

foreword

Years ago, a friend of mine shared with me the secret of happiness. It used to be on a sign at a donut shop in the Midwest. It read,

*As you wander through your life, friend,
whatever be your goal,
keep your eyes upon the donut
and not upon the hole.”*

That's it. The more we focus on what is good and right in our lives and in the world, the better and sweeter life is. And the more we notice what's wrong, lacking, broken, or messed up, the worse we feel. It's all there, donut and hole, misery and bliss. How we feel all depends on which part we pay attention to. Simple, right?

Not so. Because so many of us are so very, very talented at embracing the hole or even insisting that the hole is all there is. Or at least, like me, falling into the hole on a regular basis for all kinds of known and unknown reasons.

That's why this book of Addie Johnson's is so important. It's chock-full of ways to make sure you stay focused on all the calorie-free donuts in your life: friends and family, nature, love, stuff and no stuff, purpose and passion. And, unlike any of my books 'cause I tend to be oh-so-serious about everything, even happiness, it even offers a bunch of jokes so you can experience the joy of laughter.

Addie is real and wise and silly, just the right companion to help you discover just how sweet life is. Enjoy.

MJ Ryan, author of
The Happiness Makeover



introduction

In Search of the Sunny Side



Joy delights in joy.

William Shakespere

Life is just a bowl of cherries, right? Or pears. Or maybe it's a bed of roses. All of those quaint old sayings seem to have lost a bit of their charm in the bustle of modern life. Cherries have pits and are sprayed with pesticides. Who knows what a bed of roses actually is besides a metaphor? And living life on the sunny side of the street is a sure risk for skin cancer.

We struggle with war, poverty, global warming, rising crime rates, a barrage of news, hardly any of it good. People get sick, they die, they get divorced. Civility is as rare as gentleman doffing their hats. Celebrities have fabulous lives, but you don't. And the *If only's* threaten to take the day: "My life would be sweet if only I were richer, more famous, thinner, younger, older, had a better job, lived in a different city . . ."

Who's happy? My friends are miserable, my family has shouted at each other through each of the last four holiday seasons, all the dogs I know are neurotic, and even the people on

television are letting me down. And I don't mean the newscasters; I mean the fictional, made-up, don't-even-have-real-lives-or-real-problems people. They aren't happy either! I'm not happy a lot of the time—I worry too much, get down on myself at every opportunity, tend toward laziness and self-pity.

But before I labeled myself an unhappy lump for life, I thought I'd try accounting for all the times I notice something that makes me smile, or laugh hysterically, or walk around for a whole afternoon with a spring in my step. Maybe I am at least a little bit happy.

I have family and friends I love deeply, a husband I'm head over heels for, and I get to fill my days mostly with stuff I like to do that furthers my personal and professional goals. I am blessed to run a theatre company with some of my favorite people in the world, and lucky enough to carve a living out of acting and writing. And look, here's a bowl full of fresh fruit on the table from the farmer's market, chemical free. Happiness is all around, if I stop to take a look. Whoa, stop the presses. Or rather, start the presses—I've got a book to write.

Modern Inconveniences

Recently our apartment was burglarized and our computers were stolen. Two days after the burglary, after changing the locks and cleaning up the mess, we got on an airplane for a cross-country flight. We pulled out of the gate and sat in the plane on the tarmac for close to five hours before finally taking off for our six-hour flight. Our almost-two-year-old son was booked as an infant and was sitting on my lap, and we'd gone through all our snacks and activities by the time we got in the air. The flight turned out just fine—we all arrived safely, we were able to entertain our son, and he ran up and down the aisles until the flight attendants were cross-eyed. The upside? Now we know we could take him to Japan on a direct flight, no problem.

A burglary, losing a computer with a month's worth of unbacked-up work, an annoying air traffic control snafu . . . why am I even bringing these up? These things are not tragedies; they can't even compare to the frustrations and suffering experienced by huge masses of people around the world every day. But

they are just the sorts of things that can demoralize us, chip away at our well-being, and threaten our most precious commodity—our happiness.

