



Happy Dad, Unhappy Dad

What happy people teach, by example, to their kids

Happy Dad



Unhappy Dad



AmAre

AvEre

Get in touch! As usual, we would love to hear your feedback: suggestions about this booklet? Ideas for new topics? Like to share your experience and make it an eBook, White Paper, check-list? Please let us know through <http://www.amareway.org/> There, you can also read more on related topics. Thanks!

Introduction

"Happy Dad, Unhappy Dad" (What happy people teach, by example, to their kids) is a booklet to ignite discussion, and action, about living happily. It is an homage to my father, who gave and gives me an example of how to live happily and what really counts in life. It follows the format used by Robert Kiyosaki and Sharon Lechter in "Rich dad, poor dad", comparing two different world-views; in the case of "Happy Dad, unhappy Dad", the topic is joy and not financial prosperity, and the Happy Dad is my dad, who always values his family and does his best for his wife and son, and is now enjoying happy living at its fullest The Unhappy Dad is a stereotyped version of hard-skinned people, who were not strong enough to be resilient and became cynical, giving up on living a happy life. If there will be a second version of this booklet, it will be called "Happy mom, unhappy mom", in honour to "l'altra meta' del cielo", the "other half of the sky".

Before and after (or, if you are really in a hurry, instead of) reading **Chapter One**, please **think about this**:

- is happiness about attitudes, and also the results of such attitudes? Why is happiness often seen, mistakenly, as a place to reach? Why do we often crave for happiness, knowing that is a contraction in terms?
- how do we start living happily? By understanding who/what really counts for us? Understanding that, often, the more things we own, the more things own us?
- when we look at the context where we are here and now, what about thinking in terms of degrees of appropriateness, instead of only right or wrong? Why to see only in black and white, when we can enjoy a full spectrum of colors in between?
- and most important: what about keeping it simple, keeping it real, and keeping our eyes on the ball? That is: let's focus on what matters, which in the case of my father - and mine - is family.

Before and after (or, if you are really in a hurry, instead of) reading **Chapter Two**, please **think about this**:

- which external factors facilitate our happiness?
- which external factors make our happiness more difficult?
- which external factors are neutral, happiness-wise?
- it is often said that "repetition makes perfect". In reality, it is more about "repetition makes behavior lasting". What do we want to make lasting, in order to live in authentic happiness?

All the best,

frank
www.amareway.org



1 - Happy Dad, Unhappy Dad

Understanding Happy Dad's wisdom, seeing why Unhappy Dad is sad

These are two very different world-views. Instead of seeing them in terms of black and white, we can see what Happy Dad's wisdom can do to open our eyes about happy living: people are constructive with us, if we are constructive with them. We can also see why Unhappy Dad is locked in a self-fulfilling prophecy: people withdrawn from us, if we withdraw from them. Of course, most of us, are oscillating among the twos.

| Happy Dad | Unhappy Dad |
|--|--|
| <p>Happy Dad lives in an AmAre way. AmAre stands for being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* A – Aware and Accepting* M – Motivated and Meditating* A – Active and Attentive* R – Resilient and Respectful* E – Eating properly and Exercising <p>In Italian, AmAre means "to love"; in English, interconnectedness: (I)Am (we) are.</p> | <p>Unhappy Dad has quite a confused life, and lives accordingly to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* A – Attached* V – Vindictive* E – Egocentric* R – Reluctant* E – Exhausted and Exhausting <p>In Italian, Avere means "to have", "to own".</p> |

He knows the importance of **being Aware**: aware of context, aware of feelings, intentions. Aware of how we see things, our strengths, values and biases. Aware that, even if we can be almost everything we want to be, we have limited time and resources, so often we are better off by using our strengths, leveraging them in new contexts.

He is **Attached**. That is one of the main reasons why he is unhappy. He searches for lasting happiness in short-lived external factors; that is like basing one's main meals on snacks, or trying to repay a long-term mortgage using short-term credit card limits. Unhappy Dad is attached to things, because they seem easier "to control", and also people, to validate his ego.

Happy Dad cares about **being Accepting**. Through our awareness and actions, he gained the courage to change the things we can change, the serenity to accept the things we cannot change. And, especially, the wisdom to know the difference.

