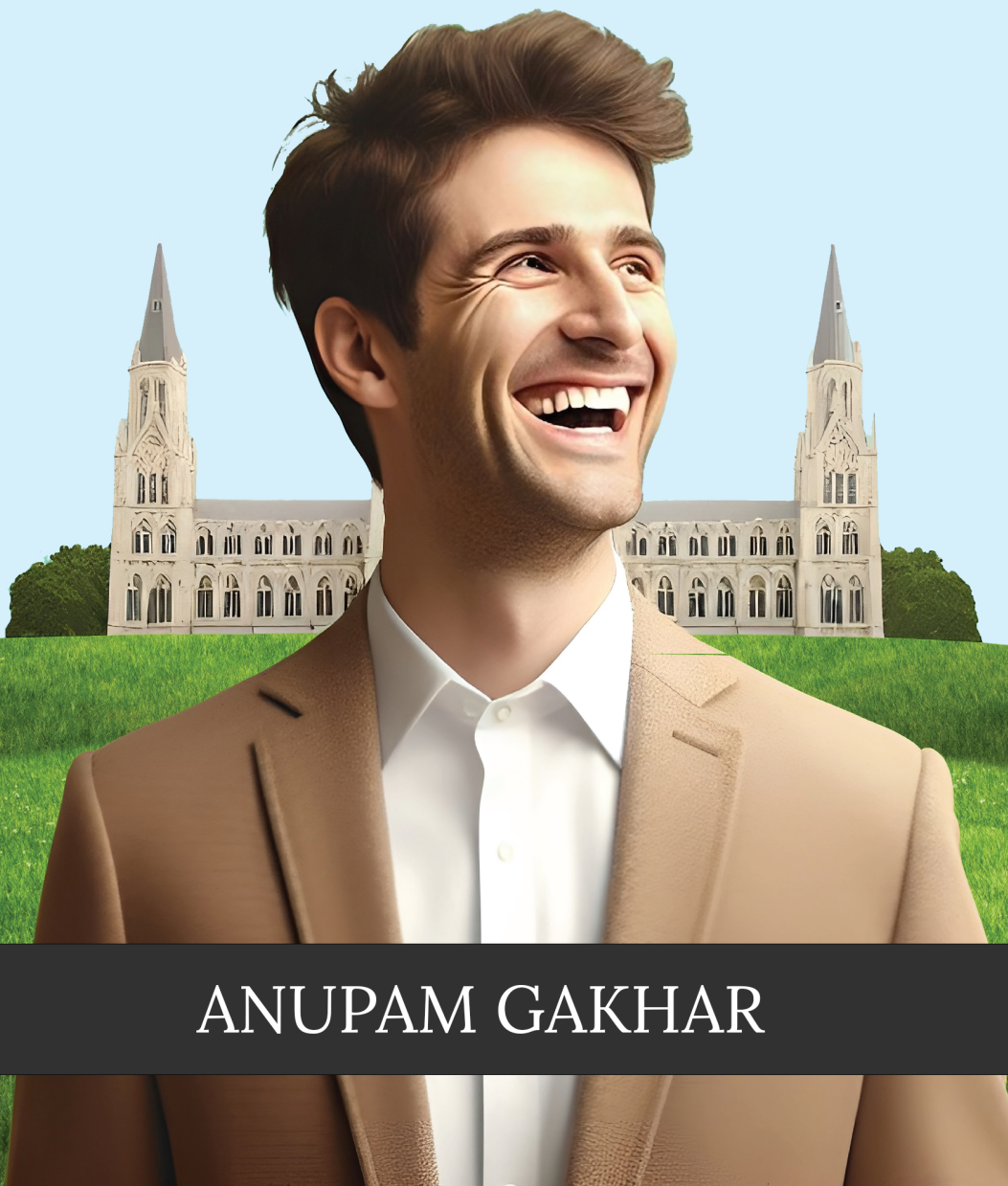


PROFESSOR *of* HAPPPINESS

THE **10** SECRETS FOR CRAFTING A
BLISSFUL AND SUCCESSFUL COLLEGE LIFE



ANUPAM GAKHAR

Preface

Warm greetings! Congratulations on picking up *Professor of Happiness: The 10 Secrets for Crafting a Blissful and Successful College Life*. This isn't just a book; consider it your wise mentor and a reliable friend. It'll help you achieve success and stay happy.

For college students, life can be challenging with the assignments, club activities, social media pressures, and exams constantly pushing the boundaries. These can feel overwhelming, and it's easy to lose track of happiness while managing everything.

Scientific studies have proven that a happy mind breeds success. In fact, it makes life better in every way. That's why maintaining a positive attitude is important. This book will teach you exactly how to do that. You'll learn simple and powerful tips to stay happy and vibrant during college and beyond. Thus, prepare yourself for living a life of abundance, happiness, and success.

Beyond sharing the happiness secrets, this book provides an immersive and delightful reading experience. It is packed with captivating stories featuring happiness gurus, playful sages, quirky scientists, and some unusual creatures. What makes it even more special is how they share wisdom in clever and joyful ways, using witty wordplay, unique anecdotes, and humorous analogies. You'll not only learn and feel inspired but also find yourself laughing throughout. So, get ready to exercise your humour muscles.

A special feature of this book is the affirmations at the end of each chapter. Consider these powerful sentences as tiny coaches for your own mind. As you repeat them daily, they'll train your brain in a way that facing challenges with courage and confidence will become second nature. Thus, keep this book by your bedside, and make it a habit to recite these affirmations daily.

Additionally, begin applying each secret as you read it. In just a few days, you'll witness the magic unfold. Your college life will transform into a splendid journey filled with joy and exhilaration. You'll find yourself achieving extraordinary things, surpassing even your own expectations. And that's not all. The brilliant glow on your face, along with a million-dollar smile, will make people stop and wonder, "What's their secret?"

