

Zen and the Art of Happiness

Chris Prentiss

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A timeless work about the Zen of happiness—the art of happiness, the way of happiness, the inner game of happiness. The Zen of doing anything is doing it with a particular state of mind that brings the experience of enlightenment—and through that experience, happiness. In *Zen and the Art of Happiness*, you will learn how to think and feel so that what you think and feel creates happiness and vibrancy in your life rather than gloominess or depression. Cutting-edge science and spirituality tell us that what we believe, think, and feel actually determine the makeup of our body at the cellular level. We all have a personal philosophy that influences our thoughts and feelings. It deals with what we have come to believe about the world, its people and its events—about how those events affect us and how we affect them. Whatever your personal philosophy is, it is completely responsible for your state of happiness and well-being because it determines how you respond to events that come into your life. How can we change what we believe when our experience has convinced us otherwise? By creating a new experience. The gentle wisdom of *Zen and the Art of Happiness* will show you how to invite those magnificent experiences into your life and create a philosophy that will sustain you through anything. Editorial Reviews Happiness can be a fickle thing. It can be a snug, magnetic garment, attracting more and more of the same, or it can be an ill-fitting gossamer veil flitting here and there. It all depends on one's psychology, karma, and attitude. This wonderful little book shows that we can overcome the obstacles to happiness. It's for those who want and need change—in expectations, habits, and outlook. Chris Prentiss teaches us how, with a *joie de vivre* that obviously comes from experience. Use his practical wisdom to get in the habit of being happy—every day. Put this book by your bedside and the Zen of happiness can be yours. About The Author: About The Author: Chri

Zen and the Art of Happiness Details


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From Reader Review *Zen and the Art of Happiness* for online ebook

Annelie says

Love this little book, it was a gift from a dear friend <3

Nat says

I didn't care for this book much overall, although the good news is that it is very short so it wasn't a big time investment, and there were a few ideas I liked. A newer friend suggested it and, although we have a few things strongly in common, I learned that love of this book was not one of those things. :-) Another friend said that hearing about it reminded her of the book *The Secret*, and that was my thought as well (though I haven't read *The Secret* and am basing that only on discussions I've had about that book.)

The main premise is that in order to be happy you just make yourself believe that EVERYTHING that happens to you is a great thing, and that whatever happens is the "best possible" thing that can happen to you in your life. This is based on a sub-premise that the universe is perfect, and watching out for you, and will never allow anything that is not in your best interest. He only spends one paragraph referencing the most horrible things that can happen (infant death, murders, rapes, etc.) and suggests that a person "not begin" with these things. The implication is that at some point one could GET to the point of being able to believe that the rape and murder of the child really WAS the best possible thing that could EVER happen to you! Because that is what the universe provided, and the universe is NEVER wrong! Now, it may very well be that if you are able to think like that, you may be happier. I would be happier also if I could convince myself that there is a monkey living in the trunk of my car who will hand me a thousand dollars every time I open the trunk. Sadly, though, I am unable to believe that. And it seems to me that the universe has provided countless examples of its lack of concern for human life. It may never do anything that hurts the universe. But it can be quite unkind to victims of floods, famine and violence.

I think this philosophy is easier to believe if you live in a very rich country like the USA, you have your basic needs met, and you just feel slightly unfilled about not having achieved everything you quite desired in your life. But, I'm not sure this book would be very helpful to a victim of a hideous crime, a terrible accident, or ongoing poverty. Are these folks all pessimists (and am I?) for not buying this?

He talks about the connection between stress and physical health, and made some excellent points there. And he told a great story about having his brand new car dented, and not becoming upset with the other driver. And I thought that was a great approach to handling the situation. A dent really can't cause you sadness, if you think about it the right way. But, he also insists that while on the ground follow a very dramatic head injury with a massive rock, his very first thought (while unable to breath or move) was that it was the best possible thing that could have happened to him. (Does anybody think that is even possible, given the human impulse to fight for life, which even suicidal people have when helpless?) He goes on to say that without that attitude, his recovery would not have been as swift and other issues may have resulted. But, I ask..why would these other "bad" things be bad, if it's really true that EVERYTHING that happens is always for our benefit? In fact, why behave in any way whatsoever that might be an attempted to improve your future? If everything that happens is always for you benefit, I see no reason to do much of anything to try to make life better. That's the part I found fairly dangerous, along with the notion that every unhappy person is basically too

blame for their own misery, no matter the circumstance.

