

THE ART OF
BEING *happy*

BY CAROLINE EATON

CONTENTS

Yourself.....	4
Present.....	15
Active	21
Purposeful.....	26
Social.....	31
Unsatisfied	36
Giving.....	40
Grateful.....	44
Willing.....	49
Wrong	54
Happy.....	59

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Yourself

“Don’t ask yourself what the world needs, ask yourself what makes you come alive. And then go and do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

– Harold Whitman

Six years ago I was working a 9 - 5 job in downtown Chicago.

Three years ago I was diving with Great White Sharks in South Africa and cruising around the Galapagos, swimming with sea lions.

Today I am buying a house in the suburbs and decorating a nursery for my baby girl.

Three drastically different stages of life and without each of these experiences I wouldn't be who I am today. During each life stage I had ups and downs. I didn't escape stress by quitting my job and traveling around the world, and having a baby didn't solve all of my problems. A house has never been a symbol of success for me, and still isn't.

Happiness has never been an emotion that I wake up with every morning, it's always been an everyday choice of how I want to react to and view the world.

You can't look at someone's business title, or see the size of their house and gauge their happiness. Despite the smiling photos you see of their family, or the big paycheck they receive at the end of the month, happiness can mean drastically different things to each person.

It's ironic how once we let go of the control, planning and expectations we all work towards, and let our lives be led in the direction that they are meant to be, we find ourselves in destinations we never imagined, and happier than we ever thought possible.

That's what happened to me.

I made space in my life to be guided by my passions. I know, it sounds cheesy, but stick with me and I'll show you how I created a life that centered on the things and people who make me happy.

After I left my 9 - 5 job, I was never the same. Letting go of the work stress freed me to make different decisions for my life. I was able to be proactive vs. reactive. I could feel myself letting go of my negative thoughts and I felt alive.

I interacted differently with people I met. I watched the news with a different perspective. I tasted food with new taste buds. When I close my eyes now I don't see routines, I see the sand dunes in Namibia and the beaches of Thailand.

If you are reading this with the same mindset I was in 6 years ago you prob-

ably don't believe me. You can't see past the deadlines and negative energy of your coworkers to believe that looking forward to waking up and feeling the energy that can drive you to make a difference in your life and the lives of others is possible.

What's the catch?

Finding this life isn't easy.

There is risk, loneliness, and doubt... a lot of doubt... but at the end there is a spectacular view. You can't see it now because you are busy thinking of the chores or the morning meeting with your boss, but it is there. Clear out the clutter from your brain and the world is waiting. My goal for you by the end of this book is for you to have the courage to not just dream of what's next, but risk living it.

Find whatever it is that uses your unique talents to make this world better. Surround yourself with people who will light a fire under you to find yours. Don't expect to find answers overnight, but start the search now for what makes you come alive.

What does this have to do with happiness?

During my travels I met a couple who had sold their house, bought a yacht

and opened up a guesthouse on their boat. They previously had a more extravagant lifestyle, but that was their past. They lived simply, there wasn't a Lexus in their garage or name brands lining their closets. They had already done that and now they were welcoming other travelers onto their boat, showing them how to experience a healthy, more relaxed way of life, and they were happy.

They knew what they wanted, followed their passion and were grateful to be able to share that passion with others. They were willing to take a big risk to live an unconventional lifestyle. Every morning they cooked and ate breakfast with us, sharing travel stories and getting to know us. Because of their positive energy we were able to relax and start the day happier and ready to engage the world, passing their positive energy on to others.

Skeletons are in every closet, and more money definitely doesn't buy an easier life. We chase brand names, climb corporate ladders, and do what we are told in order to somehow find success. I've learned that the traditional definition of success and happiness are on two different spectrums and are almost always confused.

Most people will claim they want happiness, but their actions tell a different story. Many who have found what the mainstream considers success would give it all away for one day of pure happiness.

This book is about how I have found happiness and, in turn, consider myself successful. I don't make six figures or even own a car, but by being engaged in my world and purposeful in my goals, I have created a life for myself that I am proud of.

I want you to find yourself in this book. Use your past experiences and your unique passions and skills, and create the life that you want to live and move forward confidently with that choice.

I'm inspired by story tellers, and believe our life is a story waiting to be written. If you've taken the easy road so far, and your story is filled with other's expectations of you and comfortable choices, now is the time to change. If you look back and are bored reading your own story, it is your responsibility to rewrite it and make it one worth telling the next generation. **The Art of Being...** is meant to force you to ask the difficult questions and move you to action. Don't become complacent, grab life by the horns, aim to live an extraordinary story.

I recount real stories, advice, and my own realization that happiness can't be forced or faked. If you aim for perfection and never take time to laugh, life will quickly exhaust you. Celebrate the imperfections and give yourself a break every now and then.

This book is as useful as you allow it to be. It is not meant to be read once

and put aside. It is an active guide challenging your current routine and making you think about daily choices. Happiness is constantly sought after, but rarely achieved. This book suggests **instead of changing your situation – change your mindset.**

My name is Caroline Eaton. I want to give you a quick idea of who I am so you can understand my perspective and purpose for writing *The Art of Being...*

I have always been a considerably happy person. My inner circle sees more of my struggles, while the world sees a bubbly and optimistic member of society. Somewhere between graduating and finding my first job I had fallen in line with society's expectations of me and lost who I was and what I was passionate about.