What he could do to improve, is to see things as meanings towards and end, and stop seeing material possessions as ends in themselves. Also, he can start caring and loving, keeping an eye on when what he does is about compassion and when it is about ego.

Happy Dad knows the importance of **being Motivated and Meditating**. Being motivated means we cultivate our motivation to live joyfully and be kind to all. Initially, we may decide to be kind because so people are kind to us; with our experiences, resulting in improved awareness, we understand it is good to be kind because we, as different as we are, all share the same aspiration and right to be happy. Being motivated means to have an intention to live happily, knowing happiness is lasting only when it is shared. When we pursue a specific goal in our daily life, being motivated means to know what we want to do, by leveraging our strengths and grow the energies necessary to move into Being Active.

Happy Dad is **Active**, because only action bring tangible results; he knows that reading dozens of books about cars doesn't make a person a Formula 1 racer, it all comes done to practising what one's says.

He is **Attentive**, because we also need to be receptive of the feedback and reactions to what we do in any given context. Being active and being attentive are a self-reinforcing loop which brings positive results to us and to the people, beings and environment we listen to.

Happy Dad is **Resilient**. He knows very well that life is not always a big smiling adventure, he knows external situations can be tough. He also knows how to bounce back on his feet.

He is also **Respectful**, because resilience is about persistence and not growing a hard-skin. Respectful of himself, other people (who are, too, trying to be happy, who may just behave in ways we consider strange just because they do not feel well), beings and environment.

He is **Vindictive**, in an “eye for an eye” style; he thinks that, even if that would make the world blind, that is not his problem, because he didn't “make the rules”. A struggling way to decline any responsibility.

He would become happier if he would learn it is not about forgetting what is a perceived as a “tort”, but about forgiving other human beings.

Unhappy Dad is **Egocentric**. Always trying to get the best for himself, he takes the roller-coster of the two different polarity of egocentrism: protagonism and victimism. Of course, considering that he looks only after himself, other people will often reciprocate with similar behaviour, making it a self-reinforcing way to loneliness.

He would become happier by starting to care for other people, creating a reciprocal web of caring and compassion.

He is **Reluctant** to do anything which doesn't pay him a short-term dividend.

Instead, he could start being open to do ethical things, because we are all on the same boat, and, regardless of short-term results which may be a rollercoaster, in the long term we receive what we have given.



Happy Dad knows the importance of **Eating properly**, in terms of quality, quantity and company. He knows that, to keep healthy, he needs **Exercising**, which doesn't have to be at the gym; every opportunity is good to keep fit. For example, instead of getting in and out of the car just to cover a few blocks, he knows he can walk.

Unhappy Dad is **Exhausted and Exhausting**. He doesn't know when to stop, and pushes others in the same way. He could start appreciating the power of re-charging. It is enjoyable, plus makes performances better. We all need to unplug, at our own pace.

Happy Dad is not concerned about being perfect. He focuses on being honest, fair and taking care of his family. From his chemistry classes, he knows that nothing is lost, nothing is created, everything is transformed; he is aware of change, and embraces it. He knows that the “pursuit of happiness” is a misleading phrase: if you pursue happiness, you'll never find it and surely end up somewhere else. Happiness is about living happily, starting from here and now. You can do it, too; the only question is: will you do it? And the answer is almost entirely up to you. External factors can be deeply influenced by us, but almost never fully determined; the freedom we always have is the one to decide what to do, in the context where we are here and now; to decide what we want to change, what we want to embrace.



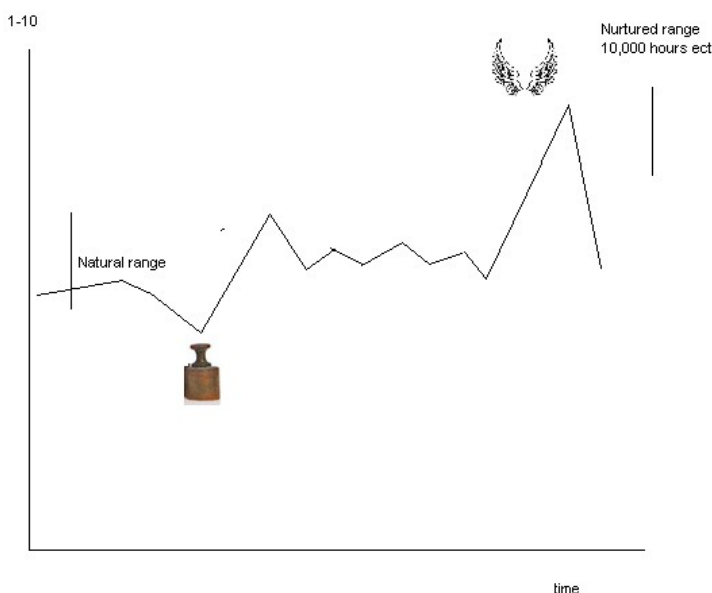
2 – Implementing Happy Dad's wisdom Practical approach to happiness. Model to measure subjective well-being