I wonder, should it even be a goal to feel happy all the time no matter what happens? Is this even a healthy response? There is no doubt that sometimes we look back on experiences we had hated, and found that they resulted in positive things down the road. And there is little doubt that positive thinking can go a long way toward lifting one's spirits, and helping a person to focus on possibilities yet ahead in life. But this book takes it a few steps too far, in my view. On the other hand, if it works for you...I say, be happy and enjoy.

Lynnette says

While this book seemed simplistic and was definitely a quick read, it touched upon the basic truth that achieving happiness can be just that... simple to attain with the right mindset.

I do think it got a little off track from time to time, especially with some plugs for other books and his rehabilitation center. But that aside, I would recommend this book to anyone struggling with the search for happiness.

Hans says

I suppose the real power of this book is if it can really help the reader or not. For some it may help a lot, others may find it too simplistic. If you are looking for an in-depth book on Zen then this is not your book.

My reasons for liking this book are mainly personal. It aligns well with my personal beliefs and philosophies so it did help me. Many of the lessons of this book are things I had already heard of but needed reminding. For example how crappy or good life is, is a matter of perception. Events in life hold no meaning, in and of themselves, only the meaning and significance we attach to them. We control the meaning we attach to events, we can look at an event and think "oh this is the worst thing ever, my life sucks" or "man this was a difficult experience but it taught me so much that it was very beneficial". When I lived in Brazil I saw abject poverty but I was always surprised by how happy most of the poor were. It astonished me, because based on my "western" indoctrinated way of thinking life should only be happy based on what we have or don't have. According to that line of thinking poor people should be the most miserable people on the planet, but many of them are not. Why? Because poverty in and of itself doesn't cause unhappiness the meaning we attach to it does. Tell a poor person how sad and pathetic you think his life is and tell him he is a victim of a cruel world and you may take from him his one power to transcend his circumstances, namely his own positive perceptions of his life.

This is type of thinking is the difference to living a happy and fulfilling or a negative and depressing one. It is how we can be the master's of our own universe.

A.F. says

One of the quotes from this book sums up the book for me:

"You should not be surprised at whatever you see or hear...If you are ready to accept things as they are, you will receive them as old friends." Shunryu Suzuki

This book contained a number of things that I've previously heard or read but that I found of value in being reminded. The author states that what one has after reading the book is intellectual knowledge but, it's value is based on putting that knowledge into practice. Focus on what is occurring in the present--the positives and the less then positive events--and ask yourself, "what good will come from this?" I got alot from this book and plan on keeping it handy to go back to frequently.

Nishant Mishra says

This book is good in bits and pieces. It could have been a great one minus marketing of his rehab(?) /de-addiction center and other books he has written.

The author could add more from the great Tao and Zen schools of thought. The book is very short and one can finish it in a day. It holds onto the premise of the 'Law of Attraction'. Useful for those who are new to new age 'happiness-hype'. Some of the concepts and suggestions of Chris Prentiss are hard to swallow and even harder to apply in life.

How am I supposed to believe that "Everything that happens to me is the best possible thing that can happen to me"?

The book is the brainchild of the 'personal philosophy' of Chris Prentiss and his attempt at explaining the hypothesis of bodybrain and receptors fail miserably for lack of evidence. I give it a 3-star for it doesn't entirely disappoint me. It advocates developing insight, simplicity and a contented life which I value the most.

