

“The Happiness Prescription” Interpreted by Chris Gardner

For my video report I watched Deepak Chopra’s “The Happiness Prescription”. It was full of words of inspiration and short meditation mantras to use each day, which Dr. Chopra encourages us to do.

Dr. Chopra says that “human life contains suffering”. In order for us to face it and overcome it, we must take the Eight Fold Path, which is the path to Enlightenment. He describes Enlightenment as “a shift in consciousness from personal to transpersonal to universe”. The Eight Fold Path teaches us to change our perception by being mindful of what is happening in the present moment. The eight steps are as follows:

1. Right perspective is nurturing. Everything is connected in the universe.
2. Correct thinking. We have 2 impulses: separation, which leads to fear and conflict, and unity, which allows thinking to “blossom so that we can experience compassion, tranquility and love”.
3. Spontaneous right speaking. We need to be mindful of our words as they have the power to nurture or destroy.
4. Right action. Dr. Chopra says not to worry about the results of an action. We need to focus on the moment without being burdened by memory. I think this would be particularly difficult for me as my mind constantly wanders to and dwells in the past. I am always haunted by words of regret, such as “if only”, or “what if”. It is hard for me to accept that there is finality in all things, that there is a last time for everything.
5. Right livelihood. We need to nurture the whole ecosystem, not just ourselves.
6. Diligence. We need to put forth the right effort in putting this Eight Fold Path to use.
7. Mindfulness. The most important practice of this path. Dr. Chopra says we need to be “silent observers of ourselves as that is the highest form of intelligence”. We need to be conscious of our breath and the sensations in our bodies. “Cultivating mindfulness leads to freedom and loss of fear from death”.
8. Meditation. “Allow the mind to quiet down into the field of the abstract”. Dr. Chopra says that meditation is not necessarily relaxation, but a way of being “restfully alert”. I like that!

In addition to the Eight Fold Path, there are 10 Keys to Happiness that are “drawn from the teachings of wisdom traditions” that we should incorporate into our lives.

1. Listen to our body’s wisdom. We really are amazing creatures, and our bodies do tell us what we need to know, but we have to practice listening to it. When awareness is in our bodies it energizes us.
2. Live in the present. It is the only moment that never ends! Again, very challenging for me.

3. Embrace silence. That's easier said than done with 4 children; however I appreciated that time so much more because I rarely have it. Dr. Chopra says to beware of our thoughts.
4. Relinquish our need for external approval. Dr. Chopra says "when we need approval we depend on others for our happiness". So it's like giving away that power. He also said, and I thought this was beautiful, and made a lot of sense, that "the sparkling of the eyes reflects our soul".
5. Relinquish our anger. Let go of toxic emotions. Dr. Chopra shares a series of steps to achieve this, the end result being able to celebrate emotion for good or bad.
6. Total self knowledge. We should ask ourselves the following 2 questions daily: "Who am I?" and "What do I want?" Dr. Chopra says we need to "put our attention to our heart and listen to it". Take 2 minutes every day and ask ourselves this, and add at least one different one from his list in order to find the answers and something "magical" will happen. This is something that I plan to do as part of our movement journal to see if it will make a difference for me.
7. Don't judge others. In order to do this we have to stop judging ourselves first. Dr. Chopra says that it is ok to have weaknesses, but we need to "accept our paradox and contradiction" in order to do so with others.
8. Eliminate toxins from our body and emotions to remain free and happy. In order to create something new in our lives, we have to let something else go to make room.
9. Replace fear with love. Dr. Chopra says that when we recognize others joy and suffering as our own it is "the birth of compassion".
10. Mindful living, the most valuable key, the most important. "The more we cultivate the experience of witnessing awareness; we will realize we are spirits." This is the "highest form of human intelligence". I think that is incredibly powerful, but not easy to achieve.

I really appreciate the concept of accepting ourselves for who we are, of not demonizing ourselves or others, of forgiving. To make our lives better we need to look inside ourselves, for therein lies the answer. We are the makers of our own destiny. Through practice of the Eight Fold Path and the 10 Keys, I hope to strengthen that part of me, and accept myself, shortcomings and all, so that I can be happy. I want to be happy!