The Art of Being... illustrates the process I took to take back my happiness. While some consider it selfish to spend a year focusing on things that make you happy, I found it necessary.

I began with my main source of stress, my job.

My first 9 - 5 job entailed suits and meetings, neither of which I enjoyed, but that's not why I left. I left because I felt myself moving on auto-pilot and I hated that feeling. I was going through the actions with a smile on my face,

but I was empty inside. I couldn't pretend any longer, I wanted adventure back in my life, new activities and relationships. I wanted to make a difference in other people's lives and be working towards something that I was passionate about.

My boss's first reaction was, "Will you be OK financially?" My parents first reaction was, "Make sure you have another job lined up before you quit," and my friends were doubtful. **I felt they were waiting to see if I was going to succeed or fall flat on my face.**

I got out of my 9 – 5 job to pursue a job with less pay, but a higher return in happiness. I could finally feel myself making a difference and working with people on issues I truly was passionate about: health and fitness.

I was fulfilled in my work life, but at home, my husband, Josh was still traveling 4 - 5 days a week to a different state. He woke up at 5 am on Monday morning to board a plane, and didn't return until the weekend. I'm not complaining, the pay was great, benefits were out of this world and we saved a lot of money and airline miles during that year to make our travels possible, but I could tell Josh was drained.

His only interactions outside of work were with the coffee barista and front desk staff at the hotel. Back in Chicago I was creating a very busy life that didn't include him, but a busy life doesn't mean a happy life - I wanted him

home and I wanted him happy.

While most people envied his ‘great’ job, he wondered if this was the direction he wanted his life to go in. He looked at his partners in the firm and didn’t see himself doing the same job for 30+ years, he knew he needed to get out before it sucked him in too deep.

That was when we decided to make the scariest and most impactful decision of our lives.

I left a job I loved, with clients I cared deeply about and spent a year traveling around the world with my husband. I have never done anything more selfish or more liberating, where all of my money and time was spent on me. But, throughout the year my world was shattered with new ideas of humility, freedom and simplicity. The lessons I learned on the road, I would have never understood or accepted without my firsthand experiences from traveling.

I went from spending only weekends with Josh, to spending 24/7 with him. In that year we went through some of the most stressful, adventurous and glorious moments of our relationship thus far. We slept in a different bed every week and saw more of each other than we were ever meant to see. We ate whatever was put in front of us and washed our clothes in the sink most days. We learned to use a squat toilet, drive a stick shift while escaping a charging elephant and how to navigate cities without speaking the language

or an updated map.

I paint you this picture to give you a sense of reality, we didn't jet set off to a luxury resort for a year and pamper ourselves. We faced the world and weren't quite sure what we would find. It was a constant mix of high and low emotions, not showering for a few days at a time or not wanting to speak to each other because one of you made another mistake, or said the wrong thing that day.

While our travels weren't ever easy, they were the best thing we could have done for our relationship and ourselves. It pushed us further in our personal skills and self-confidence than any 9 - 5 job could have done. It gave us experiences that we will be talking about and recreating in our memories until we are old and wrinkly. We had time to think outside of the stress of work, relationships and culture and we were able to ask the really difficult questions like 'what do I really want out of this life'.

That year made us realize that our story could go in a million different directions, and it is up to us to make the right choices to set us up for a fascinating, out of this world life. Happiness was surrounding us, we just had to open up our eyes and pay attention.

This isn't about convincing you to spend a year traveling. That was what did it for me. This is about urging you to be yourself. In order for you

to be yourself, you need to first find yourself. The Art of Being Happy will guide you through the most important steps I took to chase after my own happiness, rewrite my story and not settle for anything less than a difficult life where I am stretched in all directions, pushed to my limits because that is when I know that I am truly living.

Action Items

- ✓ Commit to finding your happiness. Saying it out loud is sometimes the hardest. Talk about it with someone close to you and explain the journey you will be on. Invite them to join you and let them know how they can help you.
- ✓ Determine your top 3 sources of stress. Write them down. Acknowledging where your stress comes from is key to being in control of your reactions.
- ✓ Start a journal or blog to keep track of your thoughts and emotions. I personally started *Traveling 9 to 5* in 2011 to document my trip and it became my number one outlet. Writing became therapeutic. During all types of emotions and situations, sitting down to write helped me understand the changes and put everything in perspective.

Present

*“The happiest people are those who think the most interesting thoughts. Those who decide to use leisure as a means of mental development, who love good music, good books, good pictures, good company, good conversation, are the happiest people in the world. And they are not only happy in themselves; they are the cause of happiness in others.
– William Lyon Phelps*

Never stop learning
Read a new book
Take a risk
Get involved

Notice the people around you and acknowledge them. Think about the people you see at the grocery store every week or that one guy that sits next to you every day on the bus (but you have never taken the time to speak to). Be present.

Stop worrying about next week or next month or next year, that will only increase your anxiety and make you miss out on the events of today.

Before we left to travel we were constantly planning ahead. We lived by our calendars and the weeks flew by faster than we could keep up. Our weekends were filled, we jumped from event to event in Chicago, but never slowed down enough to be present in the current day, because there was always tomorrow, and the next big thing.