Halsey Vandenberg says

This book has changed my life. I've recommended it to everyone from my closest friends and family to complete strangers because if you are ready to begin your search for truth, this book is the place to start. The simplicity of its values is powerful, and the information and knowledge in it is so practically helpful to just being happy! Zen and the Art of Happiness succeeds in showing the reader that in every single situation, the best thing one can do is be happy about whatever is happening to or around them! "Everything that happens to you is the best possible thing that could be happening to you at that time." If you keep to the principles talked about by Chris Prentiss, you will undoubtedly lead a happier, more fulfilling life. This book is a perfect starting point for preparing oneself to follow their own path of truth.

Angela says

I really like this little jewel of wisdom because it is concise. All that I've heard, discovered, and practiced in my life was reiterated by the author and his points of view. Throughout the narrative there are great quotes from fearless sages, monks, swamis, and wise figures of history and culture. This book is very encouraging,

not only because you can read it in a day, but because of the language and the flow of its content. Some reviewers have problems with the author mentioning his treatment program and centers in California, but I thought it only added to the book. They weren't annoying or in abundance. They are there for a reason and that is to make points and to stress those points. He's making a point by reliving the events. One of the points is on the events in life being the Universe's way of communicating. The events retold emphasize that point and make the reading experience all the more valuable. His examples were apt. I did not see them as pitches. All in all the most I got out of this book was that some people believe in God, Allah, Buddha, polytheism, and this book professes the religion of the Universe - that overarching, metaphysical energy that we all feel but label as God - the soul, etc. This is my belief - I am a Universalist - if there is such a thing. The instincts I have and the connection to every little speck of dirt, moon rise, or stray hair is all important and catches my attention. All the details add to the experiencing of events and that's this book in a nutshell. It has a greater consciousness that most books of this nature do not. It tells it like it is in many different ways but always comes around to the same point, no matter how differently stated. I really like this book.

Sarath Thampi says

What could be termed as a good reading experience? While reading sometimes we are offered a new idea, a new thought or perspective we never have noticed before, but somehow we know that it was there all along. That is in my opinion what a good reading experience offers.

In this book, Chris Prentiss sells us only one idea- "Every event that happens to us is absolutely the best possible event that could occur". And that my friends, is the art of happiness.

In this relatively short book, we see author telling us stories and steps that helps us understand this idea better. As you read through the book, you kinda wish that the book is a little bit more long so that we can understand this idea more better. But I think, the author has left the rest to introspection.

Coming back to the earlier question, after reading this book, there was a lot of room for thought and I think this book can be safely categorized into 'a good reading experience'. So if any one else get hold of this book, go for it...

Melissa says

The author does have some good points in the book that make you reflect a little, but over all the book is a let down. The shameless marketing of his other books and treatment center was a little annoying and not very insightful, along with the recommendation to just be happy, because once you're happy you'll continue to be happy. Well, duh - if it were that easy, wouldn't everyone do it?

Stacia says

I loved this little book. Maybe the ideas aren't anything necessarily new, but they came at a time when I was open to internalizing them. I plan to keep this book handy for frequent re-reading.

11/28/12 - I just finished reading this for the 3rd time. If I was stranded on an island with only one book, this would be the one I want.

1/3/2015 - I've now read this 4 times. I can't believe it's been over 2 years since my last read. It was a great way to start off the year.

1/2/2016 - I guess it's an annual tradition for now to read this at the beginning of the year. It's always interesting to see what stands out on a reread, depending on where I find myself in life.

1/2/2017 - Annual read completed. I'm consuming a lot of content about mindfulness lately and this book fits in nicely.

1/3/2018 - This year's read is complete. I'm improving at applying the principles to many situations, but some of the big stuff (chronic illness, political disaster) are still hard to see as the "best possible thing that could happen."

Viet Hung Nguyen says

Một cuốn sách hay dành cho các tín đồ duy tích c?c. Cuốn sách này c?ng minh ho? rõ nguyên lý "Less for more". Dù là một cuốn sách ng?n, nó ?ã nói ???c r?t nhi?u ?i?u sâu s?c, mang tính th?c t?nh v? tri?t lý s?ng.

