

# More Than Anything Else

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**Deciding What You Want the Most in Life**



**Adam Soto**

**GOLDEN RULE INDEPENDENT PUBLICATIONS**

More Than Anything Else:  
Deciding What You Want the Most in Life  
By Adam Soto

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*“Do you want to know the secret to lasting happiness? You just have to want happiness more than anything else. That’s how a person becomes happy all the time.”*

—Adam Soto

# **More Than Anything Else**

## **Will Power**

Will power is like a muscle: the more you exercise it, the stronger it gets; the less you exercise it, the weaker it gets.

A strong will power is the greatest and most important tool that a person can develop. Without it, even knowledge and understanding are left paralyzed and directionless.

A person can have all of the knowledge in the world, but without the will power to use that knowledge and put it to good use, it will be wasted. Therefore, it is crucial to develop, test, and strengthen your will constantly.

When will power is used together with knowledge and understanding, a person can live in a constant state of enlightenment, peace, love, and happiness. Unless a person has a legitimate psychiatric condition, a permanent state of spiritual enlightenment is possible for each and every person—should they direct their will to such an end.

Truthfully, the concepts behind living a life of happiness are really quite simple. Using will power to direct the flow of energy, a person can shape their thoughts and thought patterns in such a way that they begin to feel the

beginnings of enlightenment in a very short amount of time, which can then be refined and strengthened through practice and experience.

Before we go any further, there is one concept that must be understood, which is crucial to the path of enlightenment. *You, and you alone, are responsible for the flow of your own thoughts.*\* Whether your thoughts are good or bad, positive or negative, peaceful or stressful, you are responsible for them. You have the power to direct the flow of thoughts that go through your mind, to decide which attitudes and ideas you have, and how you will respond emotionally to anything that happens in your life. This is a power that most people are unaware that they even have (to varying degrees), and so it never gets developed, and they spend their days being tossed and turned by the waves of their own thoughts and emotions.

\* Although I believe that what I am writing applies to the vast majority of people, I again must mention that if a person has a diagnosable psychological condition, how much power they have over their own thoughts may not be entirely in their control, and therefore, this may not apply to them. Let me add that how much is or is not in their control is not for me to say, nor do I wish to put limits on them in any way; how much is or is not in their control is for them to find out on their own or with the help of their doctor. For the sake of better readability, I will not mention this again, so please do bear it in mind as you continue reading.

Once a person recognizes and accepts this truth about themselves—and accepts the responsibility that comes along with it—they can begin to practice using their will power to direct their mind in the ways that they want it to be, and progress towards peace and enlightenment can be made.

To summarize, now that we know that:

1. Will power is the greatest and most important tool that a person can develop
2. Spiritual enlightenment is possible for each and every person, should they direct their will to that end

And,

3. You, and you alone, are responsible for the flow of your own thoughts, and have the power to direct that flow

We can now move on to learning how to incorporate certain tools which can be used to achieve enlightenment and strengthen your will.

## Tools

The tool that I am going to present to you is very simple to use, and can be adapted to be used in any and all situations. All that is required is to understand one simple concept and apply it to everything in your life. It is designed off of this quote that I recently wrote:

*“Do you want to know the secret to lasting happiness? You just have to want happiness more than anything else. That’s how a person becomes happy all the time.”*

When I read this quote to a friend of mine, she pointed out to me that what I understand as “happiness” may be different from what someone else understands as happiness, which is true, but try not to get too hung up on that just yet, for the quote above is meant to be adaptable. The word “happiness” can be replaced with a variety of words and it still works just the same, such as:

*“Do you want to know the secret to living a godly life? You just have to want godliness more*

*than anything else. That's how a person becomes godly all the time."*

Or,

*"Do you want to know the secret to constant positivity? You just have to want positivity more than anything else. That's how a person becomes positive all the time."*

As you can see, many different words and goals can be applied using this tool, and it works the same with all of them.

Now, before this tool can be used, you must decide which goals you want to work towards in life, which in and of itself is no small matter. These are some of my goals, but whatever goals you choose are entirely up to you.

I want:

- Godliness more than anything else
- To be a loving person more than anything else
- To be positive more than anything else
- To be peaceful more than anything else

- To be joyful more than anything else
- To be appreciative more than anything else
- To be happy more than anything else

In my view, all of the goals that I just listed fit under the umbrella of godliness, but at times I find it beneficial to break it down according to whatever situation I'm in. For instance, if I'm in a situation that seems like it could cause me stress, I remind myself:

“I want peace more than anything else.”

Or, if I'm tempted to indulge in some negative thinking, I say,

“I want positivity more than anything else.”

For a tool to work it needs to be used; it does no good sitting in a toolbox collecting dust. So it is necessary to develop a practice of filtering all of your thoughts, emotions, and experiences through this filter, which requires will power and discipline. This filter must be made an ingrained part of your thought processes, like an ever present

observer constantly on guard, always watching and analyzing what's going on.

The idea of constantly filtering and observing your thoughts and experiences may seem rather dramatic or burdensome to you, but I can assure you that after a while, with enough practice and experience, it becomes second nature for most activities, and that it is only during the most trying situations that it becomes necessary to consciously use the tool to steer your thoughts and emotions towards your goals.

Actually, I stumbled upon an earlier version of this method while I was going through a divorce many years ago. I was happily married at the time and was completely blindsided when my wife told me that she wanted to get a divorce.

Although I was only twenty-two years old when this happened, I already knew that happiness was a choice, but I admit that it was still a painful time for me. As a way to manage my pain, I found a method of playing a song in my head whenever my thoughts started to drift towards the divorce. Any time that I caught my mind going where I didn't want it to go, I would play the song in my head to force the thoughts away. The song was *Trust* by Megadeth. I would play the intro part of the song for as long as was

necessary. If I needed to play the song 10 times in one hour, that's what I would do, and it helped me immensely.

