

Chapter 3

How to Put the H.A.P.P.Y. in Happy Working Mother

What happy working moms know is you can have what matters most to you.

—Sherry Brennan, mother, and vice president, sales strategy & development, Fox Cable Networks

To be our best for our kids, family, coworkers, and ourselves, we all need to be H.A.P.P.Y. working mothers:

Healthy: physical and mental health.

Adaptive: high Adaptability Quotient (AQ) and good health make you more adaptive.

Proud: of your family and able to derive joy from them as they are.

Proud: of your work and guilt-free because it's part of who you are.

Young at heart: able to find joy wherever you can.

That's the What-Happy-Working-Mothers-Know model for happiness. From these five traits emerge a set of behaviors with a domino effect that positively inspire us to lead fulfilling joyous lives.

Let's take a closer look at each of the elements of H.A.P.P.Y.

48 How to Put the H.A.P.P.Y. in Happy Working Mother

H Is for Healthy: Your Physical and Mental Health

Wellness is your responsibility. You're the CEO of the corporation that is your body, and it's up to you to set the tone, direct the operations, and make the right decisions to boost the bottom line, which is your health.

Mood Food

What you eat affects how you feel because chemicals in the body react in certain ways to specific foods, according to the American Dietetic Association. For example, stress can lead to cravings for carbohydrates because they boost levels of serotonin, which has a calming effect.¹

The Details

A healthy body needs good food, enough sleep, regular exercise, and 10 to 12 minutes of peace and quiet a day.

Self-Coaching Break: Healthy Lifestyle Goals

Take a few minutes to answer a few important questions on what physical and mental health means to you:

- ◆ What are my healthy lifestyle goals?
- ◆ Do I take good care of my health and wellness?
- ◆ How do I feel when I am healthy?
- ◆ What would support a healthier lifestyle?
- ◆ What can I do to promote my well-being?
- ◆ What request do I need to make of others to achieve my goals?
- ◆ Can I flex my schedule to match a healthier lifestyle?

Feed Your Brain, Don't Starve Your Body

Eating right is easier if you focus on foods that are good for your brain and your heart. Organizations like the American Heart Association, the American Dietetic Association (www.eatright.org), and the U.S. government, including the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services (www.womenshealth.gov; www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/default.htm), have easy-to-navigate web sites with free tips, tricks, and even recipes for a healthier, happier you. Another good source of free information is *My Brain Health* from best-selling author Daniel G. Amen, M.D., psychiatrist, brain imaging specialist, assistant clinical professor of psychiatry and human behavior at University of California, Irvine School of Medicine, and author.²

Make a commitment to incorporate healthy foods into your diet at least twice a week and build up from there. We're not talking about a diet to lose weight; we're talking about a diet to develop the clear-headed stamina and strong health you need in order to do your best both as a mother and at work.

What you eat, when you eat, and in what amount can affect energy levels. Afternoon lows, for example, can be the result of poor meal timing or food choices, according to the American Dietetic Association. The best way to beat those lows is to space meals three to four hours apart and choose low-fat protein and complex carbohydrates for your meals.

Foods for Heart Health

The American Dietetic Association (www.eatright.org) suggests that regular physical activity, the right food choices, and dealing with stress are important to a healthy heart. The nonprofit group also suggests³:

- ◆ Limit foods high in saturated fat, which can increase LDL or bad cholesterol levels.
- ◆ Eat more plant proteins, fish, poultry, and low-fat dairy foods.

(continued)

50 How to Put the H.A.P.P.Y. in Happy Working Mother

- ◆ Cook with moderate amounts of olive or canola oil instead of butter, margarine, or shortening.
- ◆ Foods for heart health include:
 - Beans, peas, and barley.
 - Soybeans, other soy-based foods (not soybean oil).
 - Fruits and vegetables.
 - Salmon, tuna, sardines, and mackerel.
 - Red grapes and purple grape juice.
 - Nuts like almonds, walnuts, pecans, and hazelnuts.
 - Green or black tea.
 - Onions, scallions, shallots, garlic, and leeks.