Xin chia s? ?ây các trích d?n mà tôi tâm ??c.

- S? hoàn h?o có ? kh?p n?i n?u ta bi?t nh?n ra nó - Okakura Kakuzo

- Có một con ???ng duy nh?t ??a b?n ??n h?nh phúc lâu dài. Con ???ng ó ch? ??n gi?n là: B?n hãy th?y mình h?nh phúc.

- Thi?n ch? ??n gi?n là tr?ng thái nh?t tâm ? ?ây và bây gi? - Alan Watts

- Thi?n là một hành trình khám phá, là một l?i s?ng và b?n thân nó không thu?c v? một tôn giáo hay một truy?n th?ng tâm linh nào c?. Thi?n liên quan ??n vi?c tr?i nghi?m cu?c s?ng trong cái ? ?ây và bây gi? và trong vi?c xoá b? s? phân bi?t nh? nguyên gi?a "tôi" và "anh", gi?a "ch? th?" và "khách th?", gi?a các ho?t ??ng tâm linh và nh?ng ho?t ??ng bình th?ng h?ng ngày. Thi?n liên quan ??n vi?c nhìn vào b?n ch?t th?t s? c?a mình, s?ng tr?c ti?p v?i nó và bi?u ??t nó.

- Thi?n ch? ??n thu?n giúp ta t?nh giác và tr? nên có nh?n th?c ??y ?? . Thi?n không d?y cho chúng ta. Thi?n ch? rõ cho chúng ta th?y - D.T. Suzuki

- Thi?n trong khi làm vi?c m?t vi?c gì ó là làm vi?c ó v?i m?t s? t?p trung trí tu? ??c bi?t, v?i s? bình th?n và trong sáng c?a tâm th?c, nó mang l?i cho chúng ta s? tr?i nghi?m giác ng? và qua s? tr?i nghi?m ó ta có ???c h?nh phúc.

- ?? ??t ???c kinh nghi?m giác ng?, các v? thi?n s? ph?i thi?n ??nh nhi?u n?m, th?m chí vài ch?c n?m. Thi?n sinh ph?i t?p trung vào nh?ng công án trong nhi?u n?m tr?i. Nh?ng ng??i ?ã ??t ???c m?c ích c?a mình ch?ng th?c r?ng kinh nghi?m giác ng? ó ch? ??n trong m?t thoáng b?t ng? và ch? t?n t?i trong giây lát nh?ng nó có uy l?c làm thay ??i con ng??i h? mãi mãi.

- Giác ng? là g?n g?i thân m?t v?i t?t c? m?i th? - Thi?n s? ??o Nguyên

- Ta suy ngh? nh? th? nào thì con ng??i c?a chúng ta nh? th? ?y. Toàn b? con ng??i c?a chúng ta d?a trên nh?ng t? t??ng c?a chúng ta, ???c hình thành do nh?ng t? t??ng c?a chúng ta - Kinh Pháp Cú

- Chúng ta là tác gi? c?a m?i giây phút s?p ??n.

- Chúng ta là nh?ng sinh v?t có quy?n l?c; chúng ta t?o ra t??ng lai c?a chúng ta b?ng nh?ng t? t??ng và hành ??ng c?a chúng ta.

- B?n tin nh? th? nào thì m?i chuy?n s? x?y ra v?i b?n nh? th? ?y.