I practiced this method so much and so often that after a while my mind became so strong that I didn't even need to play the song anymore and all that I had to do was say, "No!" to stop my thoughts dead in their tracks. It was an excellent tool! It taught me a lot about myself and the workings of my own mind.

I've developed many such practices over the years to help train my mind and strengthen my will and resolve. The key to it all is to be mindful enough to use the tools as quickly as possible and as often as is necessary.

Do I still get annoyed at things sometimes? Yes, but not for as long as I used to, and for some things, not at all.

Do I still indulge in selfish, ungodly behavior from time to time? Of course! I'm not perfect! But I am progressing towards my goals, and that gives me joy and encouragement.

I have to say, my "More Than Anything Else" tool has been my most useful tool yet. It helps to remind me of what I want more than anything else and keeps me focused on my goals.

I find that there is something very powerful and transformative about the words "I want" and "more than any-

thing else.” They give me the power to resist, endure, strive, and correct myself when necessary.

One of my greatest weak points in life has been getting angry or frustrated at other people while driving. Unfortunately, there seem to be too many drivers who are inconsiderate on the road, which always has a tendency to annoy me.

This began to change for me when I went on a road trip with my friend to Pittsburgh to see the Pirates play the Mets one afternoon. As I rode along in the passenger seat, I was amazed at how calm my friend was while driving, even when people did things that were inconsiderate and annoying. To see him sit there so calmly at times when I would have been extremely aggravated was a real lesson for me. It showed me that it was possible to stay calm during those moments and not be overcome by anger.

Now when I’m driving, I’ve gotten much better at saying, “I want to be a calm driver more than anything else” when a car or semi truck cuts in front of me on the interstate. Instead of concentrating on the fact that the vehicle just cut me off, I now concentrate on knowing that I want happiness more than anger or annoyance. I’m optimistic that I will be as calm as my friend while driving in the near future.

It is important in life that we continue to grow and evolve towards our goals, for such evolution is usually accompanied by feelings of joy, contentment, and satisfaction.

I also find it helpful to have other sayings and reminders in my life as well. On the home screen of my cell phone I have this quote from Epictetus:\*

“First say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to do.”<sup>[1]</sup>

I love that quote! It is direct and to the point, and leaves no room for excuses—“do what you have to do.”

Along with having reminders, I also take some time regularly to evaluate myself and see how well I am developing towards my goals. This kind of self-evaluation is a must-have ingredient for any person on the path to enlightenment, but it is only helpful if you are completely honest with yourself about everything.

\* Epictetus (c. 50-130) was a Greek Stoic philosopher. See *Enchiridion* and *Discourses*<sup>[2]</sup> for more of his writings.

For example, you might say, “I did pretty well in this situation, but I failed miserably in this one. What went wrong? How can I do better the next time? I *will* do my best to do better the next time!”

Evaluate yourself like this as often as is necessary, or make a habit of doing it once a day, whatever works best for you. Don’t beat yourself up too badly when you fail, though. We are all “works-in-progress,” and sometimes it takes a while to build a solid foundation under your feet before you can stand securely and confidently on the strength of your will power.

Self-forgiveness is a necessary part of living a life of happiness. Although it is appropriate and natural to feel bad when you’ve done something wrong or that goes against your principles, it is also important not to let the feeling last for longer than is necessary in order to learn what you need to from the experience. What you’ve done in the past is done; today is a new day. Don’t let yesterday (or tomorrow) prevent you from being happy today.

Although there are going to be certain things along the way that will take time to get better at as you build your strength and resolve, it is also not unheard of to excel rapidly at times and make sudden, solid progress. What I’ve

found is that, for the most part, it all depends on how much you really want it. I'll give you an example.

Let's use something tangible to start with, like an addiction to cigarettes. So you want to quit smoking? Are you ready and willing to give up cigarettes for good, to never have another cigarette again for your entire life? Unless your heart is truly with you on it, chances are you may not succeed. You have to really "want it more than anything else."

Evaluate yourself now and replace cigarettes with one of your own addictions or attachments and ask yourself the same question. Do you want to stop the addiction and find a place of happiness and freedom? Do you "want it more than anything else?" Then "do what you have to do," as Epictetus says. That's really is all that it comes down to. The choice is yours.

And it doesn't have to be something tangible like cigarettes or sugary foods. I know a lot of people who are addicted or attached to stressful or negative thinking. Are you ready to give up negative thinking for the rest of your life? Wouldn't it be much better for you to think positively? Then "do what you have to do!" Want it "more than anything else!"

For the record, I'm not saying that total abstinence from cigarettes or drinking or sex is a necessary ingredient for the path of enlightenment; your personal level of indulgence is entirely up to you and is dependent on your specific goals and aspirations.

Is it absolutely necessary to completely abstain from chocolate, for example? Maybe, maybe not, depending on what your goals are. Is there ever a time when it is beneficial to indulge in negative thinking? I can't really see that there ever is, so maybe that is the kind of habit that it is best to abstain from completely.

There are many things that I enjoy from time to time without completely abstaining from them. It just depends on what it is and where it fits in with my specific goals.

Also, sometimes goals change or evolve over time, so that's something to take into consideration as well.

The "More Than Anything Else" tool has been an invaluable tool for me in my own spiritual journey through life. With the use of this tool I am able to constantly remind myself of "what I want more than anything else." That's why I'm so happy to share this tool with you. Hopefully it will help you as much as it has helped me.

