even committed to the whole hour So in any case I began doing some research about unhappiness depression suicide and basically how to find my way out of the depths of despair and very very slowly and gradually over the years through that research And by applying a lot of the principles I eventually found my way to increasing levels of happiness Can you remember what the first step was that you took Yeah I basically looked into science because I was really struggling with my faith I was struggling with trust and all those things And so I looked into the science and said what does science say about living a happier life And some of the things I found right away was that well first of all I wasn't alone I think that's the most important thing for people to know is that you're not alone In fact we have more unhappiness in the world today than we did you know in 1950 1970 In fact we have 10 times the level of of uh uh u polar depression and bipolar depression So you're not alone What other tools Would you give people that you would teach people to start incorporating whether it's it's your inner dialogue or an action that they should take to increase positivity and happiness in their life Yeah Great question Yeah First I'd say self-care is the most critical So you wanna make sure you're getting enough sleep that you're eating you know decent food and then most importantly you're getting some exercise It sounds like such a cliché But exercise has the psychological emotional equivalent like impact

on your mood as taking an antidepressant or anti anxiety drug So it's that powerful The second thing I'd say is you know if you can get out into nature it's extraordinarily helpful particularly taking mindfulness breaks where you're just going for a walk very helpful The other thing I'd say is and you spoke to it really beautifully like which is you know beginning to focus on what's going right in your life life even if it seems really really small And if you can do more of that you know count your blessings focus on gratitude It's extraordinarily helpful The other thing I'd say is that positive thinking is very helpful although it can be very challenging And so sometimes if you can't be positive try to be quiet you know you can just simply be quiet So as much as we want to think through our way through our lives or worry our way through our lives or plan or plot and script everything in our lives Sometimes the best thing you can do is simply take a breath from the stomach And as you breathe in and out through the nose simply try to enjoy that breath like it's the last breath you'll ever take on the planet You never know it could be And so if you can do that more consistently throughout the day especially when it's easy Within about 21 to 66 days based on neuroscience you will actually create a habit that's much more automatic and effortless And you'll find it enjoyable too That's that's wonderful And Robert you said that practice makes perfect So when you practice these things it becomes a part of you it becomes second nature and that it's it's like meditation really You just you're not going to be an expert at it in the beginning Just know that life can be long and and you need to to just keep after it never give up Yeah it's it's it's true Life is both short and long especially if you're unhappy And so with the micro meditation exercise that I just mentioned the most important thing to do is to try not to get good at it If you try to get good at it that's the one thing that will prevent you getting good at it So just focus on enjoying it Perfect advice Robert I want to thank you so much for sharing your story with us Thank you so much for having me We're back in two minutes