With a spirit of joy and positivity,

Anupam Gakhar

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CHAPTER 2

The First Promise



Inside the classroom, a pleasant hum of conversation filled the air. The students were busy indulging in jovial exchanges. As Professor Hiranya entered, his charismatic persona captured everyone's attention. A wave of enthusiasm swept through the room, illuminating the students' faces with vibrant smiles.

"A hearty welcome to you all," the professor greeted warmly. With a gracious gesture, he produced a box of delectable *kaaju katli* and began passing it around the room. "Please take one each and savour its sweetness. Consider it a bribe so that you pay full attention to the lesson."

The students chuckled, amused by the offering. Each individual reached out and took a piece of *kaaju katli*, relishing the sweet treat.

"That was delicious, Professor. Your wife must be an outstanding cook," Ameek complimented.

Professor Hiranya grinned. “Ameek, before you make a request to come home for dinner, let me tell you I bought this box from a local sweet shop. My wife has nothing to do with it.”

The professor’s comment prompted loud guffaws from the students, and even he couldn’t contain himself.

Advancing further, he said, “Now, friends, let us turn our attention to the serious business of finding happiness.” With a hint of amusement in his voice, he posed, “Who among us desires to be truly happy?”

The students giggled and shot up their hands in unison.

Smiling, Professor Hiranya posed another question, “Who among you wishes for happiness to fall into their lap?”

Once again, with hearty chuckles, all the students raised their hands.

“Aha!” the professor exclaimed, his voice tinged with playful mischief. “How many of you here can lay claim to being long-lost relatives of Sir Isaac Newton?”

Startled by the unusual question, the students giggled.

Professor Hiranya snorted. “Hmm! It appears from your infectious giggles that none of you can assert even the remotest connection to Sir Newton’s distant cousins, let alone the great man himself. Yet, I notice you harbouring lofty aspirations of happiness falling into your lap like his lucky apple!” the professor quipped, his words and the mischievous curl of his lips sparking hearty laughter among the students.



“Nevertheless, I have some good news for you all, my friends,” he said, continuing. “If you don’t share a DNA strand with Sir Newton, just drop your worries. You have this Happiness Course, where you will learn how to craft happiness rather than passively waiting for it to come to you.”

A glow of hope and enthusiasm painted the students’ faces.

Smiling endearingly, the professor proceeded, “Achieving happiness isn’t rocket science. It simply requires three things: number one — a positive attitude; number two — intentional action; and number three — consistent effort.”

The students nodded to show their agreement.

“Think of it as planting a seed and diligently tending to it. Except, in this case, the seed is your happiness, and you must nurture it like an expert farmer! You need to establish boundaries, set up scarecrows, water your life with energising activities, and enrich it with manures that bring you joy. If you do so, the farm of your life will bloom with the glorious harvest of abundant happiness,” the professor explained in an inspiring tone.

Lorenzo lifted his hand, doubt clearly visible on his face. “But what if our pursuits of happiness require a lot of money, say, travelling or shopping?” he asked.

“That’s a valid concern, Lorenzo,” the professor replied. “But you must acknowledge that happiness doesn’t always have to come with a price tag. You can find joy in little things,

like doodling in your notebook, taking a walk in nature, feeding your pet, or spending time with loved ones.”

“What if we don’t have any loved ones, Professor?” Ishitaa asked softly, her voice melancholic.

This left the professor momentarily speechless. “Well, that’s a tough one, Ishitaa,” Professor Hiranya empathised. “We may not realise, yet there are always people in our lives who care about us. Furthermore, we can build new bonds and relationships by stepping out and connecting with different individuals. Some of them will become our loved ones, and we theirs. All we have to do is remain committed to being happy, and everything will fall into place.”

Professor Hiranya’s words resonated with Ishitaa, and she smiled. His perspective also struck a chord with other students, who nodded enthusiastically.

The professor continued. “Happiness is an experience that comes naturally, yet it encompasses a vast breadth of understanding. Today, however, I will guide you in learning and experiencing it right here. Are you geared up for it?” he asked in a fervent tone.

A resounding chorus of “Yes!” filled the room.

“Great!” Professor Hiranya beamed, elated by their collective agreement. “To kick off your first happiness experience, I’d like to share a light-hearted story.”

Voices of “Yay!” danced across the classroom.



A warm smile gracing his face, Professor Hiranya transitioned into the narrative.



In an old town, lived a man by the name of Pataka Bhai. He was a curious character. His physical demeanour gave the impression he was somewhat of an unbalanced mind, but his wit and humour were legendary. He possessed a treasure trove of stories and anecdotes. His words carried insights, and his delivery often sparked laughing riots. These qualities made him a popular figure among the young and the old.

Once, a local college invited Pataka Bhai to speak to a large assembly of students about happiness. The hall buzzed with effervescent animation as the students awaited the quirky scholar, expecting to be inspired, enriched, and enthralled by an unforgettable experience.

The much-anticipated moment arrived. Pataka Bhai entered the hall to a deafening round of applause. As he headed to the podium, his robe got tangled around his feet, launching him into an epic battle to stay upright. He looked like a clown attempting to skate on a soapy floor, his act setting off a tsunami of laughter across the hall.

But Pataka Bhai wasn't the one to let his smile be stolen by such trivial incidents. He rebounded with a mischievous eye-roll and a dazzling smile. This endeared him to the audience, resulting in loud chants of his name. Chuckling, he marched towards the podium, mimicking the regal stride of a king. His playful antics devolved the crowd into a giggling mob.