So to summarize:

- Learn the tool of “I want (place goal here) more than anything else.”
- Decide a number of goals that you want more than anything else.
- Put the tool into practice, using constant observation to filter everything in daily life (thoughts, emotions, experiences) through the tool.
- Take time to evaluate your progress, understanding that a seed doesn’t grow into a flower overnight, but remain open to the possibility that there are times when certain goals and mind frames can materialize and solidify rapidly or even instantly, like the flick of a switch.
- Take life one moment at a time, one thought at a time. You, and you alone, are responsible for the thoughts that occupy your mind.
- Remember Epictetus: “First, decide what you would be; and then do what you have to do.”

I will talk more deeply about the philosophy of happiness later, but now I would like to take you through a common day in my life, the point of which is to share with

you some of my ways of interacting with the world, with the hopes that what I share will be of some benefit to you.

## **What I Do**

On a regular work day I (hopefully) sleep all the way until the alarm goes off. Once I shut it off, I thank God for the fact that I woke up and that I was able to sleep. If it was a really good night of sleep, I thank God for that.

After getting dressed and using the bathroom, I always make myself something to eat. Every other day I have either an egg and cheese sandwich on homemade bread or a mixture of raisins and unsalted assorted nuts, plus a homemade oatmeal raisin cookie or two.

While I'm eating I thank God for the food, and also for the glass of water that I drink afterwards.

When I'm finished eating I read a quote or section out of a number of books that I always keep out on the table beside my chair. They are:

- *A Calendar of Wisdom* by Leo Tolstoy<sup>[3]</sup>

- *The Daily Stoic: 366 Meditations on Wisdom, Perseverance, and the Art of Living* by Ryan Holiday and Stephen Hanselman <sup>[4]</sup>
- *365 Days of Walking the Red Road: The Native American Path to Leading a Spiritual Life Every Day* by Terri Jean <sup>[5]</sup>
- *TouchPoint Bible: God's Word, At Your Point of Need* by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. <sup>[6]</sup>
- *Bible Keys to Well-Being: Daily Spiritual Meditations for Good Spiritual and Mental Health* by The Christian Broadcasting Network, Inc. <sup>[7]</sup>

And finally, I read quotes or passages from a compilation of spiritual quotes and stories that I have made for my own personal use, along with my own book, *Mind Purpose Truth*. <sup>[8]</sup>

I love reading all of these books because I find that there is no better way to start the day than to get a good, healthy breakfast of inspirational spiritual food. It helps to invigorate my mind and spirit right away and sets my mind spiritually for the day.

After I'm done reading I brush my teeth and get a shower, thanking God for the gift and convenience of soap, shampoo, and nice hot water.

Once my shower is over and I get dressed, I take some time to sit quietly in my rocking chair and say my morning appreciation prayers. This is what I say:

God, thank you so much for everything. Thank you for my family and friends, and may they live long, happy, and healthy lives, and grow closer to you and everyone around them for as long as they live.

Thank you for my job, my house, and my car, all of which are beautiful blessings, and none of which could survive very easily without the others.

Thank you for modern conveniences, such as electricity, running water, and sewage. For hot water tanks and furnaces. Refrigerators and freezers. Microwaves and ovens. Washers, dryers, water softeners, and everything of that nature.

Thank you for communication, transportation, medicine, science, technology, internet

and knowledge commons, and everything of that nature. They provide us all with much ease and luxury.

Thank you for nature. For the sun, the moon, and the stars, the heavens and the earth and all that's in it. It is amazing and beautiful, and I thank you so much for letting me be a part of it.

Thank you for all of the beautiful things that you've given me. For guitars and amps. Books, movies, CDs, computers, and recording equipment. For TV, furniture, cooking and baking appliances, and all of the other odds and ends that I have. They provide me with much joy, peace, and comfort.

Thank you for food and drink every day, and for my health. You have been so very, very good to me with that.

Thank you for my senses, for being able to see, hear, taste, smell, feel, and sense with my soul, and for the use of all of my bodily functions; to be able to walk, work, and toil.

Thank you for all of my talents, gifts, and abilities; physical, mental, and spiritual.

Thank you for my mind, and my deductive abilities.

Thank you for my body, and being able to work hard and be competitive.

Thank you for my artistic gifts, such as my various forms of writing, being able to play guitar, and for seeing the world as a poet.

But most of all, God, thank you for my relationship with you; for sharing yourself with me and allowing me to share myself with you. And for sharing perfect love with me and helping me to share it with others. You are the source of all love, joy, hope, peace, grace, unity, harmony, beauty, and life, and I know how much you love me, therefore I should have no fear as to anything. (I try not to.)

God, I don't want much in life; I only want to please you. If it is your will, please grant me the wisdom needed to help my fellow man in any way that I can, and I will share it to the best of my ability.

Then I say this prayer, which I wrote many years ago:

Dear God,

May your love always shine upon my days

May my sins be forgiven by your grace

Give me the wisdom to know your will

And strength to carry on your ways

May I always treat others as I want to be treated,

And let me judge not,

For I will be held by that same judgment

Give me courage to turn the other cheek

And grace to lend a helping hand

May I forgive others as you forgive me

And know that anything is possible

If only I believe

Let your spirit guide my way

From now until my dying day

And forevermore

Amen

I continue by saying:

God, thank you so much for everything.  
You are so good to me, you're always there for  
me, and you never let me down.

Thank you for teaching me and guiding me,  
protecting me and watching over me.

Thank you for revealing things to me and  
disciplining me to make me better. For joking  
around with me and showing me signs of your  
presence. And for being my best friend.

You are my strength, my joy, and the love  
in my heart.

Thank you so much for everything.

I finish my appreciation prayers by reciting the *Serenity  
Prayer*.<sup>[9]</sup>

*God grant me the serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can,  
And wisdom to know the difference.*

When I'm finished with my appreciation prayers I do some stretching and exercises, and then I get my stuff together and leave the house for work.

