



DR. RALF J. HOSSE



HAPPINGINEERING



*A Fulfilled Life Based On
Sustainability And Productivity*



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**FOR MY BELOVED CHILDREN,
LEONARDO & VALENTINA.**

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PREFACE

Happiness. Happiness means different things to different people. What is it that makes you happy? Have you ever been truly happy? If so what would it take to make you happy (again)? And, now that you're about to start reading *HAPPINGINEERING*, are you happy right now? As often our own mind is the worst obstacle between us and happiness, know this: happiness is a choice.

The concept behind this book is pretty simple and much of its content is based on common sense. Nevertheless, even if you will only put a few of the tips in this book into practice — particularly in the areas of your life where there is most room for improvement — you will experience a dramatic increase in the quality of life. Used with an adequate level of commitment and endurance, this book will be your powerful and transformative companion.

Think of life as resting on five pillars: 1. your social relationships, 2. your health and well-being, 3. your education, personal and professional development, 4. your financial situation, and 5. your hobbies & leisure. Life will only be happy, fulfilled, and sustainable, if none of these pillars is being neglected, if all of them are being maintained adequately.

To build and maintain these five pillars, not only do you have to do the right things, you also have to be productive and efficient; otherwise, your time at disposition will hardly ever be enough.

This book contains 100 “handpicked” tips grouped and listed in the order you will need them along the way toward happiness: for getting prepared, i.e., to define where you are right now, where you want to go and to establish the respective attitude (Part 1); for building, improving or maintaining the five pillars of your life (Part 2); and for applying selected productivity tips so you can make it all happen (Part 3).

First, familiarize yourself with the concepts of Part 1 (there’s some homework involved here) and dedicate some undisturbed time to getting a clear picture of yourself and your life. Next, pick a few tips that matter most to you from Part 2, i.e., the ones that may have the most profound positive impact on your life. Start small to eventually turn them into integral habits that feel natural and align with your goals and overall direction in life. Finally, increase your productivity to sustainably maintain your multifaceted lifestyle.

You will be equipped with the mind-set and tools to engineer a happy and fulfilled life based on sustainability and productivity — you will be taught HAPPINGINEERING. It’s an invitation to reflect more on what you do, how you do it, and, to actually DO IT.

Introduction

To establish a basis for a life that is happy, fulfilled, and sustainable, there are five pillars that have to be built and maintained: 1. your social relationships, 2. your health and well-being (physical and mental), 3. your education and personal and professional development, 4. your financial situation, and 5. your hobbies and leisure time.

Before you start building these pillars, you should quietly and honestly look at yourself. You should self-reflect: set aside undisturbed time to assess your thoughts and feelings. Look into the mirror and describe what you see.

Life is always trying to keep you in a “comfortable” routine and keeping you busy with things that in the long run may lead you nowhere. It’s only when you reflect that you are able to review your internal qualities and improve on them. An hour or two of silent assessment can go a long way in giving you that much-needed kick-start to shape the life you want.

Remember that true self-reflection is based on the awareness of your personality, your strengths and weaknesses, your beliefs and thoughts, your motivations and dreams, and, importantly, your emotions. It’s about YOU, so try to avoid assumptions about others. Be aware that situations may actually be different from how they appear

to you — they may only be the result of how you perceive them in your current emotional state.

Are you ready for a deep dive into your life, into what you like about it and what you would like to change before you resurface to see a brighter horizon? You are? Great! Then find some time for yourself in a pleasant atmosphere and read on.

#1 A Journey of a Thousand Miles

Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu said, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” It is so extremely important to take this first step. Once this is done, of course, it takes discipline, commitment, and endurance to continue this journey. Nevertheless, you have to acknowledge the importance of this very first step and keep the momentum of it: every goal requires that first foot forward.

May reading this book be the first step toward many more first steps that you will take in the five different areas of your life. These steps will be the start to slowly but steadily solidify the five pillars your life rests upon.