We left for our year long trip with a one-way flight and one AirBnB apartment rented in Hong Kong. Together we knew that to find our happiness we had to let go of the control that surrounded our lives when it came to making plans, and live in the moment.

Every day we spent traveling, we were present in that moment. If we fell in love with a city we were visiting, or met travelers who we connected with, we would add on a few nights or a week in that place. If we didn't connect with a destination and felt the urge to move on, we did.

We were able to be present because we tossed out the need to have a filled schedule. We left the perception of 'busy' behind, and we allowed ourselves to be in the moment, in that day, in that place. We got to know the people we met on a more intimate level because we were with them, listening to their stories and sharing ours, instead of thinking about who we need to meet next or our next destination

There is a strong power in being present. It hides the outside chaos and allows you to focus on what's in front of you, blocking out the stress and noise so you can get everything possible out of the moment you are in. We wanted to be happy in that day, despite what might happen tomorrow and continually grateful that we were rewriting our story.

We learned that anything can be a positive experience if we are present and focus on the good in the situation. Your happiness can be found in the calmness and peace of mind you get from just being.

Spreading Hearts is an organization started by one of my mentors and close friends, Jeanne Malnati. She started Spreading Hearts to touch other's lives in unique and loving ways, by listening to the small guiding voice inside you when you are present and engaged in the world around you.

She hands out small pewter hearts to people she meets who touch her heart or inspire her. She believes, by paying attention to the people in our lives, whether they be total strangers or our dearest friend, we can be the cause of happiness in others.

When we left for our year long trip, I carried 200 hearts around the world with me and these hearts pushed me to engage the world. At first it was uncomfortable. To walk up to a total stranger and hand them an odd pewter heart because they caught your eye isn't something you do everyday.

I gave a heart to a McDonald's employee in Madrid because he was the hardest working employee I had ever seen. I gave one to a tuk-tuk driver in Laos who had just been screamed at by a previous customer, and I handed one to a mom and her daughter for giving me shelter during a violent storm while I was motor biking in Southeast Asia. The language barrier prevented words from being exchanged but I engaged my world and let them know they were noticed, they mattered, and hopefully encouraged them to pass it on.

Being present is one of the biggest challenges for me that I write about in

this book. I'm very type A, and my mind doesn't sit still very often, it's always thinking about what's next, what else and what more. That is where Spreading Hearts helped me.

I challenged myself to slow down and be present in order to notice those around me. There is a lot of truth in the importance of being noticed and these hearts, along with the goal of being present, help you notice people who you would otherwise walk by. I was taken back by all that I learned about myself while being present and passing out these hearts.

Every person I encountered, and heart I handed out, taught me something. Whether it was patience, joy, pain, commitment - everyone gave me something, and in return I thanked them with a small heart.

Being present isn't easy, it forces you to engage the world and block out the flood of noise that wants to distract you. It's something that you practice, and you keep practicing because sometimes the noise gets too loud and we need to refocus.

I encourage you to be present. Walk away from every interaction or experience with all that you can, and stop your mind from wandering to the dreaded question of what's next.

Action Items:

- ✓ Practice being in the moment. Turn your phone off when you are with others and stop refreshing your email every few minutes.
- ✓ Avoid filling your calendar and don't see a busy schedule as a happy life. Embrace the days you don't have plans as opportunities for new experiences.
- ✓ Pick one new group to join and commit to being present. Whether it is a local church group, soccer team or knitting group. Pick something that interests you and start spending time with other people that have similar interests on a weekly/monthly basis.
- ✓ Whether you purchase hearts to pass out yourself or not, pay attention to who you interact with during the day. Look into the eyes of people you meet and say thank you to those who help you. I suggest writing it on a piece of paper or your journal who you noticed and who impacted you. Writing it down will help keep you accountable for engaging the people you meet every day.

Active

“Unless you puke, faint or die, keep going” – Jillian Michaels

Exercise daily. No excuses, exercise daily.

Keep your body functioning at its best in order to do your best work, brainstorm your top ideas, and keep your energy high. As a certified personal trainer, I have heard every excuse in the book: ‘It’s too expensive’, ‘I don’t have enough time’, or ‘First I have to finish...’ followed by a long list of priorities.

There is no excuse that you can give to convince me that anything is more important than *you*. At the end of the day you are all you have, and if you fail to take care of yourself then you are left with nothing. So tell me your excuse again, and remind yourself why it doesn’t cut it.

Some of my clients are afraid to call themselves “a runner”. They run 3 – 4 times a week, but because they aren’t running marathons or haven’t broken a 10 minute mile they say “I’m not a runner, but I run every now and then”. Have confidence in the time you put into yourself. **You run, so you are a runner. You do yoga, so you are a yogi.** Have confidence with every run that you are building a stronger mind and body and don’t be afraid to let others know.

Much of our happiness and confidence is based on how active we are. The more active we are, the more fit our bodies tend to be. The fitter our bodies, the more comfortable we are in our own skin and the more confidence we

exude.

Endorphins aren't just a gimmick—when you exercise regularly your body creates happiness, and this happiness is addicting. If you spend your days sitting at your desk all day and then move to the couch at night, your mind will take on lazy characteristics. It will build up tension and anxiety, disabling your body from having the ability to manage stress. The more you make your health a priority, your body not only feels better, but is better prepared for whatever life throws at it.