Every day when my car starts, I thank God that it started, and then I drive to the parking lot where I park my car.

At the university where I work, everyone has to pay to park their car. (I work as a janitor at a university). There are two kinds of parking passes: regular passes, which are in the center of campus, and commuter passes, which are on the outskirts at either end of campus.

To save money, I have a commuter pass, which is twenty-seven dollars less a month than a regular pass. On top of saving money, the twenty minute walk to and from my car each day is great exercise and I enjoy it, even if it is a little bit cold in the winter sometimes.

Most of the time when I'm walking I practice a form of meditation where I let random thoughts enter my mind. They might be thoughts about something that I've read or seen recently or about a conversation that I had during the day or the previous day. Sometimes I think about my goals and how I am progressing towards them, and sometimes I use the time to go over song lyrics or poems that either myself or other people have written (I play guitar and write music).

It is not uncommon for me to be so deep in thought that I don't even remember the walk to or from my car! I enjoy that time immensely!

I do the same thing while I'm working, meditating on worthwhile thoughts while I clean throughout the day, always talking to God and thanking God for various things as I make my way along.

When I'm with my coworkers I like to talk and joke around. I'm serious when I need to be, but otherwise, I like to laugh and have fun.

After work I walk back to my car and drive home. Then I walk down to the post office and check my mail.

Before supper each day I do various odds and ends, such as making my bed and packing my lunch for the next day. If it's summertime, I do yard work if I have to.

I also do more exercises in the afternoon, which consists of a few sets of push-ups and curls. Exercising helps me to maintain my strength and gets my heart rate up, which helps to keep me healthy.

I mentioned packing my lunch for work; this consists of the same thing every day: a small container of unsalted natural almonds, a container of raisins with dark chocolate chips mixed in, and a half a container of unsalted mixed

nuts. It isn't much, but it is enough. I'm definitely not full, but I never feel starved or underfed either.

Before supper I always eat a spoonful of natural peanut butter and drink a glass of orange juice.

The reason that I eat so many raisins and nuts is that I've been trying to avoid prepackaged foods as much as I can. My diet has the least amount of preservatives in it now than at any other time in my life and it makes me feel good and natural to eat this way. I'm not a health nut or anything, but I do try to eat somewhat healthy for the most part.

Supper for me is pretty standard and plain as well. It consists mostly of chicken breast with potatoes or pasta as a side and some baked beans. I always eat the same amount and am never usually full, but it is enough.

I also usually have homemade pizza once a week, and for a treat, I'll buy some homemade pierogies from a friend of mine or buy some beef once in a while.

I'm also fortunate that at the end of the year my mother and stepfather usually give me a grocery bag of mixed beef if there is any left over from the previous year's cow that they buy, which I am always very appreciative of and enjoy quite a bit. Also, if any of my mother's homemade Christ-

mas cookies are left, I usually get them as well, which is a real treat for me!

During and after supper I usually relax and watch a TV show, movie, or documentary. I don't have internet or cable at home, but I do have things on DVD that I can watch.

Once my supper is settled I will often play my guitar or read, or talk to a family member or friend on the phone. Then I might do some dishes or read some more.

Other than doing five minutes of stretching each night, the last part of my day is reserved for relaxation or writing (if I happen to be writing something at the time). Then I brush my teeth and go to bed, again thanking God for any highlights or special moments that may have happened throughout the day.

That's pretty much a typical day for me. I do spend some time throughout the day to check some alternative independent news sites as well, so that I can have somewhat of an idea of what's happening in the world, but I intentionally cut back my internet usage a few years ago because I felt like I was getting swallowed up in the internet. I definitely appreciate modern technology, but it can be very distracting and addictive, so I try to be careful, lest I indulge in it too much.

Most of what I read is spiritual in nature, but I also like books on history and psychology as well. And I love science fiction! But most of what I read is for learning purposes. Often times I take notes or write down certain quotes or passages that have an impact on me to review, share, or contemplate at a later time.

My weekends are usually spent relaxing at home or with a few friends or family members. I like to go for walks as well, and the weekend is usually when I clean the house and do laundry. It really doesn't take much to make me happy.

As far as all of my thankfulness and appreciation prayers throughout the day go, do I believe that God needs this constant appreciation? No, I don't—but I honestly can't help myself! I really am that appreciative of everything, and it brings me great joy to express that appreciation in the moments that they are happening. I think that it helps me to live in the moment and to notice the special times that happen in life while they are happening.

Appreciation is one of the cornerstones of happiness, so I don't see how it could be any other way for a person who really is happy. I know that I wouldn't want it any other way.

I realize that many of you reading this have busy lives, with some of you having children or a husband or wife, but it is still important to find (or make) time to talk to God and practice becoming what you most want to be in life. That's why I wanted to share with you some of my spiritual processes, so that you can see that meditation and spiritual thinking can be done all throughout the day, even while you are engaged in other activities.

Thankfully for me, these processes and techniques developed naturally out of my spirituality and relationship with God very early in life; I honestly can't imagine what my life would be like without them, and I am very grateful for all that I have learned. The amount of joy and value that the spiritual way adds to my life is something that I wish for every person to be able to experience for themselves. May you also find joy and peace in your relationship with God!

I will now move on to evaluating philosophical and spiritual ideas regarding truth, desire, and happiness on a deeper level.

## Happiness and Desire

I intentionally started this book with the “More Than Anything Else” tool to help demonstrate the power of the mind and will, but also to show how important it is to develop goals and to work towards those goals every moment of every day.

At the same time, it is also important to know certain things about ourselves psychologically so that we can understand ourselves and our minds on a deeper level.

One thing that needs mentioning is the concept of *desire*. Desire itself is a totally natural part of being alive and having an individual will. There is nothing wrong with desire in and of itself.