From decluttering your apartment to making a call about that job opening to learning a new language, the first step matters. The “right” moment may never come. The “right” mood or circumstance may never appear. Don’t just wait for things to happen.

Most times, self-doubt is the real enemy. Confidence and motivation are solidified by actions. A step in the right direction comes with both. It's quite alluring to remain in a daydream. But success is for dreamers who act, not for dreamers who fantasize.

We live in a world filled with endless possibilities. But it's also a world of difficulties and rejections. As adults, we fear failure more than we would like to admit. We dread the thought of exploring strange grounds, of venturing into new businesses, of starting a new relationship, of trying out something new. Because everything seems so daunting, you tend to procrastinate. "It's impossible," your subconscious tells you, "and it's just beyond your control." Is it really?

Remember that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

And the truth is that the mind-sets of a doer and that of a daydreamer are different from each other. Every man and woman on the face of the earth is a bundle of ideas and talents. However, only a small percentage actually act on those ideas and talents. Self-doubt always manages to creep in to dissolve every spark of inspiration.

Know that successful people aren't necessarily superhuman. They start small and move on to bigger things. Where others see obstacles, they see a learning opportunity.

Want to get fit? Start with few stretches and walks. Want to write that book? Jot down 100 words a day. Just start small and with something simple but keep on going and enjoy the progress you make. A

first step here, another first step there, and you will soon own this journey called life.

#2 Be Honest with Yourself: No Excuses!

To get the most out of this book, you have to be honest with yourself and drop all excuses.

It may happen that we lie to others for some reason or the other. Possibly, a lie just seems like the best choice in a sea of bad options.

But to lie to yourself? That's even worse. It can happen more often than you care to acknowledge. You convince yourself that you are doing the right thing, that you made a wise financial choice, or that everything is fine. When reality proves otherwise, you stick to your guns and refuse to back down.

As human beings, we tend to want to be in the right. We want our actions, beliefs, and attitude to line up together. A rift in these things would make us feel uncomfortable, so we are very quick to justify our actions, right or wrong. But there's a price to pay for always wanting to be right: you lose plenty of opportunities for personal growth, plenty of opportunities to improve on your outlook of life.

Another reason why we lie to ourselves is that we fear getting hurt. We don't want to rock the boat, so we make excuses. We turn a blind eye to obvious wrongdoings and say it can't be as bad as it looks.

We also lie to ourselves because we dread change. We are scared of leaving our current space, no matter how toxic it gets, because we are held down by the power of denial. We keep holding on to false beliefs that clog up space for new opportunities, ideas, or people.

Stuck in a bad relationship or a terrible job? We choose to wallow in denial or make excuses. The excuse that things will get better on their own. The excuse that you can never do better than this. The excuse that you have already invested too much time and energy to just suddenly get up and leave it all behind. The fact remains that the excuses you tell yourself and you make yourself believe can be damaging to your well-being, your life, and other people, in particular the ones close to you to whom you mean a lot.

It's time to start listening to yourself. Before you justify your behavior, actions, or thoughts, look in deep and know the reason why. Are you being truthful to yourself, or are you covering up the unsavory facts?

Wounds can only be healed by honesty. And honesty requires emotional strength. Find that strength to open up yourself to new possibilities. Stop sugar-coating your problems and burying your head in the sand.

#3 A Personal Heat-Map: Color-Coded Self-Reflection

The concept of a personal heat-map is simple. Assess what matters in your life and assign a color code of three different colors to these categories: green means all is good, yellow means room for improvement, and red means far from being ideal and that you should really do something about it.

A personal heat-map lets you see the bigger picture with more objectivity. It's basically a status report of you and your life. A visual tool you can use to break down those seemingly complicated aspects of your life into a color-coded assessment showing not only your strengths and weaknesses but also providing a call-to-action. It will facilitate coming up with actionable plans to achieve your goals, improving the neglected areas of your life, and pursuing things that bring fulfillment.

