The 100 Simple Secrets of Happy People
David Niven

The Big Idea

After years of conducting interviews and studying people, David Niven translates the conclusion of his research in his book “The 100 Simple Secrets of Happy People.” Niven shares 100 simple pieces of advice on how people can find happiness and stay happy.

“The 100 Simple Secrets of Happy People” sheds light to the differences between happy and unhappy people and provides useful practical tips on what one can do to enjoy life more. This also points out that life is fun-- all you have to do is look and see the bright side.

100 Secrets of Happy People

1. Your Life Has Purpose and Meaning
   There is a reason for your existence. You are part of the world you move in. You are not an accident.

2. Use a Strategy for Happiness
   Many things, good or bad, happen to both happy and unhappy people. Happy people just let themselves happy while unhappy people continue to upset themselves.

3. You Don’t Have to Win Every Time
   Don’t be ultracompetitive. You don’t always need to be a winner to be happy.

4. Your Goals Should Be Aligned with One Another
   Goals are like the tires in your car. They must be pointed in the same direction or else your life may not work at all.

5. Choose Your Comparisons Wisely
   Compare yourselves with those that make you feel comfortable enough with what you have—not less, not more.

6. Cultivate Friendships
   Make friends and continue to expand your friendship base.

7. Turn Off the TV
   Television is a creamy filling that distracts you from the substance of your lives.

8. Accept Yourself—Unconditionally
   Love yourself for who you are, what you can or cannot do, and what you have or do not have.

9. Remember Where You Came From
   Think about and celebrate your ethnicity.
10. Limit Yourself to Thinking About One Subject as You Lie Down to Sleep
Practice focusing on only one thing before you sleep. Learn to rid yourself of crowded thoughts before you hit the sack.

11. Friendship Beats Money
Rather than asking people about their money in the bank, ask them about their friends. You’ll know if they are happy.

12. Have Realistic Expectations
As Niven puts it, “People who are happy don’t get everything they want, but they want most of what they get.”

13. Be Open to New Ideas
Always strive to learn new things and adapt to changes. Remember, the world will never stop changing.

14. Share with Others How Important They Are to You
Let others know that you value your relationship with them. Tell them how much you care.

15. If You’re Not Sure, Guess Positively
Happy people always look at the bright side. In times when you are not sure, always go for the positive.

16. Believe in Yourself
Believe that you can do it. Otherwise, you will not really be able to function.

17. Don’t Believe in Yourself Too Much
Never think that you are far greater than others. Be open to learning from other people. Don’t assume you know everything.

18. Don’t Face Your Problems Alone
Share your problems. It helps you gain insights and come up with better and wiser solutions.

19. Age Is Not to Be Feared
As the author puts it, “Older people are as happy as younger people. While they must make accommodations for age, seniors often report serene satisfaction with their life.”

20. Develop a Household Routine
Plan and set up a reasonable schedule to do your house chores.

21. Don’t Be Overprotective
Don’t spend your time worrying over your loved ones. Learn to let them live their lives.

Sit down and appreciate what you already have. Chances are you already have what you have long been looking for.

23. Don’t Let Your Religious Beliefs Fade
Keep your faith. Trust your religion.

24. Do What You Say You Are Going to Do
Walk the talk. Honor your words. Stay focused and committed to what you say you will do.

25. Don’t Be Aggressive with Your Friends and Family
Be gentle when treating your loved ones no matter how right you think you are.
26. Root for the Home Team
Be part of your community by showing support to your community’s sports team.

27. Don't Confuse Stuff with Success
Always remember what really matters in your life. You are neither a better nor worse person for the kind of car you drive or the size of your home.

28. Every Relationship Is Different
Don’t let past relationships affect your present or future relationships. Always remember, each relationship is unique.

29. Don't Think "What If"
Let go of the past and stop wasting your time thinking what could have been. Instead strive for a bright future.

30. Volunteer
Give time to help a local charity, community drives, and other organizations for a good cause.

31. If You Can't Reach Your Goals, Your Goals Will Hurt You
Let your goals evolve with your life circumstances. Update your goals as you change priorities.

32. Exercise
Feel healthier and better about yourself. Exercise. This helps you enjoy life more.

33. Little Things Have Big Meanings
As the author puts it, “Tiny things—the tone of your voice, the exact words you use as you go through otherwise ordinary events—communicate volumes.”