Disclaimer: the tools described in this chapter are a way to put in practice Happy Dad's wisdom. *They are not a crystal ball, nor deterministic. We benefit from the learning process of considering different variables, assessing course of actions and seeing potential results in scenarios. The approach drafted here also allows to measure results, building a useful repository of aggregated, anonymous subjective well-being data.*

Starting from the example of Happy Dad, we ask ourselves some key questions, elaborating in more details a “working approach to living happily”.

Is happiness an inside job? Or does it depend on external factors?

As shown in the sketch below, one approach to these questions is to think in terms of degree of facilitation. Some events are like a weight, making harder for us to fly; some are like a lift, facilitating our happiness. But, at the end of day, considering even the way we discern between weights and lifts (same event can be considered in various ways, and especially with different degrees of effect, by different people), we can say that happiness is about attitudes, it is not a place to reach through external factors.



We can also see a “**natural range**”, often referred as happiness baseline. Regardless of the short-term changes we have in how we assess our happiness level, in the long term we tend to oscillate within our natural range. Current natural range is influenced by several components, including attitudes, genetics, familiar background, etc. Natural range does not mean unchangeable range, it just means the current usual range, which has been built over time. As said, short-term events usually do not change it; we can change it by changing our attitudes, or

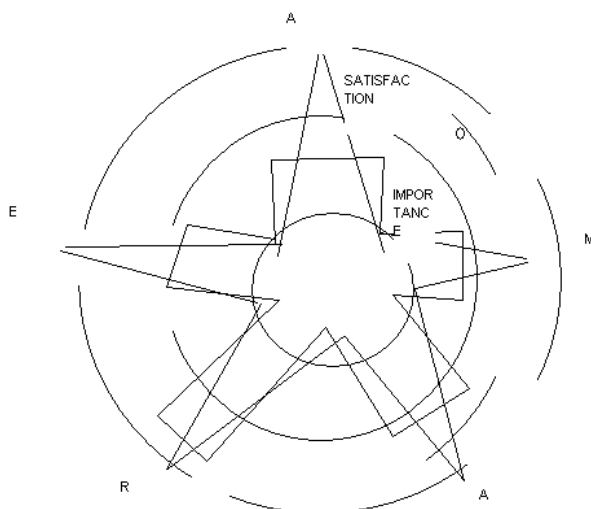


it can be moved up or down by external events only if they have an extremely strong magnitude.

By understanding where we are, where we want to go, and how to get there – for example using AmAre as a framework for personal development – and acting accordingly for a sustained amount of time, we reach a **“nurtured range”**. Doing anything for over 10,000 hours is what is often considered as making it lasting; our brains rewire according to our sustained behaviour. That does not mean we go from 1 to 10,000 hours with no happiness: each day lived with appropriate attitudes make us happier than we were before. How long we initially sustain our attitudes makes them lasting. We can start with “small rituals”: thanking when we wake up for the opportunity of writing a new chapter in our life, and thanking when we go to sleep for what we learnt that day; keeping a “gratefulness” diary; counting up to four breaths before replying to a remark we can see as inappropriate, etc.

Can we represent happiness?

As shown below, if we want a representation of where we stand now, we can plot the importance and satisfaction level of each AmAre components, forming a star with five (or ten) points:



Can we design an approach to happy living?