The Pursuit of Happiness

Through my travels, conversations, and research, I've come to the conclusion (and I ain't the first or the last to come to it, let me tell you), that after the basic needs of survival are met, the pursuit of happiness is the *most* important thing we do in our lives. Why else would we spend so much time thinking about it, making art about it, hoping and wishing and planning for it? If we're putting all that energy into happiness, why aren't we happier? Well, a lot of it has to do with what we think it means to be happy. Our definition is all screwy. Even though I know better, I catch myself at least fourteen times a day thinking about how happy I will be when I get through my dentist appointment, or deposit a bigger paycheck, or when I don't have any more stinkin' problems. And as I'm thinking those things, I fail to appreciate the little things that are

making me happy right this moment. The wind in my hair, the crunch of an autumn apple, my kid's toothy smile, a great movie, a catchy tune. It's all in how I look at it—and if I'm keeping a tally, there are at least as many positives as negatives. Even better, if I want to I can tip the scales to the sweet side once in a while.

You cannot *poof* yourself happy. And nobody else can either—no fairy godmother or perfect imagined spouse, no guru or fitness instructor. If you got everything you wanted (or thought you wanted)—*poof*—right now, you'd certainly feel happy for a little while. But scientists who study this stuff, and spiritual leaders, and that wise old lady across the street all know one thing: feeling happy doesn't come from getting everything you think you want for nothing. It comes from dreaming about your goals and working to reach them. And it comes from paying attention to the little things in life that trigger a feeling of happiness—if you let them. It's great when the outcome of your efforts is what you want, but that's all really icing on the cake.

There's a ton of medical research to back it up: people who appreciate where their bread is buttered and how sweet the jam on their toast is—well, they're healthier, they live longer, they're usually more successful (although they may not define success as having the most marbles), and for sure, other people want to spend more time around them.

Buried Treasure

I went on something of a treasure hunt to create this book. I polled my friends and family. I read some new books and went back to some old favorites. I dug deep into my own psyche. As I was writing, and especially after we were burglarized, I realized that even when we're going through a tough time, or getting in a bind, we need to stay open to the reasons for happiness all around us. There's a mountain of evidence that life is sweet, if we'll just stop to look at it.

Life Is Sweet is the result of my treasure hunt: a collection of 333 things that make me—and lots of other people, including, probably, you—happy. It's chock-full

of stories, vignettes, aphorisms, quotes, ideas big and little, not to mention bits and pieces from the media—all of them pointing to the same conclusion. People, stories, kids and animals, stuff/no stuff, goals achieved and unpleasant tasks done, laughing (snickering, giggling, guffawing, wetting your pants), health or progress toward it: all are fodder for happiness.

Why a list of 333 things? I could claim that a mystic oracle told me this number, and that by repeating it in a whisper while closing your left eye and stirring your coffee counter-clockwise you could have unlimited power and influence over the stock market and have reliable premonitions of the color trends for spring or the filly who's going to run away with the Derby this year. But no, reason one is about simplicity. Life is sweeter when it's simple. And a lot of the time it's the simple things that make life sweet, and 333 is a nice, simple number.

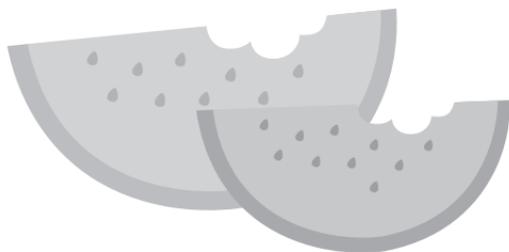
The second reason is that most people (myself included) think life can't be sweet all the time. So 333 is a nod to that eminently sensible idea. Forget sweet

365, Sunday through Saturday, rain through shine all year long. Three hundred and thirty-three gives you a few days a year to be crabby if you must.

The third reason is that while we're counting ways to see that life is sweet, what *really* counts and makes life better is developing an attitude of seeing and being the happiness *right in front of us*. And that takes a bit of practice. And 333 times is a bit of practice and then some.

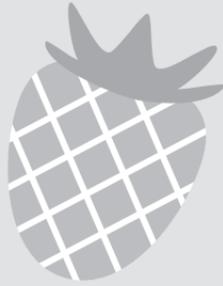
Too often we hide away the treasure of our own happiness as if there's a limited supply, and we forget that life will bring plenty more booty for us. So it's time to go out looking. You'll find some right on your doorstep, some in your immediate circle of friends and family, some in the love passed among us all. You'll find some in stupid jokes, some in philosophical musings. You'll find that some treasure sneaks up from behind and finds you, and some stays hidden and difficult to seek out. But don't forget that you have the map that will lead you to more happiness than you can ever imagine, and you've had it forever—it's your birthright.