34. It's Not What Happened, It's How You Think About What Happened
It is how you see the events in your life that determines your happiness—and not the event itself.

35. Develop Some Common Interests with Loved Ones
Create deeper bond with your loved ones by sharing a task or an interest together.

36. Laugh
Don’t waste your time studying or analyzing a humor. Just laugh and enjoy it.

37. Don’t Let Your Entire Life Hinge on One Element
Don’t focus on just one aspect of your life. Take joy from other areas of your life.

38. Share of Yourself
Avoid holding things inside you. Sharing your feelings, thoughts, and hopes with friends will make you feel a lot better.

39. Busy Is Better Than Bored
Always find something to do. It feels better to have something to work on than have nothing to do at all.

40. Satisfaction Is Relative
Your satisfaction is based on the scale you have created for yourself.

41. Learn to Use a Computer
As the author puts it, “Whether they are eight or ninety-eight, people who use computers experience the wonders of technology and of the world.”
42. Try to Think Less About the People and Things That Bother You
Focus on the things that brings you joy instead of the things or people that upset you.

43. Keep Your Family Close
Even if you are miles away from other members of your family, strive to maintain bond and contact with them. Keep in touch.

44. Eat Some Fruit Every Day
According to Niven, “Fruit eaters feel good about what they eat, are less interested in eating junk food, and ultimately feel better about themselves.”

45. Enjoy What You Have
Be grateful for what you have. Value what you are blessed with and don’t compare them with what others have.

46. Think in Concrete Terms
Be sure to be able to measure your progress so you will know if things are improving or not.

47. Be Socially Supportive
Reach out to others. Get out of your comfort zone and spend time making others feel good.

48. Don’t Blame Yourself
There are things that you really cannot control. So don’t put yourself down when things don’t go as expected. It is not your fault.

49. Be a Peacemaker
Keep peace with yourself and others. And promote this to your family and friends.

50. Cherish Animals
Animals have so much to teach about love. The closer you get to animals, the more joy you get.

51. Make Your Work a Calling
If you see your work as a job, it becomes dragging. If you see it as a calling, it becomes fulfilling,

52. Never Trade Your Morals for Your Goals
Never sacrifice what you believe in just to attain your goals. This is what makes you less of a person.

53. Don’t Pretend to Ignore Things Your Loved Ones Do That Bother You
If there are things your loved ones do that bother you, tell it to them in the nicest way possible.

54. Get a Good Night’s Sleep
A full night’s rest is fuel for the following day. Rested people feel they work better and are more comfortable when the day is over.

55. Buy What You Like
Don’t deny yourself of the things that you want and need. At the same time, don’t accumulate possessions just for the sake of having much.

56. Accomplish Something Every Day
No matter how small the effort or the task, always make sure that you have accomplished something each day.
57. Be Flexible
Accept that there are always differences between people. So be flexible.

58. Events Are Temporary
Everything shall come to pass. When bad things happen, always remember that these are not permanent. Just give yourself some time.

59. Be Your Own Fan
Be ready to pick yourself up when you are feeling down. Reinforce yourself at all times.

60. Join a Group
Be involved with an organization or a group that practices your interest. This makes you feel less lonely and more comfortable with others.

61. Be Positive
Be an optimist. See that bright side in everything at all times.

62. There Will Be an End, but You Can Be Prepared
As Niven puts it, “Don’t wait until the end of your life to figure out what you wished you had done. Think of those things now and do them.”

63. How We See the World Is More Important Than How the World Is
According to Niven, “Scientists, philosophers, and kings could offer a never-ending debate on the question. But there is no real grade for the world apart from the one you assign it.”

64. Keep a Pen and Paper Handy
Keep track of the ideas that pass you by at the most unexpected times. A pen and paper will help you do this.

65. Help the Next Person Who Needs Some Minor Assistance
Take time to pay attention to people who needs help. Don’t have second thoughts in giving them a hand. Helping is a win-win gesture.

66. Take Care Not to Harshly Criticize Family and Friends
Avoid fixing your family and friends. Love them for what they are. If you have to correct them, say it in a constructive way.

67. Some People Like the Big Picture, and Others Like the Details
You can think of the totality of the things you have accomplished, or you can think of the momentary memorable episodes of your life. Either way, adopt a focus that makes you feel happier and more satisfied.

68. Do Things You Are Good At
Take on responsibilities that you excel in. Focus on the things that you do best and hone further your skills.