What you eat has a huge impact on brain function as well as heart health, says Dr. Amen. In his book, *Making a Good Brain Great*, (Harmony, 2005), he suggests some practical steps for optimum brain health:

- ◆ **Drink lots of water:** 84 ounces a day which equals 9½ glasses. (**Tip:** Carry a water bottle within arm's reach in your car, and take a sip every time you stop at a red light.)
- ◆ **Include good fats in your diet:** Despite the anti-fat hype, your body needs fat to function well. The key is to minimize the bad fats—generally those that come from animals and include dairy products, red meat, and pork. (**Tip:** Read labels and use olive oil instead of butter.)
- ◆ **Include antioxidants in your diet:** Take a good multivitamin containing 800 mg folate, 50 mg B-6, and 500 to 1,000 mg B-12. (**Tip:** If you have trouble concentrating or have low energy levels, try adding 60 to 120 mg of ginkgo biloba to your supplements every day.)
- ◆ **Balance your meals with protein, good fats, and carbohydrates:** Our bodies need a balance of all three to stay healthy. (**Tip:** Eat a colorful diet.)

- ◆ **Enhance your health with brain foods:** Brain foods include wild salmon, chicken, turkey, eggs, tofu, soy products, low-fat dairy, beans, nuts, seeds, berries, oranges, cherries, broccoli, oats, whole wheat, wheat germ, red peppers, spinach, tomatoes, and yams. (**Tip:** Try eating at least one brain food a day.)
- ◆ **Reduce calories:** Research has shown that people who restrict their calorie intake to less than 1,800 calories per day live longer, healthier lives. (**Tip:** Choose to live longer or be more satisfied.)
- ◆ **Get enough sleep:** Research has shown that adults need eight hours of sleep each night. (**Tip:** If it's a choice between watching TV, checking your e-mail, or sleeping—opt for sleep.)
- ◆ **Meditate:** Clearing your mind for a few minutes each day is very calming and re-energizing. Meditating 12 minutes each day is an important part of a healthy brain regime, says Amen. (**Tip:** For simple meditation, get into a comfortable seated position, close your eyes, and focus only on your breathing. Try to clear your mind. Thoughts will fly through your brain; be aware of them, but don't engage them. Quiet your mind with your breathing.)
- ◆ **Exercise:** Aim for at least 30 minutes of mild to moderate aerobic exercise every day. (**Tip:** Check to see if your cable company offers on-demand exercise classes.)

A final word on exercise: Even if you forget its medical and aesthetic benefits, it reduces stress at work and at home. In our research, we asked the more than 1,000 working mothers what they do to relieve stress, and their overwhelming response was “exercise.” No. 2 on the list: “shopping . . . alone.”

Exercise doesn't have to take a huge time commitment. For time-strapped working moms, Los Angeles health and fitness trainer Debbie Rocker, also a former professional athlete, bicyclist, and spinning pioneer, has a great solution—her WALKVEST[®]. Picture a fishing vest with lots of small pockets for two-pound weights. Add

52 **How to Put the H.A.P.P.Y. in Happy Working Mother**

them up, and you get results just by walking around the house, pushing a stroller, or doing your grocery shopping. It is great for moms pre- and post-pregnancy who want to lose weight and get in shape fast. (Check out the WALKVEST® by Debbie Rocker at www.walkvest.com.)

Patty, a nurse and mother of three, knows the difference between feeling healthy and not. “When the boys were little, I felt so stretched that I stopped doing all the things I like to do to stay in shape. I felt guilty taking an hour to run when I had so little time with the boys as it was. Of course, the result was that I was always exhausted and irritable, so the time I spent with them I was not at my best.” After that year, Patty made some changes. She was able to shift her schedule to work later so she had more time with the boys during the day when they were awake. She also reserved at least one hour five days a week to run, bike, or practice yoga. “Now, I feel like myself again. I have more energy and I’m in a better mood. I feel like exercising is an investment I make to be a better mom, wife, and nurse.”