Happiness doesn't care how much money you have or the circumstances you were born into. Your treasure map goes where you go; it's printed on your face and in your fingerprints, waiting for you to unlock its potential. Have fun on your search for the sunny side, and don't forget to enjoy the journey. Life is sweet and creamy—yes, your life—if you just look at what's in front of your face.





Love and Other Forces for
Good in the World, like Giving,
Sharing, and Finding Money



We cannot do great things
on this Earth, only small
things with great love.

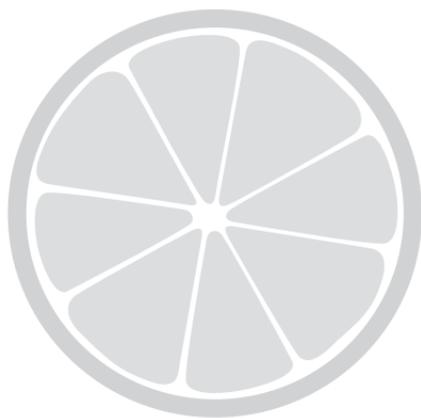
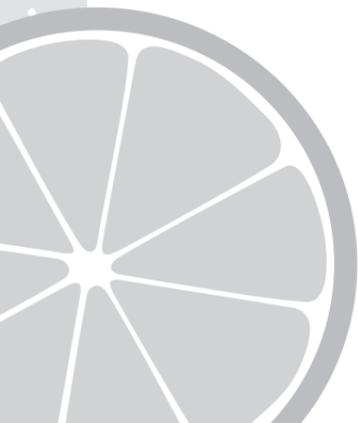
Mother Teresa

Love really does make the world go 'round. From teenagers in a lip lock, to old marrieds going bowling on a Friday night, to sisters who talk every day, to the friends who are so close they're really your family, to the kindness of strangers. Love is the best. It's the impetus for the creation of songs, poems, gardens, and more (not to mention babies). It's a reason for long journeys, and it keeps hope alive in the hardest places. The love between two people is a living thing with its own history and hopes, a journey in and of itself. The love in a family nurtures us and keeps us going. The love for humanity inspires generosity, growth, and understanding. And, as they say in all those songs and poems, love never dies. It is a currency that cannot be devalued, a flower that never loses its bloom. It is often the greatest comfort when someone has died to remember how they loved and were loved by others.

Passion ignites purpose, and most if not all of the forces for good in this world emanate from love: generosity, understanding, kindness, justice. Most of us are surrounded by more love that we might consciously

think about on a day-to-day basis. You're on the receiving end of love that is literally flowing around the globe. Perhaps even better, you're on the giving end of that love, and no matter how much you share, the tank never runs low.

When you're down in the dumps and you think fortune has turned on her heel and walked out on you, you see a spot of green among the fall leaves in the gutter. After love, finding money is the next best thing. But more on that later.



1 Someone to Do the Work With

I remember talking to a friend at brunch and coming to one of those realization-of-the-obvious moments. We were talking about our youthful ideas of finding a mate: that when we found Mr. Right, the journey would be over. There would be minimal struggle after that, and little arguing or compromise; the relationship would exist in a kind of perfect glass bubble. Somehow we thought that our relationship with “the one” would be immune from the needs and pressures of every other relationship in our lives. Boy, were we dumb, and thank goodness. As my uncle said before he married my husband and me, “A relationship between two people in love is probably the most difficult thing God asks us to do.” And he wasn’t kidding. My friend and I are both lucky and thrilled to have found our Mr. Rights—the ones we want to do the hard work with from here to eternity—and that’s far more exciting than any glass bubble.

2 Off to Bed and Forget the Fight

Maya Angelou's brother gave her a painting with the instruction to hang it so that it was the last thing she and her husband saw before going to bed at night. So if they were in the middle of an argument, they could look at the painting and say, "Oh, stop. Whatever it was, whatever you said, forget it," and go to bed with a twinkle in their eyes.

3 Basic Needs

"As far as living a healthy, happy life goes, I hold loving and being loved right up there with fresh air and water."

—Oprah Winfrey

4 Again and Again

Weekend trips, spring cleaning, looking at photos, long drives, finding something new for the house. Ah, the



fun work of reconnecting with your partner over and over. A couple's work is never done.

5 Love Is

"Love is the condition in which the happiness of another person is essential to your own."

—Robert Heinlein

6 Shakespeare

He knew a thing or two about love. This scene from *As You Like It* always sticks with me. Phebe is a shepherdess pursued by heartsick and thickeheaded Silvius. But Phebe is head over heels in love with Ganimed, who is Rosalind disguised as a man (which is why she says she can be in love with "No Woman"). Orlando is in love with Rosalind. She likes him too, but she's using her disguise as a test to see if he's for real.

