



BOOK CLUB READING GUIDE FOR "CREATING YOUR BEST LIFE"

My book lends itself well to reading groups that are looking to explore the topic of personal happiness, life goals, and the qualities that help or hinder you in the attainment of both. This is the first and only book to connect the science of happiness with the science of goal pursuit, and to offer hard evidence to support its claims, so this is appropriate for people who want to know "why" we do and don't succeed.

Since the book was published, I've been honored to speak virtually and in-person to a number of reading groups, and would be happy to explore this idea if would add vitality to your discussion. Drop me an email at caroline@carolinemiller.com to see if I can Skype into your group to help you explore some of the ideas below.

These questions are designed to help you think hard about whether or not you are living the life that you would most like to live, and how this book can assist you in getting wherever you want to go. I wrote a number of unique worksheets to help readers gauge where they are with areas around social contagion and self-regulation, for example, so deeper and prolonged self-study is possible, if desired, long after the book is finished.

Suggested questions for discussion:

1. The book begins with an overview of life lists and how they have been used by high achievers in many areas of life, from sports to business. Does anyone in the group have a "bucket list" they would like to share with other members? If no one has such a list, it's interesting to explore why none exists.
2. Happiness – emotional flourishing – has been found to predict success across all life domains, and not vice versa. Have people found this to be true in their own lives?



3. The field of Positive Psychology has yielded a study of “positive interventions” – cognitive or physical shifts that have been proven to improve people’s moods. The worksheet “Jolts of Joy” in the worksheet area is a place to write down what people use to reliably increase their own joy. Share some of these with others, and then discuss how often you bring them into your own life to create or enhance well-being. Can you get more of them into your life?
4. The best kinds of goals are “challenging and specific” if you are seeking your highest possible performance with outcome goals. Most people, however, choose to set easy goals, or no goals, because they don’t want to disappoint themselves, or they are afraid of all kinds of things. Who has challenging and specific goals to share with the group, and can you use the reading club’s regular gatherings to create more accountability to pursue these goals?
5. Chapter Six is all about self-regulation, or willpower, because without this important quality, it will be impossible to accomplish most goals. Discuss the idea that self-regulation is like a muscle that gets depleted throughout the day, and gets renewed with laughter, sleep or even a teaspoon of sugar. Can people identify with the fact that it is hard to pursue any willpower-related goals towards the end of the day? Tie this back to the section on why New Year’s resolutions usually fail, and share some ideas about how to change goal-setting efforts moving forward.
6. The happiness people, according to the Headey study, wake up every day to clear-cut goals that are challenging, involve taking risks, and stress the importance of relationships. Who is setting these types of goals in the group? Is taking risks easy or hard for group members? What are the biggest risks that people have taken, and what were the rewards? Are you living without regrets now?



7. Research shows that we “catch” behaviors from the people around us, including becoming obese, quitting smoking, or even being happy. Use the “Web of Influence” worksheet to identify who is closest to you, and discuss whether or not group members truly have the right types of people in their lives to help them accomplish goals and “capitalize” on the good times.
8. We are impacted daily by the “primes” in our lives – including newspaper stories, license plates, aromas, colors, photos and even our bank passwords. Discuss whether or not the primes you encounter daily are helping or hurting you to be the best person you can be. What can you change to improve your primes? A good exercise is to discuss what seven-letter license plate you can create to enhance your zest, happiness, or gratitude, for example, and how you’d feel if you looked at it repeatedly every day.
9. Our relationships with others are one of the most important factors in whether or not we will be happy or successful in life. How much time do people devote to nurturing the most important relationships in their lives? What gets in the way of spending more time on these relationships? Can this change?
10. The “New Millennials” is the generation of young adults that was told that everyone is a “winner” for simply existing, which has resulted in lower levels of resilient, gritty behavior. Has the group seen examples of children being over-praised and then quitting when the going got hard? What about group members? Do they have grit and resilience around not quitting? Examples?