“Good afternoon, my dear children!” he greeted the assembly of students. “I am addressing you as children because you laughed like them when I stumbled. It made me realise you are among the naughty little ones,” he joked, winking at the young crowd with a wide grin.

Teased with the label ‘naughty children’, the college students burst into hoots and whistles. Some began performing lighthearted mischievous acts, sparking torrential guffaws in the hall.

Waiting for order to be restored, Pataka Bhai continued. “So, my carefree children,” he said, widening his smile, “would you like to listen to a story?”

The crowd thundered “Yes!”

Taking a fleeting pause, Pataka Bhai turned his head to glance at every person in the hall. Flashing a broad grin, he began the narration.

“Once upon a time, there was a farmer who bought a donkey for carrying his farm load. But this donkey was not your ordinary mule. This remarkable creature was a singing sensation, a rockstar. Let me show you how.”

With that, Pataka Bhai launched into playful theatrics, transforming into the avatar of a head-banging rockstar donkey. He began strumming an imaginary guitar slung around his neck, jamming out hard-rock tunes from his vocal chords.

The crowd went berserk, possessed by the fervour of his thrilling performance. Hysterical laughter inundated the



room as the boys and girls imitated him, bellowing their own rhythms.

Grinning and enjoying their revelry, Pataka Bhai waited for a long while for them to settle down so that he could continue. “Every night, as the farmer slept, the donkey would begin belting out raucous melodies in its somewhat distasteful voice,” he said, and chuckled. “This persisted until the four-legged creature reached a state of pure bliss, and the entire neighbourhood had woken up in exasperation. Once again, let me show you how they would have reacted. If you wish, you can mimic me and get a feel of their irritation in real-time,” he joked.

Kicking off a playful display, Pataka Bhai enacted springing up as if startled awake. He produced an exaggerated yawn, extending his arms wider than an elephant’s trunk. Putting on a blown-up expression of frustration, he comically muffled his ears with the pillow, as though striving hard to avoid the donkey’s heavy metal playlist.

Pataka Bhai’s actions drew instant cheers from the jubilant crowd, with each person in the hall mirroring his every gesture. Their joy knew no bounds. Their gleaming faces, twinkling eyes, and enthusiastic engagement were telling evidence of the sheer pleasure they were deriving from his entertaining presentation.

Pataka Bhai paced ahead. “The farmer’s agitated neighbours voiced their grievances, urging him to take action to eliminate the ongoing nuisance. Frustrated and yearning for peaceful sleep, the farmer put on his thinking

cap, determined to find a solution. After much thought, he devised a plan to bring an abrupt halt to the donkey's musical recitals. That night, the farmer tied the donkey's neck to a heavy stone, hoping it would prevent the donkey from singing. However, the braying prodigy had other ideas! Can you guess what?" Pataka Bhai asked, raising his eyebrows with a tinge of mischief.

Eager whispers filled the air, the students curious to hear the animal's response from Pataka Bhai himself.

Sensing their desire, he declared in a booming tone, "With fierce determination, the donkey lifted the stone and sang louder than ever before."

The crowd burst into roaring applause for the donkey.

Amused, Pataka Bhai took to the microphone and asked, "Friends, take a moment and think of the enchanting song the maestro of melodies would have sung?"

The unusual request for predicting the donkey's melody left the crowd bursting with laughter. One person, paying tribute to the donkey's musical talents, released a tuneful *he-haw*. That was enough of a cue to trigger a relay of *he-haw-he-haw* chants in the hall — some original, some plagiarised versions of the donkey's super song. This caused an explosion of whoops and laughs among the students. Pataka Bhai, too, couldn't resist the temptation, and joined the crowd *he-hawing* fervently. The excitement in the hall soared to epic proportions, the atmosphere crackling with euphoria, unmatched, unrivalled, and certainly unforgettable.



In the ensuing merriment, all Pataka Bhai needed was an opportunity to carry on. Fortunately, he was granted one, and he proceeded with the tale.

“The farmer was stunned and startled. Not to mention, he seethed at being outsmarted by a mere donkey,” Pataka Bhai snickered. “However, collecting himself, the farmer resolved to try again. After feeding the donkey the next night, he tied it too close to a tree to sing. Feeling relaxed and patting himself on the back for doing a remarkable job, the farmer went to sleep.”

Smiling playfully, Pataka Bhai paused briefly, observing the eager faces in front of him. “It seems the farmer was under some kind of curse. The moment the clock struck twelve, the farmer found himself wide awake. Convinced that the tree trunk was nothing but a top-tier microphone from a karaoke machine, the long-eared music maestro thought it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Whoa! It thrust itself into singing, spinning around its head like a DJ!” Pataka Bhai giggled. “If you thought that was the pinnacle of its rocking delight, hold onto your seats, because there’s more. The rockstar would occasionally pause, rotate its eyes, soaking up the cheers and the rapturous applause from its invisible audience.”

The crowd exploded into boisterous guffaws.

“The farmer felt miserable. What would his forefathers be thinking of him for losing the game to none other than a donkey? How would he face his fellow villagers?” Pataka Bhai chuckled, mockingly adding, “He contemplated running away from the village for a few days.”



The audience roared with laughter.

Pataka Bhai continued with a grin. “The farmer’s inner voice urged him to try again. Tossing his resignation out of the window, he put his ‘great escape’ on hold. Swearing on his favourite potato variety, he vowed to give his mind-bending mission another shot. Thus, the farmer sat to jot down a hundred ideas to prevent the donkey from singing and zeroed down on one. Do you want to know what it was?”

The sound of “Yes!” bounced off the walls in the hall with the students raring to know of the farmer’s plan.