PHEBE: *Good Shepherd, tell this Youth what 'tis
to love.*

SILVIUS: *It is to be all made of Sighs and Tears,
And so am I for Phebe.*

PHEBE: *And I for Ganimed.*

ORLANDO: *And I for Rosalind.*

ROSALIND: *And I for No Woman.*

SILVIUS: *It is to be all made of Faith and Service,
And so am I for Phebe.*

PHEBE: *And I for Ganimed.*

ORLANDO: *And I for Rosalind.*

ROSALIND: *And I for No Woman.*

SILVIUS: *It is to be all made of Fantasy,
All made of Passion, and all made of
Wishes,
All Adoration, Duty, and Observance,
All Humbleness, all Patience, and
Impatience,
All Purity, all Trial, all Observance:
And so am I for Phebe.*

PHEBE: *And I for Ganimed.*

ORLANDO: *And I for Rosalind.*

ROSALIND: *And I for No Woman.*

How's that for a definition of love from an illiterate shepherd?

7 Love List

If I'm feeling low, one of the best ways I know to perk up is to make a love list. It's simple, just a list of every single person I love. Then I follow it up with another list, of all the people I know who love me. I can stash it in a pocket to take with me on a tough day, or just keep it in mind as I get on with my life.

8 Love Letters

Not just for romance, you can write a love letter to almost anyone. Try writing a letter full of love to your favorite aunt, or a writer you admire, or even yourself! You could also send a letter to a perfect stranger who

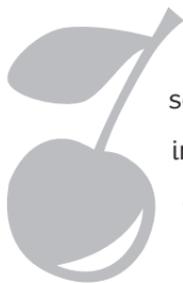
might need some love and support—someone in the military, or recovering from a natural disaster, or coping with a loss.

9 Remembrance

I'm fascinated by family histories, and I love to hear stories about courtships, births, deaths, and strange happenings from my grandparents, aunts and uncles. I love feeling connected to places I've never lived, and to people I haven't seen in eons through the love that's been shared and passed down in my family.

10 Growing Up

Maybe the best thing about becoming an adult is a shift in my relationships with friends, family, and my husband. It's the change from the relationship being about self-validation to being about knowing. I worry less and less about how I look or feel when I'm with



someone else, or what I'm getting out of my interactions, and I'm more and more focused on a genuine desire to know the people I love inside and out. I'm also more willing than I've ever been to allow other people to try and get to know me in that way, too, warts and all.

11 Green and Slimy

"Love is like seaweed; even if you have pushed it away, you will not prevent it from coming back."

— Nigerian proverb

12 Silly Stuff

I love that stuff shared between couples that seems loopy to everyone else. The word or joke or song that makes them smile moonily at each other and shut out the rest of us cranks.

13 Puppy Love

There's something wonderful about seeing a preadolescent boy pad around faithfully after the object of his affection. There's also something wonderful about seeing a real puppy pad around after the boy he loves, totally smitten.

14 A Soft Spot

My uncle is a cop who doesn't get his feathers ruffled easily, and isn't a mushy type at all. I don't know what possessed me, but I asked him recently, "Is there anything that makes you giddy?" And he replied, "I don't know if I've ever been giddy. . . . Maybe young love. . . . Walking with Angela [his wife] on the beach." And my heart melted.

15 Loving the Single Life

There are plenty of people who are wonderfully happy being single, and wouldn't have it any other way.

Playing the field with no intention of settling down, or happily spending time with loved ones, they soar above the trivial dramas of cohabitation, and have often found joy through a true love of themselves.

16 Pretending to Be Strangers

I love those moments with my husband when I learn something new about him, something I might never have guessed and am surprised I didn't know sooner. Maybe the way to kick-start this feeling once in a while is to pretend to be strangers. Ask your partner to tell you a story from her childhood, or to describe a time in her life when she faced or overcame a fear. Talk like you're just meeting someone—but without any stranger anxiety—a stranger you trust implicitly to share special secrets about your past or the intriguing things about the way you think or relate to the world. Too often we forget to keep “getting to know” our partners because we assume we already know them well enough, so it's fun sometimes to start at the beginning.

