



THE

HAPPY WORLD

OF

UNHAPPY

PEOPLE

BY MIKE P

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People

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*People are fascinating creatures: in a world of endless activities,
they still have managed to invent boredom.*

No wonder people are masters at creating boredom rather than being masters at solutions. You'll understand this more when you dive further into the book.

One of the most significant imperfections of the modern world is that it spoils us with an unbelievable abundance of goods within our reach that can be obtained effortlessly and at moderately low prices. Similar to all great things in life, we often find ourselves taking them for granted all too soon, in this way taking every chance away from ourselves to truly appreciate how amazing our life is and enjoy it to the fullest. Of which due to so many options available at our doorsteps, we have a snowball's chance in hell.

Compared to our over-exertive ancestors, we have become so passive. This is not a secret. No more do we roam around with spears in our hands to hunt for food to sustain ours and our families' lives, nor do we put up a fight to protect our homes.

We have created services to take care of us at any time we are in trouble; we have all sorts of technologies to communicate with our loved ones and friends in a matter of seconds. Games, movies, and TV shows entertain us every time we feel a little down; we even have different machines and robots to do our chores, saving us a tremendous amount of time! We live in a perfect world that has everything for everyone! We have made our lifestyles as easy as the ABCs with the technologies, yet, at the end of the day, we still get the nagging feeling that we're missing something... something truly significant, like a missing puzzle piece. Something that always keeps us one step from being completely happy.

For quite a while now, I have been contemplating and overthinking some ideas, but enough with gatekeeping, I would like to share them with you. With all said and done, it feels like it is the time to sit down and have a little conversation about why you (and me, and pretty much everyone else) are unhappy with the roller coaster life in this massive amusement park called The Earth.

Let's clear things up first: I'm not here to sell you a magic pill that will change your life drastically. Neither am I here to tell you the secret of becoming successful, rich, or loved more than you are now. I am confident that you possess a measure of those elements already. What I will try to do, though, is share with you a different perspective to look at your life that, optimistically, will remind you: you're actually doing OK. I would try to illustrate that you are not only surviving the lifeboat but also thriving in it in your own unique way.

So, you, my Friend, do me a little favor: fix yourself something to drink, bring some snacks, and sit comfortably on a chair, because we have a long way to go now. You know how it happens

- once in a while, you come across someone, let the time go, and only with the first rays of sunlight do you realize that you've talked to that someone through the night. Feel free to get refills for your drinks between the chapters. So, my Friend, the key to happiness is - ...

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BRAIN

“Ego is to the true self what a flashlight is to a spotlight.”

John Bradshaw

It is quite interesting that if we put our EGOs out of the picture, we would come to an understanding that biologically, we are wired nearly identically. Let’s begin the chapter by understanding how the human nervous system and brain works. We’ll shine a little light on processes that are happening within the body. This knowledge will help you understand what happiness is, in its most *natural* form.

You, my Friend, do hear (these days more than ever) those weird words like *dopamine*, *serotonin*, *oxytocin*, *adrenaline*, and the list goes on. And, apparently, according to a tremendous number of social media storytellers, all that unfamiliar stuff has a significant effect on your everyday being.

Afresh, the practice of *dopamine detoxification* has been extensively advertised on every corner as some sort of sacred wonder and a total game changer. But let’s leave those confusing words out for a moment and delve into a smidgen (tad) bit of science

to understand what the brain really wants.

If we were to compare our body to a computer, then the brain, most obviously, would be an analogy of a processor. Just like in a computer, our 'processor' receives input signals from the sensory nervous system (senses like touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing), analyzes them, and sends output signals via tiny wires called nerves to human output devices - muscles and organs. "What for?" You may ask. Well, for one reason only: to fulfill our immediate needs.

A *need* - is a psychological feature that makes us, let's say, get our butts off a couch and go places to get a bite (preferably to our fridge, to conserve precious energy). It is worth noting that things have become more accessible in the latest patches of our virtual reality. The players of beta versions of 'Life' had to go through much tougher challenges just to make it through to another day.

So, essentially, a *need* for something creates a *goal* in our mind and it makes our system work towards it. And to make it possible for our complicated body to complete tasks like these, our brain analyzes the current need (or needs), selects the more pressing one, and sends signals to our muscles to move our body toward the desired solution.

The priority of needs was well presented back in 1943 by psychologist Abraham Maslow. Physiological needs lie at the foundation level, and they drive the entirety that will keep our brain and, hence, our body running. The inclusion of sex to basic needs has been controversial. Yet, Mr. Maslow must have been a pure soul, and by 'sex' meant nothing but the quick mixing of one's DNA with another person's in some darkened corner only for the sake of creating a new player into this world.

Level two describes the need for safety. Also reasonable.

As a human being, you want to be secure about your health - the fewer health points the lower are chances for you to remain in the game. The need for safety is vast; it permeates various aspects of life. Nobody wants bombs falling on their head or people beating them in the streets (physical security). Distancing people who constantly drive you crazy gives you some sort of peace (emotional security). And, last but not least, the need for financial security. It applies more towards the players of higher levels, usually 25 and above. Financial security means being sure you have enough in-game resources to take care of yourself (easy mode), your spouse, and a little one (difficult mode). The difficulty mode you play on is directly proportional to the number of people who depend on you financially.