Your Emotional Health

Being a working mother requires tons of energy, and that means good emotional health. We get that energy and emotional health in large part from the people around us. Although a special hug from a son or daughter goes a long way toward reenergizing us, the reality is that it takes more than that for our emotional health to thrive at work and at home.

A Mother's Story

Jessica works three full-time jobs. She’s a mom, CEO of her family’s household, and has a successful career as a writer. She loves it all even though some days she’s ready to drop from exhaustion. What’s the greatest source of her boundless energy? “My daughter throws her arms around me and says, ‘Mommy, get ready for energy,’ then she gives me a giant bear hug! That’s my happiness.”

Harnessing the Energy

The effect those around you have on your emotional health may surprise you. To find out, try an energy audit.

Self-Coaching Break: Energy Audit

Create two columns on a sheet of paper. On the left side, write a plus sign. On the right column, a negative sign.

On the left side, list the people who give you energy. Those are people who, when you spend time with them, you feel better than you did before you spent time with them. They put you in a good mood and make you feel good about yourself and the world. Then, in the right column, list the people who take your energy away. Those are the people who, although you may like or even love them, tend to drain you of energy when you are with them.

Be painfully honest with yourself. This list, after all, is for your eyes only.

In some cases, the same people may appear in both columns, depending on the kind of interaction you have with them. That's okay; list them in both columns with a note explaining why.

The energy audit paints a clear picture of those people in your life who give you energy. Try to spend more time with the people you listed in the positive column. Even spending 15 minutes a day talking with one of them can make a huge difference in your emotional health. As far as those people who drain your energy, consider whether you must interact with them. If they're close to you—a spouse or a business partner—you may be able to change your relationship or the way you communicate to make it less draining. If you can't (or don't choose to) limit your contact with them, try telling them what sorts of interactions drain you. They may be able to change the way they talk with you and that could neutralize the negative energy. If you can identify what is draining about that relationship, you

54 How to Put the H.A.P.P.Y. in Happy Working Mother

can set boundaries that allow you to continue the relationship without sapping so much of your energy in the process.

A Mother's Story

Claudia, a working mother of two, felt stretched to the breaking point—her unhappiness compounded by a husband who didn't help her.

“Why do you work so hard for a firm that doesn't care about you? Do you really think your coworkers respect you more because you neglect your family?” her husband asked one evening.

Claudia took a deep breath to resist her urge to argue with him. It was unfair of Michael to talk to her that way. She was doing her best to balance raising two small children and working the 60 hours a week her law firm expected.

The harder she tried, it seemed the more critical Michael became. After all, she was the one who dealt with the nanny, attended the parent/teacher conferences, and took time off to take the kids to the doctor. Even though her salary was more than half the family income, her husband made her feel guilty for working. Sure, he worked hard, too, but he always got home earlier in the evening, and it never occurred to him to make dinner or play with the kids. By the time she got home at 7, her husband was in front of the TV with the kids playing on the floor nearby.

Claudia felt isolated and miserable. Every waking minute was divided between work and the kids. She had no time for herself, and even less for the two of them as a couple. Claudia felt she was failing as a lawyer and as a mother.

One evening, as she was packing to go on a business trip the next day, all the tension came to a head. “Why don't you just stay away?” Michael asked her. “You're never here anyway, so go work 24 hours a day like you want to.”

“That's not what I want!” Claudia shouted. “I'm trying to make this all work, and I don't feel like you're helping!” The baby's crying interrupted them, and brought an abrupt end to the argument.

Later, both agreed they needed outside help, so they turned to a marriage counselor. The neutral setting enabled both to talk about their unfilled expectations of each other and the pressures they felt as working parents.

Michael learned to understand he was exerting unreasonable pressure on Claudia and that his negative comments were deeply hurtful. Claudia learned that she needed to ask for the help she desperately needed. It was unrealistic, the counselor explained, for her to expect help without asking for it.