Building your level of activity takes time and requires persistence (and isn't easy!). You have to believe it is important and set aside your time to commit to becoming active. At first it feels like a waste of time, and you will fill your mind with all of the other things that you could be doing with that time. After a month of consistent exercise, your body understands. It now relies on the activity and craves the endorphins that are produced. When you miss a workout you start having withdrawal symptoms, your body craves the activity. We aren't meant to spend life in a seated position.

With all this exercise and a new healthier lifestyle, your eating habits are the next hurdle to jump. I hate diets. I hate every low carb, HCG, no-fat, no-fun type of eating that is marketed. I'll tell you the secret to living a happy life, fit and full of energy:

DON'T EAT CRAP.

You know what food is crap. I don't need to list out all of the salted, processed, sugary foods that are in the grocery store. Eat fresh foods, get lots of protein and vegetables, and stop adding mayonnaise, salt and loads of sugar to your meals. Don't keep crap in your house—the temptation always wins and you end up eating more than just one serving. Eat an occasional piece of chocolate, keep your serving sizes small, and drink more water than you think you should. Don't be obsessed with the number on the scale, become obsessed with how your body feels and fits into your clothes.

Now that you agree that staying healthy is on your priority list, let's start now...*no excuses*. No 'in the morning', 'last meal' or 'I'll start tomorrow' - **Now.**

Action Items:

- ✓ Go for a walk. If you are already in good shape get outside for a run. If you prefer to lift weights, pump some iron. Start an exercise routine and don't allow yourself to make excuses to skip it. Work out a minimum of three to five times a week (but I prefer 30 minutes a day).
- ✓ Go to your refrigerator and pantry and throw out the crap. **Right now (seriously), go do it and then you can continue reading this.**

Done yet? Tell your family about your commitment to your health and make it clear that you don't want crappy foods in the house.

✓ Once you have a regular fitness routine set up and you have cleaned your house of processed crappy foods, invite a friend to join you in your fitness routine. Pick a running partner or gym buddy that won't let you skip a workout.

Purposeful

“If opportunity doesn’t knock, build a door.” – Milton Berle

Happiness is a choice, not an emotion that you wake up with every morning. To be purposeful in your pursuit of happiness you must write down your goals and turn those goals into realistic future outcomes. It means making the choices to position yourself in the best possible situation to pursue happiness.

Dreams will stay dreams until they are organized and planned for. I am tired of hearing “That will never happen” or “It’s too expensive, time consuming, or difficult“. Excuse after excuse only adds up and creates a mental barrier to overcome. Being *purposeful* is recognizing what makes you happy and being willing to risk failure to succeed. It is not only having a plan, but making daily steps towards your end goal.

I hear retirees say “I don’t have any skills” or young kids out of college say “there are no jobs in my market”. Once you get past the fear of learning, no book, language or new venture is out of your reach. Exercise your mind by asking questions and doing your own research to find the answers.

Consider your current actions and determine where change is most needed. Acknowledge the end results that you want to see and find someone you trust who will hold you accountable. You need someone active in your life who understands your goals and shares your enthusiasm for reaching them. It’s important to keep that person informed of your plans and actions on a regular basis.

After two years of my post-college job, I knew I was not cut out for the “9 to 5” corporate lifestyle. I was worn down and knew I needed a change. Instead of complaining to friends about my discontent, I made action steps and set dates. I made a list of my passions (travel, fitness and nutrition) and then brainstormed job possibilities under each category. I listed out everything—no job was out of reach or too mundane. I was insistent on finding a job in one of these three categories.

I narrowed my list down to one job in each category: a personal trainer, a registered dietician, and being the star of my own show on The Travel Channel. I spent the next few weeks researching each job, reading about the qualifications, talking to people in each field and figuring out what I would need to do to get the job I wanted. (I couldn’t find the star of a current travel show to discuss her job with me, so I had to settle on my imagination for that one.)

After doing the research, I chose to pursue a career as a personal trainer. I found the certifications that I needed, purchased the study materials and set a date. It was November and I gave myself an end date of June. In 6+ months I wanted to be in the position where I could apply for jobs and be confident that I could make a major career shift.

I did it. With a lot of late nights studying, and weekends spent preparing, I interviewed with the high-end gym Equinox in Chicago and was offered a

job the following week. I took a 50% pay cut for the first year, but my emotional bank was full. I was happy and I loved my job. I did my research. I had a clear goal and committed to myself to follow through.

Everyone gets stuck on finding their purpose in life. They don't want to make a major life change until they discover their *all mighty purpose*. My response to that is, start doing what you love now. Once you start being purposeful about your passion - you will be amazed how quickly your eyes are opened. They coincide so closely, your passion and purpose, and once you find it, give your heart to it.

You can't move forward in life without being purposeful in your actions.

Action Items:

- ✓ Make a list of areas in your life that need change. Where have been spending most of your time unhappy. Examples: job, family, your child's play group, church etc.
- ✓ Pick one area to focus on and create an action list of steps you are taking to make the change. Be specific and give yourself deadlines. Start crossing them off one at a time.
- ✓ Tell someone about your plans, and if you feel comfortable tell

more people. This makes your commitment to change real and increases your accountability.