Pataka Bhai smiled, his eyes twinkling with mischief. He continued, “The next night, the farmer tied the ace vocalist’s mouth shut with an extravagant rope, one so expensive that even tycoons would shy to buy. This was to ensure there was no chance of failure. And to prevent any midnight crisis, the farmer slept next to the donkey. He wanted to see how the clever quadruped could find a way out of it now.”

Taking a lingering pause, Pataka Bhai gazed at the crowd with a contagious smile, stoking their eagerness. It sparked a murmur among the students, eager to know whether the farmer succeeded or if the donkey once again outsmarted him.

When the wait grew hard to bear, someone from the crowd cried out, “What happened next?”

Pataka Bhai chuckled. “What do you expect from such a phenomenal singer?” he asked with excitement. “At the stroke of midnight, the musical prodigy found a way once



again,” he declared, thumping the podium with joy and ardent zeal.

The students burst into hooting and cheering for the inspiring animal, almost as if they were proclaiming it the global monarch of wisdom and talent.

“How is this possible?” a voice from the crowd inquired.

Pataka Bhai grinned. “The songster launched into a humming concert without opening its mouth!” he exclaimed fervently, triggering a wave of laughter and resounding applause for the clever donkey that kept echoing in the hall for a prolonged period.

As the crowd settled, Pataka Bhai forged ahead. “Once more, the artful animal outwitted the farmer. But here’s something that you must listen to with all ears.”

The hall turned into an oasis of silence.

“Because of this incident, the farmer had three realisations,” Pataka Bhai proclaimed. “First, there’s no better road to success than persistence. It amazed the farmer that the donkey did not lose hope and kept trying.”

The crowd concurred with nods.

“Second, it’s best to embrace people’s unique qualities for their happiness. Even if there’s a justifiable reason to suppress them, one should try to find a mutually agreeable compromise. After all, our happiness stems from surrounding ourselves with happy beings. The farmer realised he had been so focused on stopping the donkey from

singing that he forgot about the donkey's happiness, causing distress to both."

Again, all expressed their agreement with nods.

"Third and the most powerful of all," Pataka Bhai said in a commanding voice. "Listen closely, for this lesson can change your life. And the lesson is: it is vital to remain committed to your happiness, no matter what — obstacles — come — your — way," he stressed, punctuating each word with a pause.

Inigorated and inspired, the audience inundated the room with electric applause.

"Now, my dear children," he pressed on, his voice laced with enthusiasm, "I want you all to take this oath with me. Speak loudly, not once but thrice; I will remain committed to my happiness, no matter what obstacles come my way."

The crowd echoed the statement three times in succession with boundless energy, feeling uplifted and inspired. Pataka Bhai's face lit up with pure delight. He had achieved the goal of instilling in their hearts the vital significance of perseverance, celebrating individuality, and cherishing personal happiness above all else in their lives.

Pataka Bhai concluded. "That's all from my side, young fellows. I hope you enjoyed the story and will carry the valuable lessons into your life. I thank you all for being excellent listeners." Then, with a passionate voice that could kindle a blaze of enthusiasm even in stones, he showered his blessings upon them, saying, "May God bless each one of you with all the happiness of the world. May your smiles ignite a



revolution of joy wherever you go. May you perpetually soar and illuminate the universe.”

All members of the audience rose from their seats, their hands colliding in thunderous applause. Their hoots, shouts, and whistles electrified the atmosphere as in a rock concert. It was a sign of heartfelt appreciation for Pataka Bhai.

With a gracious nod, Pataka Bhai bid the students farewell. As he made his way out, his robe snagged on his foot once more, leading him to stumble again. This time, instead of laughing, the students simply smiled. This was out of their deep-seated respect for the man who had delivered an incredibly insightful talk. He had enhanced his image even further as a venerated guru in their minds.



The captivating tale and the profound lessons it carried left the students of the Happiness Course spellbound. Witnessing the abundance of inspiration within them and observing their joyful expressions, Professor Hiranya’s heart brimmed with delight.

Pinaaki rose to her feet. “You are truly a master storyteller, Professor! Your narration transported us to the hall, making us feel like we were listening to Pataka Bhai live. I loved it!” she exclaimed.

“Thank you, my dear,” Professor Hiranya replied, his face adorned with a wide smile of gratitude. “But, let me remind you, I am not finished yet with today’s lesson. Thus, reserve some praise for later, too.”

The students cracked up, amused by his remarkable sense of humour.

With a grin, Professor Hiranya proceeded, “Well, I have a little nugget of wisdom to share. Folks, in your daily grind, you often pick what seems right to the world, not what lights up your soul. That’s being unfair to yourself! Don’t you think so?”

He paused, scanning the thoughtful faces of his students.

“When you must choose between two equally tempting options, go for the one that promises to give you maximum happiness. That way, the feeling of satisfaction from your chosen option will always outweigh the regret of leaving the other. Any guesses why?”

The students gazed at him, eager to hear the answer.

“Because you listened to the voice of your heart, you went with your soul’s call,” he shared with a pleasant smile.

Everyone concurred with spirited nods, feeling motivated and intrigued by the professor’s advice.

“Just a minute, Professor,” Venkat chimed in.

Before he could complete his sentence, Professor Hiranya playfully intervened. “Totally with you, Venkat!” he exclaimed with a smile. “There might be exceptions, but let’s try living by this rule and see our happiness soar, shall we? Come on, give it a try and let me know how it goes!”

The students giggled at the professor’s ‘try before you buy’ pitch.



“I’m on board, Professor,” Hardik affirmed. “We often settle for fried *samosas*, when we should gulp in scoops of ice-cream on a hot day. With your advice now on my menu, I’ll make my happiness plate a gourmet feast, customising it with all my favourite dishes, rather than those half-cooked canteen specials because of the lure of the discount.”