69. Go Visit Your Neighbor
Having a good chat with your neighbor is a good way to make you feel good about yourself and others.

70. Smile
Your smile makes other people happy, which in turn makes you happy.

71. Don’t Accept Television’s Picture of the World
When you watch the television, always separate what you see from what you know and what you believe in. Don’t be greatly affected by the pictures you see.
72. You Always Have a Choice
Remember, you always have a choice to do whatever you think is important or right for you.

73. Be Agreeable
Make it easy for people to deal with you. Don’t be angry or disruptive merely because you can.

74. Don’t Ignore One Part of Your Life
Always make sure that all pieces of your life fall into the right mood. This makes your life easier and happier in general.

75. Listen to Music
Listening to music is one of the easiest and best forms of relaxations.

76. Let Your Goals Guide You
When you have chosen reasonable, meaningful, and aligned goals, pursue them with all your heart.

77. Use Your Job Positively
Appreciate all that your job gives you, and it will help you appreciate what really matters.

78. Don’t Forget to Have Fun
Always take time to be silly, enjoy, and laugh every day of your life.

79. Believe in Ultimate Justice
Always take comfort in the notion that no matter how many problems and conflict there are in the world, still good prevails.

80. Reminisce
Recall happy moments of the past, this gives you power to bring happiness to your future.

81. Be Conscientious
Finish what you start. Care about what you are doing, and do it right.

82. Don’t Dwell on Unwinnable Conflicts
Move on and forget the past. Don’t dwell too much on unwinnable problems and focus instead on the things you can change.

83. Enjoy the Ordinary
Have fun in everything you do, even if it is the most mundane task. Find great joy in doing the ordinary.

84. Focus Not on the World’s Tragedies, but on the World’s Hope
The world has gone through many devastating events. Despite this, focus on the hope the world offers. Think of the world’s potential.

85. Get a Hobby
Hobbies are a steady source of interest, providing two essential ingredients in life: consistency and fun.

86. Envying Other People’s Relationships Is Pointless
Do not replicate what someone else has. The key to being happy is to focus on your own relationship and exert effort to cultivate it.

87. Give Yourself Time to Adapt to Change
Don’t expect to ease your self in new circumstances. Give yourself time to adjust. This makes adapting to future changes easier for you.
88. Focus on What Really Matters to You
Exert your energy into things that you value. Don’t waste your time on people or circumstances that do not really matter to you.

89. Realize that Complete Satisfaction Does Not Exist
There is no such thing as complete satisfaction. Don’t try to be perfect. Remember that everything can be improved.

90. Surround Yourself with Pleasant Aromas
As Niven suggests, “Here’s a simple way to make yourself feel better. Air out your house, and add some fragrant flowers. Make your home smell nice, and you will feel the effects.”

91. Don’t Let Others Set Your Goals
Don’t choose your goals according to what other people think. Instead, think about what is meaningful to you. Then set your goals from these things.

92. You Are a Person, Not a Stereotype
According to Niven, “People are happiest when they allow their individual personality to come out, not when they conform to popular images. Men who believe they must act tough and women who believe they must act soft are boxed in to a set of expectations that have nothing to do with who they are.”

93. Know What Makes You Happy and Sad
Sometimes people do not know the reason for being unhappy. It pays to study your emotions and understand what makes you feel happy or sad. This helps you know how you can adapt to or change the circumstances to brighten up your day.

94. Keep Reading
Exercise your brain. Learn new things. Travel and explore. Read.

95. We Must Feel Needed
As the author suggests, “Think of those who rely on your friendship, caring, guidance, help. You probably don't realize how important you are to the people in your life.”

96. Say "So What"
When you find somebody else who is richer, smarter, prettier—say “so what.” Remember, your life is shaped by the relationships you keep and not the by the acquaintances that you see rarely.

97. Have a Purpose
Without purpose, nothing will matter. Give everything meaning. Have a direction in life. This makes living a lot more meaningful and fun.

98. You Have Not Finished the Best Part of Your Life
There is reason to enjoy life as long as you live. Be it your teenage years or your senior years, you have the capacity to make it your best days.

99. Money Does Not Buy Happiness
It is not the amount of money you have that makes you happy. It is the way you view your life and see yourself. For all you know, the richest people in the world are not the happiest at all.

100. What Does It All Mean? You Decide
Remember, “Your future—how you feel about it, yourself, and everything else—follows from the decisions you make, the priorities you develop, and the perspective you see things through.”