- Ngày nào c?ng là m?t ngày t?t ??p c? - Vân Môn
- M?i chuy?n ??u ??n ?úng vào th?i ?i?m thích h?p.
- N?u b?n th?c s? bi?t cách s?ng thì có gì t?t h?n là b?t ??u m?t ngày m?i b?ng m?t n? c??i. M?m c??i s? giúp b?n gi?i quy?t nh?ng vi?c trong ngày c?a b?n v?i s? hi?n hoà và c?m thông. Hãy m?m c??i tr?n v?n v?i con ng??i mình - Thi?n s? Thích Nh?t H?nh
- N?u b?n không tìm th?y chân lý ngay n?i b?n ?ang ? thì b?n mong tìm chân lý ? ?âu ch?? - Thi?n s? ??o Nguyên
- C? h?nh phúc và kh? ?au ??u không n?m trong chính b?n thân s? vi?c.
- M?i m?t hành ??ng ??u t?o ra m?t h?i ?ng và h?i ?ng này hoàn toàn phù h?p v?i hành ??ng ?ó.
- Hãy suy ngh? v?i toàn thân - Taisen Deshimaru
- ?i?u cao quý nh?t là ?i?u ph?c ???c tâm c?a chính mình - Atisha
- Hãy quan h? v?i nh?ng ng??i ??ng hành x?ng ?áng cho dù vi?c ?ó làm cho b?n kh? s? hay cô ??n.
- Nhìn th?u su?t ???c b?n ch?t là c?a s? m? ra giác ng? - Hakuun Yasutani Roshi
- Cách duy nh?t ?? làm cho s? thay ??i có ý ngh?a là lao t?i theo nó, ?i cùng v?i nó và nh?y múa v?i nó - Alan Watts
- Hãy trôi theo cùng nh?ng s? vi?c có th? x?y ra và hãy ?? tâm mình t? do. Hãy v?ng vàng b?ng cách ch?p nh?n nh?ng vi?c mình ?ang làm. ?ó là ?i?u c? b?n nh?t - Trang T?
- ? Vi?n ?ông, có m?t l?i suy ngh? xem h?nh phúc là bi?t ???c nh?ng gì mình không nh?t thi?t ph?i có.
- Tìm ???c s? ?i?m t?nh hoàn toàn gi?a nh?ng chuy?n ??i thay là tìm ???c Ni?t bàn - Shunryu Suzuki
- Khi b?n có th? tr?m t?nh ? gi?a n?i xao ??ng, ?ây là tr?ng thái th?t s? c?a thiên nhiên. Khi b?n có th? h?nh phúc gi?a lúc gian kh? thì b?n th?y ???c ti?m n?ng th?t s? c?a tâm r?i ?ó - Huachu Daoren
- Nh?ng ng??i có t?m nhìn h?n ch? th??ng s? h?i và do d?. H? càng v?i v? thì h? càng ?i ch?m h?n - T? T?ng Xán
- S? vi?c là s? vi?c, tình hu?ng là tình hu?ng. M?i chuy?n tu? thu?c vào cách b?n ph?n ?ng nh? th? nào tr??c m?t s? vi?c hay m?t tình hu?ng. B?n c?n ph?i ch?n cách ph?n ?ng.
- ?i?u khó kh?n nh?t trong vi?c lo?i tr? stress là ph?i ki?m soát ???c trí t??ng t??ng c?a mình ?? có th? hình dung ra m?t h?u qu? t?t ??p cho m?t s? vi?c hay tình hu?ng thay vì m?t h?u qu? t?i t?.
- ?i?u gì ?ã t?o cho ta n?i bu?n phi?n và ni?m vui s??ng? Chính chúng ta t?o ra t?t c? b?ng trí t??ng t??ng c?a chúng ta.
- ??ng ?u?i theo quá kh?. ??ng ?ánh m?t chính mình trong t??ng lai. Quá kh? không còn n?a. T??ng lai thì ch?a ??n. Ch? có hi?n t?i, tu? quán chính là ?ây. Bi?t v?y nên tu t?p; không ??ng không lay chuy?n - Kinh Nh?t D? Hi?n Gi?
- Thi?n ??nh là m?t k? thu?t gi? cho ta không phân tâm, t?p trung vào giây phút hi?n t?i.
- Vi?c th?c hành thi?n là nh?m t?o cho chúng ta thói quen nhìn b?n thân cu?c s?ng m?t cách t?p trung và cân b?ng - quan sát ch? không ph?i là ph?n ?ng l?i, c??ng l?i s? thôi thúc phán xét nh?ng s? vi?c nh? là nh?ng s? vi?c không t?t.
- Thi?n ??nh không ph?i là ch?y tr?n cu?c ??i, mà là s? chu?n b? ?? th?c s? s?ng trong cu?c ??i - Thi?n s? Thích Nh?t H?nh
- B?n hãy nh? r?ng Thi?n có ngh?a là làm b?t c? vi?c gì và làm m?i vi?c v?i m?t s? t?p trung và t?nh giác ??c bi?t c?a tâm.