Lack of resources damages your emotional security first then it affects your health points, and, eventually, the perfect world you've been building for so long will collapse just like a house of cards. Lone wolves might dodge this bullet to a certain limit, yet, as soon as you get involved in social relationships like marriage and family - your loved ones would be the first to put you under pressure to provide. Choose wisely, my Friend. Those who are supposed to have your back do have a hidden superpower to hurt you the most.

Level three delves into the need for romance and sexual relationships for pleasure. But honestly, with the head-whirling amount of online gaming and food delivery services, only a tiny percentage of us, incels, have the courage to step out of our comfort zones and reach higher than level two.

Level four involves esteem needs. At this point, you've finished with your body needs, and it's time to boost your EGO. Back in the day, building your esteem was based solely

on your abilities and achievements. The more qualified and indispensable you were as a unit, the more admiration you got from society, significantly boosting your self-esteem big time. These days, however, shortcuts have been found—no need to waste precious years of youth on education and career—a cute face, the ability to undress, and a social media account could do wonders skyrocketing your self-esteem. The recoil hits hard, though: too many lost and empty souls, yet full of amour-propre, compete in toxicity with each other day and night. (I'm not a hater. I silently envy).

And ultimately, the fifth level, self-actualization—the top of Olympus, where only gods reside. After one has successfully gone through levels one to four, fulfilled all their needs, and built enough esteem, they realize there's no other way higher up but to become a better version of themselves. At this point, no need to worry about the basic necessities; the sole goal is to reach one's full potential. In the real world, the milestone can be described as non-existent. Only a handful of true samurais have enough determination to ascend over the material goods that the world has to offer. Others merely ask, 'Why?' and keep partying.

Apart from moving a body from point A to point B, the brain also uses the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) to make sure we breathe, our heart pumps blood and provides organs with oxygen, and so on and so forth. ANS works rather unconsciously, so we would not forget to breathe or maintain our heartbeat when engrossed in things substantial for us in the moment—a slice of pizza, for example, or a complicated strategy of how to finally ask a crush out without having an egg on our face.

ANS is divided into the *Sympathetic nervous system* (associated with stress) and the *Parasympathetic nervous system* (associated

with peace). Human organs receive controlling signals through neurons of both, and follow the signal produced by the dominant system at that specific time. The sympathetic system stimulates the fight or flight response of one's body, triggered when the brain experiences any stressful situation. The brain starts operating faster and eating up more energy in those moments like the fuel in cars speeding up.

The parasympathetic system, on the other hand, stimulates 'rest and digest' responses. It gets the floor when you have successfully coped with whatever bothered you. The brain says it's time to rest and stores its precious energy for another stressful time. It is similar to a car, when we reach our desired speed, we let go of the foot on the accelerator and let the engine run at low rpm to conserve fuel.

The parasympathetic system slows down your heartbeat and puts you to sleep at night, so you will be ready to conquer the world again the next day. Although the idea is simple, the fast pace of modern life makes it feel challenging and it has become crucial to maintain the balance between the two. Stress burns you out, you start hating things that surround you, and hate creates more stress. Thus, the vicious cycle continues.

*You need to work as much and as hard as you possibly can
Only then you'll have a chance to afford the best therapist to fix you.*

After you read the joke, neurons in your brain send signals to each other to process it. Every function of our body, from our emotions to our memory and countless signals sent to our muscles and organs, is an electrical signal transmitted by neurons. Chemistry also plays an important role.

To transmit a signal *between* neurons, they (neurons) produce

a signaling molecule, - a *neurotransmitter* - a chemical which fills the gap between two neurons. At every moment inside the human nervous system, there's a rivalry on whether to transmit the information (a useful signal) or not (if the signal is irrelevant).

Understanding this model of operation destroys the possibility of every clickbait video that promises to bring your brain to 100% efficacy to make you super productive. Usually, only about 10% of neurons in our brain work simultaneously. The rest are inactive. Besides, the neurons that belong to ANS are completely out of our control.

Suppose you've managed to engage all the neurons of your brain. It does not mean you've become smarter. It implies that the brain simultaneously sends signals to sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. It feels as if your heart has been told to speed up and relax at the same moment. Wouldn't it be ridiculous if your brain transmits signals like you are hungry and not hungry, you are thirsty and not thirsty while you are trying to focus on some task? Wouldn't you want to concentrate on one thing and not be bothered by something else to be more productive? *Productive brainwork engages not all but only the required-for-the-task neurons at a time.*

Another type of neuron that we can control is *motor neurons* - neurons that are connected to our muscles. It is totally up to you to lift your hand from the table, chew, walk, run, and so on. These sets of neurons are also not activated all at once. Imagine you running, chewing, blinking at the same time. I hope you agree that we don't work this way... And if that's not enough - if your brain manages to activate an abnormal number of neurons simultaneously, you will end up experiencing an epileptic seizure, which is a natural response to excessive

neuronal activity in the brain. The movie 'Limitless', where the character portrayed by Bradley Cooper used a particular drug to achieve the full potential of his brain, would have been much shorter if it was biologically accurate: Eddie finds the pill, swallows it, dies from a seizure, the end!