“I am impressed by your appetising culinary analogy, Hardik. I shall hastily conclude the class to join you in your gourmet feast, honouring my sacred commitment to happiness,” the professor joked, drawing oodles of laughter from the class.

Carrying on with his explanation, Professor Hiranya expanded, “Folks, being committed to your happiness means taking risks, following your passions, and not worrying about what other people think. It means doing what makes you truly happy, even if it’s unconventional, of course, within the limits of decency and personal safety. So, the first promise you need to make to yourself is that whenever you must choose between the norm and happiness, you will choose...” He left it for the students to complete the sentence.

“Happiness!” the students shouted at the top of their voices, almost shaking the windowpanes.

Rising from her seat with a warm smile, Ishitaa remarked, “Professor, echoing Pinaaki’s sentiment, I’d say, you possess an exceptional gift for teaching. And I can prove it right here.” Turning to face her classmates, she asked, “Does everyone agree with me?”

“Yes!” the students responded with enthusiasm.

Almost instantly, Lorenzo started a round of applause for the professor, and others quickly joined in. Much to their amusement, Professor Hiranya raised his hands in a gesture of gratitude, playfully blowing flying kisses at them.

With a cheerful smile, he said, “It is my pleasure to be your tour guide on this journey of happiness and self-discovery. Thank you so much. Our next session is scheduled for the upcoming week. Until then, enjoy yourself. God bless you!”

Energised by the wisdom and love they had received from the professor, the students exited the room, keen to advance their learning with him for a brighter and happier future.

Professor Hiranya followed them, a smile of contentment giving his face a warm glow. On the way, he thought, “At present, they are unaware that appreciation is a great tool for making someone happy. Though I have yet to teach them the techniques for creating happiness, their admiration has already filled me with joy.” Halting momentarily, he mused, “A child is undoubtedly the father of the man.”

Pleased by his own unspoken reflections, he shook his head, chuckling, and resumed his march forward.





SHAPE YOUR HAPPINESS

Promise yourself that you'll give priority to your happiness in every decision. The following statements will help you chart that course. Affirming these regularly will transform your perspective and set you on a journey towards boundless joy and deep fulfilment. Read and repeat the affirmations below, substituting 'can' with 'will,' to reinforce your determination and carve a life filled with happiness.

To be happier:

- I *can* create happiness around me by upholding a positive attitude always.
- Each day, I *can* make sure not to let trivial incidents steal my smile.
- Each day, I *can* water the seeds of a positive attitude for my lasting happiness.
- Each day, I *can* stay committed to my happiness.
- Each day, I *can* conquer big and small obstacles and achieve my goals.
- Each day, I *can* strive to improve my skills to deliver stellar performance.
- Each day, I *can* shower appreciation on my loved ones so that they give their best.



CHAPTER 4

The Ten Secrets of Happiness



As Professor Hiranya walked in, the room came alive with a burst of excitement and anticipation. Students, already seated, straightened up, and those trickling in hurried to take their places. The prospect of knowing the secrets had butterflies dancing in their stomachs.

Looking refreshed after a hot cup of *masala chai*, Professor Hiranya embarked on the next part of the day's lecture.

"Welcome again, my dear chums. This round is going to be a riot of learning. Get ready. I am going to reveal something about the secrets of leading a happy life."

The room resounded with jubilant shouts of "Yay!" and excited exclamations of "Aha!"

With a hint of mock surprise on his face, the professor exclaimed, "Oh! How could I forget this? I'm sorry folks, but there's some work to be done before we get to the secrets of happiness!"

Loud shouts of “No!” echoed through the disappointed students.

“I regret, but you’ll have to bear with me for this. I will conduct a brief survey in the class before we proceed further,” the professor announced.

The students’ enthusiasm took a further nosedive, their faces resembling wilted vegetables left out in the sun for too long.

“Now, now, don’t give me those pitiful expressions. It’s just a survey, not a life sentence,” Professor Hiranya joked, a grin spreading across his face. “And if I ask you to fill out lengthy forms or write essays, you can claim ownership of my neighbour’s car!”

The professor’s strange offer elicited a wave of chuckles from the students. Their enthusiasm staged a triumphant comeback, filling the room with renewed energy.

Professor Hiranya proceeded, a vibrant smile illuminating his face. “So, here’s question number one. Who among us drowns their sorrows in ice-cream when feeling upset?”

Everyone giggled and raised their hands.

Chuckling, he posed the second question. “Who among us feels like their mind goes into overdrive when trying to focus on a task?”

Again, a cascade of grins filled the room, and all hands shot up in one go.

“Ah, you guys could give my grandma a run for her money. To date, she was the only one who could win a Nobel



Prize for having maximum thoughts at one time if there were one. But now it seems she must face fierce competition, for this class has many more deserving candidates!” Professor Hiranya commented, flashing a mischievous wink.

Teased, the students burst into loud laughter.

“Next question! Who among us forgets to exercise but never forgets to eat an entire pizza?”

“I!” everyone shouted in unison before erupting into a galore of giggles.

The mere mention of a pizza had Hardik salivating, which Professor Hiranya noticed.

“Hardik, seeing the ravenous hunger in your eyes, I’m wondering if you’re thinking of just eating a pizza or proposing marriage to it,” he remarked, sparking effervescent guffaws in the class.

Grinning, Professor Hiranya resumed the survey. “Now, there are two more questions left, but these are on a serious note,” he stressed. “Who among us creates time for watching stand-up comedy with friends but can’t find time for family?”

Only a few hands went up this time, largely out of hesitation. As they began introspecting on their own lives, a feeling of disheartenment became visible on their faces. Most college students prioritised their entertainment and friends over their families, and this class was no different.