Problems start when we begin to want things that are contrary to our own best interests or our specific goals in life. (Or the will of God, if you are spiritually inclined.)

Even worse is when an individual doesn't have very well defined goals in life or is lacking an overall philosophy to guide their thinking and desires towards what they want the most.

For these kinds of people, their desires and goals can change as easily as the direction of the wind. Often times,

they themselves don't even understand what it is they truly want or why they want it.

Without any deeper goals or philosophies to guide them, these types of people usually drift from fulfilling one desire to another, seeking happiness in the fulfillment of their momentary desires. Sometimes this works, but more often than not it leaves the person unfulfilled on a deeper level.

The unfortunate truth of the matter is that most people simply don't know any other way. For whatever reason, our culture and society fails to teach us much of anything about the workings of our own mind and how to set meaningful goals that will bring us true and lasting happiness.

If the world is ever going to change on a grand scale, this is a problem that needs to be addressed. How that might happen is hard to envision, and frankly, it is beyond the scope of what I'm trying to write about in this book, but one thing that I know for sure is that it has to start with individuals learning to develop their minds and souls and then showing others how to do it. It is the only way that true progress will ever be made.

Getting back on topic, it is important for a person to analyze and understand how having desires that are contrary

to their goals will inevitably lead to a general unhappiness, or a momentary happiness, at best.

For a person on the path of enlightenment, a thorough examination of their desires and how they relate to their goals is of fundamental importance.

Using the tool of mindfulness (self-observation), it is actually quite easy to analyze our desires as they are happening and decide if they fit in with our goals and philosophies in life, and then decide whether we should pursue the desire or not.

For example, let's say that all of a sudden you get a craving (desire) for a milkshake. Since milkshakes taste good, it's easy to see how that might happen.

Now you must ask yourself where having a milkshake might fit in with your overall goals. If your goal is something like, "I want to be healthy more than anything else," you must decide if having a milkshake would be contrary to that goal, or if your goal allows room for having a milkshake once in a while. If you haven't had a milkshake or any other high calorie foods for a while, maybe it would still be within your goals to have one. But if you have already reached your decided upon caloric intake goals for the day or week, maybe it would be better to abstain from

having one so as to remain on track to achieving your overall goals.

That's pretty much how it works for most physical or material aspects of life, depending on what your specific goals are. Philosophical or spiritual goals work quite differently.

For example, would it make much sense to say, "My overall goal is happiness; I want happiness more than anything else. But since I haven't had any unhappy or depressing thoughts for a while, I think that I will indulge in some depressive thinking now." As you can see, that just doesn't make any sense.

For spiritual or philosophical goals, any indulgence in anything that is contrary to our goals can only bring our overall energy down. Whereas having a milkshake every once in a while might taste good and be enjoyable for a moment, there is nothing about negative thinking that ever brings about inner joy (enjoyment). For however long it is that we indulge in negative thinking, we will not feel inner joy, but instead will feel anxiety or depression. It simply doesn't make any sense for a person to do this to themselves—not even once in a while.

Therefore, the secret to lasting happiness is to desire happiness more than anything else. Analyze your desires

as they are happening and choose the way that meets your goals the best. Practice this method constantly, and happiness will surely follow.

Let me add that the type of lifestyle that I'm advocating as a means to achieving constant and lasting happiness isn't meant to be all work and no fun. In my view, life is meant to be enjoyed. There is no reason why a person living responsibly and within their goals can't have it as part of their goals to enjoy a movie or concert from time to time. Everyone needs moments of rest and relaxation. Entertainment such as reading, television, concerts, and movies are great ways to relax and (often times) learn things at the same time.

Therefore, work when you must, but have fun whenever you can. Make it a part of your goals, and always allow some time for social activities with friends and loved ones. It is time spent with friends and loved ones that gives life so much of its joy and meaning.

If you're married, make it a goal to be a great spouse. If you're a parent, make it a goal to be a great parent. Be the best that you can be. Want it more than anything else. This is the path of enlightenment.

It is also important when we are setting goals that we set goals that are attainable and realistic. There's nothing

wrong with setting the bar high, just don't set it impossibly high.

At the same time, don't be afraid to push or test your limits as well. You might not accomplish what you set out for every time, but sometimes it is necessary to fail many times before we finally get it right. To think that you might never fail is unrealistic anyways, isn't it? Therefore, never be afraid of failure.

With whatever you are involved in, give it your best effort. Maybe you'll succeed, maybe you won't, but that's all a part of the learning process we call life. Even if you do fail or fall short, as long as you give it your best effort you can at least find joy in that, and can use it to strengthen your resolve for the next time.

As far as living a life of perpetual happiness is concerned, there really isn't much more to it than what I've already said. Once a person learns the basic concepts, the rest is just mindfulness and practice, with an emphasis on continued learning, self-evaluation, and growth.

There are always ways to add to your philosophy and understanding of things, and I encourage you to do so. But as you learn, always remember the basics. Refine what you know and grow, but keep it simple at the same time. Gain knowledge through education, and wisdom through experi-

ence. Learn from everyone and everything. All moments in life are an opportunity for learning, growth, joy, and practice.

And lastly, share what you've learned with others. We are all teachers and students—all the time.

### **Situational Anxiety**

I have some additional insights into the topic of happiness that I would like to share with you that will help to address situational anxiety and how to understand and approach it.

The first insight has to do with control and anxiety, and how these can influence our overall happiness.

It has been my observation, both in myself and in those around me, that the majority of the anxiety that we experience has a lot to do with our desire to control everything around us. It can be said that in many cases, the people with the most anxiety are those who want to control everything around them the most. (As I said, this is just my observation; I could be wrong about it. I suggest that you meditate on the topic yourself and see what your own thoughts are on the matter.)