Claudia also learned to pay attention to her values and respect what mattered to her as a mother and a career woman. She decided that having more time with her kids was more important than her ambition to become a partner in five years. She still wanted to make partner, but she was comfortable taking a slower path to get there. As a result, she went to her boss and was able to arrange to work closer to home and cut back on her travel. It slowed her career progression, but the trade-off was worth it.

Claudia also recognized that superwoman doesn't exist, and that's okay. She can do the best she can and that's enough. Today, Claudia is a happy mother who enjoys her kids' accomplishments, a contented wife who loves her husband for who he is, and she excels in her career, though she didn't climb the career ladder quite as quickly as she had planned.

The Guilt Factor

Guilt, a force that saps emotional health, runs at epidemic levels among working mothers. It's especially prevalent in societies like the United States, where the perceived norm calls for "good mothers" to stay home to raise their children. That's begun to change slightly and very slowly as more women head back to the workforce, in part due to economics.

Since women began to enter the workforce in earnest in the 1960s, the stories have circulated about how children suffer when their mothers work outside the home. As you'll see in detail in the next

56 How to Put the H.A.P.P.Y. in Happy Working Mother

chapter, the research—and kids of working mothers—indicate exactly the opposite. Children thrive and are healthy and secure when they live in a loving, stable environment. Whether mom works is irrelevant.

Adding to their guilt, working mothers often face a work environment designed for men with stay-at-home wives. The demands of the workplace frequently conflict with the demands of child care. This is changing, though, as more companies adopt flexible work schedules, and the Family and Medical Leave Act offers many parents the right to take leave to care for family members. Still, many working mothers feel that they must sacrifice their careers for their kids and resign themselves to slow or standstill career progression to meet the needs of their families.

Sofia, 33, always knew that even if she had kids—today she has one and another on the way—she wanted to work and develop herself as a professional. Living in Buenos Aires poses difficulties, she says, because Latin American society expects mothers to stay home with the kids. “When I travel for work, my mother and mother-in-law make comments. They’re from another generation, though, and just don’t understand what it is to be a working mom. Work develops me intellectually and personally, and when I’m home I give quality time to my son.”

If you feel twinges of working-mother guilt creeping in, ask yourself what you’ve contributed this week as a:

- ◆ Mother.
- ◆ Working person.
- ◆ Wife or significant other in a relationship.
- ◆ Homemaker.

Remember that small contributions can have a big impact over time. If you helped your child learn something new or made her laugh, that’s a contribution. If you helped a colleague at work accomplish something, that’s a contribution.

A Is for Adaptive

Every working mom knows that change is part of life. Work schedules change; babysitters move away; kids get sick. Just when you think

everything is under control, it changes. How we deal with change makes the difference between being stressed and being happy. We call the ability to cope with change your AQ or Adaptability Quotient.

A clear sense of what is important to you and the purpose of your life helps to make change less stressful and easier to navigate. As you learn to adapt readily to more new situations, your AQ increases, too. A higher AQ allows you to become more secure and happier. Whatever your AQ, you can increase it by the decisions you make every day to focus on what is truly important to you.

Adapting doesn't mean giving to others until there's nothing left for you. A popular children's book that you may have read is *The Giving Tree*, by acclaimed poet and author Shel Silverstein. It's the story of a little boy and a special tree that gives up everything for the boy it loves until all that's left of the tree is its stump.

Society tells us that as mothers we are supposed to be like that tree. We are supposed to give to our children selflessly out of boundless love to the exclusion of our own well-being and happiness. Fathers are not expected to forfeit or defer their happiness—society demands that only of mothers. But such an expectation is unhealthy for mothers and for children. Mothers who forgo their own happiness are more likely to live vicariously through their kids. They may even get so involved in their children's lives that they inadvertently get in the way of their children learning to develop their own coping skills.

As mothers, we have unconditional love for our children. We, like the tree, would go a long way to make our children happy and successful. But we owe it to ourselves, our kids, and our work to take care of ourselves as well. To be your best, your most energetic and most joyful self, you need to be able to pursue your own life in addition to your life as a mom. For many women, going to work helps them preserve their sense of who they are as adults, as individuals, and keeps them connected to the real world beyond play dates and storybooks.