Nevertheless, Professor Hiranya didn’t let that linger and posed the next question quickly. “Last but not least, who

among us thinks spirituality is about joining a cult and having fun?”

Ameeek sprang up eagerly. “I totally feel that way!” he shouted with unbridled excitement.

“Bad!” Professor Hiranya retorted instantaneously, turning the classroom into a canvas of grins. “Spirituality is a personal journey, way beyond joining a cult and having fun, my friend,” he contended.

The students nodded in agreement, endorsing his point of view.

“Some of you might be curious about why I asked those questions. Well, in each question lay hidden one colourful component of the grand secret of happiness. And that greatest secret is ‘self-care’. Friends, it is nothing else but self-care, which is at the core of a life filled with love, laughter, and fulfilment.”

“Self-care! Sorry, I didn’t get that, Professor. What is self-care? Can you shed some more light on it?” Ishitaa requested, sounding completely ignorant.

“Okay, let me explain that,” Professor Hiranya agreed. “Self-care is like giving your body and mind a luxurious spa experience every single day. More importantly, without the hefty price tag,” he chuckled. “Just like bricks are essential for building a sturdy house, self-care is essential for building a healthy and happy life.”

Meenu transported her gaze towards him, looking perplexed. “Professor, I am still struggling to understand this



concept. Could you offer an additional perspective on self-care?” she urged.

“Yes, sure, I can,” Professor Hiranya replied with a warm smile before asking, “Do you all agree that we are our greatest asset?”

The students nodded.

“I’m glad we all are on the same page,” Professor Hiranya affirmed. “Now, everyone here knows that assets require some sort of care to prolong their lifespan, uphold their value, and ensure they perform at their best. Don’t we?” he further asked.

The students again nodded their heads.

“When you pamper yourself with a long, warm shower, doesn’t it give you that ‘Ahh, this is the life’ feeling?” the professor jestingly inquired.

The students responded with giggles, showing their agreement.

“That pampering is nothing more than tending to both your body and mind. When you engage in these activities, taking on the role of caregiver, it is referred to as self-care. And the good news is that we human beings are the ultimate self-care experts. That’s our secret superpower!” he asserted.

Professor Hiranya ran a quick gaze across the room, taking in his students’ posture and expressions. He wanted to gauge if they were grasping the concept of self-care.

Satisfied they were absorbing it, he proceeded. “In simple words, self-care is all about intentionally setting aside time

each day to engage in activities that make you feel relaxed and rejuvenated. Thus, whether it's practising *yog*, taking a walk in nature, listening to music, or indulging in a delicious treat, self-care is all about prioritising yourself. All you have to do is figure out what brings you joy and create opportunities to engage in those activities daily."

"Professor, is self-care a fancy way of saying we become *yog*-loving, herbal tea-sipping, meditation-practising modern-day saints? I mean, those who also enjoy an occasional treat of spicy noodles and Bollywood movies," Pinaaki interjected, winking an eye.

The students chuckled at her lighthearted intervention.

Well, it certainly sounds like a great way to practise self-care, Pinaaki! I'd rather be happy taking spiritual initiation, or what you call '*diksha*', from a saint leading such a zesty, vibrant, and flavourful lifestyle. Would you mind sending me the address and location of his prestigious 'Salvation Through Indulgence' *ashram*? I can't wait to find enlightenment between dessert courses," Professor Hiranya quipped, eliciting loud guffaws from the students.

"Professor, if my soul finds celestial bliss in spicy *dhokla* and *rava laddu*, can I savour them for the sake of my self-care? Wouldn't it be a form of gastronomic meditation?" Hardik inquired with a sly smile, prompting snorts and snickers from his classmates.

Comprehending foodie Hardik's mischievous intent, the professor exclaimed, "Ah, that's yet another saintly practice, indeed!" Chuckling, he added, "By all means, yes, Hardik. Engaging in activities that encourage the secretion of a flood



of digestive juices is the epitome of self-care. I'm pulling this nugget of wisdom straight out of your future seminal research paper, *A Buffet Annihilator's Guide to Ultimate Inner Peace* – a pioneering study in the sacred art of beast-like devouring and earth-rattling burping.”

The entire class burst into side-splitting laughter, the mesmerising ‘belly dance’ of Hardik’s intestines adding to the hilarity.

Once the students regained their bearings, their wide smiles still prevalent, Professor Hiranya subtly transitioned back to the topic. “It is all about being purposeful in how you take care of yourself,” he stated. “As college students, you may often feel overwhelmed with academic and personal responsibilities. It is self-care that provides you with the tools and resources you need to manage these pressures, and beyond. These tools help you stay focused, motivated, and healthy.”

Professor Hiranya’s explanation didn’t entirely satisfy Bhanu. “Can you highlight how some of these tools and resources actually help us in our daily lives, Professor?” she requested, seeking illumination.

“Absolutely! Let me try again,” Professor Hiranya replied. “Folks, imagine self-care as the spectacular concert and self-care activities as the magnificent dancers performing on our life’s grand stage to charm our well-being. Some of these talented artists execute slow moves that instil calm and allow us peaceful sleep, some engage in energetic steps that boost our energy levels, and some simply create a warm sense of belonging through graceful gestures. They all do different

things and make our life a superhit show,” he explained, pausing to let his words connect with the students.

“There’s something profound to understand here. All self-care activities aren’t just on-stage performers; some are our trusted dance assistants. They empower us to confront life’s surprises with finesse, much like mastering challenging dance moves. And that’s not all! Some self-care practices play the role of subtle choreographers, quietly aiding us in unexpected ways, such as improving our team-building or organisational skills in real life,” Professor Hiranya elaborated. “That’s how important self-care is to our existence!” he exclaimed, locking eyes with the students, driving home the significance of his message.