So, if you, my friend, want to use '100% of your brain' to solve some hardcore task, do yourself a favor: silence your phone, turn off the music, put yourself in a calm surrounding, eat something and make sure you are not tired before you start the work. Performing all the above tasks would leave your brain to concentrate on one specific thing of your choice. Yes, it is as simple as that. And as soon as you're about to be done with your important task, your brain will surely reward you with a little bit of *dopamine* to make sure you feel happy and proud of yourself.

The reward system is a neural structure responsible for positive reinforcement. To put it simply, it motivates us to: work toward things that will keep us alive (food, drink); reproduce (having sex to pass our DNA on); or learn (acquiring knowledge, behavior patterns, and skills to survive). Positive reinforcement is a tool which defines what is good for you, what brings you pleasure, and what is bad and even dangerous and harmful.

The neurotransmitter *dopamine*, which is highly speculated about on social media these days, does play a significant role in the brain's reward system. Yet, it is not only dopamine that makes us happy.

Apart from positive reinforcement, dopamine pathways are involved in motor control and releasing of some other hormones. 'How-to-become-a-superhuman' propaganda tends not to mention those, thereby describing dopamine as the root of all your possible successes or failures. Also, dopamine level increases at the stage of anticipation of a positive result – just

before something good is about to happen. The chemical is not a final reward, it is a precursor to the reward. “Get control over your life right now!”, “Increase your motivation overnight!”, “How to be super productive?”, “Why are you not successful?” The answer is one and only – *dopamine detoxification*. The idea behind the method is to eliminate certain pleasurable stimuli to increase the sensitivity of your ‘blunt’ reward system.

Dopamine detoxification witnesses have created a rather intricate way to describe a simple condition of a human individual – feeling bored. Give me a second to explain. Our initially curious brain tends to reward us with the feeling of pleasure as soon as we have learned something new. As I’ve mentioned before, learning increases the chance of an individual to survive in this cruel world. To motivate you to acquire new skills, the brain releases less dopamine in response to the regular day to day things, making it mundane.

Imagine if you, my Friend, were to watch the movie “Home Alone.” Suppose you kept watching it day after day. I bet that in a matter of a week (a few weeks if you are genuinely strong-willed), you would get out in the street and launch the darn CD to the sky with the expressions ‘Never again!!’ and yelling ‘I hate Christmas and Macaulay Culkin!!’ However, if once a while, during “the most wonderful time of the year,” you got your old cd box out, brushed the dust off, carefully put the CD in your player (by that time, the level of dopamine in your brain would be higher than the mountain Everest), got under a blanket, turned off the lights, leaving only garlands on your Christmas tree to illuminate the room, took a sip of cocoa and pushed play – you’d laugh to tears overwhelmed by joy and happiness, even though you are watching it for the thirteenth time.

And just like that, it works with every other thing you may

do in your life. Let's take a job, for another instance. As adults tend to spend more time earning, for lasting impressions, an ideal choice is a job with diverse tasks that prevents your brain from getting tired of repetitive things. But, let's be honest, most jobs are rather routine. So, do stuff outside work! Read, watch movies, go for a walk, play computer games, go to the gym, party—the list of affordable activities is actually pretty long. The idea is to switch from a used-to-activity (boring) to something different, and your brain won't hesitate to reward you.

“But what happens with my dopamine level?” you may ask. Well, if you don't take heavy drugs, your dopamine level increases and decreases constantly. Let's say - you're eating a tasty burger - you are prolonging your being, and it is time to get a happy candy from your brain as a reward. Then you go back to work, and the level of dopamine subsides over time. Then, after work, you drive home and come across a nice tune on the radio - the level of dopamine increases. You enter your place and see your dog pooped on the floor—well, it is stressful, I know—the level drops down again. And it goes on.

People with a critically low level of dopamine have Parkinson's disease. (Dopamine, or, actually, L-Dopa - a precursor to dopamine is used as a treatment). On the other side, people with an extremely high level of dopamine have schizophrenia. I promise you that doing everyday stuff that gives you pleasure (except drugs. Stay away from drugs!) will not drive your level of dopamine to schizophrenia. And again, if you are bored at work, burned out, or tired, it doesn't mean Parkinson's is waiting around the corner. Besides, remember I told you that dopamine detoxification advertisers tend to “forget” other dopamine pathways in our brain. When they advise you to stop performing the things that you like, like eating fancy food, they suggest

going for a walk. And guess what is released when you move? Nice guess! Dopamine! That's right.

While mastering detoxification from dopamine by not doing usual pleasurable stuff, you continue obtaining it from other activities. But let's be honest here, it is way easier to make people fall for some mysterious sacred practice of *dopamine detoxification* than for simple advice — “amuse yourself!” “*You are simply bored*” hardly sounds like good clickbait.