From these premise, we can draft an approach to measure and improve our current subjective well-being:

- 1) assessing our baseline happiness: using the formulas reviewed from Chapter 2 to Chapter 4 in our free eBook “Happiness Formula” (<http://www.iswb.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/happiness-e-book.pdf>)
- 2) assessing our priorities, and level of satisfaction with them: taking the AmAre Way test, which you find in the Appendix I of this booklet

3) monitoring our changes over-time: re-taking, for example every Wednesday, the AmAre Way test, which you find in the appendix of this booklet

4) lifting our baseline happiness level: developing loving kindness, appreciation, compassion, equanimity. For example, by living accordingly the Teachings of the Seven Grandfathers (Appendix II), meditating and embracing other constructive attitudes. Researchers like Sonja Lyubomirsky, and authors like Tal Ben-Shahar, published seminal books on the matter.

We may build scenarios about how changes in external factors facilitate our happiness level over time, so we can improve our awareness by considering different options. To do this, further research should be carried on, reviewed and published; there are two main approaches to collect data:

- researchers ask how people think they will feel if this or that event occurs, if this or that goal is achieved, etc.

- researchers ask people to measure the effects of events, goals, etc. on people who already experienced them, when possible right before, during, after, and long time after particular events occurred.

While such approaches are complementary, we need to keep in mind that the second approach has proven, so far, more reliable: it is widely understood, proven and accepted that we often tend to over estimate the consequences of future external factors, both positive and non-positive, on our lives. So between the step “**assessing our baseline happiness**” and the one “**assessing our priorities**”, we can insert an intermediate step: learning more about how other fellow human beings' happiness is affected by external factors, and then making up our minds based on our subjective evaluation of what we learn from direct experiences and what is said by researchers. Of course, well-being is subjective by definition: no two people will have the exact experience, even when they are in a similar context; but, considering that when it comes to happy living, as human beings we have more commonalities than differences, this is a n appropriate approach.

As mentioned at the start of the chapter, please consider this is a working model to assess happiness and build scenarios. When we want to measure how tall we are, we use a scale; the same we can here for our happiness, keeping in mind that measurement of subjective phenomena is not like measuring lengths in the “tangible world”. The main value of this approach is to make us think, and rethink, about how we can live happily, and how external factors can facilitate, or make more difficult, to live happily. It is not meant to carry any absolute value, because at close scrutiny there are only a few of them. This is a pragmatic approach, which we can use together with other models and approaches. It is not meant to be taken integrally as it is, or be rejected in its totality. And it is open to be furtherly optimized. Because, we have two main approaches to life: we can live happily, changing everything which need to be changed in order to care about ours and others' well-being; or can just keep doing the same things, over and over again no matter what is the context, and in that case it will be our well-being level which will be roller-coasting up and down.

Appendix I – AmAre Way

Happiness = Aware and Accepting + Motivated and Meditating+ Active and Attentive + Resilient and Respectful + Eating (Properly) and Exercising

1.1 How to calculate it?

| Aware Accepting | | Meditating Motivated | | Active Attentive | | Resilient Respectful | | Eating Exercising | |
|--------------------|---|-------------------------|---|---------------------|---|-------------------------|---|----------------------|---|
| W | G | W | G | W | G | W | G | W | G |
| | | | | | | | | | |

Explanation of variables. Being:

A: **Aware** of how we see things, our strengths, values and biases; and also **Accepting** them.

M: **Motivated**, to live joyfully for the benefit of all; and also **meditating** to facilitate mindfulness.

A1: **Active** and do what we consider appropriate in a given context; and also being **attentive** to the feedback coming from the context where we act.

R: **Resilient**, because in life there are both positive and challenging events, it is better to accept and admit it, and keep walking in appropriate directions; and also **Respectful**, keeping a genuinely kind attitude.

E: **Eating properly**, feeding our bodies and minds with healthy food, feelings and thoughts; and also **Exercising**, because it has been proven than lack of exercise is a cause of stress.

(...): if there are additional aspects considered too important to be included in the rest of the formula, they can be weighted and graded here

For each variable, please specify:

w: weight, importance given to each aspect (sum of all weights should be 100)

g: grade, rating given to each aspect (each grade is a value between 0 and 1)

If you want to use a spreadsheet, where you can insert the values and see them automatically calculated, you can use: <http://spsh.amareway.org/>

1.2 What does it mean?

AmAre formula is meant to be descriptive and preventive, but not predictive. That is, it quantifies the current situation, and the strengths and weaknesses we should be aware of and act upon. Regardless of what the number says, we are always responsible, here and now, for our happiness, so a high result means we should keep building our happiness as we have successfully done so far, and a lower result means there are aspects to act upon to improve our lives.

