

Book Review

The happiness track: How to apply the science of happiness to accelerate your success

Seppala, E. (2016). Harper Collins.

We all want to be happy and successful, but in this modern age is it coming at too high a price? Author Emma Seppala argues that it is and that happiness is actually the key to success, not the other way round as we are taught from a young age.

Seppala is a leading expert on health psychology, wellbeing and resilience. She believes most of us want to be successful and happy, yet achieving those two things has never been more difficult.

Technology overwhelming us

She argues that because of the growth of technology, the pace of our lives is reaching overwhelming levels. We are constantly checking our phones, replying to emails and text messages – all while doing other things like planning the shopping list. We are all under deadline pressure and it's taking its toll because we can't unplug and escape. She writes about highly successful people she knows who have achieved incredible things. However, she's been saddened to see these ostensibly successful people burnt out, disconnected and unhealthy.

She says the way people are taught to seek success (what is culturally supported and encouraged) is completely wrong.

"We are compromising our ability to be truly successful and happy because we are falling for common but outdated theories about success.

"From a young age we are taught that getting ahead means doing anything that's thrown at us with razor-sharp focus and iron discipline – and at the expense of our happiness," Seppala says.

She details six false theories about success. These include; never stop accomplishing, you can't have success without stress, persevere at all costs, focus on your niche, play to your strengths and look out for number one.

While some people may have achieved success this way, it's happened at great cost, she says.

How do we get happy and therefore successful?

So how do we become happy and therefore successful? Drawing on research, she shows how six strategies for attaining happiness and fulfilment are actually the key to thriving professionally.

These six strategies (which correspond to each chapter) will apparently help you be happier, which in turn will enhance your success. All you need to do is: live in the moment, tap into your resilience, manage your energy, do nothing, be good to yourself and show compassion to others. I think this is easier said than done though. I liked the chapter about the benefits of living in the present moment and how doing “nothing” is good for your creativity.

This book has an interesting premise – happiness is the key to success not the other way round. However, I found it a bit bland in places and hard to relate to. It’s one thing to suggest how to be happy but it’s something else to actually be able to do those things.

Reviewed by Maggie McNaughton, writer at Healthy Communications.

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