A very suitable format of a personal heat-map is a pie chart with equally sized slices, one for every area of your life, with three segments each from the inside to the outside: the inner segment for red, the middle segment for yellow, and the outer segment for green. As an alternative format, you could also use a simple radar chart in Microsoft Excel and replace the colors by numbers ranging from 1 to 3 or higher if you want more granularity.

All around the outer line of the slices, you can place the various aspects of your life that matter, possibly grouped together according to the 5 pillars mentioned above plus additional ones that come to your mind.

Start by compiling a list of these aspects, then group and arrange them around your pie chart. And while you are keeping everything listed and making room for more, you have to keep it honest and thorough. Consider your relationships (with your partner, friends, and family), health, body, mind, character, fitness, sleep, mindfulness, spiritual life, peace of mind, living conditions, skills, education, career, finances, hobbies, creativity, spontaneity, and productivity. Think about yourself, your major life goals, how you spend your time, and how much fulfillment you're getting.

The next step will be grading these areas by applying the respective colors to the segments in the slices. If you cannot be totally truthful with your evaluation, ask a trusted family member or friend to help you. Very soon, you will have a pretty complete picture of how things are going in the various areas of your life — all at a glance!

The whole point of a personal heat-map is self-reflection and the assessment of what goes well and what does not. Which parts of your life are flourishing and which have been neglected or need some extra care? To achieve personal growth, you have to step back and assess where you are in life, taking stock of every single aspect of your life, with the focus on who you want to be and where you want to go.

For instance, if the personal heat-map shows that you are overweight (your weight status will carry a red color), start making weight loss plans. Alter your current diet and start eating healthy, get a treadmill or do a 30-minute walk every sunrise. Drink more water.

Get a gym membership. Consult a fitness professional. This action plan can be well supported by additional tools and tips in this book, i.e., the mission statement (#4), the to-do list (#82), and achieving goals by habits (#87).

And as you're carrying out your action plan, keep the personal heat-map updated along the way. As you do this, you will be able to monitor your progress, make necessary adjustments, and keep up your motivation.

Finally, while you're focusing on improving the "reds" and "yellows" of your personal heat-map, keep an eye on your "greens" — just because they are green (congratulations on that, by the way) does not mean that they do not require maintenance anymore!

#4 A Mission Statement: All Goals at a Glance

Your mission statement serves as a roadmap to where you are going and how you are going to get there. It is a concise list of your goals (whether short- or long-term) and priorities as well as your personal set of core values that guide your day-to-day decision-making.

Your mission statement is also a steady reminder that keeps you in check. A guiding light to your destination. It keeps you in the right frame of mind, as you will be allocating your resources in a way that is consistent with your goals. Although the process might be challenging, developing one is satisfying and illuminating.

A suitable format is a one-pager, as it helps having your mission at a glance and not split up across several pages; for example it can be prepared in Microsoft PowerPoint or with a mind-mapping software. Your goals should be grouped according to which pillar of life they belong to and can be ordered short- to long-term.

It's necessary to always refresh your mission statement, for example, on a 3-month basis, to keep the progress flowing. With one, you can better manage your time, update your short-term goals and priorities, say no to distractions, and keep your long-term goals in sight.

Building a solid mission statement, at least for the first time, may take a while. You need to commit this time to examining your goals, values, passions, regrets, and limitations. To create one, you need to be introspective, you need to reflect, review, revise, and try to capture your true essence in a concise manner.

Moreover, you need to imagine. Envision your life in two, five, or even ten years from now. For instance, visualize the end of your current career. What achievements, contributions do you wish to have in your field? Do you want to start a sideline that you want to shape and grow over the years?

The key thing about a personal mission statement is that it is personal. It must be unique to you alone, not tailored to a second party's demands. Your language in writing has to be specific, decisive, and concrete, not watered-down. Use your "I will" and "I want" effectively. Take your action verbs seriously and also personalize your