One of the formula's strengths is its unlikeness to reach One, the perfect score, or Zero. This formula is useful so we can improve our awareness about the situation so far, and build a better present. Once the formula served its purposes, we can move on. Because the ultimate happiness is not reaching number 1, it is in finding and renewing the appropriate life-dynamics. If we can accept the way life is, and the fact that different people assign different weights and grades to the pillars of their happiness, and still respect and care about all of us, doing our best for the mutual happiness, we are on the way to build together a lasting happy living.

This is a scale to interpret the overall result of the formula:

0-0.3: This is an unlikely result, so please double check each value inserted. If values are correct, it is possible the perception of your SWB tends toward emphasizing the non-positive aspects, or that there is a short-term serious issue. This means there is a need to work on all your priorities to make them more satisfying to you in the medium term.

0.31-0.60: Your level of SWB could be higher, if you are closer to 0.31 result. If you are closer to 0.5, you are near an exact average value where you perceive the same value of positive and non-positive components in your life. In both cases, by working on the AmAre variables (starting from the ones with higher weight and lower grade), you can substantially improve your well-being.

0.61-0.90: You tend towards an optimal level of SWB. You feel happy, and likely experienced most or at least many of the happiness "fringe benefits". You likely live joyfully everyday: no matter the ups and downs we all have, you can make the best of them for yourself and the people around you.

0.91-1: This result is unlikely to be reached, so please double check each value inserted. If values are correct, you are achieving the maximum level of SWB, which you can sustain by living joyfully.

To interpret the value of each AmAre variable, you can use the same scale. If a variable is high in weight, and low in grade, then it requires attention and action to improve it. If a variable is low in weight, and high in grade, then you may ask yourself if its grade is slightly over estimated.

We suggest calculating your AmAre Index once per week for the first 5 weeks. Then, to calculate it once per month. Please make sure to start from scratch at each calculation, meaning you should not check values assigned in the past; after calculating your current AmAre Index, you can then check what changed compared to the previous calculations. If you want to be reminded about monthly calculation, you can register the AmAre newsletter on. <http://www.amareway.org/>

1.3 Where are references and further information?

<http://www.amareway.org/>
(Official website)

<http://www.amareway.org/personal-development-free-personal-development-ebooks/>
(Free eBooks: AmAre applied to blogging, social media, etc.)

Appendix II - Teachings of the Seven Grandfathers

Happiness is about how we relate with people (including us), beings and environment. The Teachings of the Seven Grandfathers is a set of teachings on human conduct towards others, part of the Anishinaabe people's wisdom. According to their tradition, such teachings were given to the Anishinaabe early in their history: Seven Grandfathers sent their messenger to survey the human condition. The messenger communicated, among others, with a child, and decided (after receiving approval from the Seven Grandfathers) to tutor him in the "Good way of Life", each Grandfather providing one principle.

The principles are:

- **Nibwaakaawin—Wisdom, prudence, intelligence:** To cherish knowledge is to know Wisdom.
- **Zaagi'idiwin—Love:** To know Love is to know peace. Love is unconditional.
- **Minaadendamowin—Respect:** To honour all creation is to have Respect. We must give respect if we wish to be respected.
- **Aakode'ewin—Bravery, fearless heart:** Bravery is to live with integrity, in every situation, to do what is right even when the consequences are unpleasant in the short-term.
- **Gwayakwaadiziwin—Honesty, righteousness:** it is about being honest in word and action. Be honest first with yourself, and you will more easily be able to be honest with others.
- **Dabaadendiziwin—Humility, compassion:** knowing ourselves as a part of the whole; we can have differences, that does not make better or worse than others.
- **Debwewin—Truth:** truth is to know all of these things. Speak the truth. Do not deceive yourself or others.

Thanks

To family, friends, supporters and readers, who provided feedback about previous books we made available online for free.

To authors, researchers, counselors, Wikipedia, etc. who have been studying the field of subjective well-being and contributing to its outreach.