Conversely, it can be said that those who have the least amount of anxiety in life are those who have a clear understanding of what is in their control and what is not, and therefore, only try to control that which is in their power to control.

As I have already illustrated earlier, the things that are the most under your control are your attitudes, perceptions, reactions, and actions; but what I'm referring to in this section are the specific aspects within a *situation* that are within your control or influence.

When confronted with any kind of situation, the first thing that you need to do is figure out: a) what is and is not in your control, and b) what is within the realm of your *influence*. Once that is figured out, the next step is to decide what you want the most and what actions, if any, you are going to take. But along with any actions taken (or not taken), it must be understood right from the start that there is always a possibility that the desired outcome that you are acting towards may not necessarily materialize in the way that you are hoping for (or maybe not at all). This is only natural, as not all external things are always in our control or subject to our influence.

Once the situation has played out, it is important to evaluate and reevaluate the situation and see if there is any-

thing else in your control or influence, or if matters are now settled or beyond your control or influence.

Which brings me to my next insight. Whether things play out in your favor or not, once you have done *everything in your power* to control or influence the situation, then it is time to *accept* the situation for what it is. *Acceptance* is another area that can have great influence on our overall happiness.

When observing your own life or the lives of those around you, wouldn't it be true to say that it is those who are unable to accept the reality or finality of a situation that have the most difficulty finding peace within themselves? Once a person has done everything in their power to control or influence a situation, what benefit is there in *not* accepting that fact? Yet so many people continue to let situations that they have no control over disrupt their happiness and peace.

For those who have accepted that all avenues have been explored and acted upon, then the situation becomes "closed," and it simply is what it is. At that point the issue or situation is either a part of the past, or it becomes a part of life, and therefore, no longer has the power to disrupt their peace. Additionally, with the right perspectives and

attitudes, it will no longer have the power to disrupt their happiness, either.

I'm not saying that all situations that have reached a final resolution are *easy* to accept; some situations are harder to accept than others. But once nothing else can be done about it, then, in my opinion, it is time to *accept* the situation for what it is and *decide that you want happiness more than anything else in life*, even if the resolution was not what you had desired or hoped for. The alternative is *to refuse to be happy because you didn't get your way*. Why punish yourself like that?

Which brings me to my third and final insight. Again, in observing those around you, wouldn't you say that it is those who *make the best of any given situation* that are the happiest and most at peace with themselves (and those around them)? Can there really be any other way to happiness than to make the best of any given situation? That starts by looking for as many positives that you can from the situation and concentrating on them, rather than on the fact that the situation didn't turn out exactly as you had desired. Making the best of any given situation is an absolute must if a person is going to live a life of constant happiness.

(By the way, these insights that I'm mentioning are nothing new; they have been around for thousands of years, and have been practiced and emphasized by a great number of people, religions, philosophies, and philosophers. But as a society, we are rarely taught these insights, and therefore, they remain hidden to us as a whole, and are unable to help people in the ways that they could.)

To summarize this section, remember that a lot of the anxiety that people suffer from in the world stems from their desire to want to *control* everything around them (even that which is beyond their control), their failure to *accept* that some things are beyond their control, and their inability to *make the best of a situation* once it is out of their control or if the situation didn't go as they had hoped or desired. Therefore, have a clear understanding of what is and is not in your control, do the best that you can with what is in your control, and once you have done that, accept what's out of your control and make the best of the situation from there on out. Then live in peace, joy, and happiness.

## Closing Thoughts

When we are young, we are taught many things. Some of the things that we are taught are good and helpful like reading, writing, and arithmetic. We are given lessons in classical literature and history. We are taught the basics of science and economics. But one thing that hardly anyone teaches us about is *ourselves*. Most of us grow up without the slightest understanding of our own mind and thought processes—and the power that we have over them.

Why is that? If there is one thing in this world that should be essential for each of us to know, shouldn't it be our own mind and how it functions?

Imagine a world in which every person, from a young age, was taught that they had the power to control and harmonize their own mind and live at peace with themselves and those around them. Wouldn't that be a wonderful world?

As the saying goes, better late than never. Let us start now to educate ourselves, our children, and our friends and family about how to control and harmonize our minds. It can make a world of difference!

It can be said that most (if not all) of the pain and suffering that people experience in life can be traced back to a

simple lack of self understanding. Too often in life we are afraid to ask ourselves the tough questions, to really look into the mirror and call it like we see it. We do ourselves a great disservice when we do this. Each of us could be so much further along the path of enlightenment if we were more honest with ourselves and each other.

Honesty can be a double-edged sword though—you might not like what you see. But if you are strong enough, honesty can cut away all of the poison and self delusion that makes it impossible for you to experience absolute joy every moment of your life.

Each person in the world, whether consciously or unconsciously, follows certain philosophies in life. Therefore, everyone is a philosopher in a way. The question is, how much of your philosophy has been decided by you, and how much of it has been instilled into you by other people?

Our minds, at any age, are very impressionable, but especially so at a young age. Unfortunately, as I mentioned earlier, hardly anyone teaches us about the power that our own attitudes and perceptions have in our lives, or how much power we have over our attitudes and perceptions.

Regardless of what's happened in the past, living a life of happiness begins by deciding what you want in life and

why. So what do you want? Don't just move on to the next line (the one that you are on now), actually think about it. What do you want the most in life?

Admittedly, this is a very hard question to answer. There are so many variables and questions to be asked, like, "What is happiness, anyways?" If I were to ask a hundred different people, I would probably get a hundred different answers.