For some mothers, staying at home to raise the kids is the fulfillment of a dream, of their life's purpose. We applaud and encourage them to follow their dreams. The point, though, is that mothers are more than just mothers. They also are adult women with their own

58 **How to Put the H.A.P.P.Y. in Happy Working Mother**

identities, sense of purpose, and vision for their lives. Happiness comes in part from pursuing the life you believe you were meant to live, and not one that society or family pressures impose on you.

As a working mother, the goal is to create the right boundaries for your children, your relationships, and your work so that you still have something left for yourself. That's a high AQ.

A Mother's Tale

Addie Mae is one of those rare women who combined a lifetime of work with motherhood while never losing sight of what was truly important; she loves life and it shows. She is the happy, retired, working mother of 6 children who live in Texas, Ohio, Kentucky, and Arizona; a grandmother of 26; great-grandmother of 38, and great-great grandmother of 3. Co-author Cathy Greenberg met her on a plane flight. This is her story:

Addie Mae was originally from Louisville, Kentucky, and grew up during the Great Depression. Her father left the family when she was only 2 years old. She started work at age 12, babysitting for the working mothers in her hometown. At age 15, she followed in her mother's footsteps and worked as a housekeeper after school. Her beloved mother had been a housekeeper for the family of Helen Keller.

Addie Mae always looked at life with a view to what could be, and her optimism, hope, pride, and joy shine through her. She went to work in a rubber plant in Alabama, originally as a cook. After 21 years of service as an hourly wage earner, a supervisor, and finally as a member of management, she retired.

At age 58, Addie Mae went to college at Florence State University and loved every minute of it. She always loved learning. (She had been valedictorian of her high school graduating class in 1947.)

The day I met Addie Mae she was returning from her sister Evelyn's funeral. But you wouldn't know it. Her vivacious attitude and sense of abundance as she shared her story radiated

from her. She talked about her home, where she loves to serve others her favorite secret recipes for homemade pecan pie, sweet potato pie, and her special Thanksgiving oyster dressing with corn bread.

Her best friend, Sheila, 71, helps brighten her days as does the life she has with her many other friends in Green Valley, Arizona.

Addie Mae's strategy for raising a successful family as a working mother on her own for many years was tough love and instilling an appreciation for service to others. "Serving others is a privilege in life, and I try to do something good for someone every day," she says. When asked about hardships she may have endured, she smiles and says, "Life is what you make of it."

Addie Mae has made a terrific life for herself and all her children. When she gets off the plane, one of her sons is waiting for her. He takes her small handheld case, and she is home. The love and admiration in his eyes are a well-earned reward for a mother who worked, educated herself, her family, and her friends as well as her clients and customers along the way.

Her words echo in my mind all the time: "I try to do something good for someone every day." I like that. As a working mother I wish everyone had that motto. It would make life so much easier for all of us. As my Dad would say, "Try to do an act of senseless kindness as often as possible." To this day, I put coins in expired meters!

—Cathy Greenberg

PP as in Proud of Your Work/Proud of Being a Mother

We don't expect our friends or coworkers to be perfect, but many of us demand perfection of ourselves. (If we're really honest, we wish for perfection in our children, too.)

When we set the bar so impossibly high, disappointment is inevitable. But happiness requires that we take pride in what we have. Pride can come from a job well done, not necessarily a perfect job. If you

60 **How to Put the H.A.P.P.Y. in Happy Working Mother**

bring your best to your work each day, be proud; if your child is not the best athlete or the brightest student in school but is kind and considerate, be proud. Pride is a form of appreciation. It is feeling good about what you contribute both in the workplace and as a mother.

If your work is aligned to your values, it's easier to feel proud of it. First, though, you need to be clear about those values. (Try our values assessment exercise on page 9.) Just as you would not take credit for every good thing your company or school does, neither should you take the blame for things you don't like and can't control. Take pride in the contributions you make—personally, directly. Both at work and as a mother, you don't control every outcome, so you can't take credit or blame for them all.