17-25 Love Is All Around

Some things that make me happy when I see them:

17. Romeo & Juliet

I love witnessing awkward teenager love, in the stage right before in blows up into full-scale *Romeo and Juliet* madness. When two kids are excited and into each other, but really worried (for the moment) about jumping in. Toes curled over the diving board, so to speak.

18. Romeo & Juliet All Tied Up

My husband told me that he saw two teenagers making out on the subway, in that conspicuous way that only teenagers can get away with. He said he noticed them stop and the girl tied their shoelaces together, and then they promptly went back to happy canoodling.

19. Railway Reunions

I like to pass the time as I wait in a train station by watching as someone paces, checking the arrivals board again and again. Then watching

as the reunion unfolds with their friend, love, mother, sister. . . . These are best when there is some running with arms outstretched, or some laughing through tears.

20. Sharing Headphones

The other day I saw a mother and her maybe six-year-old daughter on the subway, each with one earpiece, jamming out and dancing so hard to the music they were both hearing that the little girl's earpiece would fall out from time to time. They'd laugh hysterically until she got it back in and then they would go back to their boogey.

21. Bathroom Graffiti

I can't say much about what's written on the walls in men's rooms, but I do have fun imagining the histories behind some of what's written in the ladies' stalls: A+D, S+D 4ever, U unlocked my ♥ and threw away the key, Lila my love 2000.

22. Tattoos

Like bathroom graffiti, just a little more personal and probably more permanent. It might not be

for you, but some people have beautiful tributes to their husbands, wives, or kids. And don't be stalled by thoughts of breakup or regret—you can always find a way to change the tattoo. Like Johnny Depp, who got his “Winona Forever” tat shortened to “Wino Forever.”

23. T-shirts

Okay, so you're not ready to go under the needle? Something a bit more temporary is a cool graphic tee. You can order custom ones online, or make them yourself at specialty shops. Like “I can't stop thinking about Daniel.” Or “Property of Polly.”

24. Presents

I'm a fool for gift wrap, even if I'm not the one getting the present. Watching people walk down the street around the holidays with bags stuffed to bursting with colorful paper, ribbons, and bows just about sends me over the edge.

25. Good Things/Small Packages

I love seeing a man with a little bag in that telltale Tiffany blue. Just imagine the jitters he's got about whether he picked the perfect thing, and the look on her face that tells him he did it just right.

26 Keepsake

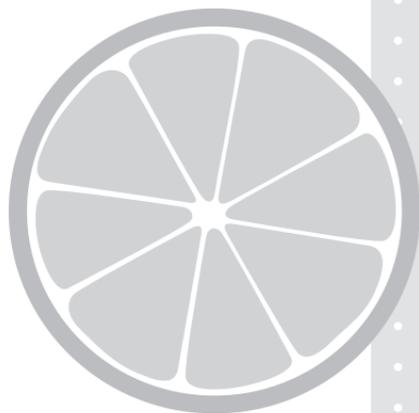
"Treasure the love you receive above all. It will survive long after your good health has vanished."

— Og Mandino

27 The Only Word We Need

"One word frees us of all the weight and pain of life: That word is love."

— Sophocles



28 Hiding Money

As a child I had the habit of stashing cash. I would slide a dollar bill in between two books on a shelf, or place a neat stack of quarters inside an empty jewelry box. Then, in the long intervals between room cleanings, I'd forget all about the money and be thrilled when I found it. And I'm not alone in this. Annie Dillard talks about hiding pennies as a kid in her memoir *An American Childhood*, and drawing chalk arrows to the hiding place with promising notes for strangers like, "Money Ahead!" What joy for the hider and the seeker.

29 Hiding a Lot of Money

There was a news story recently about people finding money in public toilets and mailboxes all over Japan. The gifts are in various amounts, but based on media reports the totals are in the millions of yen (probably more than \$100,000), and some have contained a note asking the finder to do good deeds with the money. But the secret giver or group of givers remains

a mystery. Some people are keeping the money, but most are following Japanese custom and turning it in to the police to be claimed. They can get it back later if nobody comes forward and then spend it doing good deeds, which seems like good karma coming and going.

30 The Love Underneath

Like I said before, scratch the surface of every good thing in the world, and you'll find love.

GENEROSITY: *Love of giving freely*

LISTENING: *Love of tuning in*

KEEPING PROMISES: *Love of following through*

FORGIVENESS: *Love of self*

PEACE: *Love beyond self*

UNDERSTANDING: *The love underneath it all*

CURIOSITY: *Love of knowledge*

JUSTICE: *Love for fellow human beings*