Social

*“People inspire you or they drain you – pick them wisely”
— Hans Hansen*

Depending on your personality, this advice to “be social” varies in meaning. Whether you consider yourself an introvert or extrovert doesn’t matter; building relationships and maintaining them is a key to finding happiness.

Belonging to a group gives us a sense of identity and makes us feel a part of a bigger picture. It is proven that having strong social connections allows us to experience fewer stress-related health issues and faster recovery from illness and traumatic situations. These friendships become our encouragement and support when we make big changes in our lifestyle.

The feeling to love and be loved, and to care for others and be cared for, is one of the most basic and important human needs. It’s important to connect with friends and family who bring out the best in you and are a positive energy in your life. You will find yourself more content and happier as you are able to cut out and say no to friends that give off negative energy in your life. As you cut these negative relationships out of your life you will become more confident and see those positive friendship bonds grow stronger.

I don’t think you have to be out on the town until 3 AM every night, or hold weekly parties at your house to be social, but you do need to find those people who give you security and support, celebrate the good times with you and who speak up when you need an honest voice in your life.

We tend to socialize with people who are convenient. We have our university

friends, our neighborhood friends, our kids' friends' parents—they all serve a purpose in their own way, but how many do you have a real connection with?

How many are the life friends that have been there for 10+ years? How many do you actually trust? These are rare but important. Seek out people whom you can share with and are able to trust. Once you find them, work at the relationship. Just like your group of university friends who have all taken different paths and you rarely hear from, relationships go away if not nurtured.

Can you think of 3 important people in your life? 3 people whom you can call through the good times and bad. Call them, text them, email them once a week—let them know you are still around and care. I promise they will do the same, and you will be happier knowing you have these three people in your life and on your speed dial.

Outside of these three people, you will have plenty of acquaintances whom you will attend social events with and plan play-dates for your kids. It does matter who these people are and what they enjoy. Surround yourself with people who support you and encourage you to be better.

Who are these friends I am suggesting you cut ties with?

Your friend who picks out the one grey cloud in the sky and always has something to complain about. She looks at every glass as half empty and usually thinks she gets the shit end of the deal in most every interaction.

Your friend who makes everything into a competition, even your other friendships become up for debate on 'who is the better friend.' These friends are solely out for their own interests and don't care who they leave in their dust.

Your overly critical friend who can't let anything go. If it's not her way, its the wrong way and she won't waste time telling you. You are already your own worst critic, no need to have a second negative voice in your life

These are only a few examples of friends that are making a negative impact in your life. If you dread seeing a certain person, or feel drained, bad about yourself or frustrated when you leave them, you might need to reconsider if they are giving off positive or negative energy in your life.

The key is that *it's your choice where you spend your time and who you spend it with.*

Action Items:

- ✓ Think about your friends. Make note of who you think drags you down, and who makes you happy and encourages you. You might real-

ize that some of your acquaintances you want to spend more time with and less with some of your closest friends.

- ✓ Say no to an engagement, a party or a group that increases your stress. Practice saying no to unnecessary events that breed negativity in your mind.
- ✓ Plan a monthly get-together. Host the event at your house so you can be in control of who's there. Keep it simple and limited to only the group of friends who make you laugh, who you trust, and encourage you. Life gets busy, but slowing down to spend time with your close friends is never an evening poorly spent.

Unsatisfied

“What screws us up most in life is the picture in our heads of how it is supposed to be”

Do you remember the last time you were around a 2 year old?

They are constantly asking why. Why aren't we done playing this game yet? Why do birds fly? Why do we have fingernails? Why are ants so small? There is no limit to their curiosity. While in the moment we tend to groan and insist "because I said so". There is a lot to learn from a 2 year old's desire to understand why.

In our own lives, asking why and being unsatisfied with the answers can be a blessing.

Josh and I did just that. We left our jobs on a hunch that there is more to life than working 9 – 5 from behind a desk. We wanted to give ourselves the opportunity to explore and experience life instead of just going through the motions. We weren't satisfied with the rules that were set by previous generations, so we aimed to write our own.

Asking why is scary. Once you know the answer, it then becomes your responsibility to act on it. For us it was scary to say goodbye to the steady paycheck and benefit packages, but we had asked why and wanted some new answers. We were in search of an independent lifestyle. We wanted to experience the world first hand and be in control of our future.

We still ask why all the time. Are we moving in the right direction? Why do

some ideas work and some fall flat? Why are we over budget or not happy in a certain location? **Not all of our whys have answers but we are working on figuring them out.**

Living an unconventional life is just that: not settling for the requirements society hands you or having to follow in anyone's footsteps. **When your happiness is determined by your own set of rules, no one determines the outcome except yourself.**

When you are told no, ask why. When you don't want to wake up in the morning and go to work, ask why. When your friends and family begin to act distant, ask why.

It could be your boss telling you no, your friends or even yourself. Do you need to spend time getting in shape in order to accomplish a long time goal? Do you need to learn a new skill at work in order to advance to the next level?

Asking why keeps you continually engaged in your life. It doesn't let you sit by and watch on auto-pilot. Once you ask why, you are responsible for the outcome. You determine the answer and you write the action plan. The beauty of asking yourself why is that the answer is yours. Your road to happiness is defined by you.