Understanding Your Personal Values

Values are the root of our security, our emotional thermostat. They establish our inner core for decision making, prioritizing, and acting on issues of importance in our lives. Since time, energy, and money are limited resources, working mothers have to make decisions every day on how to spend those resources. If those decisions are consistent with our values, we are at peace with them. If they are not consistent with our values, we feel torn and guilty. Guilt can lead to stress, and stress can eventually undermine our effectiveness and success, both at home and at work.

Think of Claudia, above. Until she and her husband sought the outside help of a counselor, Claudia was wracked by guilt and constantly trying to deal with the work-vs.-home conflict. It wasn't until she clarified her values as a mother and a career woman that she was able to consciously decide to slow down her career progression to make more time at home. She then approached her boss with her decision and was able to tailor a schedule that worked for them both. Then her level of happiness skyrocketed.

Too often we as mothers do a good job but don't feel good about ourselves because we haven't met the high standards we've set for ourselves. Remember, too, that Super Mom—just like Barbie and Wonder Woman—doesn't exist. A good job is not always a job

done perfectly. We may place too high a value on the ideal outcome and forget to congratulate ourselves on the capacity, capability, or competence to get the job done at all! It's okay if the dishes end up in the sink overnight or if your children go to school in a less-than-coordinated ensemble. It's also okay if you don't win employee of the month, but you get the job done well and with integrity. Treat yourself as you would your best friend—with kindness, forgiveness, and generosity. Acknowledge your contributions, really appreciate your investment in the result, and you'll be happier with the outcome.

Motherhood Is Not a Competitive Sport

We all hope to raise happy children who are confident, loving, and respectful. That's a big part of what being a successful mother is all about. Sometimes in today's competitive world, though, we lose sight of those priorities. Raising a family becomes a competitive sport. Who walks first; who gets into the gifted program at school; whose child is the basketball, karate, or football star; whose is the most popular; in the most activities; speaks the most languages. Your kids may end up unhappy and resentful, participating in activities they don't enjoy. (Perhaps that's a familiar feeling in your own life.) When it comes to your kids, as with your own life, focus on blocking out the noise emanating from those who view motherhood as a competition.

Instead, focus on and take pride in the beauty in your child and what he or she does. That will set up an entirely different set of priorities. Your kids will get involved in sports or music or other activities because they enjoy them, not because they feel they must do them. Their success at school will be defined as doing their best—whatever grade that turns out to be. You may still need to push your kids to work a little harder or to read more and play less on the Xbox, but you are teaching them to be who they are—not to be someone else.

Y as in Young at Heart

To be young at heart is to be joyful and free of the shackles of negativity that weigh us down and makes us sad. No matter your

62 How to Put the H.A.P.P.Y. in Happy Working Mother

age, you can be young at heart by replacing negative thoughts with positive ones.

The Institute of HeartMath, mentioned in the previous chapter, has proven that people can improve their health by consciously focusing their thoughts on love and appreciation. After nearly 20 years of research, they've shown that when a person experiences feelings of compassion, love, and caring, his or her heart beats in a smooth, coherent pattern. When that occurs, the body produces more DHEA, the hormone that prevents aging and gives us feelings of youthful vitality. In contrast, when someone is angry or stressed, the heartbeat is a jagged, incoherent pattern. The body produces higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol, which has been associated with diabetes, depression, fatigue, and many chronic diseases.

It's naïve to think bad things don't happen. Of course they do. It's not possible to be happy every moment of the day. To be young at heart is to choose the positive path whenever possible, to be optimistic, and to expect good rather than bad things to happen. It also is to forgive. Holding a grudge creates tremendous negative energy in your body and hurts you in the process. Holding a grudge is like taking poison and expecting the other person will get sick. Let the anger go and move on. Appreciate those you love and those who give you support and comfort.

Self-Coaching Break: Forgiveness and Forgivable Acts

Bad things happen everyday. People may insult, disappoint, or hurt you. You can't control other people's bad behavior. You can, however, control your response to it.