For me, *happiness is living a life in harmony with truth.* The truth of what, you might ask? Well, there are many kinds of truth. There is the truth about God, the truth about existence, and the truth about our minds and how they work, just to name a few. (My views on God, truth, and existence are subjects that I've written about in my books, *The Truth as I See It: A Collection of Spiritual Writings* <sup>[10]</sup> and *Mind Purpose Truth*, and can be read on my website [www.mindpurposetruth.com](http://www.mindpurposetruth.com).) <sup>[11]</sup>

"But lots of people believe all kinds of things; how do you know that what you believe is the truth?" you might ask.

What I believe to be truth is based on the comparisons of my own spiritual experiences, the feelings of my own soul and relationship with God, and what other people have to say about spirituality and truth. How I come to an an-

swer involves a lot of comparing and questioning, which isn't always easy. That's why most people simply adopt the views of other people or organized religions or philosophies without ever really questioning them because it takes a lot of work and they don't feel comfortable *deciding for themselves* what's right and what's wrong; they want someone else to do that for them.

But you should never be afraid to ask questions! There is no greater tool to understanding and enlightenment than the *question*—so question everything! It is through the journey of asking questions and seeking answers that some of life's greatest meaning is revealed to us!

But how will you know if something is true or not? You must test it! And if possible, you must try to *experience* it! Philosophy and spirituality isn't just about *accepting* someone else's ideas; philosophy and spirituality are meant to be lived and experienced!

I encourage you to question everything that you read and come across—including everything that I say. Compare it with what you already know and see how it feels to your own soul. Test it every way possible, and eventually, with enough evidence and experience, you will know the truth. (Or at least be on the pathway to truth; whether or not anyone can know *the* truth isn't for me to say (I don't

like to put limits on God or other people), but trying to know as much truth as possible still seems like a very worthwhile goal in life, even if it seems unattainable at times.)

Like I said, the ideas and practices behind controlling and harmonizing your mind are actually quite simple. Like any activity or philosophy in life it takes a period of learning followed by daily practice, until eventually it is as easy and habitual as tying your shoes or riding a bike.

Just like any new activity, there may be some growing pains along the way. To be honest, it is really only painful if a person tries to live under two opposing philosophies of life at the same time. A person can't choose a life of happiness and freedom and then cling to old philosophies and attachments that oppose it. Living in such a way will only lead to torment.

To embark on a lifetime journey of happiness, one must be "all in." You have to want it more than anything else in life. You must have a clear understanding of your goals and an uncompromising resolve to let nothing stand in your way of achieving them, not even your own past thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, or experiences.

As I mentioned before, happiness is a kind of philosophy. Any philosophy in life is shaped first by a group of

ideas which are then built into a system, which, if followed, is meant to produce certain results, which should lead towards predetermined goals.

I believe in keeping things as simple as possible; the simpler, the better. The philosophy of happiness is not a difficult one. It is so simple, in fact, that it seems almost too obvious. And it is. The problem is that most people just don't think about it often enough or practice it much.

One of the problems in life is that from a very young age we are taught by the examples of others that it is okay to indulge in anger, self-pity, anxiety, and negative thinking—that it is, in fact, *normal* to do so! That it's a part of what it means to be *human*! But nothing could be further from the truth! That's not the way that a human life needs to be at all! By practicing a philosophy of happiness, a person can escape from these kinds of self-defeating ways of thinking and mature into a happy, positive, and fulfilled person.

So what do you want the most in life? What are your goals? Why wait any longer to live a life of constant happiness? Be happy now!

Be happy always!

## Quotes for Living a Happy Life

(When reading this section, it may be helpful to replace the words “happiness” or “happy” with other words such as *godliness, peace, positivity, joy, etc.*...for increased versatility and impact.)

“You cannot think unhappy thoughts and expect to be happy. If you want to be happy, you have to think happy thoughts.”

“You have the power to decide which thoughts occupy your mind and constitute your energy. With practice, this power grows into habit, which eventually becomes your normal way of interacting with the world.”

“To realize happiness you must unlearn your old ways of thinking and replace negative thoughts with positive thoughts.”

“Happiness is a state of joy, positivity, and perspective. Happiness is a philosophy, an attitude, a passion. Happiness is a choice.”

“Anytime an unhappy thought enters your mind, you must banish it immediately. There is no other way to happiness.”

“To be in a perpetual state of happiness you have to want happiness more than anything else. It means giving up every kind of self-pity, justification, indulgence, or excuse as to why you can’t be happy.”

“Don’t get stuck or dwell on negativity. If you’re going to get stuck, get stuck on happiness. Dwell on joy, appreciation, beauty, and positivity.”

“Although the past can be an excellent teacher, it isn’t necessary to dwell on the past to build a better future. To build happiness in the present, you must *be* in the present! If you are always happy in the present, your future will be happy as well.”

“One of the key ingredients to living a life of happiness is to focus not on what you don’t want, but on what you do want. This is very important!”

“To embark on a lifetime journey of happiness, one must be “all in.” You have to want it more than anything else in life. You must have a clear understanding of your goals and an uncompromising resolve to let nothing stand in your way of achieving them, not even your own past thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, or experiences.”

“Do you want to be happy? Then why do you keep doing those things which make you unhappy?”

“Happiness is a kind of philosophy. Any philosophy in life is shaped first by a group of ideas which are then built into a system, which, if followed, is meant to produce certain results, which should lead towards predetermined goals.”

“While on the path of happiness, even if something does annoy or upset you, make a conscious effort to notice this happening and bring yourself quickly back to the path. How long you remain off of the path is entirely up to you.”

“Step 1: Decide to be happy.

“Step 2: Refer to step one.”

“Do you want to be peaceful? Think peaceful thoughts! Anxious thoughts and peaceful thoughts cannot co-exist at the same time! You must choose one or the other!”

“Appreciation is one of the cornerstones of happiness.”