Some of you might be confused - doesn't being satisfied and happy go together? Why am I telling you to be unsatisfied?

You weren't put on this Earth to be stagnant, you are here to move mountains. While it's good to be grateful for everything that's been given to you, being satisfied can get you stuck. Don't settle for just an OK life - strive to make it great!

Be unsatisfied with life's traditional to-do list. Write your own list and make it unique to you, always asking why along the way.

Action Items:

- ✓ Ask yourself if your life is moving in the direction you want and answer honestly. Make a list of what you want your life to look like and what you want to have accomplished in the next year and over the next 5 years. Be specific.
- ✓ Write your own happy list. What makes you happy? Don't answer with what makes your husband happy or your kids happy, or what society says should make you happy – what makes YOU happy. Write down the top 3 – 5 things that you come up with and reallocate your weekly schedule to involve these activities.

Giving

“Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time, and always start with the person nearest you.” – Mother Teresa

You get out of this world what you put into it. Some of us are made to change the world. We take big risks to reach out to those most in need. This is a passion, a calling—it isn't for everyone.

You don't have to change the world; you only have to leave your own personalized imprint on it.

Giving is as simple as spending an extra 30 minutes to help your colleague at work, letting someone cut in front of you during rush hour or smiling big to the Starbucks worker behind the counter who is battling a line out the door. When you stop thinking of giving in monetary terms your gifts become endless. The gifts involving our time, kindness and support are those most remembered and cherished.

I have been lucky to be on the receiving end of some spectacular displays of giving. Gifts that were as simple, but so impactful, as opening up a home to Josh and I on our trip around the world. When you travel for as long as we did you long for a home-cooked meal and a warm bed that reminds you of what you left at home. I learned a lot from each family we stayed with.

I was blessed with multiple families who without hesitation, invited us to spend weeks with them. These were not mansions where they had extra rooms for us to crash in, but despite the size they wanted to share their homes with us. At one point we stayed for two weeks in a family's two bed-

room apartment while our friend opted to sleep on the couch, just so we could stay with him. These were incredibly humbling experiences where we couldn't walk away with anything less than the most radical view of giving. We left inspired to give more to the next person and to be much better hosts when given our next chance.

If you have ever been a host you know the stress and patience it takes to have new people in your space. No matter if they are strangers or family, you never seem to be able to fully relax because in the back of your mind you are always worrying if your guests are comfortable. I realize the extent in which my hosts put themselves out and gave me their heart, and for that I am forever grateful.

Begin thinking in terms of what can you give to people. Not just friends and family members but everyone around you. **Don't focus on what you want to give, but what you think the person needs.** What will make the biggest impact? Maybe it's lending a friendly ear to discuss stress in their life, joining them at a group event that they are afraid to go to alone, or letting them practice an upcoming presentation that they are giving to their CEO. Listen and watch those around you and respond in kind with how you can best surprise them with the gift of giving.

“Help one person at a time, and start with the one closest to you.” This is some of the best advice I have heard. Pay it forward to strangers. Don't shy

away from opportunities to give, whether it is your time, your energy, or a smile to a stranger on the street.

Action Items:

- ✓ I believe giving is one of the most important parts of finding your happiness. It's easy to start with tangible things. Bring a coffee to your colleague at work or purchase a drink for the stranger behind you in line.
- ✓ Reflect on your past conversations with your friends and family members. Who has stood out that you could offer your time or assistance to? Send a card or offer 15 minutes of your time to help out a friend.
- ✓ Find a cause that you believe in. Whether it is volunteering to feed the homeless in your city or you want to support a missionary in Africa. Don't just give your money away; pick a group or campaign you can be actively involved with.

Grateful

“It is not happy people who are thankful, it is thankful people who are happy.”

Who have you thanked today? Have you taken the time to stop and be grateful today...for anything? Most likely you have a lot to be grateful for and practicing grateful thoughts is a start to living a happier life.

Acknowledge what has been given to you and the help you have received along the way. **We don't walk through life alone, and if you are trying to, you have a long steep climb up.**

A few years back I became ungrateful. I saw my days as mundane and boring. I would board the same bus and sit next to the same strangers on my way to work. My days were filled with the same lists of emails, lunch breaks and scenery on the way home. I needed something to inspire me again and restore my daily gratitude. I started my own Project 365. Every day I would take a photo with my phone of what was new, exciting or inspiring that day.

This is a project that is easy to do, but a big commitment to undertake. My days didn't change, it was the same bus route followed by the same long day of work until I arrived home at the same apartment. **What changed was how I looked at the same routine.**

Over a year I had become thankless to the people I interacted with and the great city of Chicago I lived in. I took my gratitude into my own hands and I started appreciating my surroundings. I started saying thank you to my coffee guy and my bus driver more often. I would take the time in the morning to

look at the sun rising over the skyline, and I would notice the new artwork on the wall in the building across the street. I became happier because I opened my eyes and took the time to be thankful for my days, taking photos of everything along the way.

Some days were harder than others. Inspiration comes easily when you hear a great speaker or you read a motivating book. It is hard to be grateful on rainy days where your umbrella breaks in the Chicago wind...or your boss gives you a deadline of 5 o'clock and you are sitting at your desk typing for 8 hours. It is hard to tear yourself away from your own negativity and take the time to be grateful. *These are the days that the project helped me the most.*

I promised myself 365 days of gratitude. On the dreary days, I pulled myself out and made myself go on a walk to see something new or meet someone interesting. I never knew what to expect but it was my commitment to give myself the time and the breath to be grateful. I said “Thank you” more and I could see people look at me with surprise as if those two words are rarely spoken.