Jess says

This book had many great philosophies tucked away inside it - many of them from ancient Chinese philosophers - that rang true with my beliefs and ideals on life, which is why I think I enjoyed it as much as I did. The main philosophy that the author focuses on is *"everything that happens to me is the best possible"*

thing that can happen to me", and reiterates throughout the book that believing this statement is the most important step towards achieving happiness, despite the hardships, the losses, the good times, and the bad.

The idea is a simple one, but at the same time requires incredible perseverance and a strong mind-set. I believe though, that it truly is possible to be happy simply by changing the way you think, and by believing that everything that happens to you was meant to happen, and that in the end, it was for the best. I can believe this because it has happened to me on several occasions - I have learned a hard lesson, I have become a better person, or I experienced something, or met someone, I would not otherwise have done if that seemingly 'bad' event had not occurred.

I also have a problem with thinking negatively, over-thinking situations, and stressing and worrying. This book helps you to deal with those problems, and I'm going to try hard to overcome them by adopting these philosophies into my life.

Some of my favourite philosophies and quotes stated in the book are these:

"All that we are is the result of what we have thought. It is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts." - The Dhammapada.

"There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so" - William Shakespear.

"Everything comes at the appointed time."

"The more you engage in any type of emotion or behaviour, the greater your desire for it will become."

"The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge with it, move with it, join the dance." - Alan Watts.

"Flow with whatever may happen and let your mind be free: Stay centered by accepting whatever you are doing. This is the ultimate." - Chuang Tzu.

It's a very helpful little book with some important lessons, that like anything in life really worth doing, will take time and practice and determination to achieve them. Definitely worth the read.

Brennan says

This is a difficult book to rate. Depending on your take, the ideas of this book either 1) unlock the secrets of the universe; or 2) are so simple they are laughable.

I am going to split the difference and give it 3 stars - and if the ideas work after 3 months, I will considering upping it to 4 or maybe even 5 stars depending on how widely the universe opens up to me.

This book proposes a few basic ideas about finding happiness, and it basically boils down to the following premise: "Every event that befalls us, is absolutely the best possible event that could occur." Put another way, "Everything that happens to us only happens so that we can be benefited to the maximum amount possible."

Being a therapist who sees more complexity to human suffering than this, I could easily scoff at the idea. But

I also see a possible truth in the simplicity of this. And being an active and practicing Mormon, this is very consistent with the tenants of my faith which basically say that God, in his infinite wisdom, views all of our life experiences - especially the difficult ones, as ways to give us experience that shall be for our good (Doctrine & Covenants 122:7).

So I am willing to go with it for awhile and see where it takes me. But . . if I vanish in 3 months, you will know I have transcended human experience and have become one with the universe.

Rob says

It's hard to classify this as a self help book, being so tarted up with Chinese allusions and spirituality. And maybe it isn't. It's a concise zen message brought elegantly into the 21st century by a westerner with long experience in this very eastern mentality (and a Chinese-sounding pen name on some of his other books, to boot). In any event it's worth a read. The message is simple, though as with other self-help books, the almost-always-impossible part is the practice.

Prentiss doesn't dwell long on this practical difficulty, saying only that you need to act and not just think. Unhappily, that will never be enough. Books like this ultimately fail because they cannot physically prod you off the couch. It doesn't matter if the theory behind them exhorts you to attain enlightenment or eat fewer potatoes.

Perhaps future editions will have a chapter about how to use this book to smack people into awareness. That would surely be consistent with zen practice and it might even work.