You can choose to be angry and hold a grudge, or you can choose the positive approach. If it's important and you can change it, then act on it. If not, let it go.

Holding on to anger and resentment saps valuable energy that you could use for more positive things like appreciation, learning, or healing. The biological responses to anger and stress are well-documented, while the physical act of forgiveness is still

under examination. We do know, though, that the emotional act of forgiveness can speed recovery of one's spiritual well-being, which impacts physical health as well.

TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AND THINK ABOUT YOUR ANSWERS.

Action

Imagine that you said something cruel to a friend in the heat of an argument. How would you feel when you realized you deeply hurt your friend? What steps would you be willing to take to repair that relationship? How would you feel about yourself and about the person you hurt?

Reaction

Imagine your friend stays angry for a few days and then forgives you. How would you feel when you were forgiven?

Review

How would you show your forgiveness? How would you recognize forgiveness? How would others recognize forgiveness?

Action

Imagine that someone intentionally or thoughtlessly hurts you. For example, a colleague at work spreads a rumor about you that damages your reputation with your other coworkers. Would you feel angry or hurt? Focus on that anger. How do you feel when you think about it? Is your heart racing? Do you feel your blood pressure rising?

Now, forgive that person. Let go of all the anger, even if just for a few moments. Picture it melting like a snowball. Take deep breaths as you let go of the resentment. You may still be right and

(continued)

64 **How to Put the H.A.P.P.Y. in Happy Working Mother**

he or she may still be wrong, but you are making the choice to forgive.

Review

How do you feel now that you have let go of the anger? Is your heart beating more slowly? Do you feel lighter and more relaxed? Does forgiveness feel better to you than anger and resentment?

Insight

If you make a conscious effort to forgive, you will improve your health, your happiness, and all of your relationships, both as a mother and a person at work or at home.

Express appreciation every day. It can be a simple thank-you to another, a note, a hug. It doesn't take much extra effort, but it's good for you!

To be young at heart is to find joy in the simple things of life. Luxury vacations are nice but you can't save your joy for two weeks out of the year. Find joy every day in the rich aroma of your first cup of coffee; in the sweet smell of your daughter's hair as you kiss her goodnight; in the bedtime story you read to your son. Joy lurks in every mundane detail of life; you only need to recognize it.

Happiness Tip: Learn to forgive yourself and others.

Bottom Lines: Exercises to Try

CREATE A H.A.P.P.Y. MONTH

Put happiness on your to-do list, literally. On your calendar begin to set aside time to do the things that will help you to

feel happier. Here are a few ideas, although you know best what makes you happy:

- ◆ Sign up for an exercise or yoga class, and then attend the class, consistently.
- ◆ Make dates to go for walks with a friend.
- ◆ Take 15 minutes a day to practice meditation. If time is an issue, try 5 minutes in the morning before you get out of bed, 5 minutes at lunch time, and 5 minutes in the evening.
- ◆ Set aside time to focus on forgiving someone who has hurt you.
- ◆ Make a values list.
- ◆ Schedule time to talk with someone who gives you energy.

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Learning to relax is important for working mothers. That relaxation doesn't have to be expensive or take a lot of time but it can make a world of difference in your ability to happily and comfortably cope. A few options include:

- ◆ Quiet Time
 - Use car rides on your way to or from work as quiet time
 - Use noise-reducing earphones at home.
 - Listen to nature sounds, happy music, or soothing music on an iPod or other MP3 player.
- ◆ Reading Time
 - Take a trip to the library.
 - Visit a bookstore.
 - Take a book and have a cup of coffee or tea at the neighborhood coffee house.
 - Join a book club—or, create a book club of your own.