Being goal driven is equally a blessing and a curse. We get so laser focused on our goals that we block out everything around us. For those of us who are ambitious and goal driven (like myself), being grateful won't be an easy task, but a daily practice and rewarding success.

Be grateful more often and look at the world with new eyes. I challenge you to start your own Project 365 and take a photo of what you are grateful for daily.

Action Items:

- ✓ Start your own Project 365. Use your camera or phone to record one thing a day you are thankful for. Upload it to Flickr or a personal blog so you can keep a record of all of your photos in one place.
- ✓ Write one thank you letter a week. Not a thank you email, but an actual old-school handwritten letter. Keep a stack of cards on your desk or another highly visible area so you can quickly write your thank you letter during your lunch break.

Willing

“I don’t know where I’m going from here, but I promise it won’t be boring” – David Bowie

Change is good, and failure is inevitable. Risk can lead you to fall directly on your face or it can propel you into new opportunities you never dreamed possible. Change, risk and failure are all imperative to your growth. Be open and willing to accept them all eagerly.

I believe fear is the opposite of being willing. We live much of our lives in fear and convince ourselves that we are happy. We don't ask for the promotion we deserve, because we have a good-enough job. We don't reach out and make new friends because we have enough already. We don't take our two week vacation because we are afraid of missing out on work opportunities or are not willing to give up the extra money.

We aren't open to change because change involves risk and unknown circumstances that we may not know how to handle. If you are open, and if you trust yourself and your own abilities, then be prepared for good to enter your life.

I have met a lot of people who hate mushrooms. When I ask when the last time they tasted a mushroom they reply, "When I was 6, but I know I hate them". Insert anything in the place of mushrooms - the idea is the same. A fear of change combined with unwillingness to try (and try again) will leave you missing out on some really amazing experiences and meeting some fascinating people.

Another area where I have seen a correlation between willingness and happiness is in jobs. Did you just start a job that you quickly came to hate, but “you have to stay with it for at least 2 years”? Have you been working the same job for 10 years which you describe as “miserable”, but are comfortable and fear change? You have read what I think about being unsatisfied and purposeful, now I urge you to be open to new opportunities.

Companies are no longer loyal to you, so you are no longer required to stay loyal to your company. My old boss once told me “No matter how good of an employee you are, you should always have your resume out there.” Opportunities usually come when we least expect or want them, and it is our responsibility to be willing to take advantage of them.

How often are you saying ‘no’ in your life?

When your new neighbors ask you to come to dinner or your friends offer for you to join them on a road trip, what is your first reaction? Do you tend to find yourself saying no more often than yes? Being willing is getting in the practice of saying yes to things that scare you, saying yes to change, and opening yourself up to new opportunities that are riskier than staying put in your current comfortable life.

On a random weekend in July I turned to Josh in the car and said “Let’s quit our jobs and travel the world.” If he wasn’t willing to listen to me, our life

would have looked drastically different. If he had been closed off to discussions of radical change, he would have quickly disregarded the idea and we would have missed out on our best adventure yet. Luckily my husband trusts me and knows that I am not all crazy. **He was willing to hear out my side of the argument and do his own research.** He put aside his uncertainties and fear and to take a risk with me and thankfully our lives have never been happier.

Don't just expect to wake up one day and love your job or your life.

I've made it clear that career isn't a cause of happiness, but I do believe it can be a major cause of stress. Being willing to take a honest look at your career and making the sometimes tough and risky choice to change, can help alleviate your stress and change your thoughts, starting you on the right path to happiness.

You have to create the story you want to live and be willing to say yes to make both big and small changes in choosing how you spend your time.

Happiness involves risk. Without risk don't expect the right door to be open and waiting for you.

What have you been avoiding because you fear change?

Action Items:

- ✓ Acknowledge what you have been unwilling to change despite knowing it would lead to a better life. Once you admit what you have been avoiding, it is your chance to make a change.
- ✓ Take on a new project. Next time you hear “any volunteers?” raise your hand. Offer to lead the next initiative at work or host the next book club meeting at your house. Be Willing.
- ✓ Network. The more people you interact with, the more opportunities that will come your way. Be prepared for more doors to open once you’re willing to meet new people and discuss your goals openly.

Wrong

“Here’s to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They’re not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can’t do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. While some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.” – Apple Inc, advertisement

This is your time to fail. Fail big. Make mistakes and be wrong. It is OK.

Your life can only get easier once you perfect the art of being wrong. Our society equivocates success with being right: if you're the best, then you should always have the right answer. In reality no one can be right all the time, which means somewhere you have to be hiding the wrongs, spinning them as "not so right", but still "right".

Does trying to cover up our wrongs and spin them as right make us dishonest? This could be another source of unhappiness and is one of the reasons we need to make failing a part of our lives and accept who we are and own what we do.

It's ironic that we seem to admire those who have the confidence to make mistakes and are willing to challenge the norm, but so many of us strive so hard to be right. The best minds are working against the stream. We care about getting the passing grade, and the perfect testimonial despite the extra stress it adds to our plate.