Professor Hiranya’s revelation left Bhanu and the other students speechless with surprise. None of them had ever considered or paid attention to self-care activities, let alone analysed their significant impact on the overall happiness and well-being of human beings.

“Wow! Professor, it means self-care is the all-rounder in life’s cricket match! It bats against day-to-day googlies, bowls out stress, runs out disruptions, and stumps away illnesses of body and mind,” Lorenzo stated, presenting a cricketing analogy, garnering praise from everyone.

“Lorenzo, I’d rather say, self-care is the ‘Man of the Match’ of our life’s pitch! Nonetheless, my friend, I must commend your intelligent round-up. You’re truly a complete package, an extraordinary cricketer with the brain of a fox,” Professor Hiranya joked, causing the class to burst into grins.



Then, raising his tone, he announced, “Get ready, folks! In the upcoming sessions, I’ll be sharing some intriguing secrets with you. Today, as promised, I’ll reveal just the first one. Beware; it’s so amazing that you might find yourselves on the edge of your seats with excitement!”

His statement had the students enthused and filled with keen anticipation. Whispers of ‘I wonder what the first secret is?’ echoed throughout the room.

Professor Hiranya paused, scanning their eager faces.

“I’m sorry, but there’s yet again one thing between you and the first secret,” he announced with a grin, bending to draw out something from his bag. Pulling out a shiny silver flute, he held it up. “And that’s this flute! Now, I know what you’re thinking — why does a happiness professor need a flute? Is he secretly a one-man band?” he said with a mischievous glint in his eyes.

There was pin-drop silence in the class, the students as baffled as newborn lambs lost in a den of wolves.

Showing complete disregard for their perplexed expressions, the professor continued. “I don’t mean to toot my flute, but that’s true, I’m a one-man band,” he declared, sly pompousness written large on his face. Taking a deep breath of joy, he expressed, “Ah, playing this little beauty is the key to unlocking my sunny spirits. And with my mood at an all-time high, you’re in for the happiest lecture of your life! So, get your ears ready, for this performance is bound to stick with you as your favourite earworm for the rest of your lives!”

The unexpected and ‘forced’ invitation left the students completely stunned, their minds struggling to grasp the sudden musical detour in the middle of an otherwise engaging session. Nonetheless, with their expectations set sky-high by the professor, they sat attentively to attend the finest concert of their lives.

Sporting a pleasant smile, Professor Hiranya commenced his flute recital. As he went on, his eyes closed, as though he had got lost in the melody.

The class waited for the entrancing moment, like puppies staring at a milky feast. However, the music, which was supposed to be magical, sounded like a crow cawing in a bad mood after mistakenly drinking vinegar instead of chocolate milkshake. Minute after excruciating minute crawled by, slower than a snail on sleeping pills. When Ameek could bear it no longer, he let out a dramatic cough, louder and hoarser than a donkey’s angry bray. It worked!

Professor Hiranya opened up his eyes gradually, as if coming out of a deep trance. He noticed his students gawking at him like baffled buffaloes. It wasn’t difficult for him to realise that their suffering was synonymous with that of the previous batches. They, too, had just endured his musical concert. Wearing a self-doting smile, he took it in his stride, for he was in deep love with his instrument and nothing could deter him from playing it again the next semester. After all, he was the one who had made them take the oath of staying committed to their own happiness. Filled with motivation, but giggling inside, he offered his apologies.



“Sorry guys. I just love playing the flute and I go into a deep meditative state. I can see the admiration in your eyes for my performance. Before you make a request, I’m afraid I can’t teach you how to play it, even if you offer to polish my shoes,” he quipped, struggling to contain his laughter.

The students burst into guffaws, thoroughly charmed by the professor’s jocular excellence.

Unable to restrain himself, Professor Hiranya, too, waded into the merriment. Playing host to a lively smile, he advanced. “Weaving magic with the flute just makes me forget everything. Anyway, can someone remind me what we were supposed to talk about? I think it was something vital to our mental health, wasn’t it?” he asked, as though trying to recall something insignificant.

Meenu, aware of the professor’s playful nature, took it upon herself to jog his memory. With a mischievous smile, she said, “Professor, weren’t we going to discuss the first secret of happiness?”

“Voila!” Professor Hiranya exclaimed, shaking his head. “It seems I have returned from a long exile. I am so delighted,” he said euphorically. Changing his tone to a solemn one, he voiced, “More so, to see you all so engaged in class. That’s because your attentiveness truly reflects your commitment, and your enthusiasm foretells your future. Those who possess these two traits are not only intelligent but also destined to succeed in life.”

The students instantly broke into smiles, relishing the professor’s subtle but completely unexpected appreciation.

“But do you know intelligence itself is insufficient for attaining optimal mental well-being? It is, in fact, intricately woven with emotions in the fabric of our lives. Intelligence alone is like having a high-tech smartphone with all the latest features, but no battery,” he jested, the relatable example drawing chuckles from the students.

Smiling, the professor proceeded, “Yes, it may look impressive, but it’s useless without the energy to power it. While we spend days and nights boosting our intellectual capacities, we often forget to nurture our emotional side. Imagine this: You’re a master architect designing a magnificent building. But you’re only focusing on the sleek exterior, giving no attention to the sturdy foundation. Guess what? Your building might appear imposing, but it won’t stand the test of time!”

The students found depth in the logic.

“Similarly, my happiness comrades, you must keep one thing in mind when erecting the skyscraper of your happiness. Ensure the pillars of your intellectual framework stand on the firm foundation of your emotional wellbeing,” he emphasised.

The class nodded their heads. Professor Hiranya was unfolding the blueprint for creating happiness in a truly captivating manner.

In this engrossing moment, Pinaaki stood up, a giggle rippling through her lips. Professor Hiranya could sense she had a prank or comical observation in her mind.