(continued)

66 How to Put the H.A.P.P.Y. in Happy Working Mother

- ◆ Movies
 - Make a list of movies that make you feel happy. Exchange your list with friends.
- ◆ Music
 - Find music that makes you feel good and put it on your MP3 player.
 - When you walk or work out or even when you sit in the break room at work, listen to that music and let it lift your mood.
- ◆ Theater
 - Take in a theatrical production or other cultural event you enjoy. That may include the play at your child's school or local community theater.
- ◆ Sports/Exercise
 - Yoga
 - Pilates
 - Boxing
 - Get a work-out buddy
 - Spinning classes
 - Relaxation classes
 - Stretching
 - Walking, which can be done virtually anywhere, anytime.
- ◆ Drinks or dinner with a friend.
- ◆ Retail therapy/shopping—alone, with family, or friends.

MANY VOICES

If we agree that 50 percent of our happiness is determined by set point and 50 percent is within our control, this tool will show you how to coach yourself to make choices that will lead to your own happiness. Making good choices becomes increasingly important when current conditions (C) are

difficult. Self-coaching is a great way to be happier if we can make the right choices for ourselves.

Beginning as very young children we hear many different voices around us. Some of these voices may be positive, some not so positive. For example, our mothers telling us how cute we are or how great we are constitute positive voices. But our siblings telling us they are older and we need to listen to them or obey them may be negative. Our own voices of self-doubt also follow us along the way. These are voices saying things like, can I really do this? Am I smart enough?

One of the voices we hear is society telling us to find happiness in marriage and motherhood. Starting with the women's movement, the voices told us we can have it all. Remember the commercial that told us we could bring home the bacon and fry it up in a pan, and then there was something about pleasing a man?

Our goal is to really listen to those voices that we hear and to understand which ones truly influence our opportunities for success and which ones get in the way of our success.

As your own self-coach, you need to understand which voices play in your head.

You also need to understand which voices contribute to your happiness and which get in the way of your true happiness.

This exercise will help you silence the voices that get in the way of your happiness.

Write down next to each voice if they are enabling positive (E) or disabling negative (D). This will help you identify which voices create which outcome for you when you hear them.

	D	E
Mother	_____	_____
Father	_____	_____

(continued)

Stepparents	_____	_____
Grandparents	_____	_____
Siblings	_____	_____
Friends	_____	_____
Teachers	_____	_____
Mentors	_____	_____
Coaches	_____	_____
Advisors	_____	_____
Other (TV, movies, society)	_____	_____

Once you can identify the impact these voices, ask yourself the following questions about each of the voices:

- ◆ Should you listen to them?
- ◆ When or under what circumstances do they matter?
- ◆ What does it take to eliminate the voices that no longer provide value, and how do you keep and apply those voices that truly support your strengths and your true desire for success and well-being?

Once these details are understood—you can begin to create a whole new set of internal coaches to complement your motivations for personal success.

Creating new voices and internal coaches.

Knowing that you can choose which voices to keep and rely on, as well as develop your internal coaches, is a true gift.

Here are five steps to building a better group of internal coaches through voices you already know and possibly trust:

- 1.** Write down a new list of voices that evoke positive emotion for you. These internal coaching voices may come to you when you are making decisions, trying new things, or planning daily activities or goals. They may be telling you important details about personal health, child care, or career and personal decisions.

- 2.** Create a new list below by thinking about more recent events or relationships:

	D	E
Spouse or significant other	_____	_____
Business partner	_____	_____
Coworkers	_____	_____
Friends	_____	_____
Care givers/babysitters	_____	_____
Support personnel	_____	_____
Doctors	_____	_____
Associates	_____	_____
Instructors	_____	_____
TV	_____	_____
Mentors	_____	_____
Coaches	_____	_____
Magazines	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____

- 3.** Take the time to reflect on their words and how they impact you, your emotions, and your ability to be successful.
- 4.** Next to each of these new potential coaches, write down whether their voices are enabling or disabling influences in your life.
- 5.** Take inventory of those voices with the most positive impact on you. Recognize that these are the internal voices you should be listening to—while those who do not impact you in a positive way should be carefully evaluated.

Recognizing that you have the choice to spend more or less time with these internal coaches and to actually invest in their voices is the first step. Making the choice is the second.