Those who aren't afraid to fail want to stand out and make a difference, while we long to fit in, unnoticed.

When Josh and I quit our 9 - 5 jobs we were seen as wrong. After being mar-

ried for 5 years we were supposed to be having babies and buying a house and when we gave up a year of our lives to travel, sell our belongings and create what the world sees as an alternative lifestyle, we were seen as wrong. We were met with apprehension and confusion instead of celebration by our friends and family members.

Despite how strongly we knew we were right, and our decision was the best thing for us, upon leaving we shared that view with only a few people, everyone else watched and waited to see if we would succeed.

Chris Guillebeau is a great example of someone challenging the norm and being “wrong” in society’s eyes. He is growing a community of people who are working unconventionally, insisting that work should be fun and meaningful. He writes about non-conformity and refusing to accept the established customs that have been set before you. He states his mission as, **“We’re waging war on the status quo, mediocrity, and the passive act of sleepwalking through life.”**

He is working against the status quo and staring down the cynics who are trying to stop him. He knows he is “wrong” and pushing the limits while working against the stream – but he is crazy enough that his community is getting bigger every day (and I am a part of it!)

Plan to be wrong

Even your most strongly-held belief might have holes. Celebrate your failures, admit to them and be comfortable accumulating wrong ideas, failed attempts and mishaps of all types. Every failure is a chance to learn and take a step towards success.

Listen to those who doubt you and those that counter your ideas- they are helping you. Don't close off their ramblings because they make you seem more wrong. Always strive to make better mistakes tomorrow.

Once you let yourself off the hook from being right all of the time, your mind and body will be at peace. Don't take life too seriously; it is full of trap doors and landslides. **Laugh at the chaos and remind yourself that being wrong is half the battle!**

Action Items:

- ✓ Ask your boss for an honest critique on how you can improve at your job. Ask your friends how you can become a better friend and ask your husband/wife how you can be a better spouse. Don't be offended at their answers, but use them to improve yourself.
- ✓ Brainstorm a new strategy at work or a new initiative in your free time. Rally the people and resources you need to make it happen.
- ✓ Take action on the crazy idea in the back of your notebook. Stop caring if your idea becomes a huge success, just get something in motion now.

Happy

“Life isn’t about waiting for the storm to pass, it’s learning to dance in the rain.”

– Vivian Greene

A good friend once told me, happiness is as much about removing the sources of unhappiness and stress as it is about pursuing the dreams and passions you love. I think there is such truth to that statement and truly what we should all be striving for.

I want you to find your happy. I want you to take each chapter and relate it to your own life. Find what turns your individual light on and inspires you to go out and do more in the world. Try new things and say yes to new opportunities as they are given to you. Flaunt your wrong ideas and make them better, and never stop asking why.

Your happiness will be found in paying attention to the little things, giving it all that you have, and being grateful for all that is given to you. Your life is your story to write, I say make it one that sends you to your limits and forces you to face the unimaginable.

Happiness is a choice.

Every day is a new start, leave tomorrow in the past, learn from your experiences and strive to better yourself and others around you.

Don't just read this manifesto once and disregard it. Revisit it and continually strive to engage the world around you. Try new ideas, adventure somewhere you have never been with someone you love and be present in each

moment.

Your happiness will spread like wildfire. People will notice your brighter smile and will start asking questions. It amazes me how people expect a reason for happiness. As if it is unnatural that someone feels happiness “just because.” With introducing a new lifestyle of willingness and a sense of purpose you will begin to feel the happiness burning inside of you for no reason at all.

This book is meant to be shared. Give it to your friends and family members and encourage them to pass it on if they are inspired. **Create your own stories for each chapter in this book about how you gave more, were unsatisfied, engaged strangers, were willing to risk the unknown and are happier because of it.** Let's encourage everyone to take control and give themselves the freedom to be happy.

Be Yourself

Be Present

Be Active

Be Purposeful

Be Social

Be Unsatisfied

Be Giving

Be Grateful

Be Willing

Be Wrong

Be Happy

Spread the News of this Manifesto

If you've been inspired, I would greatly appreciate if you would consider passing on this manifesto to others you know who could benefit from reading it. Use this link (<http://www.traveling9to5.com/2015/04/the-art-of-being/>) to post on your website or simply email it out to your network. You can also add value by telling your own stories about how you have fought for your happiness in your own perspective.

Acknowledgments

I'm grateful for everyone who is kind enough to share my story with their community, follow me on twitter, post a comment on my site or otherwise endorse my work. You guys inspire me to do more, so thank you!

Special thanks to my family who has shown me so much love and patience over the years and to my friends who have kept me out of too much trouble and supported my crazy dreams.

Finally, to everyone I've met through my travels for a brief moment that have left footprints on my heart.

About the Author:

[Caroline Eaton](#) is an ACE-certified Personal Trainer and Health Coach specializing in pre- and post-natal fitness. She graduated from the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University and began her career in corporate America, before refocusing her energy on her true passion for fitness and nutrition. Caroline loves helping women feel strong and beautiful while educating them on healthier choices for their lifestyles. She wants you to find your passion and embrace your happy. The world needs more people chasing after their dreams and doing what they love.

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