“Professor, I cannot hold back this example. Isn’t emotional neglect akin to having teeth but forgetting to brush



them? And we all know what happens when someone neglects their dental hygiene!” she quipped.

“What happens then?” Venkat asked, his face mirroring a befuddled emoji on a smartphone.

The entire class erupted into a guffaw fest, surprised by Venkat’s innocent cluelessness.

“Hmm,” the professor said, looking curiously at Venkat. “Dear Venkat, in that case, you walk around with stinky breath, sending people looking for rabbit holes to save their lives.”

The students broke into maniacal grins, tears flowing from their eyes, Professor Hiranya’s wit proving to be a sold-out hit.

Venkat took his seat, realising he had taken Pinaaki’s query too seriously.

“Thank you for sharing that humorous but insightful comparison, Pinaaki. Just like brushing your teeth keeps your mouth clean and healthy, *emotional self-care* keeps your emotions healthy and your mind clean. Without that, you’re on your way to joining the team of muddle-heads! Would any of you want that?” he asked, chuckling.

A collective roar of “No way” echoed through the room followed by snorts and giggles.

He continued. “We need to be kind to ourselves and do all that’s possible to keep ourselves in a feel-good mental state. *Emotional self-care* is the perfect tool for that. Practising

emotional self-care is like giving ourselves a soft mental hug every day!”

Professor Hiranya paused, his gaze meeting each face. “So, by now, you should have discerned the first secret of happiness. And that secret is *emotional self-care*!” he declared with a pride-filled smile.

“Hurray!” the students shouted, a wave of joy sweeping through them, the long-awaited first secret having been finally revealed.

“To ingrain this in the mind, repeat after me: The first secret of leading a happy life is *emotional self-care*,” the professor instructed, a sly smile visible on his face.

Breaking into chuckles, the students obediently echoed the statement like playschool children, laughing heartily thereafter.

Amidst the sea of delighted faces, Professor Hiranya noticed Ameek raising his hand. He invited him to pose his query.

“Professor, it was challenging for us to synchronise our butts to your flute’s tunes. I couldn’t help but notice the sheer commitment with which you played the instrument, completely immersed in your self-professed enchanting melody,” Ameek voiced with a wry chuckle. “I’m genuinely curious to know how your playing the flute intertwines with the concept of *emotional self-care*.”

Looking straight into Ameek’s eyes, Professor Hiranya replied, “Ah, Ameek, it seems your butts are in dire need of *Panchakarma* oil therapy! Once those rusted gears get the



royal treatment, only then they'll be able to glide and groove to the enthralling melodies of my flute!"

The professor's lightning-fast, hilarious retort sparked a laughter riot in the class.

Adopting an earnest tone, Professor Hiranya explained, "The true beauty of *emotional self-care* lies in its being personal and unique for every individual. Playing the flute is undoubtedly my personal passion. But it also serves as a magical pathway for me to connect with my inner self, discover profound calm, and experience waves of divine joy."

He paused, his facial expression suggesting he was reflecting on the heart-warming memories created by his music.

"The flute is not just an instrument; it is a gateway to my emotions," the professor expressed. "When I play, I allow myself to dissolve in the melodies, letting the music transport me to another world — a realm of profound peace and inexplicable bliss. It becomes a form of meditation, a way to release stress and unwind from the demands of everyday life. Playing the flute is that special self-care activity that brings me immense happiness. And I realise it leaves my audiences charmed too," the professor jestingly remarked.

The students melted into chuckles. Despite Professor Hiranya making light of his performance, they could sense the genuine passion and fulfilment that radiated from him as he spoke about his flute. And that impressed them the most.

Sporting a warm smile, Professor Hiranya continued. "*Emotional self-care* is to the soul what breath is to life. Thus,

identify and embrace activities that make your soul sway. Treat them as your weapons of stress destruction. Regular engagement in these activities is bound to significantly enhance your day-to-day happiness, leading to long-term fulfilment.”

“Brilliant! That’s such a simple and yet powerful solution, Professor,” Ameek complimented.

“Professor, it is clear that neglecting *emotional self-care* is like trying to bake a cake without any flour. All you’d get is a sad-looking pudding that will make even the stray dogs wrinkle their noses,” Hardik joked, inciting grins in the class.

Breaking the jollity, Misaal redirected the discussion back to the topic. “Professor, for our comfort, could you suggest some of the most common *emotional self-care* activities?” he requested.

“Well, that’s a valid question, Misaal. But I am afraid the time is up for today. We shall carry this topic into the next class,” the professor replied.

Everyone in the class felt dismayed, for they had become deeply absorbed in the concept.

To bring their smiles back, the professor asked, “Before we disperse, would you want to have another round of the riveting flute concert?”

“No way!” they shouted simultaneously, roaring with laughter.

Professor Hiranya contorted his face into the shape of a squeezed lemon before joining the class in their guffaws, almost falling off his chair.





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Self-care is the foundational pillar of a fulfilling life. The affirmations that follow possess the transformative power to uplift your spirits, lighten stress, and empower you to lead a happier, healthier life. Read and repeat the statements below, substituting 'can' with 'will'.

To be happier:

- I *can* practise self-care for my mind and body for a healthier and happier life.
- I *can* indulge in activities that ignite my passions and uplift my spirits.
- I *can* immerse myself in *yog*, nature walks, and music for relaxation.
- I *can* create time to enhance my intellectual capacities and emotional well-being simultaneously.
- I *can* treat myself with kindness to consistently maintain a positive mental state.
- I *can* take refuge in self-care to face challenges, feel positive, and become unstoppable.
- I *can* actively seek caring friendships, for these emotional bonds enhance happiness.



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