“If you’re not experiencing joy and happiness this very moment, why not? What is preventing you from doing so? The only things that can—your attitudes and perspectives.”

“You are responsible for yourself. It is up to you and you alone how you feel at any given moment.”

“Self-forgiveness is a necessary part of living a life of happiness. Although it is appropriate and natural to feel bad when you’ve done something wrong or that goes against your principles, it is also important not to let the feeling last for longer than is necessary in order to learn what you need to from the experience. What you’ve done in the past is done; today is a new day. Don’t let yesterday (or tomorrow) prevent you from being happy today.”

“Whether your thoughts are good or bad, positive or negative, peaceful or stressful, you are responsible for them.”

“During everyday life, if I notice a person or event trying to disrupt my happiness, I calmly remind myself that being in a perpetual state of happiness takes constant practice. Practice something long enough and you’re bound to get good at it.”

“For a tool to work it needs to be used; it does no good sitting in a toolbox collecting dust.”

“For a lot of people, this is what life is like: ‘I won’t be happy unless I have (enter word here)! This is called an “attachment.” You should have only one attachment in life, and that is your attachment to your desire to be happy.”

“Will power is like a muscle: the more you exercise it, the stronger it gets; the less you exercise it, the weaker it gets.”

“A strong will power is the greatest and most important tool that a person can develop. Without it, even knowledge and understanding are left paralyzed and directionless.”

“A person can have all of the knowledge in the world, but without the will power to use that knowledge and put it to good use, it will be wasted. Therefore, it is crucial to develop, test, and strengthen your will constantly.”

“We are all “works-in-progress,” and sometimes it takes a while to build a solid foundation under your feet before you can stand securely and confidently on the strength of your will power.”

“Take some time regularly to evaluate yourself and see how well you are developing towards your goals. This kind of self-evaluation is a must-have ingredient for any person on the path to enlightenment, but it is only helpful if you are completely honest with yourself about everything.”

“Analyze your desires as they are happening, and choose the way that meets your goals the best. Practice this method constantly, and happiness will surely follow.”

“It is important in life that we continue to grow and evolve towards our goals, for such evolution is usually accompanied by feelings of joy, contentment, and satisfaction.”

“Spiritual enlightenment is possible for each and every person, should they direct their will to that end.”

“Philosophy and spirituality isn’t just about *accepting* someone else’s ideas; philosophy and spirituality are meant to be lived and experienced!”

“You have the power to direct the flow of thoughts that go through your mind, to decide which attitudes and ideas you have, and how you will respond emotionally to anything that happens in your life.”

“One of the problems in life is that from a very young age we are taught by the examples of others that it is okay to indulge in anger, self-pity, anxiety, and negative thinking—that it is, in fact, *normal* to do so! That it’s a part of what it means to be *human*! But nothing could be further from the truth! That’s not the way that a human life needs to be at all! By practicing a philosophy of happiness, a person can escape from these kinds of self-defeating ways of thinking and mature into a happy, positive, and fulfilled person.”

“Imagine a world in which every person, from a young age, was taught that they had the power to control and harmonize their own mind and live at peace with themselves and those around them. Wouldn’t that be a wonderful world?”

## **A Path to Happiness**

- Understanding your mind, your thoughts, and your will is essential in understanding yourself
- You are responsible for yourself. It is up to you and no one else what you think and how you feel at any given moment
- Know and understand that you have the power to experience and maintain joyful and peaceful thoughts all the time
- Observe your mind and thought processes
- Understand your mind and thought processes
- Decide what you want and why
- Decide a number of goals that you want more than anything else
- Set realistic goals in regards to your mental/emotional/spiritual self and work towards realizing those goals
- Incorporate your goals into a philosophy and practice it, using constant observation to filter everything in daily

life (thoughts, emotions, experiences) through your philosophy and tools

- Learn the tool of “I want (place goal here) more than anything else”
- Find methods and techniques to help keep your mind clear, beautiful, and on track towards realizing your goals
- Take time to evaluate your progress, understanding that a seed doesn’t grow into a flower overnight, but remain open to the reality that there are times when certain goals and mind frames can materialize and solidify rapidly or even instantly, like the flick of a switch
- Take life one moment at a time, one thought at a time. You, and you alone, are responsible for the thoughts that occupy your mind at any given moment
- Continue to observe yourself, improve yourself, and practice your philosophy
- Share what you have learned with others

## Footnotes

- [1] *Enchiridion* by Epictetus (AD c. 125)
- [2] *Discourses* by Epictetus (AD c. 125)
- [3] *A Calendar of Wisdom* by Leo Tolstoy (translated by Peter Sekirin (*Scribner, 1997*))
- [4] *The Daily Stoic: 366 Meditations on Wisdom, Perseverance, and the Art of Living* by Ryan Holiday and Stephen Hanselman (*Portfolio/Penguin, 2016*)
- [5] *365 Days of Walking the Red Road: The Native American Patch to Leading a Spiritual Life Every Day* by Terri Jean (*Adams Media, 2003*)
- [6] *TouchPoint Bible* by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. (*Tyndale House Publishers, 1996*)
- [7] *Bible Keys to Well-Being: Daily Spiritual Meditations for Good Spiritual and Mental Health* by The Christian Broadcasting Network, Inc. (*The Christian Broadcasting Network, Inc., 2000*)
- [8] *Mind Purpose Truth* by Adam Soto (*Golden Rule Independent Publications, 2019*)
- [9] *Serenity Prayer*, written by Reinhold Niebuhr. First published in 1951.
- [10] *The Truth as I See It: A Collection of Spiritual Writings* by Adam Soto (*Golden Rule Independent Publications, 2018*)
- [11] [www.mindpurposetruth.com](http://www.mindpurposetruth.com)